

Provost's February Faculty Forum
Thursday, February 13, 3:00-4:30pm
Wells Conference Center, Room 2

“Best UMaine Practices in Reaching and Retaining Students”

Provost Faye Gilbert:

Welcome everyone and get prepped to get to work as you work with these issues at the table. We're looking to capture ideas then share them more broadly after this forum.

This is an interactive session; please have a scribe and someone to report out. We'd like 1 idea from each table so that everyone can hear what you are doing around these issues. We'd like to capture the whole set of ideas today.

The next forum will be on enriched learning experiences and research.

Our starting point today is the research coming from retention efforts. What makes an impact on students returning to an institution? Academic probation negatively affects. Financial aid increases retention. First year student success efforts and classes improve retention. Greatest impact: faculty-student mentoring and that relationship has the greatest effect.

What are our stats? No DFWLs: 88% return. 1 D or F, 74% return next year. 1 W, 61% return to us. 1 F, 59% return. Multiple Ds or Fs, 43% return. Multiple Ws is 38%.

Graphs show the percentage of undergrad courses with DFWL rates below 20%. It is divided by 100 level, 200 level, 300/400 level. Fewer DFWLs the higher up we go but freshman year is a year of risk and uncertainty. Similar trends with STEM courses. Perhaps more challenging for our freshmen coming from Maine and elsewhere with their education before college.

You are doing incredible things. Faculty really working with these issues and doing incredible things. Percentage of courses with MLAs is very clear; 5-10% of students we might have lost stay with us. Humanities classes revising Wikipedia. Course use of Hackerspace. Online course and interaction with faculty abroad. Marine Science students designing a research project for their professor in the field.

President Joan Ferrini-Mundy:

I am very thrilled at the turnout. I've been eager to be in these conversations since I got here. Central to what we do. Number of extraordinarily good teachers here is quite high. This is already a place that values teaching and learning. It is committed to high impact, innovative practices. I don't know that we are well known as this kind of place? I want to make sure that we *are* known as such a place. This is an area of scholarly interest to me. The real outcome we need to focus on is the learning. Thank you for being here; this will not be the last of these conversations and I look forward to new ones.

Provost Faye Gilbert:

This is the third forum, in line with what we are trying to do. First question: what have you done or want to do to increase student success in your classes? This question started as me asking why the DFWL rates are so high? Flipping the question is on purpose and perfect. What have you done that has worked? Talk at your tables and be prepared to report out. I am giving you 15 minutes and report out then.

Question 1 report outs:

What have you done (or do you want to do) to increase student success in your classes?

TABLE:

Personalize the experience for students through personal narratives and personalized course descriptions.

TABLE:

Explain what you mean by “office hours.” It’s okay to show up! Not avoid the professor because they look busy in their office.

TABLE:

Navigate Partnership apps. Emails showing concern, the app is working with students.

TABLE:

Mentoring and tutoring; meeting students beyond just that classroom time, giving them extra time and instruction if they need it.

TABLE:

Notion of building community, we do it lots of different ways. Cohorts in which students work together and hold each other accountable. Learning-living communities. In our classrooms and beyond that.

TABLE:

Transparency. Why we do things? And sharing that with our students.

TABLE:

Size of classes: 100 level being the big problem. We just need smaller classes. We need to find ways for students to have relatable experiences in classes.

TABLE:

We use MLAs in some of our classes and that seems to have a huge impact on student success. February 25 Tuesday is a forum on MLAs. It helps make the class feel smaller.

TABLE:

Building certain types of social and emotional skills. Fostering collaboration among students. Creating an environment where students don't have to be afraid to fail.

Faye Gilbert: That goes with the Make the Grade initiative, inspired by the chancellor and with the president's support. Funding a retake class for students who had 1 D or F last semester. Sending the message we believe in you, we think you can make this and will be successful going forward. 55 have taken the offer so far and I look forward to seeing the outcomes.

TABLE:

Students have varied learning styles and strengths. Diversity of classroom measures so that all students can shine.

COMMERCIAL - "SET YOUR COURSE" WHILE NOTES WERE COLLECTED FROM THE TABLES

Faye Gilbert: we hope to tailor these by college and application. This is the beginning. We start with a theme that we will be building on by college and discipline. And now, your second question. What are the barriers in your way from implementing student success practices? Take about 10 minutes to discuss.

Question 2 report outs:

What are the barriers you face in helping your students to be successful in your course?

TABLE:

Knowing what the resources are? For fragile, first generation students struggling with school. How do we as faculty recognize when students are struggling and point them towards good resources? For example, tutoring when failing exams. Counseling. Really hard to send them to resources.

