

Th'Ink Well

Quarterly Newsletter from the Center for Teaching Excellence

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Contact Information



Co-director: Sharmila Pixy Ferris,
ferriss@wpunj.edu



Co-director: Maria Villar,
villarm@wpunj.edu

We are located in Cheng Library,
Room 203.

Please visit our website:
<http://www.wpunj.edu/academics/cte>

Welcome to the 2010-2011 Academic Year!

A Message from the Directors

We would like give a special welcome to our new President, Dr. Kathleen Waldron, new faculty members, and incoming students. This year promises to be full of activity. Departments are creating and revising courses for the University Core Curriculum; administrators are preparing for the upcoming Middle States' accreditation visit; and a long-term strategic plan is being developed for the University. As the new academic year begins, and teaching commitments grow, please remember that the Center for Teaching Excellence is here to serve you and support your teaching efforts. We wish you a productive semester and look forward to seeing you on campus and at CTE activities!

WPUNJ Student Demographics * Fall 2010

Data provided by IR&A & Admissions Office

This Fall, 1535 new first-time, full-time first-year students enrolled at WPU and 1157 new full- and part-time transfers enrolled. Additionally, 196 students were readmitted and 102 second-degree students enrolled.

Among the 1535 new first-time, full-time first-year students, there were

1062	(69.2%)	Regular admit
108	(7.0%)	EOF admit
56	(3.7%)	Nontraditional admit
309	(20.1%)	Special admit

In terms of gender and ethnicity, the new first-time, full-time first-year cohort looked as follows,

787	(51.0%)	Female students
225	(14.7%)	African-American
352	(22.9%)	Hispanic
129	(8.4%)	Asian

Among the 1157 new full-time and part-time transfer students, 650 (56.2%) were female.



First-year students attending the 2010 Convocation ceremony on the WPUNJ campus.

What is Happening in Higher Education?

Findings from the Almanac of Higher Education 2010-2011 Report

The Almanac of Higher Education Report, published by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* every year, offers us a broad picture of the issues affecting academe across the country. We start this academic year by sharing some of the financial, professional, and student-demographic trends documented in the 2010 Report.

- Increasingly, the **price for college**, including tuition, fees, room, and board, has risen. Though many students pay less than the full price of college thanks to financial aid, the adjusted prices have risen faster than the inflation rate and the average family incomes. In 2009-2010, the average cost of 4-year public colleges was \$19,388 for resident students and \$11,943 for commuter students. At WPUNJ, the cost was \$20,698 for resident students and \$10,838 for commuter students for the 2009-2010 academic year.

To see the percentage growth since 1990-91, visit <http://chronicle.com/article/Soaring-Price-of-College/124079/>

- Increasingly, **faculty members** occupy part-time and non-tenured-track positions. While colleges have expanded teaching jobs, the number of tenured and tenure-track positions has grown much more slowly. Between 1993 and 2007, in Master's Public Institutions, non-tenure-track (full-time and part-time positions) grew over 80%, while tenured full-time positions declined by two percent. In 2007, 53% of faculty-members were part-time or non-tenure track full-time at national level. At WPUNJ there were 365 tenure/tenure-track faculty and 555 adjuncts in 2009.

To see trends by type of institution, visit <http://chronicle.com/article/Graphic-Increasingly-Faculty/124091/>

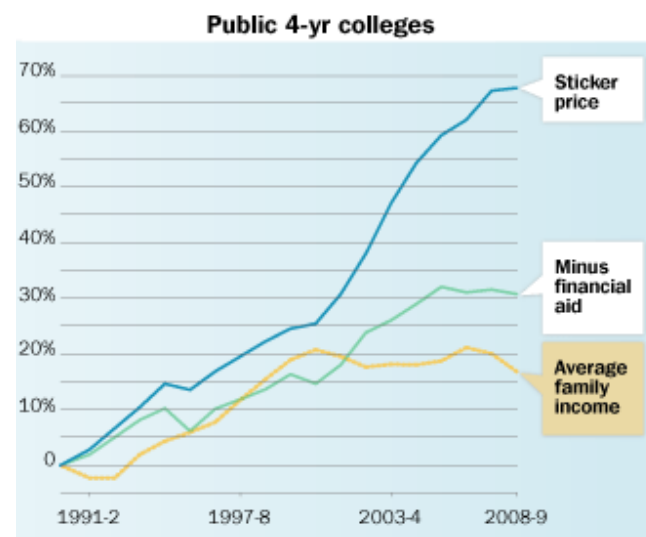
- Increasingly, the **student population** includes groups that have traditionally been less comfortable with (and less welcomed by) the higher education system. About 30 percent of undergraduate students are over 24 years old and almost 40 percent are enrolled part-time. At 4-year public institutions, about 29% of the undergraduate enrollments are minority students. At WPUNJ, 44% of full-time, first-time, first-year enrollments were minority students in 2009.

