

## **Extended Orientation Under Limited Resources: An Example of Collaboration and BALANCE**

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BALANCE (Being an Active Learner Among New College Experiences) is a series of workshops offered to students each fall and spring semester to enhance their ability to succeed in the university experience. BALANCE is designed primarily for first-year students, however, all students are welcome to participate. Collaboration between academic and student affairs faculty and staff has produced a program that integrates learning in the affective, cognitive and behavioral realms. Didactic and experimental student learning opportunities develop critical thinking skills required to address the challenges of contemporary college life (ACPA, 1994). Student development theory, with a commitment to high standards of academic, personal, and social behavior, is put into motion throughout the workshops, which have included, but have not been limited to:

- Alcohol Alert
- Assertiveness Training
- Avoiding the Dangers of Performance Enhancing Substances in Athletics
- Career Development Strategies
- Choosing a Major
- Completing Effective Scholarship Applications
- Computer Skills for University Students
- Developing Positive Relationships with Faculty
- Diversity Awareness – AIDS Awareness Day/Quilt Project, Washington, DC
- Diversity Awareness – Holocaust Museum, Washington, DC
- Effective Note Taking
- ESU Library Tour
- ESU Registration Policies and Procedures
- Getting the GPA of Your Dreams
- Learning Styles Assessment
- Positive Presentation Skills
- Self Motivation
- Stay Well for the Health of It
- STD Alert
- Strategies for Adjusting to ESU
- Stress Management

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Test Taking Techniques  
Textbook Reading Strategies  
Time Management  
Values Clarification  
Wise Use of Credit

## Institutional Resources

In order to provide a high quality program without specific university budget, committed University faculty and staff have been identified who facilitate the workshops for free. In addition, the program has received funding from grant awards from the East Stroudsburg University Foundation Faculty Grants Program, from the ESU Parents Association Grants Program, and matching grants from the budgets of the Division of Student Affairs and Programs for Academic Support.

## Student Understanding of Personal and Community Responsibility

One specific example of the program's promotion of personal responsibility which emphasizes self-control and moderation has been a workshop entitled "Alcohol Alert." This workshop has been co-facilitated by the faculty chair of the university's Task Force on Alcohol and Substance Abuse and the Director of University Health Services. The program has presented the concept of responsible drinking by providing data and information about the campus drinking culture. Additionally, the students have been introduced to "Alcohol 101," a nationally recognized interactive CD program that enables students to make choices in simulated drinking situations and experience the resulting consequences. The CD program has been available in a number of university computer laboratories, including those in residence halls.

One specific example of the program's promotion of civic responsibility (justice and compassion) has been through the inclusion of field trips. For example, a trip to Washington, DC offered an opportunity for students to participate in the national AIDS Awareness Day and Quilt Project and to tour the National Holocaust Museum.

## Outcomes Assessment and Positive Impact

Outcomes assessment has been an integral part of the program. A comparison of pre-test and post-test instrument results assess student learning outcomes, and students evaluate facilitators and their programs. Learning carries over into the individual lives of the participants and the collective life of the university community. Particular examples of positive interest in the program have come from the Greek community, whose student members have requested co-sponsorship between BALANCE and their organizations. In addition, some faculty members have required class attendance at programs, and some athletic coaches have required student athletes to participate. The Coordinator of Judicial Affairs includes workshop attendance as part of student sanctions and resident advisors and mentors attend sessions with and without their mentees. On a campus of

approximately 4,500 undergraduates, more than 500 students participate in the workshops each semester.

### Campus Promotion

To promote BALANCE, the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs and the Programs for Academic Support Center provide multi-media program information, recruitment and promotions (television and radio show publicity, printed materials, display materials, computer and video presentations, mass mail distribution, and residence life staff training), program coordination, and support for professional development and training through nationally recognized seminars and conferences.

### Program Recognition

The program has been recognized by Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education, which has provided grant funding in order to continue to enhance the program and develop it into a credit-bearing course proposal.

### Reference

American College Personnel Association. (1994). *The student learning imperative: Implications for student affairs*. Washington: Author.