TABLE:

Faculty are limited in their time and resources. Things keep piling up but nothing gets taken away.

TABLE:

How to have a campus wide or system wide discussion on student preparedness? That is declining. Rather than putting the pressure on the instructor, we should have open campus wide discussions on how to address that. We need to acknowledge it.

Faye Gilbert: ongoing discussions on Gen Ed are a great opportunity to address this.

TABLE:

Mismatch between the first year student experience and university faculty's lack of understanding or misconceptions about the student experiences. Starting a conversation between these groups and where everyone is coming from.

TABLE:

The physical space. If you have 34 students crammed into a room and you want to do some of these things, you can't. Students can't even get in and out of chairs. We're trying to build this community but tight space makes this hard.

Faye Gilbert: the new engineering building will have spaces we all can use.

TABLE:

Scheduling. Not enough active learning spaces on campus. Are they being prioritized correctly?

TABLE:

We see mental health challenges as substantial, on the rise, and we need more support.

Faye Gilbert: Several offices banded together to fund another graduate student assigned to the counseling center now. It is not a lot but a step in the right direction.

TABLE:

To engage students who are overcommitted and exhausted. Social media. Mental health. Things we can't or don't know how to overcome.

TABLE:

Student accessibility services find there are faculty who do not follow the law or recognize accommodations.

TABLE:

Mental health issues. How we reward teaching in promotion and tenure documentation? As opposed to how we reward research.

President Joan Ferrini-Mundy:

Two thoughts. With barriers, I know that when I was doing more teaching I always wanted more help in how to use these active learning techniques. I taught math and wanted ways to introduce practices that would get me more of a window into student thinking without necessarily changing my entire way of teaching. How do we help more people learn to work with MLAs? That is not a simple thing to suddenly introduce a bunch of people into the classroom. Thank you for coming. Please do not be afraid to email me directly with your ideas and suggestions. [*President departed*]

Faye Gilbert:

If you have additional thoughts, you can jot them on the sticky notes and leave them with us.

Given what I have just heard you say: faculty constraints, time. Research suggests the most important thing is the faculty-student mentoring relationship-- how do we do that? How do we foster that when there are only so many hours in the day and how do you mentor say, 300 students? Like in some of our classes. Do you have ideas for approaching the mentoring issue that does not involve you sacrificing everything for that cause? Class sizes will probably continue to increase. This will not go away in the short term. But I believe that with your help we can find a way to help our students feel welcomed and honored and nurtured here without expecting you to sacrifice everything. Teaching, scholarship, service work, in order to make that happen. Take 15 minutes to discuss then we will report out.

Question 3 report outs

What can the university do to help foster a culture of mentoring in your class?

TABLE:

Took issue with the question in general. Why mentoring has to occur in the classroom? And how to define? Would be better served by advisors and faculty mentors. To me it's a disconnect.

TABLE:

Some departments have drop-in help places. Math, for example. We can't mentor every student but in the math lab students can drop in and get individual mentoring there. More departments need more space.

TABLE:

Talked about first year experiences and courses that are discipline based. 1 on 1 focus, fostering the transition from high school and ensuring a lot of interaction with upper level students and faculty.

TABLE:

Making yourself approachable to students. Slight recognition like an email can go a long way.

Faye Gilbert: I believe you can do it is a powerful message.

TABLE:

Creating spaces outside the classroom.

TABLE:

In load teaching assignments. How are independent studies counted or not counted? How do you divvy up teaching assignments?

TABLE:

Power and impact of professional advisors. Another question, asking students why you are here in a particular class? Some students have a hard time answering that. Creating meaning for students, including gen eds.

Faye Gilbert: that was a theme of the gen eds forum.

TABLE:

Importance of events like new faculty orientation; maximize information for new faculty. Do a refresher at beginning and middle of year. What are resources and workshops available? Huge importance of recognizing the role of our staff.

TABLE:

Mental health side of things. Program at Minnesota has faculty and staff trained in triage for mental health problems.

TABLE:

Choosing classrooms with enough space to accommodate MLAs. Providing resources like food for student advising sessions to incentivize attendance.

Faye Gilbert:

Tip of the iceberg step. I appreciate you coming to the forum and talking to each other. The next forum will be March 12, where we will dive deeper into enriched learning experiences. How can all freshman students have a research experience? Getting some discussions and input. These notes from today will be posted on the provost website with the video.

TABLE:

What if we had *students* answer these questions in a forum?

Faye Gilbert: That would be great.

Dee Nichols:

There will be a Faculty Senate working group meeting in the Coe Room tomorrow. Looking at perceptions of General Ed and various models.