

**Knowledge is Power: Student-Driven Strategies for Success
in Alaska's Challenging Postsecondary Context**

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MA Arctic and Northern Students

Project

Prologue

This project is an exploration of the ways in which the University of Alaska can increase the odds of success for all students, but particularly for those who need to overcome the greatest challenges. Historically education has been assumed to be a pathway for upward mobility in American society. However, for economically and socially disadvantaged students, the upward path has always been far steeper than for those who come from even modestly situated families. Ironically as educational opportunities have spread across the United States, with more students than ever finishing high school and going on to postsecondary education, difficulties for students in poverty have intensified, relative to the general population. This problem was acknowledged as an issue at the beginning of the Cold War and the modern civil rights era during President Truman's administration.

Education has traditionally been a function of the individual states, but Truman envisioned education beyond high school as part of the arsenal of freedom and democracy, and created the first presidential commission on postsecondary education in the United States "with the task of defining the responsibilities of colleges and universities in American democracy and in international affairs..." (Truman 1947, 1). The final report "Higher Education for Democracy" argued that equal access to education for all Americans was an essential building block for our democracy, and set out not only to identify the invisible barriers towards student achievement, but to recognize that failure might as often be due to societal ills rather than individual weakness. At the heart of the problem was the difference between the idealized version of education offering steps of opportunity, and the reality that differential access to college might entrench socio-economic and class divisions in America. In a world of ever increasing enrollments, those

denied access to education through no fault of their own would fall even farther behind. As the report stated “we have proclaimed our faith in education as a means of equalizing the conditions of men. But there is a grave danger that our present policy will make it an instrument for creating the very inequalities it was designed to prevent. If the ladder of education opportunity rises high at the doors of some youth and scarcely rises at all at the doors of others, while at the same time formal education is made a prerequisite to occupational and social advance, then education may become the means, not of eliminating race and class distinctions, but of deepening and solidifying them.” The conclusion of the 1947 report would set the stage for an ever increasing role for the federal government in public education in the decades that followed. “It is obvious, that free and universal access to education, in terms of the interest, ability, and need of the student, must be a major goal in American education” (Truman 1947, 36).

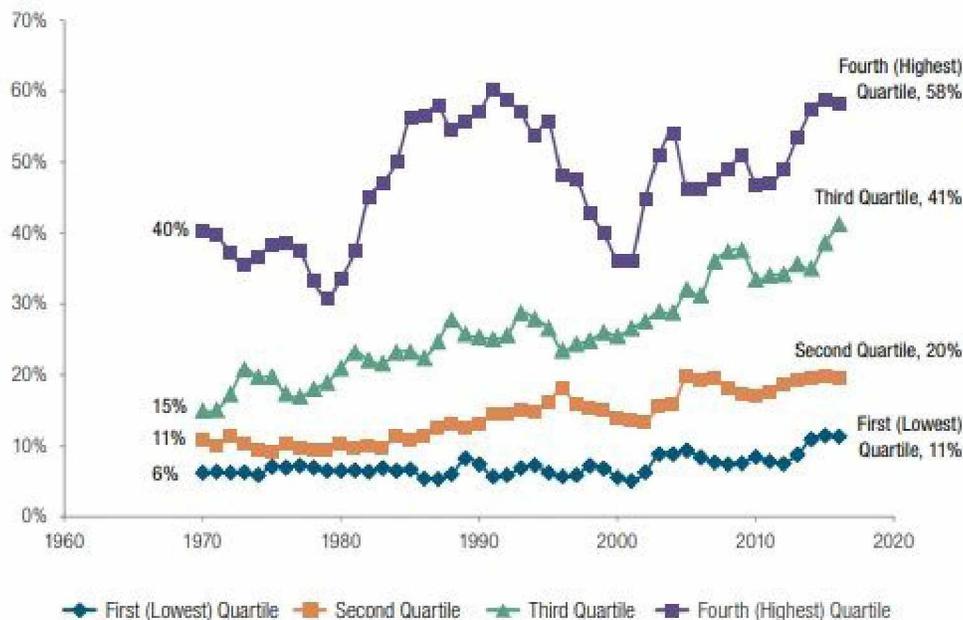
The challenges of college access and persistence have been at the forefront of both my professional and personal experience. For the past 6 years I have been an academic advisor for hundreds of underprivileged students at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and I have recently been hired as the director of Student Support Services (SSS) at UAF. SSS is a federally funded TRiO program, whose mission is to increase the academic achievement, retention, and graduation rates of first-generation and limited-income college students, and students who experience disabilities. Housed within the U.S. Department of Education, TRiO programs¹ were instituted in the 1960s as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty. Each year these programs intercede on behalf of tens of thousands of under-resourced students to ensure that higher education is a viable option for them. I aim to help aid students from disadvantaged

¹ Originally Upward Bound (UB) and Educational Talent Search (ETS) which both serve middle and high school students, and Student Support Services (SSS) which serves college students--providing academic, financial and social support to first-generation, limited-income, and disabled students.

backgrounds in their pursuit of higher education, from both my vantage point as a staff member and as a graduate student who has studied the aspects of Alaska's socioeconomic and cultural history that impact higher education. My experience at UAF has instilled a deep personal and professional commitment that carries into this Master's project.

Besides my professional experience as an academic advisor, I have had the additional advantage of learning what a difference such programs can make from my own personal history. Not only did I grow up in a family that was in the bottom quartile of family income, but I was also the first in my family to attempt a four-year program. Either one of those factors alone would have seemed to predict that I would likely not graduate from college. According to the most recent statistics, about nine out of ten students in the bottom quartile of family income fail to complete a Bachelor's degree by age 24 (Pell Institute, figure 1). These pre-college demographic factors, along with the fact that I entered my freshmen year as a pre-major student--an Admissions flag indicating that I was academically underprepared--suggested that

Equity Indicator 5a: Estimated bachelor's degree attainment rate by age 24 for dependent family members by family income quartile: 1970 to 2016



many challenges would lie ahead on my path to pursuing higher education. To my advantage, I avidly participated in a suite of federally funded TRiO programs, whose vast academic, cultural, and financial supports helped guide me from seventh grade through the end of my senior year of college. Had I not participated in these proactive intervention-focused programs as an adolescent and young adult, I very likely would have been swept back into the cycle of generational poverty that continues to grip my family.

Although I now know the university system quite well, I began my college career insecure in my academic abilities and certain that everyone else had it all figured out. I continue to identify instinctively with individuals who arrive at UAF uncertain and intimidated by their surroundings, and I see great value in helping students acquire self-confidence as they progress through their postsecondary education. The students served by SSS are the human face of statistics the university gathers to predict future institutional revenue, and in the face of sweeping state budgetary cuts University of Alaska administrators' interest in data surrounding access, persistence, and completion has increased markedly. As I carved out a space for myself in the Arctic and Northern Studies program, I realized that a project would be the most effective way to help shift the tide for historically underrepresented college students at UAF. The literature I have read over the past two years has supported proactive interventions for at-risk students, which led me through a multitude of studies of retention-based programs.

First Year Seminars (FYS)--which typically take place within the first semester of a student's academic career--represent a promising retention strategy, especially if instructors address the wide variety of academic and cultural norms that students encounter as they enter the college environment. Over time I became convinced that the most successful FYS models were

those that were context based--that is, grounded in the regional setting of the school--had measurable and attainable goals, were realistic in their approach, and took place early in the student's academic journey. Based on these understandings, I seek to build an Alaska-specific First Year Seminar course that provides targeted support to students with the highest need and equips them to be successful at a state funded, open enrollment institution in the North. The following project draws upon my life history, undergraduate and graduate pursuits in Northern cultural history, and my work experience as a professional in the field of higher education.

