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April 1996

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Orientation 101 For Student-Athletes

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The Student Development Division of William Rainey Harper College (a community college located in the northwest suburbs of Chicago) offers a new student orientation course (Orientation 101) to incoming students who are at-risk for poor academic performance. Course assignments are determined based on the goals of the division's four student development outcomes dimensions (interpersonal effectiveness, intrapersonal effectiveness, intellectual development, and life management skills). In developing the course, twelve outcomes were determined for these four dimensions.

Although these outcomes would appear to be universal for all incoming at-risk students, what about the student-athlete, whose needs may differ somewhat from those of non-athletes? Many of these students come from the inner-cities (where they are members of the majority culture) into the predominantly white, middle-class, "Ward and June Cleaver" suburbs-to say that these students experience culture shock would be a major understatement. Thus, three sections of Orientation 101 are now specifically targeted for incoming student-athletes at-risk, where the term "at-risk" is broadened to include not only high school class rank, but also cultural variables and academic preparedness.

In this team-taught course, the instructors design activities to address the aforementioned outcomes, while incorporating examples and situations germane to the needs of student-athletes and students of color. Students are encouraged to participate in rich discussions and share personal stories with their peers, relevant to class material. Classes are small (average number is approximately 24 students) and ground rules for in-class discussion are established during the first class meeting. Attendance is taken regularly, and students must keep all assignments in a portfolio to be submitted at the last class meeting. In addition, students are required to report on a non-athletic campus activity, attend a career exploration session, participate in a scavenger hunt of campus resources, and attend two one-on-one advising sessions with their instructor to explore reasons for attending college and course selection for spring semester. Although the majority of these students are men, women athletes who enter Harper at risk are also required to enroll in this one-credit hour course.

The stress of being one type of minority on campus can sufficiently compromise student achievement; truly, the student-athlete of color at a predominantly white institution may

perceive his/her environment as antagonistic and hostile, and may lack effective coping strategies, knowledge of campus resources, and perceived support among his peers. By offering Orientation 101 for student-athletes, these students are afforded the opportunity to interact with their peers while integrating themselves into the Harper community at-large. This experience leads to greater social support, which, ultimately, translates into academic success.

PRESENTERS:

Lisa Brady is the Athletic Academic Counselor at William Rainey Harper College in Palatine, IL, and is currently in her fifth year there. She has a B.A. in psychology from the University of the Pacific, and a Master of Arts degree in counseling psychology from Springfield College. Ms. Brady's internship was spent counseling within the Oakland A's professional baseball organization. In addition to her numerous responsibilities as counselor for student-athletes, she teaches a course in humanistic psychology. Her other areas of passion include programming for issues such as: at-risk student, sexual assault and date rape prevention, healthy relationships, multiculturalism/diversity, women's issues, and student athlete retention. Although she currently resides in the suburbs of Chicago, Arizona remains her home at heart.

Roderick S. Brown is currently in his fourth year as an academic/personal counselor and instructor in the Student Development Division of William Rainey Harper College. He received his Bachelor of Arts in psychology from the University of Notre Dame, and earned his Master of Science in college student personnel administration from Indiana University-Bloomington. Mr. Brown served briefly as a Residence Hall Director at Grinnell College before pursuing his true calling as a counselor at Harper. In addition to Orientation 101, he has taught courses in study skills and humanistic psychology. A proud native of Indianapolis, his other areas of interest (personal and professional) include multiculturalism, sexual assault prevention, assertive communication, dream analysis, AIDS education, theatre, music, basketball, and film studies.