

Bowling Green State University

Bowling Green State University aspires to be the premier learning community in Ohio, and one of the best in the nation. Through the interdependence of teaching, learning, scholarship, and service we will create an academic environment grounded in intellectual discovery and guided by rational discourse and civility. **Student success** is the motivating and guiding force of many of our efforts. **First Year Programs** at Bowling Green State University are designed to enhance the educational experience of our new students both in and out of the classroom.

First Year Programs help students become more engaged learners and better connected to the University community. Dedicated to providing an enhanced educational experience, the University prides itself on challenging and supporting students with an intentional commitment to student learning, success, and satisfaction. As demonstrated through the following First Year Programs, collaboration between faculty and administrators from Academic Affairs and Student Affairs plays a critical role in the planning, implementation, and overall success of these initiatives.

Academic Investment in Math and Sciences (AIMS) is designed to increase the number of well-prepared women and students of color who graduate from the University with majors in mathematics, computer and natural sciences. AIMS students begin their experience the summer before matriculation and throughout the entire four years of college work to strengthen their academic skills and to develop their professional and leadership traits required for advancement in mathematics and the sciences.

The **Center for Multicultural and Academic Initiative (CMAI)** facilitates the academic and personal adjustment of first-year students of color at the University. Based on an initial assessment interview, students are advised from a holistic approach throughout the first-year that takes into account their academic, personal, social, and cultural well-being.

Library and Learning Resources has a full-time **First Year Experience Librarian** dedicated exclusively to meeting the needs of first-year students. In addition to individual and group instruction available in BGSU library facilities, the First Year Experience Librarian develops library curriculum for a variety of first-year student courses.

The **Honors Program** offers qualified students academically enriched classes, an Honors Housing option, informal reading groups, a peer mentor program for first-year students, and personal and academic support in addition to programming designed to enrich the educational experience.

The **Literacy Serve and Learn (LSL)** program is a collaborative effort between the University and Toledo Public Schools to provide service-learning opportunities for BGSU students while they provide instructional support in Toledo elementary schools.

The **President's Leadership Academy (PLA)** is designed to prepare students to be leaders in the 21st century. The program consists of a four-week summer program before the first-year of college and a yearly curriculum with three basic components—leadership development, community service, and academic preparedness.

Springboard is a graded one-credit course aimed at assessment and development of skills in communication, analysis, problem solving, judgment, leadership, and self-assurance. Through a series of hands-on individual and small group activities, first-year students with their coaches (recruited from among faculty, staff, students, community members, and alumni) assess their strengths and development needs. Each student at the end of the semester has a personal development plan and the beginnings of a personal written and video portfolio.

Student Support Services (SSS) provides comprehensive academic and social support for first generation, low income, and disabled students. Eligible students receive academic advising, career counseling, and financial aid assistance. Tutoring is provided in content area courses, as well as academic and life skills workshops, and individualized math, reading, and writing assistance from professional staff.

UNIV 100 – University Success is a two-credit hour, graded course for first year students that exposes them to the resources of the University, diverse cultures and ideas, and assists in the development of intellectual, personal, and social skills that will allow them to be successful at during their college experience and beyond. Theme sections of the course are also available and serve as an opportunity for new students to strengthen their connections to an academic major or interest.

UNIV 131 – Career & Life Planning course is a two-credit hour course where students assess personality, interests, values, aptitudes, and abilities as they begin to explore the world of work and how to prepare for it. Students who complete this course are more informed about their academic and occupational choices and are more focused with their career goals.

The **University Program for Academic Success (UPAS)** offers academic support to conditionally admitted at-risk students. This program includes intrusive academic advising in addition to coordinated group and individual tutoring and participation in a unique bridge experience.

Residential Learning Communities

The Chapman Program is for academically motivated and ambitious learners who want a dynamic education within a supportive community. Chapman students work closely with faculty and residence hall staff to build a morally principled community founded on collaboration, trust, and respect for each other's differences.

The **Health Sciences Residential Community (HSRC)** includes students who major in a variety of science, health, and pre-professional programs. HSRC is a place where students can share information and ideas with others who have the same interests and goals, including dedicated faculty who provide tutoring, mentoring and advising assistance in and out of the classroom.

Partners in Context and Community (PCC) is an innovative program for middle childhood education majors. PCC students learn to teach by actually teaching and working in high-need urban schools beginning their first semester. Students gain valuable practical experience while developing close relationships with faculty and peers.

Integrating Moral Principles and Critical Thinking (IMPACT) is a highly select group of extremely motivated Honors students who live together in the spirit of intellectual curiosity and moral commitment. The central focus of IMPACT students and faculty is to determine the role of morality in shaping the thought and behavior of rational, thoughtful people.

La Comunidad provides cultural and academic programming for Spanish majors and minors, and other students interested in the Spanish-speaking world.

Planned Comprehensive Follow-Up of First Year Programs

Since Fall 1997, the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) has tracked retention, grade point averages, credit hours earned, and graduation rates for First Year Program participants, in addition to a control group of non-participants. The OIR has recently developed a comprehensive assessment report that includes the results of a formative study concerning the effectiveness of learning communities and first year programs. Program outcomes, including retention, graduation, grade point averages, credit hours earned, student-program interaction effects, student perceptions collected through surveys, and income vs. expense analyses, were studied using a variety of methods. The current evidence suggests that Chapman Program, Honors, Literacy Serve and Learn (LSL), Springboard, UNIV100, and the University Program for Academic Success (UPAS) are contributing most towards these outcomes at this time. A closer examination of the objectives and activities of some of these efforts may suggest some best practices that could be adopted more widely among other programs.

The programs showing statistically significant positive effects on retention across multiple cohorts and over multiple years after background variables were controlled for included Chapman, Honors, Springboard, and UNIV100. Chapman students graduated within four years at a significantly higher rate as well. Those showing statistically significant positive effects on grade point averages across multiple cohorts and over multiple years after controlling for background variables included Chapman, Honors, LSL, Springboard, UNIV100, and UPAS. Those showing statistically significant positive effects on student credit hours earned across multiple cohorts and over multiple years after controlling for background variables included Chapman, Honors, and LSL.

Chapman, Honors, LSL, Springboard, UNIV100, and UPAS all administer satisfaction/feedback surveys to their participants each semester and/or each year. The results have been used to modify activities and the feedback is favorable. Chapman also administered a follow-up survey to a sample of its original Fall 1997 cohort in the spring of 2001; the results revealed that seniors attributed very positive benefits for their educational and personal development to their first year participation in the program. UNIV100 carries out focus groups with currently enrolled students, course facilitators, and course completers and was a participant in the 2001-2002 First Year Initiative Benchmarking Study. Springboard maintains an extensive database of pre- and post-assessment information concerning the personal and educational development of its students. Meta-level assessments of the feedback provided to participants are used to also continually assess and improve the program.