Introduction

Access to education beyond high school has become a basic international human right, as outlined in Article 13 of the United Nations' International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. Article 13 states that "higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education." In the United States today, as in many western countries, postsecondary education is vital to finding meaningful employment, financial security, and access to upward mobility. Democratic principles require that all individuals have equal opportunities to access, graduate, and benefit from postsecondary education--regardless of their household income, parental educational attainment, socioeconomic status, or any other demographic characteristics. Federally funded programs authorized under the Higher Education Act of 1965, such as TRiO and Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs² (GEAR UP), were instituted for this very reason--to level the educational playing

² GEAR UP programs provide six-year grants to states and partnerships to provide services at high-poverty middle and high schools.

field and provide college access to traditionally underrepresented populations. However access to postsecondary education without support is not opportunity.

Although Alaska's first college was founded in 1917 and opened in 1922—long before statehood--Alaskans have taken advantage of postsecondary education at lower rates than in other states, as many have found technical certifications, on-the-job training, and traditional knowledge of the land more useful and lucrative. This perspective has shifted recently, however. With reduced state spending since oil prices plummeted in 2014, and with the expectation that by 2020, 66 percent of jobs in Alaska will require at least some college education (Carnevale, et al. 2013, 3), postsecondary education has become a more effective means of acquiring employment. However, in Alaska a complex set of historical, geographic, economic, social, and political forces and conditions contribute to the difficulties that certain subsets of students experience within the university. These Alaska-specific factors influence the students served in the UA System and the rates at which they persist and complete their degrees--in addition to their educational preparation for college, their parent's level of education, and the financial resources at their disposal.

Alaska Context

The history of education in Alaska reflects its unique colonial experience, its enormous size and sparse population, its complex demographics, and the division of federal versus territorial/state responsibility for education. Prior to the arrival of Western influences in the region, indigenous peoples transferred knowledge from generation to generation through culturally specific practices based largely in apprenticeship. The Russian Orthodox church and members of the Russian-American Company introduced the first formal education efforts prior

to the United States' purchase of the territory in 1867. The Organic Act of 1884 established a civil government and divided responsibility for public education between the federal and the territorial governments. Alaska Natives generally remained in their traditional regions, migrating seasonally to harvest subsistence resources.

In the decades following Alaska's purchase, the United States government contracted with missionary societies, including Presbyterian, Catholic, Episcopal, Congregational, Methodist, Moravian, and Swedish Evangelical Covenant, to establish day schools in rural Alaskan villages. A handful of territorial-led vocational boarding schools also operated throughout the more populated regions (Barnhardt 2001). Schools tended to apply English-only policies, although practices varied by region and by religious denomination. This shared governance of education reflected federal responsibility to Alaska's indigenous peoples, which meant that Alaska Natives experienced assimilationist policies aimed at other Native Americans. During the early to mid twentieth century official education policies included removal of Alaska Native children from their homes and villages to attend boarding schools, a practice that deprived both the children and their families of the ability to share their lives and their languages and to pass down many cultural traditions (Hirschberg and Sharp 2005). The impacts of these regrettable policies have been long lasting and can still be felt in Alaska today.

When it became a state in 1959, Alaska took on greater responsibility for public education. Still, the historical system of Bureau of Indian Affairs schools in rural Alaska that served mostly Alaska Native children persisted, with territorial/state-run schools in urban areas serving the predominantly non-Native population. The mid 1960s brought about the state's new educational policy, which included two programs focused on Alaska Native youth: one a

boarding home program that relocated rural Native high school students into the private homes of urban families for the nine month school year; the other was the establishment of regional high schools with enrollment targets of at least 500 students. The state instituted both based on the recommendations of a consulting team it hired that expressly sought to “accelerate the breakdown of old village patterns, patterns which may retard the development of rural folk into a disciplined and reliable workforce” (Cotton 1984, 33). Studies of both programs found students struggled to adjust to the new settings. While many later expressed positive perceptions of their school experiences, they also noted the negative impacts of their absence on their home communities (Hirschberg and Sharp 2005). In many students’ experiences, neither system provided an environment that met the students’ educational or social needs. Majorities of students in both programs dropped out (Cotton 1984).

Owing in part to the work of Christopher Cooke, a lawyer funded by the Alaska Legal Services Corporation, the 1970s brought about a significant shift in educational policy. During that decade the state settled a case in which Native parents charged that the state’s public school system violated the state constitution in not providing equal educational services in rural Alaska. Known as the *Molly Hootch* case, the settlement resulted in high schools being built throughout rural Alaska. The dissolution of many boarding schools in the post-*Hootch* era not only allowed for more localized control of education, it helped to bring an end to the policy of what UAF Professor of Education Carol Barnhardt termed “assimilation through segregation”³ (Barnhardt 2001, 13).

³ Barnhardt notes that “one of the primary goals of boarding schools was to assimilate American Indian/Alaska Native students into mainstream society by separating them from their communities.”

With this transition came the responsibility of providing an education that was relevant to Native children and did not alienate them from their community, while also preparing them for employment and/or postsecondary education in larger urban centers. Substantial challenges persisted regardless of who was in charge, including: the high cost of meeting educational needs in remote Alaska villages, high teacher turnover, and a shortage of qualified teachers with knowledge of local histories and cultures. In 2017 Alaska's attorney general Jahna Lindemuth wrote a sixteen page opinion affirming a wide range of sovereign powers for the state's 229 tribes, including child protection, law enforcement, land management and some education programs (Lindemuth 2017, 11). This recent recognition of Native sovereignty by the state's executive branch is a welcome, if long overdue, change. Emerging indigenous leaders are arguably the best suited for finding culturally relevant and effective educational solutions, meeting the primary and secondary school needs of their people. However, the long-standing challenges with education in rural Alaska and the continuing logistical issues are not easily overcome. Improving the quality of public education will require substantial collaboration and funding, even with increased local control.

Higher Education in Alaska

Alaska's workforce needs have shifted in the past decade, making a college education more important to securing employment than ever before. Nevertheless, postsecondary graduation rates continue to lag behind the national average. Moreover, Alaska has faced a fiscal crisis since 2014 when global oil prices plummeted; oil production levels had been declining since they peaked in the 1980s. Thus with lower production levels and dramatically lower oil

prices, the state is running substantial deficits. State budget deficits have led to significant cuts for the state university system and a sense of urgency to demonstrate that the university is meeting the current needs of the workforce--in fact, continued legislative funding is contingent on it.

The Alaska College Access Network, which includes over fifty state, national, and federal education-focused programs serving Alaskans, has invested considerable resources into researching the state's postsecondary climate. The network is made possible by funding through the College Access Challenge Grant and coordinated by the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE). This network's current objectives include creating synergies and reducing duplicative efforts among member organizations, as well as disseminating best practices among members and coordinating messaging among state programs, organizations and agencies to foster improved graduation rates.