To see enrollments by type of college, visit <http://chronicle.com/article/Graphic-Enrollment-Levels/124068/>

- Increasingly, **freshmen** students at 4-year colleges worry about financial aspects. According to the The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 2009 survey, 66.7% have major or some concerns about paying for college and 53.4% expect to cover some expenses through loans. When asked about their reasons for selecting the college attended, the two reasons most commonly cited were "graduates get good jobs" and "the cost of attending." For a large number (78.1%) of this year's freshmen at 4-year colleges, "being very well off financially" was an essential or very important goal for attending college.

To view the 2010 Almanac of Higher Education, visit <http://chronicle.com/section/Almanac-of-Higher-Education-2010/463>

To view the 2009 American Freshman Survey results, visit <http://chronicle.com/article/This-Years-Freshmen-at-4-Year/63672/>



This graph illustrates the percentage growth since 1990-91 in average price for tuition, fees, room, and board, adjusted for inflation for public 4-year colleges.

To find this, and other graphs, visit: <http://chronicle.com/article/Soaring-Price-of-College/124079/>

The WPUNJ 2010 Freshman Cohort **Insider's Views*

Faculty Voices

**First Impressions of Freshman Students*

Four faculty members responded to the CTE call to share first-impressions about freshmen. Their positive impressions reinforce what many other instructors have also commented: We are pleasantly surprised by the engagement of new students!

- ◆ **B. Andrew, Philosophy** *"This year, I feel like I am merely a facilitator for my first year students. They are highly-motivated and hard-working. They come to class with their own questions and their own problem-solving techniques. They're wonderful!"*
- ◆ **S. Miller, IRT** *"Three students who had missed my first class actually took it upon themselves to email me to let me know why they had missed it. I was very impressed that they chased me down rather than my having to chase them down. I told them to go into the Blackboard course website and that they would be responsible for their first assignment. Guess what! All of them got their assignment in on time and caught up with the rest of the class. I very much appreciated the fact that they hit the ground running even with a bit of a late start."*
- ◆ **M. Sebetich, Biology** *"I am impressed by this class of 27 freshmen. They bring a large diversity of experiences for as young as they are. I was very happy with the 17 students who completed the first homework assignment to write a one page assessment of an essay of their choice from "This I Believe." They wrote well and with insight."*
- ◆ **R. Wolk, Library** *"These are only first impressions, but students in my FYS class acted maturely and seemed to understand that committing themselves to academic work is a priority. Students were very receptive to learning about WPU, and did not exhibit the apathy that often characterizes FYS classes. This impression was reinforced by their attention and orderly behavior at the convocation--one of the best in many years."*

Student Voices

**First Impressions of Faculty and College Experience* Daniela Giglio, WPUNJ Peer Leader

As a peer leader for a freshman First-Year Seminar course, I asked the students in my class how they felt about their college experience thus far. "After two weeks in college, what are your first impressions? What has struck you most about faculty, classes, college life in general?" Twenty-three students responded in writing. The ratio of positive, neutral, and negative responses was even. Approximately one-third of the class responded that they were having a positive experience at WPUNJ in their first two weeks. The remaining two-thirds of the class had either neutral or negative reactions.

The first-impressions expressed by freshmen students focused most frequently on professors' attitudes, workload, and freedom. The most common theme was the amount of work the students' felt they were being given. Fourteen students answered that their school work had increased since transitioning from high school to college. Thirteen students made comments regarding professors' attitudes and teaching styles. Of these thirteen, four reported that they were pleased with their professors, while nine felt unhappy. Three students commented on how college has allowed them more freedom and independence, while two reported that they no longer have time to themselves.

Below are some examples of the student responses:

- ◆ *"After two weeks I really like William Paterson. I learn a lot in my classes. It's going to take a lot of work to keep up, but I am enjoying my college experience."*
- ◆ *"My impressions of the first two weeks of college were great. It's just a lot of work. But I'm used to it because I took college courses in high school. I thought the faculty was going to be very strict, but they are funny, caring, and nice. I love college a lot, classes are great."*
- ◆ *"You are much more independent. Homework isn't assigned to you like before. You're expected to know the assignments. It takes a little getting used to."*
- ◆ *"The classes are a lot of work and very time consuming. Also its overrated and not as fun."*

Common Myths about Good Study Habits

New York Times writer Benedict Carey Tells Us To Forget What We Know

There are many theories about the best ways for students to learn from studying. Yet, Carey found that much of the old advice about good study habits has zero support among cognitive scientists.

Cognitive researchers have found a few techniques that can improve the amount of information retained by students. Switching rooms when studying, for example, can help the brain make subtle associations between what is being studied and background sensations at the time. Varying the type of material studied in a single sitting can also make a deeper impression on the brain. The brain picks up deeper patterns when seeing assortments than when being immersed in one particular style.

