

University: North Carolina State University

Program: College of Textiles

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Description of Program:

The College of Textiles' (COT) First Year Emphasis (FYE) is a program of intensive advising and guidance for students that starts with contact being made as soon as the University accepts the student. Most of the advising and academic support comes from the Academic Programs Office, and in addition, the Student Services Office provides complete cooperation in outreach to our new students. All scholarships and student activities as well as summer job placement and permanent job placement is handled in Student Services. In many cases, the incoming students have meet many of the staff people in recruiting trips or at the COT Open House held each February. The staffs of the two offices are in complete communication with each other which is known and appreciated by all students, especially the first year students.

A full-time professional adviser teaches/coordinates the introductory class, TT 105 Introduction to Textile Technology (TT 105), that includes academic survival skills training for all textile students as well as content that serves as the basis for the textile degrees. In addition to this individual, the Student Services Manager is greatly involved in making decisions that affect students in ways such as need for counseling, need for academic monitoring, etc. The two individuals, the professional adviser and the student services manager, frequently conduct joint sessions with a student who needs help.

Success in the FYE is noteworthy and attributed to the close connections with peers in the small class sections, with upper class students by being assigned to one new student as their peer mentor, and with staff and faculty by repeated contact in the introductory class. Many of the first year students work on projects with faculty members during their first year. A key factor in the success of this program is the personal and open interaction with the professional adviser and the other staff members in the COT

The COT is committed to exposing students to the many academic, social, and cultural opportunities available at NCSU. Students receive credit in their TT 105 course for participation in out-of-class campus cultural and educational events as well as service projects. The COT has provided access to numbers of service projects and leadership training activities. One of the most significant leadership training programs is the NC State Leadership Development Seminar series that all students are to attend as part of their grade in the TT 105 course.

The primary objectives of the FYE are:

- To provide quality advising and appropriate learning experiences for first-year students;
- To promote students' academic success;
- To facilitate students' decision-making about their major and career in textiles or other fields;
- To introduce students to the technology in the textile industry;
- To initiate sound team building skills for project work;
- To initiate the development of communication skills including oral, written, and technology-based information;
- To promote student satisfaction with the COT and NCSU at large; and,
- To facilitate students' co-curricular learning, involvement and integration into the campus community.

To whom is the strategy or initiative directed among first-year students?

The entire first year class in the COT is involved in the FYE. This group includes the usual diversity of textile majors as well as the typical undecided student who needs assistance in finding degrees outside the COT. The COT attracts the full range of applicants including honors and scholars students. A special section of TT 105 has been established to assist honors and scholars students in meeting the requirements of the University Scholars and Honors programs.

Among these targeted students, how many or what percentage participate or benefit? If not all targeted students participate, how are participants selected?

All COT first year students including transfer students participate in the FYE program.

What connections does the program or strategy have to formal classroom experiences and learning outcomes?

The FYE program is incorporated in the TT 105 class as previously described. The emphasis on academic survival skills is well positioned since instruction in practical skills such as time management, note-taking, test-taking, effective study skills, etc. are immediately used in the TT 105 class. The need for students to see a connection between learning such skills and the academic content of a course is crucial. Many programs exist where these skills are taught in courses that are more seminar-like in nature and only meet once per week. While this approach is preferable to not having these skills taught, the student becomes more vested in applying these skills when the teacher, in this case the adviser, emphasizes success.

In addition to the TT 105 class, special sections of the first English course (ENG 111) are taught for the COT that coordinate with TT 105 stressing the same academic and communication skills. In the fall of 2002, the First Year Inquiry program, which is built upon an inquiry guided educational model and includes an intensive assessment of student growth in critical thinking skills, will also be added for first year students enrolled in the first semester chemistry course.

Finally, in the past four years the COT has started one of the most respected and trusted tutorial programs on campus. The professional adviser who oversees this program selects peer tutors. From the group of peer tutors, a head tutor is selected who is

responsible for assessment and management of the program. Tutoring assistance is available in all subjects common to the first two years including textile courses.

What qualitative or quantitative assessment data are available to suggest effectiveness?