In 2015 the Network commissioned the McDowell Group to compile a report to help guide their efforts towards an ambitious goal: to increase postsecondary access rates by over 15 percent within 10 years.⁴ In their report, the McDowell Group noted that Alaska ranks 47th in the nation for adult baccalaureate attainment or beyond.⁵ Additionally, the group found that only one-third of Alaskans earn beyond a high school diploma and for those two-thirds who continue on to higher education, on average, they take longer to complete degree programs than the overall U.S. population (Alaska College Access Network 2017). Meanwhile, the Pell Institute's

⁴ In this context, the network defines postsecondary education as being a degree or certificate of any kind, not necessarily 2 or 4-year degree.

⁵ A more recent 2018 figure on six-year completion rates for first-time full-time bachelor's degree-seeking students compiled by the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, which conducts and disseminates research and policy analysis to improve opportunities and outcomes for traditionally underrepresented populations, placed Alaska in last place on that measure.

recent “Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States” reported that Alaska ranks second to last in the nation in awarding undergraduate credentials per capita to 18-34 year-olds. Among traditionally-aged students 18 to 24 years old, Alaska fell in last place⁶ at 32 percent (Pell Institute, 120).

The University of Alaska System’s recent decline in enrollment embodies the reality of the statistics outlined by the Pell Institute and the McDowell Group. Enrollment--which takes into account student recruitment, retention, and completion--has become a primary UA System concern. Consequently, in 2016 UA President James Johnsen initiated a comprehensive review of UA programs named Strategic Pathways that focuses on 22 specific administrative functions and broad academic areas. President Johnsen highlighted a series of statistics to contextualize his Strategic Pathways initiative, including the following:

- UA is responsible for 85 percent of higher education in Alaska.
- By 2025, 65 percent of Alaska’s workforce will require some postsecondary education (we are currently at 37 percent).
- Of 100 average 9th graders in Alaska, just five will graduate with a baccalaureate degree from UA after 10 years. Our economy needs 25.
- Alaska imports 70 percent of its new teachers every year from outside the state, at an annual recruiting cost of \$17 million.
- Alaska ranks near the bottom of all the states in the New Economy Index and in degree completion rates.

⁶ Six-year completion rates for bachelor’s degree-seeking students ranged from a low of 32 percent in Alaska to a high of 71 percent in Massachusetts. Comparison of data from 2000 and 2015.

- In terms of market share, the percentage of Alaskans in higher education has declined 32 percent since 1980, from 6.3 percent to 4.3 percent.
- Alaska has the highest percentage of its population, of any state, with some higher education but no degree.
- We rank number 3 in per capita state support for higher education, number 2 in state appropriations and total revenue per student FTE, even after adjusting for our high cost of living.

Strategic Pathways working groups comprised of UA faculty, staff, students, and community leaders have been collaborating over the past three years to implement significant policy changes to meet the needs of the state during these challenging times. President Johnsen charged the UA System as a whole with increasing enrollment and graduation rates by 25 percent by 2025, which is a lofty goal—but necessary to meet Alaska’s workforce needs.

A recent article published by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) expresses skepticism of Strategic Pathways, noting that it reflects a common tendency to borrow models from elsewhere, rather than developing plans based on local conditions. Observing that the UA System has adopted alternative models of reorganization previously to respond to the state’s unique circumstances, the authors emphasize that “Alaska needs a system of higher education organized to meet Alaska’s needs, not a borrowed model that reflects the needs, circumstances, history, and politics of some other state” (NCHEMS 2018, 3). Yet, while the report accurately identifies the need to develop a plan that meets Alaska’s needs, it suggests a top-down model, never mentioning UA’s student demographics. For example, more than half of UAF’s undergraduate population is either the first in their family to attain a

baccalaureate degree, or from a family with limited income.⁷ The 2017 U.S. Department of Education Publication, “First-Generation and Continuing-Generation College Students: A Comparison of High School and Postsecondary Experiences,” reported the national average of first-generation college students as 24 percent.⁸ As noted above, the students who are most at risk of not being retained and who struggle to complete their degrees are first-generation, those with limited family income, and students who are otherwise academically underprepared for college. Much of the investment in Strategic Pathways thus far has focused on recruitment of new students; however, we must also retain these students through graduation to make progress toward the 2025 goal. Therefore, it is imperative that we not lose sight of the student population we serve and how best to assist them on their path to graduation.

Student Population at UAF

In the Fall of 2014, the number of first-time baccalaureate students⁹ at the University of Alaska Fairbanks totaled 3,381, 52 percent of which were first-generation college students. When socioeconomic status was added in, over 60 percent of that sample population were either first-generation or had limited family income. Of that at-risk population, 78 percent met federal standards for academic need as outlined by the U.S. Department of Education; that is, 47 percent of UAF’s total first time baccalaureate students in 2014 were considered academically underprepared to attain their four-year degrees. While these statistics quantify UAF’s at-risk

⁷ The term "low-income individual" means an individual whose family's taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150 percent of the poverty level amount.

⁸ Among high school sophomores in 2002 who later went on to enroll at a postsecondary institution, 24 percent were first-generation college students, 34 percent were continuing-generation college students with at least one parent who had some postsecondary education experience but did not have a bachelor’s degree, and 42 percent were continuing-generation college students with at least one parent with a bachelor’s degree or a higher level of educational attainment (NECS 2017, 5)

⁹ Either citizens or nationals of the United States, or those otherwise meeting the residency requirements for federal student financial aid enrolled at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF).

student population, they shed little light on students' undergraduate experience. The specific social, cultural and economic capital that this student population brings to the university setting explains much more about whether students complete their college education programs.

Navigating the university can be a daunting task for any student, but first-generation college students feel the pressures in particularly acute ways. Whereas a student from a family with one or more parents who received a Bachelor's degree might enter the institution with a sense of belonging and ability to maneuver through administrative offices with ease, or at the very least a parent from whom they can solicit advice, a student who lacks this cultural capital may find the university much more difficult to navigate. These individuals may not have a frame of reference through which to understand their institutional experiences, know where to seek answers to their questions, or know how to advocate for themselves when they encounter roadblocks. This is primarily because institutions of higher education implicitly and explicitly reward middle and upper-class values, Dr. Nicole Stephens argues.

As Stephens, co-author of "Unseen Disadvantage: How American Universities' Focus on Independence Undermines the Academic performance of First-Generation College Students" found in her research, students with predominantly working-class frames of reference experience cultural incongruity as they attempt to pursue their degrees. "Although social class achievement gaps are often thought to be a product of differences in students' intellectual abilities or academic skills, our findings suggest that the gap in performance between first-generation and continuing generation students is, at least in part, a product of the predominantly middle-class cultural norms of independence that are institutionalized in many American colleges and universities" (Stephens et al. 2012, 1193). Many working class students enter the university with

a set of skills that equip them for success in situations where teamwork and collaboration are essential, but Stephens argues that individuality and personal development are valued more in higher education. Examples of this distinction can be seen in students' motivations for entering college. When polled, first-generation college students were more likely to give interdependent reasons such as wanting to help their family out after graduation, providing a better life for their children, or showing that people from their backgrounds could be successful in a university setting. Continuing generation students were more likely to be independently motivated, thus they expressed such motivations as expanding their knowledge or understanding of the world, a desire to explore new interests, and learning more about their current interests (Stephens, et al. 2012, 1188). Interdependently motivated students tend to see their degree as a means to employment, whereas independently motivated students tend to see college as a time of self-exploration--thus when family circumstances change, students with more interdependent motivations are more likely to leave college to meet family needs. These external forces change the way the student interacts with, and places value in, their educational experience.