The notion that children have specific learning styles, such as visual or auditory, is not supported by evidence. In a review for the journal *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, a team of psychologists stated that “the contrast between the enormous popularity of the learning-styles approach within education and the lack of credible evidence for its utility is, in our opinion, striking and disturbing.”

Cognitive scientists recognize that cramming can get one a better grade on an exam, but may not lead to better retention of information after the test. Practice tests and quizzes are powerful tools of learning because the spacing of study time can lead to self-reinforcement of the information. “The process of retrieving an idea is not like pulling a book from a shelf; it seems to fundamentally alter the way the information is subsequently stored, making it far more accessible in the future... The harder it is to remember something, the harder it is to later forget.”

A few simple cognitive techniques like alternating study environments, mixing content, spacing study sessions, and self-testing will not make one a grade-A student alone. Motivation matters. But, these techniques are based on evidence, and not empty theories, which can prove beneficial to students of all ages.

Source: Carey, B. (2010, September 6). Forget what you know about good study habits. *New York Times*, Retrieved September 10, 2010, from http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/07/health/views/07mind.html?_r=1&scp=2&sq=benedict%20carey&st=cse

Best Practices for Teaching First-Year Undergraduates

Teaching Tips (from Carnegie Mellon University)

Carnegie Mellon recognizes that first-year undergraduate students' experience includes tremendous intellectual, social, emotional, and cultural adaptation and development and faculty play an important role in these processes. The university's Center for Teaching Excellence has found the following strategies beneficial to professors teaching first-year students. Below is a list of specific areas to focus on, but for further explanation of each strategy, please visit the link provided below.

- ◆ Adjusting Students' Expectations
 - ◆ Be explicit about your expectations.
 - ◆ Encourage students to ask questions or seek assistance as a normal part of the learning process.
- ◆ Calibrating Your Expectations
 - ◆ Check assumptions about what students know or can do. An ungraded assignment or quiz can show if majority of students are weak in certain area so that you can adapt class or hold a review session.
 - ◆ Remember that most of these students are 18-years-old and may feel overwhelmed.

- ◆ Being Approachable
 - ◆ Learn the names of first-year undergraduates
 - ◆ Since first-year students often perceive faculty as “too important to bother,” it can help to come to class early and talk to students.

Some of the other strategies included in this article are:

- ◆ Getting Students to Office Hours
- ◆ Improving Attendance
- ◆ Engaging Students in Meaningful Learning
- ◆ Helping Students Manage and Monitor Their Learning
- ◆ Challenging Talented Students
- ◆ Assuring Quality in Teaching
- ◆ Maintaining Cohesiveness Across Multi-section Courses
- ◆ Addressing Academic Integrity Issues
- ◆ Helping Students who are Experiencing Difficulty
- ◆ Recognizing and Responding to Students who may need assistance

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/resources/PublicationsArchives/InternalReports/BestPractices-1stYears.pdf>

Center for Teaching Excellence Activities Calendar

Fall 2010

Date/Time & Location	Activities
Friday, October 1 10:00AM	<i>Teaching Scholarship Circle</i>
Friday, October 1	<i>UCC Workshop for Area 1 (Well-Being)</i>
Thursday, October 7 12:30PM-1:45PM Paterson Room	<i>CTE Seminar on Student Participation</i> <i>Co-lead by Lynne Rogers (Music) and George Robb (History)</i>
Friday, October 8 9:30AM-12:00PM UCC 171 A&B	<i>UCC Workshop for Area 2 (Expression) and Writing Intensive</i>
Friday, October 15 9:30AM-12:00PM UCC 211	<i>UCC Workshop for Area 3 (Ways of Knowing)</i>
Friday, October 22 9:30 AM-12:00 PM UCC 171 A&B	<i>UCC Workshop for Areas 4-5-6 (Diversity & Justice, Community & Civic Engagement and Global Awareness)</i>
Thursday, October 28 2:00 PM	<i>Teaching Scholarship Circle</i>
Friday, October 29 10:00 AM	<i>Teaching Scholarship Circle</i>
Thursday, November 11 12:30PM-1:45PM Paterson Room	<i>CTE Seminar</i> <i>Co-lead by Jacob Felson (Sociology) and Jyoti Champernekar (Math)</i>
Thursday, November 30 2:00PM	<i>Teaching Scholarship Circle</i>
Thursday, December 9 12:30PM-1:45PM Paterson Room	<i>CTE Seminar on Library Research</i> <i>Lead by Tony Joachim</i>
Thursday, December 1 2:00 PM	<i>Teaching Scholarship Circle</i>
Friday, December 2 10:00 AM	<i>Teaching Scholarship Circle</i>