- Students and parents are exceptionally pleased with the FYE program as is noted by the earliest evaluation of this program that actually begins with the New Student Orientation held during the summer. Parents remain with the student the entire time during the COT orientation and advising. The COT has consistently received the highest ratings of all colleges on campus for advising and academic support even before students arrive. This satisfaction remains strong into the first year.
- The vast majority of students are satisfied with the intensive advising program they receive and all of them see the professional adviser at least two times each week in class. In addition, they have regular informal as well as formal contacts with their adviser throughout the year.
- Students are also satisfied with the information they receive particularly in the areas related to information about academic policies and resources at NC State. Especially important in this support area are the Administrative Assistants who work in the Academic Programs office. These individuals are highly trained and responsive to students' needs and questions.
- COT students are academically very successful, and a large majority is retained at NC State although not all in the COT. Even second choice majors, students who did not have COT as their first choice college, do well. For the Fall of 2001, the average GPA for all first year students in the COT was 3.21. Of the 154 students, only 5 had less than a 2.0 GPA. At the end of the fall, only 1 student of the 154 (99.35% retention) did not return to NC State. These results for the Fall of 2001 are not very different at all from the past three fall semesters.
- Students frequently admit that the Academic Portfolio they are required to prepare is one of the best activities they do to help them realize the responsibility they have for their own education. (See the description in the next section.)
- Every student who uses the COT Tutorial Center does an evaluation of each time they attend. These evaluations are tallied and the results, based on the users' evaluations, rank all the program's aspects as superior.
- The COT was one of 4 colleges on campus to be recognized for the outstanding performance of all its minority students during the Fall 2001 semester. To receive this recognition, over 50% of these student must have achieved at least a 3.0 GPA. Over 60% of the COT students accomplished this. One of our African American students received top honors completing 21 hours with a 4.0 GPA.
- COT faculty members who receive these students as their advisees after this first year have expressed repeatedly how much easier their jobs are in the upper class advising.

How long has the program strategy been practiced? How has it evolved?

The FYE program in the COT began serving first year students during the 1996-97 academic year; the program completed its fifth year in 2000-2001. While the basic

design of the program has maintained throughout its history, many improvements have been made to include a larger support group for first year students. Examples of improvements/changes are as follows:

- Contact with students, once the University accepts them, was begun the second year FYE existed. As soon as a student is accepted, a “welcome” letter is sent with a variety of information. An exact copy of this letter is sent to the parent/guardian at the same time. Students are also called by the Student Services Office to offer help and answer questions as well.
- The COT Parent Newsletter was created the second year of FYE to inform parents/guardians of the academic expectations of the COT as well as the events in which students are expected/encouraged to participate.
- One much appreciated addition to this program came three years ago. On the Sunday afternoon before the first day of classes, the COT holds a “class meeting” for all incoming new students. This meeting accomplishes a lot to calm nerves and help with last minute issues. Following all the initial contacts and orientation with this meeting has made a tremendous difference with students being connected to the COT and NC State from the outset.
- Special emphasis was developed on connecting first year students with major resources on campus that would help with decisions about majors and careers. The emphasis developed to the point that individuals from the University Career Planning and Placement Center and the center for undergraduate advising, Advising Central, are brought into the TT 105 classes to meet the students and encourage students' use of these services.
- Transition issues are addressed, and students are taught how to manage their academics during TT 105. Students are now required to develop an Academic Portfolio that includes their Graduation Plan (courses needed to graduate), their current degree audit (provided on line by Registration and Records), the departmental requirements for graduation (also on line), and a current resume which must be updated before each advising meeting.
- All students remain with the professional adviser until the Fall of their second year. The professional adviser works with them to register for the first year of classes and then assigns them to their upper class adviser who will remain with them until the graduate.
- Any student who is now identified as not wishing to pursue a textile degree remains with the professional adviser until they transfer to their desired major. They receive counseling and personal attention from other advisers on campus during this time.
- For the past four years, all new students are photographed. A copy is placed in their permanent file in the Academic Programs Office and one is also sent to their upper class adviser when they finish their first year. In addition, class photos with the students names written on them are posted in the academic advisers' office. Plans are now in place to have a First Year Emphasis web page on the main COT web site for the fall of 2002 class.
- Frequent announcements are sent to students via email to remind them of upcoming important dates, etc. This service comes from both Academic Programs and Student

Services. The information in these emails ranges from reminders about registration procedures to upcoming seminars or forums about jobs, etc.

- A new service COT now offers new students was started this current spring semester. Any incoming textile student who is looking for a room mate for the fall can send some basic information and be placed on a web site. The students then access the information and contact each other.

Have others emulated the practice, or has it received formal recognition for effectiveness?

- One of the major positive outcomes of the FYE program is that the upper class advisers in the COT have adopted most all the expectations developed in the first year. One of the major examples of this is the requirement by most advisers that the Academic Portfolio be maintained and presented at advising meetings.
- One of the SUNY campuses in New York has requested and received much of the information upon which the FYE program is built, especially the part that involves parents.
- The program during its initial stages was selected for and presented at the International First Year Experience Conference in 1998.
- The College of Natural Resources at NC State has asked to be provided the information about our program and how to develop the FYE-type program within the frame work of an introductory course such as TT 105.

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What is the source of funding? Is the funding available?

The COT FYE program is supported by funding that is accessed through Academic Programs in the COT.