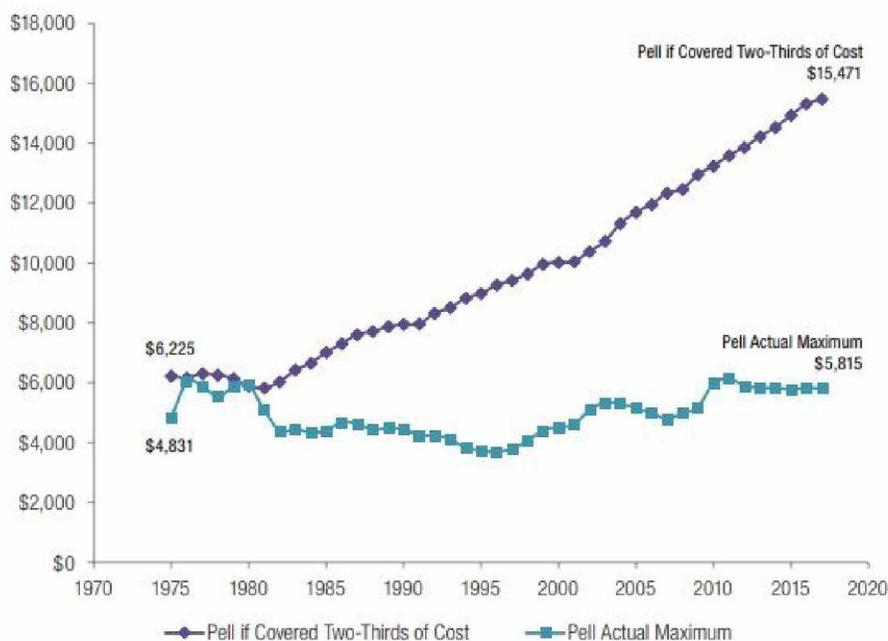
Socioeconomic capital can play a significant role in retention and completion rates as well, as first-generation college students often lack family financial support for their academic pursuits. Working more than continuing generation students, taking fewer credit hours, and studying fewer total hours are all characteristics of first-generation students as well (Pascarella et al. 2004, 251). While attempting to fulfil their most basic needs such as food, shelter and maintaining family relationships, these students are often criticized for having a poor school/life balance. In reality, they are expected to perform on par with their peers who have been given a head start.

Children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds also tend to be raised to reason with and question authority--seeing instructors as equals--which enhances their institutional experiences, argues sociologist Annette Lareau in *Unequal Childhoods*. This contrasts starkly with the “emerging sense of distance, distrust and constraint” that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have for authority figures in higher education (Lareau 2003, 3). Cultural norms also can affect how rural Alaska Native students engage in the classroom--both with their instructors and their fellow classmates. Whereas a non-Native student may be more outspoken in class, allowing for shared processing, Alaska Native students tend to be less verbal than instructors would expect.

Although higher education has been heralded as a socioeconomic equalizer, many researchers in the field (Bernstein 1974; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Stephens et al. 2012) have argued, echoing the warning in the 1947 Higher Education for Democracy Report more than half a century earlier, that universities instead “produce social class inequalities among students because they are built and organized according to taken for granted, middle- and upper-class cultural norms, unwritten codes, or ‘rules of the game’” (Stephens et al. 2012, 1178). Financial resources and academic skills are important, but they by no means guarantee success for this student population. As Stephens, Hamedani and Destin note, students also need “psychological resources, including the belief that people who have backgrounds like theirs deserve to attend college and can thrive there” (Stephens et al. 2013, 2). The academic skills students bring with them to college can vary widely based on socioeconomic status and access to educational resources. However, researchers agree that first-generation college students often bring a sense of grit, resilience, and ability to overcome obstacles that is

difficult to quantify in comparison with finite predictive factors such as high school GPA and entrance test scores. What students from low socioeconomic backgrounds lack most of all, are the fiscal resources to make their degree a reality. The lack of financial assets forces them to work more hours than middle class students with family backing, and these work hours detract from students' time to study, as well as their their time to participate in extracurricular activities. Moreover, they more often lack the resources to live on campus, which research shows correlates with higher graduation rates (Pascarella et al. 2004).

Equity Indicator 3b(iii): Maximum Pell Grant if the Pell Grant maximum covered two-thirds of average cost of attendance: 1974-75 to 2016-17 (constant 2016-17 dollars)



The Pell Grant provides reliable support to students who apply for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), who have low estimated family contribution to their education. Initiated as part of the same Higher Education Act of 1965 that created TRiO

programs, the Pell Grant was designed to complement the academic guidance provided in these federally funded programs with financial support. As noted in a report produced by the Pell Institute in 2018, the Pell Grant intended to cover about two-thirds of the cost of education, although the last time it accomplished that goal was 1980 (Pell Institute, figure 2). Much in the same way that funding has failed to stay on par with need, so too have services (Pell Institute 2018, 77). These federal trends of declining financial and programmatic support for disadvantaged students compound the state's fiscal and educational challenges, increasing the urgency of identifying and adopting a recruitment, retention and completion policy that will allow the university to realize President Johnson's ambitious goal for 2025.

Increasing graduation rates 25 percent in the next seven years is a daunting task. The UA System will need to recruit, retain, and graduate far more students than previously thought possible, despite funding cuts from the state legislature. Given the academic, social, and financial barriers experienced by a large percentage of the student population, it is imperative that swift institutional action is taken to meet the needs of Alaskan students.

Literature Review and Justification

Alaska's higher education system faces a conundrum. Given the state's workforce needs, it must do much better at recruiting, retaining and graduating students. Meanwhile, the state's fiscal crisis has led to budget cuts and demands that the UA system justify every dollar of funding it requests from the state. Therefore, the UA system must systematically evaluate its efforts at recruitment and retention to ensure maximum effectiveness of its policies and practices.

Vincent Tinto, sociologist, leading researcher in the field of higher education, and author of *Completing College: Rethinking Institutional Action* argues that if universities are truly

interested in enhancing retention and graduation rates, they must avoid investing in “a laundry list of actions, one disconnected from another,” resulting in an “uncoordinated patchwork of actions whose sum impact on student retention is less than it could or should be” (Tinto 2012, 5). To avoid this common blunder, he advocates for the reduction of silos--or pockets of isolated effort--that result when student services are decentralized. Four overarching principles guide his approach, including: expectations, support, assessment and feedback, and involvement. Though these guiding principles are broad enough to apply to retention efforts staff and faculty conduct outside the classroom, he stresses that the university’s primary concern should be the student experience, noting that they “are more likely to succeed in settings that establish clear and high expectations for their success, provide academic and social support, frequently assess and provide feedback about their performance, and actively involve them with others on campus, especially in the classroom” (Tinto 2012, 8). Individuals who do not experience one or more of these conditions for student success are at increased risk of exiting the postsecondary environment without a degree. Statistically, those who fail to complete their academic programs are more likely to come from first-generation, limited-income, or academically underprepared backgrounds. Though primarily referencing first-generation college students, Gary Pike and George Kuh, both scholars in the field of higher education, put it most succinctly stating that “an institution of higher education cannot change the lineage of its students.” However, they can “implement interventions that increase the odds that... students ‘get ready,’ ‘get in,’ and ‘get through’ by changing the way those students view college and by altering what they do after they arrive” (Kuh & Pike 2005, 292).

