

Teaching Matters

[The Linda J. Emanuel Teaching and Learning Center](#)
Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania

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Inside This Issue

- 1 Message from the Publications Team
- 2 First Year Student Advising
- 4 Technology and Student Retention
- 4 TLC Events
- 4 TLC Teams

Each issue of Teaching Matters will focus on ways you can help students become successful during their college careers and beyond.

The Teaching and Learning Center Newsletter

Lock Haven University's Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) is dedicated to providing faculty with resources and support needed to ensure that the highest quality of teaching and learning takes place throughout the University.

The TLC helps faculty stay abreast of pedagogical developments in research and practice; maintains and provides a wide array of resources on teaching and learning; and supports faculty in enhancing their teaching.

One way this is accomplished is through the dissemination of the TLC Newsletter. The TLC Newsletter is a monthly publication providing information on best practices in higher education, grant funding, and the use of technology in the classroom. If you would like to contribute to the TLC Newsletter, please contact the Chair of the Publications Team, Tara Mitchell at tmitchel@lhup.edu.

Message from the Publications Team

Welcome to the new 2009 – 2010 academic year! We hope that your semester is off to a promising start. The TLC Publications Team is excited to provide you with information that will help you in your efforts to improve your teaching at Lock Haven.

Each month, the TLC Newsletter – *Teaching Matters* – will be published at the TLC's website (<http://www.lhup.edu/TLC>). The theme for each *Teaching Matters* will follow the theme of that semester's University Days. This semester's theme is "Building a Foundation for the Future." Each issue of *Teaching Matters* will focus on ways you can help students become successful during their college careers and beyond.

This month's *Teaching Matters* includes a column on advising first year students, using technology to increase student retention, and the TLC itself.

We welcome any suggestions or contributions you would like to make for *Teaching Matters*. Please let us know if we can do anything to make this a greater help to you by contacting Tara Mitchell at tmitchel@lhup.edu

First Year Student Advising

Contributed by Maribeth Hanna Long

“...through our role as academic advisors, we have an opportunity to forge rich connections with our new students and provide critical support during this transitional time.”

The class of 2013 is here! What can we do to contribute to their success at Lock Haven? We'll meet with them in our classrooms as our students and in our offices as our advisees. Research in higher education indicates that “regular faculty-student contact is perhaps the single most important factor in helping students feel a sense of belonging” (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). We're guaranteed this faculty-student contact within the “captive audience” atmosphere of our classrooms. Beyond that, through our role as academic advisors, we have an opportunity to forge rich connections with our new students and provide critical support during this transitional time.

Integrating several advising models in working with our first year advisees will allow us to monitor academic progress, teach college management skills, facilitate positive student development, and link students with campus resources. Prescriptive advising, characterized by the direct delivery of information from the advisor to the advisee, can be effective in terms of explaining academic policies and procedures and discussing course sequencing and class scheduling. However, we need to move beyond this didactic approach in order to influence positively the development of our advisees. Developmental advising, grounded in student development theory and psychosocial theory for conceptual support, focuses on 3 main themes – academic competence, personal involvement, and developing or validating life purpose (Ender & Wilkie, 2000). This holistic approach to advising first year students facilitates rapport building and conveys a genuine desire to get to know the student's interests, potential for campus involvement, and academic and career development issues. Intrusive advising, characterized by direct advisor-initiated involvement in the advisee's academic situation, can be very effective in helping first year students access important campus resources and develop the self-efficacy skills essential for their academic success. Contacting advisees during the first weeks of the semester to check on class attendance and specifics with regard to course evaluations thus far can result in timely referrals for tutoring, counseling or other resources that may be indicated.