Undergraduate students experience college in a wide variety of ways, and Alaska institutions have demographically diverse student bodies. While Caucasian students made up over 55 percent of the fall 2017 freshman profile at UAF, Alaska Native and American Indian students comprised over 26 percent.¹⁰ First-year students entering directly from high school accounted for only 65.8 percent of the 2017 cohort, and of the incoming class of 812 students, fully 89 percent came from Alaska. The factors that adversely affect more traditionally aged students differ markedly from those faced by adult learners, who made up more than 30 percent of the incoming class. Similarly, minority students encounter challenges that other students typically never face. Geri Salinitri, a Canadian researcher in the field of higher education, summarizes some key factors that traditional age students face, including “new found independence, homesickness, time management, finances, or different teaching styles” (Salinitri 2005, 854). In addition to these “normal” challenges, Alaska Native students often experience debilitating homesickness. Cultural differences can contribute to difficulties in adjusting, as well.

Leading researchers in postsecondary education such as Pike, Kuh, and Tinto emphasize that student success is correlated with involvement in the campus community. The more engaged students are the more likely they are to be retained, but as Jeffery Valentine points out “if Tinto’s interactionalist model [which primarily addresses voluntary student departure decisions within postsecondary institutions] is based on an acculturation/assimilation perspective, then minority students may be pressured to separate from their cultural communities to successfully integrate into the college environment. Such separation as a rite of passage may hold harmful consequences for racial and ethnic minorities” (Valentine 2011, 217). For many Alaska Native

¹⁰ Followed by Other/Unspecified at 5.8 percent, Asian at 5.3 percent, African-American at 4.2 percent, and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander at 1.4 percent

students, the incongruity between their cultural identity and the cultural norms necessary for success in higher education pose significant challenges. For example, the majority of rural students will experience an untimely family death at some point in their college career, if not multiple times. Cultural expectations that family members return home and observe the traditional grieving process can result in absences of a week or more, and can entirely sidetrack a student's progress for a semester or cause them to drop out altogether. While many university students may feel comfortable processing the loss of a family member with the help of a counselor on campus, Alaska Native students would not likely see this as a viable option.

Socioeconomic status and parental education levels can further separate less privileged students from others. Students whose parents are not university graduates tend not to have grown up with norms and expectations that ease college matriculation and graduation. And students whose parents cannot support their education financially must spend much more time than their peers working to pay for their college education - effort more privileged students can devote to their studies (Pike & Kuh 2005, 277). Therefore understanding our student population provides a sound foundation from which to build robust and sustainable retention efforts.

Proactive interventions that mitigate roadblocks before students fall off track not only help at-risk undergraduate students, they use the institution's time and resources more effectively. As professor of Higher Education George Kuh and his colleagues note, "students generally benefit most from early interventions and sustained attention at key transition points, faculty and staff should clarify institutional values and expectations early and often to prospective and matriculating students. To do this effectively, a school must first understand who its students are, what they are prepared to do academically, and what they can expect of the

institution and themselves” (Kuh, et al 2008, 555). Although some students arrive with clarity of purpose and motivation, many incoming students are uncertain about everything from what major they should choose and how that relates to the what career they will pursue after graduation, to how to take notes while simultaneously listening to a lecture.

Staff and faculty advising of first-year students who are undecided on their majors, are academically underprepared, have limited financial resources, or are the first in their family to go to college can clarify expectations for such at-risk students, helping them to avoid pitfalls and to navigate toward academic success. Arthur Chickering, educational researcher in the field of student affairs, has proposed a Theory of Identity Development that supports this approach, as comprehensive advising can assist students on their paths to mastering the seven vectors of student development, including: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity.

While thorough advising improves student success, such external advice should be complemented by targeted support in the classroom. Summer bridge programs, such as the Emerging Scholars Academy hosted by UAF’s SSS program, also help by orienting students to campus prior to the semester, familiarizing them with university policies and important deadlines, and offering them guidance in such college skills as time management. Stephens gives a nod to “bridge” programs in her article “Closing the Social-Class Achievement Gap,” stating that they are a “standard approach of many institutions” designed to “teach [first-generation] students general academic tips and strategies, such as how to study for exams or choose a major” (Stephens 2013, 2). Similarly, new student orientations can provide connections to resources and

expose students to extracurricular activities, but such intense programs end rather abruptly and assume that the student will be able to stay on track. Importantly, First Year Seminars, on the other hand, provide sustained guidance throughout the entire first semester.

First Year Seminars (sometimes called First Year Experience courses--or FYE's) are a nationally recognized and frequently used intervention strategy that regularly reinforce academic expectations, provide opportunities for feedback and assessment, engage students in curricular as well as extracurricular activities, and provide targeted support for students in need. Typically offered via multiple 15-20 student sections and instituted for unique undergraduate populations, they can facilitate a supportive network of peers. They allow for shared experiences and guidance in wrestling with anxieties, including the common experience of imposter syndrome. Utilizing difference based education in the classroom as part of an FYS course can help students understand how their individual backgrounds affect their educational experiences, which can help combat impostor syndrome as well, according to Nicole Stephens. She advises institutions to encourage "students from diverse backgrounds to explore how significant social differences--such as race, ethnicity, gender, social class, and sexual preference--can shape their own and others' experiences and opportunities in college and in life... [Finding that] students' participation in these dialogues increased intergroup understanding and collaboration, empathy and civic engagement" (Stephens et al. 2013, 2). Rather than ignoring or trying to erase the diversity of experiences that students bring to the classroom, Stephens encourages a "near-peer panel approach," allowing more advanced fellow first-generation college students to validate common experiences and share their tips with underclassmen. FYS courses take a wide variety of forms, however, and they have attracted some valid criticism.

Critiques of First Year Seminars often center around the commodification of higher education--that FYS courses are merely makeshift solutions for the larger issue of lagging student preparation and motivation--or, alternatively, that they are ineffective. Sarah Hickinbottom-Brawn and David Burns, scholars and authors of “The Problem of First-Year Seminars: Risking Disengagement Through Marketplace Ideals,” argue that “despite their good intentions, many FYS actually perpetuate the kind of disengagement they were designed to alleviate due to their reliance on narrow, instrumental view of education” (Hickinbottom-Brawn & Burns 2015, 154). While these authors agree that students enter their first year of college unprepared, they do not see a skills-based course as the solution. Consequently they argue that “construing educational success as the mere mastery of formulaic approaches to learning and managing one’s life... enabl[ing] one to finish school efficiently and with as little struggle as possible narrows both the view of student growth and the role of educators in FYS” (163). Moreover, these authors take issue with institutional administrators who seemingly seek student success as a means to secure greater profit.

While the researchers express valid concerns about quick fixes for deep seated problems, they fail to consider the variety of barriers to success that universities pose and the myriad factors that contribute to completion versus dropping out. They depict the FYS as a superficial solution to serious under-preparation for university studies, rather than recognizing that in some cases it represents an opportunity to level the educational playing field for at-risk students. When marketed towards a general audience to meet non-descript academic deficiencies, this type of course can seem opportunistic and likely will not produce strong outcomes. However, a targeted FYS that addresses skills, goal setting, and cultural barriers can foster cultural capital in

first-generation, limited income, and academically underprepared students that will enable them to succeed in academia. A clear, concise, marketing and communication plan with faculty and staff buy-in would be necessary for the successful implementation of such course. Offering tuition waivers for students in need, or a scholarship upon successful completion of the course, would generate student interest.

Both fiscal and political institutional limitations exist in instituting an FYS course, but nearly all stakeholders agree that universities must improve retention and completion rates - --the disagreement lies in the most effective means. In “First-and Second-Generation College Students: A Comparison of Their Engagement and Intellectual Development” authors Pike and Kuh note “living on campus had a direct, positive effect on learning outcomes, and educational aspirations had the greatest indirect effects on learning and intellectual development. In fact, living on campus had the greatest total effect (i.e., combination of direct and indirect effects) on learning outcomes of any student characteristic. That campus residence is relatively powerful is understandable because... [it] puts students in close physical proximity so they cannot avoid being confronted on an almost daily basis by others who look, talk, and hold values different to their own” (Pike & Kuh 2005, 289). Similarly, Eric Jamelske, author of “Measuring the Impact of a University First-Year Experience Program on Student GPA and Retention” found that while the classroom holds the greatest potential for commuter students, the “retention effect from living on campus was consistently estimated to be approximately twice that of the taking a goal compatible FYE course” (2009, 387). Given these findings, UAF should consider options for making on-campus housing more accessible to students. Having one’s basic needs, such as food, shelter, and transportation taken care of can greatly mitigate some of challenges that at-risk

students face. With multiple dorms currently closed due to low enrollment, the university pays for the upkeep of empty rooms. It would be worthwhile to explore a subsidized housing rate--particularly for students with limited income. Specific dorms could be set aside for first year students without segregating those on housing scholarships. Increasing student engagement, inside the classroom with an FYS and outside of the classroom with on-campus housing, would represent a comprehensive approach to pursuing Tinto's four principles for student success: expectations, feedback and assessment, support and involvement. As noted above, the FYS course must be carefully designed to be attractive to students and effective in improving student retention and graduation rates.¹¹

When these courses correspond with student goals and have clearly articulated learning objectives, they can improve student retention. However, when they are haphazardly instituted in a university, without clear communication to students of their purpose and value, and without guidance for faculty, any benefits may not be lasting. In his response to these interventions Jamelske, notes that "there are certain limitations to the claim that taking an FYE course significantly improved the probability of student retention." Based on his findings, he therefore concludes that "taking a goal compatible FYE course at this university adds value to the student experience in addition to the strong positive retention effects of living on campus" (Jamelske 2009, 387). As Kuh emphasizes, however, simply offering interventions "does not guarantee that they will have the intended effects on student success." He clarifies: "Institutional programs and practices must be of high quality, customized to meet the needs of students they are intended to

¹¹ Financial barriers are not the only reason students choose to live off campus. Family and work-related considerations, among others cause some students to choose not to live on campus. Therefore living on campus cannot be seen as a "magic bullet" for student retention and completion any more than any other single solution would be.

reach, and firmly rooted in a student success-oriented campus culture,” which requires widespread faculty, staff, and student buy-in as well as dedicated funding (Kuh et al. 2008, 556). Thus, as this and other research attests, FYE’s must be targeted and context based, and they should be coupled with multiple other interventions to support student success.

For instance, early warning systems are widely used assessment tool for instructors and staff members to track all new student grades. This intervention offers insight into student progress within the first three to five weeks of the semester. To be effective, early warning systems require multiple early assessments, which places an increased burden on faculty. However, Tinto and Kathleen Gabriel, author of *Teaching Unprepared Students*, both argue that early assessments allow faculty to learn how students are processing the information presented and allow opportunities to alter the course if learning objectives are not being met. Additionally, engaging students in an active learning process while in the classroom can effectively supplement the more passive lecture-dominant learning experience, and increase learning outcomes. Gabriel agrees with Tinto on the benefits of a learner-centered approach, emphasizing the importance of the classroom as the best place to set high expectations clearly, from the first day of class, in the syllabus. Clearly identifying course goals and learning objectives can be vital for at-risk or underprepared students, who may not have good note-taking skills or find college course structures and expectations intuitive. Thus “having a well-written syllabus that covers all the course procedures, expectations, reading assignments, grading policies, and so on is crucial. It is the best preventative measure professors can have in the classroom,” Gabriel writes (2008, 26). This approach can be an important step in clarifying expectations not only in foundational and basic skills courses such as First Year Seminars, but also in upper division courses as well.

Multiple researchers stress the importance of strong faculty/student connections and communication in retention, as students can flounder without them. Tinto in particular recognizes that some students, for instance those who commute to campus, may have competing obligations outside of college and that the classroom may be the only place “where education in the formal sense is experienced” (Tinto 1997, 599). Adult students, a growing subset of the undergraduate population, experience similar challenges for involvement in school-related activities outside the classroom (Donaldson and Townsend 2007, 27). Ernest Pascarella, who has done substantial research into first-generation college students--many of whom are adult students entering college for the first time or returning after stopping out--argues that “these tendencies toward part-time enrollment, work responsibilities, and living off campus are probably responsible in large measure for the fact that first-generation students also had lower levels of extracurricular involvement and interaction with peers in non-course contexts. This may place first-generation college students at a disadvantage in terms of the developmental benefits they derive from postsecondary education. There is mounting evidence that extracurricular involvement and interaction with peers can play a significant role in both intellectual and personal development during college” (Pascarella et al. 2004, 276) The median age of students at UAF in the fall of 2017 was 26, making Pascarella’s charge to engage “peers” in extracurricular activities difficult but not altogether impossible to meet. Targeted support services outside of the classroom can be especially effective with non-traditional students: veterans support centers, student clubs created by and for students with similar interests, living/learning communities, support groups offered through the counseling center, etc.

While external support services can aid in meeting some student needs, they are not often utilized by the students who could benefit from them most--primarily due to their competing priorities. Salinitri finds that several factors negatively affect traditional age students' success, including: "inability to meet university academic standards, inability to adapt to a new social and academic environment, changes in personal goals and aspirations, lack of motivation and clearly defined goals, priority of other commitments such as work or family, financial difficulty, or incongruence between an institution's orientation and approach and that desired by an individual." Students from all age groups can experience any number of these challenges. Salinitri advocates for faculty mentorship and an "increased [need for] academic and personal counseling programs to improve student retention, particularly for low-achieving students" (Salinitri 2005, 854). Faculty mentorship, implemented as part of an FYS course, can inspire students to explore disciplines they may have previously overlooked. At UAF the Biomedical Learning and Student Training (BLaST) program does an impressive job of building faculty bonds with historically underrepresented students interested in STEM-fields, as well as connecting them with the comprehensive financial resources necessary to be successful in their pursuit of higher education. Pairing financial support with an FYS course by making it free of charge for students with limited income could be an added incentive and a well-placed investment.

Proposed Intervention

A First Year Seminar (FYS) alone is not enough to solve the larger challenges that the university and its student population face. In fact, a similar intervention was provided in 2011 in

the form of a one-credit major exploration course, with several sections offered. These classes failed to entice many students for a wide variety of reasons, including the fact that the course was not required and the marketing and communication surrounding it was disjointed.

For a FYS to be successful at UAF, we need to target a narrow population of students who need many of the same basic college skills for success, and a curriculum that addresses the challenges they are about to face. I suggest starting with pre-majors who are first-time, full-time freshmen and either first-generation or low-income baccalaureate seeking students. Individuals who qualify for the Pell Grant should have their course tuition waived. Making the class three credits, having it extend through the full semester, and having it count within the General Education Requirements would make the class much more attractive and effective for the targeted student population. Furthermore, the course should engage students both inside and outside of the classroom, helping them to construct a network of resources for future semesters. If successful, the course could be expanded to reach other student populations and altered to meet various groups' specific needs as they enter college; for example, we might have a separate cohort for adult students, eLearning students, or commuter students. A one-size fits all approach cannot be expected to produce desirable outcomes.