Intrusive advising is especially effective in working with first-generation college students, who come to us without parental insight about the collegiate experience and may be underprepared academically. If we're intrusive during the first several weeks of the semester, asking our advisees what course on their schedule they are most anxious about, what they believe is their level of preparedness academically, and what struggles (academically and otherwise) they may be experiencing in the first few weeks of the semester, we can make appropriate referrals early enough to make a difference. These referrals may be to Tutorial Services, the Writing Center, Counseling Services, the Math Tutoring Lab, Disability Services, the Registrar, Financial Services, or Student Life. The important thing is that the referrals are timely and that we check to be sure that the student follows through. Appendix B in the *Academic Advising Handbook* (available online & from the Department of Academic Development & Counseling) has contact information for important campus resources.

First Year Student Advising

Contributed by Maribeth Hanna Long

Within the first few weeks of the semester, we can share information about important dates and events with our first year students. Because first semester schedules are not always ideally suited to each student and changes may be necessary, it is invaluable to inform new students of the last day to add a course (September 8), the date for withdrawing from a course with a W grade (October 2), and the last day to withdraw from a class with a WP/WF grade (November 6). The Club Fair (September 16) provides an ideal chance early in the first semester for new students to “connect” with our university community. The Majors Fair (September 23) provides a chance to affirm or clarify a choice of major, get connected with faculty and upper level students in a major, and learn about minors. Mid-term low grade reports (October 27) provide a “wake-up call” to students, inspiring them to focus more intently and more effectively on academics. We may even want to “coach” our advisees in terms of appropriate interaction with an instructor about their mid-term low grade.



“Research supports that effective academic advising during the first semester can contribute positively to persistence and satisfaction.”

Research supports that effective academic advising during the first semester can contribute positively to persistence and satisfaction. Today as I finished writing this article, I received several calls from my youngest child who is in her first days of college in Virginia. Though she is someone with more exposure to the higher education environment at an early age than many, she had her share of questions. I’m grateful to her for reminding me that new students have loads of questions. As a faculty member who advises many first year students, I need to remember that I’m here to help them find the answers.



References

Ender, S.C. & Wilkie, C.J. (2000). Advising students with special needs. In V.N. Gordon & W.R. Habley (Eds.), *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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Technology and Student Retention

Contributed by Paddy O'Hara-Mays and Tara Mitchell

The use of technology is growing at an exponential rate. From the laptop initiative to the Admissions Facebook page, Lock Haven University is taking strides to increase its web presence and improve its technology. How, though, does technology help faculty work with students to lay a foundation for their success? There are a variety of ways to use technology to increase student success. LHU faculty members use class wikis to create engaging discussions, a number of Lock Haven organizations have Facebook pages to increase a sense of community, and many classes require technology use as a component of the class requirements, just to name a few. All of these things increase both student satisfaction and the odds that a student will be successful in an increasingly technologically focused society.

Companies are also beginning to focus on technologies to help with student retention directly. One such example is Starfish, which has developed and maintains a series of programs to help educators identify students at risk. It works with existing content management systems (like our own eCampus) and identifies students who show signs of struggling with the course, such as infrequent log in times or lack of discussion contribution.

Although we currently do not use Starfish, or other student retention programs such as Starfish, student retention is a continuing area of concern for educators and administrators at LHU. With growing numbers of students, it is not always possible to “catch” students at risk for failing (or simply leaving) early in the semester. Harnessing new technologies may be one way to help our future students.

TLC Events

Each semester, the TLC holds a variety of workshops, presentations, and events to encourage faculty in their efforts to provide quality instruction and advising. The TLC also co-sponsors events with the Academic Technology department.

Please consider attending these events. You will be notified of each event via email and will be able to register (if needed) online. We look forward to seeing and working with you this semester!



TLC Teams

The Teaching and Learning Center is a service of the LHU faculty to the LHU faculty. LHU faculty members work together in teams to offer all of the programming, services, and resources that the TLC provides. The TLC has teams that coordinate programming, travel grants, peer awards, technology, service learning, advising, publications, peer coaching, and ethics.

The TLC Teams provide a wonderful way to serve the university and your fellow faculty members. Please consider becoming involved in one of these teams. You should have received an email recently from Paddy O'Hara-Mays requesting volunteers for the TLC Teams. Simply sign up for the Team that suits your interests. We look forward to working with you on the TLC Teams!