Additionally, I propose that interested and knowledgeable staff should be given the opportunity to teach these courses as part of their contracts, which may offset the cost of hiring an adjunct who may or may not be as fully immersed in the university community. If this course could be coordinated with at least one other class, such as a first-year Writing or Communication course, creating a cohorted learning community, it likely would generate even greater returns on retention, as outlined in the literature.

To most effectively serve all UAF students outside of the classroom, and thus bolster our retention and graduation rates, the university should also implement a centralized academic resource center or “Learning Commons.” This has been thoroughly researched by faculty in UAF’s Developmental Education program and suggested for a number of years. An academic resource center would not only serve students in the proposed FYS course, but connect all university students with the various forms of support at their disposal. Currently the retention-focused programs, which include Student Support Services, the Academic Advising Center, Rural Student Services, the Department Developmental Education, the Writing Center and Math Lab, the Health and Counseling Center, Financial Aid, and many more, exist in relative isolation from one another. Centralizing services into a single location would increase accessibility for students, minimize bureaucratic runaround and misinformation, and allow for greater collaboration among departments.

The proposed FYS course would not be a magic-bullet solution; it would instead be the beginning of a greater investment in Alaska-conscious and student-centered services. It would meet the students where they are, helping to clarify university policies and standards, and leading students on a path to self-efficacy.

Conclusion

Meeting the changing needs of Alaska’s workforce will require investing in context-driven strategies for student success. As UA President Jim Johnsen noted in 2016, Alaska ranks first in the nation for individuals with some college and no degree. These individuals have a diminished earning potential in comparison with those who have completed

their undergraduate education. Meanwhile, owing to the Alaska's fiscal crisis, the state legislature is demanding that the university do more with fewer resources. President Johnsen has charged the university with increasing graduation rates by 25 percent by 2025. The institution's and the state's future depend on the university's success in achieving this daunting task.

Merely relying on business models and focusing on recruitment will not suffice. As a state funded, open enrollment institution, the UA System has an obligation to serve the students we admit. As an institution in the circumpolar north we experience unique geographic, social, political, historical and economic challenges. A high percentage of our students enter the university with multiple factors that increase the likelihood of their not completing degrees, including being the first in their families to attain a college degree, having limited financial resources, and being academically underprepared for higher education. Knowing our student population and strategically addressing the challenges they face as they pursue higher education will improve retention and graduation rates. A well-designed First Year Seminar class that eases students' transition to college, helps them to navigate the institutional bureaucracy, and fosters academic success skills and confidence will prove to be a wise investment, along with other forms of support and efficiencies aimed at comprehensively serving students.

Proposed Curriculum

The research on strategies for success in higher education suggests that a targeted First Year Seminar, created to meet the specific needs of first-generation, limited income, and academically prepared students would level the educational playing field for those that could benefit most. The attached syllabus outlines a curriculum that would meet many of the needs of

such students. The purpose of the course is to create an environment wherein students can build cultural and social capital that will allow them to thrive at the university. Features of the course directly address many of the difficulties identified in the literature that first generation and low income students face.

Helping students to own their identities through difference-based teaching methods normalizes their concerns, in part by learning from similarly situated peers about their success as well as failures. Identifying learning styles and developing study skills and time-management strategies early in the semester allows students to apply these skills to concurrent courses. Connecting students with resources and advocates within the institution reduces the chances that students will flounder when they encounter difficulties outside of this particular classroom. Engaging students in extracurricular activities, such as a play or Starvation Gulch, with a group of their peers connects them to campus in ways that the classroom cannot. Regular feedback and a final debriefing session that allows time for group reflections on the first semester of college will allow students to process their experiences and will enhance learning outcomes.

Nanook Navigation 101

Instructor: Victoria R Smith

Office: 514C Gruening Building

Phone: 474-5722

Meeting Times:

T/R 11:30-1pm

Meeting Place:

TBD

Credits: 3

Text, Materials and Supplies: *College Success*, Saylor Academy, www.saylor.org, 2016. This text is an open source product provided free to students by Saylor Academy. To access the book navigate to the website from your laptop or tablet. Other readings to be assigned as needed.

Instructional Goals and Purposes: The purpose of this course is to enhance academic skills for college success, including note taking, reading for meaning, test preparation, time management, and financial literacy. The course will also focus on easing the transition to college, providing an orientation to campus resources and helping improve student self-efficacy.

Course Objectives: After studying the material presented in this course and having participated actively throughout the semester, students will be able to:

- Explain the purpose for attending college and identify personal goals for academic achievement
- Demonstrate critical thinking skills, analyzing and evaluating information
- Identify and use available campus resources
- Become aware of campus activities
- Describe how emotions affect learning and success in college
- Demonstrate note taking, studying, test taking, verbal and written communication, research and information literacy skills
- Describe effective strategies for managing time, finances and health
- Describe possible majors and identify career goals
- Demonstrate technology skills essential in academic and work environments
- Participate in community service activities
- Assess your current knowledge and attitudes on reading to learn

Learning Outcomes: Upon successfully completing the course, the student will be able to:

- Demonstrate academic skills necessary for college success: note taking, study skills and time and money management
- Utilize transition strategies for adapting to the college environment
- Identify support services, campus resources and opportunities for campus and community engagement
- Develop habits and strategies for enhancing student self-efficacy and responsibility

Methods of Instruction/Course Format/Delivery: Students in all sections of the class will have access to this course via Blackboard. Instruction and class participation will include:

- Instructor lecture
- Guest lecturers
- Online and in-person submission of assignments
- Messaging via email
- Videos
- Panel discussions
- Participation in whole class and small group discussions
- Exams
- Quizzes

Culture of Respect in the Classroom: Students can expect the instructor to be concerned for the educational experience of each student in the class, respectful of individual differences, encouraging of creativity, knowledgeable of and enthusiastic about the course material, prepared for class, reasonably open and accessible to discuss material and assignments, thorough and prompt in evaluating assignments, and rigorous yet supportive in maintaining high standards for performance. Students are expected to work, individually and together, to create an atmosphere that is safe, valuing of one another, and open to diverse perspectives. Students are expected to show courtesy, civility, and respect for one another and for the instructor. Comments that degrade or ridicule another, whether based on individual or cultural differences, are unacceptable.

Disability Services: UAF is obligated to provide accommodation only to the known limitations of an otherwise qualified student who has a disability. Please identify yourself to UAF Disability Services (203 Whitaker Bldg.) by applying for accommodations. To be considered for UAF Disability Services accommodations, individuals must be **enrolled for at least one credit** as a UAF student. For more information contact Disability Services at uaf-disabilityservices@alaska.edu, 474-5655 or by TTY at 474-1827.

AA/EO: The University of Alaska Board of Regents have clearly stated in BOR policy that discrimination, harassment and violence will not be tolerated on any campus of the University of Alaska. If you believe you are experiencing discrimination or any form of harassment, including sexual harassment/misconduct/assault, you are encouraged to report that behavior. If you disclose sexual harassment or sexual violence to faculty members or university employees, they must notify the UAF Title IX coordinator about the basic facts of the incident. Your choices for disclosure include:

1. You may confidentially disclose and access confidential counseling by contacting the UAF Health and Counseling Center at 474-7043.
2. You can get support and file a Title IX report by contacting the UAF Title IX coordinator at 474-7599.
3. You may file a criminal complaint by contacting the UAF Police Department at 474-7721.

Grading: This is a pass/fail class. Students must receive a 70% to pass.

Grading Breakdown:

Attendance and Participation	20%
Quizzes	25%
Assignments	25%
Exams	30%

Attendance and Participation: Students are expected to attend and fully participate in every class. Please keep your phones silent and in your backpack, and earphones out of your ears. Use of a smartphone in class will count against your participation points. Attendance and participation will account for 20% of your final grade.

Quizzes: 5 quizzes will take place throughout the semester and the content will be based on the material covered in the book and in class discussions. Each of the quizzes will be worth 5% of your final grade.

Assignments: Throughout the semester students will complete a number of self-assessments and exercises that will ask you about yourselves, your study habits, and what you have learned that might help you develop or improve time management, note taking, test taking, skills, etc. Altogether these assignments will be worth 25% of your final grade.

Exams: Two exams will be given this semester, a mid-term and a final exam. Each of the two exams will be open note and taken in class. If you are unable to take a test when it is scheduled, you must make arrangements with the instructor prior to the testing date. An excused absence and makeup test may be granted for documented sudden illness or unforeseen circumstances. Each exam is 15% of your final grade.

Semester Calendar

1. Building and working towards educational goals *Week 1 (8/28-8/30)*
 - a. Assess your current knowledge and attitudes
 - b. How do you get there?
 - c. Identify your own values
 - d. Build goals related to your values
 - i. Chapter 1 & Chapter 2, section 2.1
 - ii. Unit 1 assessment: SMART Goals, take STRONG interest inventory
 - iii. Activity: Syllabus BINGO breakout activity, student panel

2. Creating a physical and mental space for studying *Week 2 (9/4-9/6)*
 - a. Why you need a space of your own
 - b. Elements of a good study space
 - c. The dangers of multitasking
 - d. How to minimize distractions and interruptions
 - e. Identify two study spaces for yourself
 - i. Chapter 2, section 2.2
 - ii. Unit 2 assessment: Self guided journal reflection, student panel (sophomore, junior, senior)
 - iii. QUIZ #1

3. Creating an effective time management plan *Week 3 (9/11-9/13)*
 - a. Where does your time go?
 - b. Where should your time go?
 - c. The battle with procrastination
 - d. Using calendar planners and to-do lists
 - e. Special tips
 - f. Evaluate your time management knowledge and skills
 - i. Chapter 2, section 2.3
 - ii. Unit 3 assessments: Time management exercises, peer coach to assist
 - iii. Group STRONG Interest Inventory interpretation

4. Reading to learn *Week 4 (9/18-9/20)*
- a. Assess your current knowledge and attitudes
 - b. A new way of approaching reading
 - c. How do you read to learn?
 - d. Dealing with special texts
 - e. Building your vocabulary
 - i. Chapter 5, section 5.1 - 5.4
 - ii. Unit 4 assessment: Quiz on active reading, tutor from the writing center
 - iii. Out of class activity: Starvation Gulch (9/22)
5. Learning styles and learning processes *Week 5 (9/25-9/27)*
- a. Benjamin Bloom's six types of thinking
 - b. A closer look at critical thinking
 - c. A closer look at creative thinking
 - d. Problem solving and decision making
 - e. The VARK learning style system
 - f. Reflect on your thinking and learning skills
 - i. Chapter 3, sections 3.1 - 3.4
 - ii. Unit 5 assessment: Learning style quiz, take the MBTI
 - iii. QUIZ #2
6. Read, listen, take notes, and study *Week 6 (10/2-10/4)*
- a. The learning cycle: prepare, absorb, capture/record, review/apply
 - b. Prepare to learn in class, ask questions, and participate in discussions
 - c. Absorb information using active listening
 - d. Strategies to improve your listening
 - e. Capture information using note taking
 - i. Chapter 4, sections 4.1 - 4.4
 - ii. Unit 6 assessment: Study skills quiz
 - iii. MIDTERM EXAM
7. The social world of college *Week 7 (10/9-10/11)*
- a. Assess your current knowledge and attitudes
 - b. Getting along with others
 - c. Living with diversity
 - d. Campus groups
 - i. Chapter 9, sections 9.1 - 9.4
 - ii. Unit 7 assessment: write reflection on social relationships/group activities, Student Activities Office/Reslife guest speaker

iii. QUIZ #3

8. Using and improving your memory skills *Week 8 (10/16-10/18)*
- a. Review information to remember it
 - b. Exercises to improve memory and retention
 - i. Chapter 4, section 4.5
 - ii. Unit 8 assessment: Memory skills quiz
 - iii. Return Midterm Exam
 - iv. Out of class activity: attend “1776 - The Great American Musical” (10/20)

9. Be ready for tests and test anxiety *Week 9 (10/23-10/25)*
- a. Why test?
 - b. Why stress?
 - c. How to be prepared for the test
 - d. Types of tests and strategies for each
 - e. General strategies for test-taking
 - f. Types of test questions and strategies for each
 - g. Academic honesty
 - h. After the test
 - i. Practice your test-taking skills
 - i. Chapter 6, sections 6.1 - 6.6
 - ii. Unit 9 assessment: create plan for test prepping, Health and Counseling Center guest speaker
 - iii. QUIZ #4

10. Interacting with instructors and classes *Week 10 (10/30-11-1)*
- a. Assess your current knowledge and attitudes
 - b. Why attend class at all?
 - c. Participating in class
 - d. Communicating with instructors
 - e. Public speaking and class presentations
 - i. Chapter 7, sections 7.1 - 7.5
 - ii. Unit 10 assessment: find a mentor, faculty panel

11. Managing your health and stress *Week 11 (11/6-11/8)*
- a. What kind of student are you?
 - b. The elements of a healthy lifestyle
 - c. What exactly is stress?

- d. What causes stress?
 - e. The effects of stress
 - f. Responses to stress
 - g. Positive responses
 - h. Emotional health and happiness
 - i. Relationships
 - j. Sexual Health
 - k. Evaluate your stress levels
 - i. Chapter 10, sections 10.1 - 10.7
 - ii. Unit 11 assessment: write reflection on protective strategies, Health and Counseling Center guest speaker
 - iii. Out of class activity: go skiing with Outdoor Adventures
12. Academic writing and research in college *Week 12(11/13-11/15)*
- a. What is academic writing?
 - b. Approaches to writing an assignment
 - c. Becoming a better writer
 - d. Using others' writing correctly
 - e. Integrating research into your writing
 - f. Evaluating online sources
 - i. Chapter 8, sections 8.1 - 8.2
 - ii. Unit 12 assessment: Writing assignment, faculty guest speaker
 - iii. QUIZ #5
 - iv. Out of class activity: visit Writing Center, meet Sarah Stanley
13. ******No Classes - Thanksgiving Break - Week 13 (11/20-11/22)******
14. Your career after college *Week 14(11/27-11/29)*
- a. Finding a career
 - b. Choosing your major
 - c. Getting the right skills
 - d. Thinking about your career now
 - e. Resumes and cover letters
 - f. The job interview
 - g. Create your own resume and cover letter
 - i. Chapter 12, sections 12.1 - 12.7
 - ii. Unit 13 assessment: creating your professional brand, Career Services guest speaker
 - iii. FINAL EXAM

15. Finals Week Study Groups

Week 15 (12/4-12/6)

- a. Tutors to lead small group study sessions
 - i. Return Final Exam, student panel
 - ii. Out of class activity: Pizza party at Collegetown Pizza

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