

Think Student Centeredness

Reaching Beyond



Tina Miller: No Boundaries

Born with a handicap that confined her to a wheelchair, Tina Miller grew up depending on her family to help her with many daily activities. "I didn't know if I could live on my own," she said. Four years later, she graduated with a double major in biology and environmental science and wants to go to the West Coast to pursue postgraduate studies. Dr. Judith Stribling, a biology professor, remembers then-freshman Miller coming to a wetland ecology course. "I was initially concerned because we take canoes out in that class and I didn't know how we could bring her out," said Stribling. "She was a real trooper, though, and all the students in the class became her advocates, making sure she could go on every trip." "The past four years have helped me understand that I can handle anything, that I can do or be anything," said Miller.

New Students, New Experiences

Matt Dewhurst of Germantown, MD, thought it would be a good way to pass the time while waiting to transfer to another university. Now a junior, the communication arts major said everything he does, including his decision to remain at SU, is directly related to his Algonquin New Student Experience.

Wilderness Retreats

In the Canadian wilderness, groups of 35-50 freshmen learn to work as a team, living on the bare essentials for 12 days. Dewhurst said he liked the idea of adventure and meeting new people, but he has found that the relationships he made during that freshman year have influenced his entire academic future. Returning for his third year on the Algonquin trip, twice now as a peer counselor, Dewhurst marvels at the transformation some students undergo during the experience.

Exchanging POV

English major Steven Lessner of Bel Air, MD, also appreciates the lasting connections he made during his MOSAIC (Maximizing Opportunities for Students to Achieve an Inclusive Campus) New Student Experience.

"I really wanted to meet a diverse group of people," he said. "Coming from a high school that was mostly Caucasian, I was drawn to an opportunity to be with other kinds of students."

MOSAIC freshmen, in groups of 15-20 students from culturally varied backgrounds, spend five to six days on campus during the summer. While learning about the University, they also take day trips ranging from exploring the life of a slave in antebellum Williamsburg, VA, to visiting the crabbing community in Crisfield, MD.

Long-Lasting Ties to SU

The summer of 2002 marked the 20th anniversary of the Algonquin trip (canoeing in Canada), SU's first attempt at a wilderness orientation project. In the two

New Student Experience Options

■ Academic/Community Experiences

- ASAP (Achieving Social, Academic and Personal Success)
- Introduction to the World of Business
- Defining Excellence: An Introduction to the Bellavance Honors Program
- Fulton (Liberal Arts) School Seminar I
- CHAMPS (Challenging Athletes Minds for Personal Success) Life Skills
- Fun With Forensics: An Introduction to Laboratory Sciences
- Introduction to Engineering and Physics
- MOSAIC (Maximizing Opportunities for Students to Achieve an Inclusive Campus)
- STARS (Students Taking Action and Responsibility on the Shore)
 - Habitat For Humanity

■ International Experiences

- Adventure in the Andes
- Explore Chile
- Poland Trek

■ Outdoor Programs

- Acadia Cycling
- Algonquin Canoe
- Nantahala Whitewater Rafting and Ropes Creative Leadership
- Nanticoke SAIL (Students Aboard Interacting and Learning)
- West Virginia Whitewater Adventure
- Chesapeake SAIL



All new students and transfer students with 24 credits or less may enroll in a brief New Student Experience seminar where learning about campus is combined with fun times and adventure.



Student Reflections from July 2001 West Virginia Whitewater Adventure

“I had no idea I could push myself as far as I did. I really surprised myself ... I am still nervous about school, but I know now that I have 14 new friends that are there for me.”

decades since, the New Student Experience Program has flourished, with some 450 incoming students (out of a freshman class of 900) participating in 19 program options, including cycling in Maine, sailing on the Chesapeake Bay and exploring forensics in campus labs (a la *CSI*).

Campus officials believe the success of the New Student Experience Program is directly attributable to SU’s high retention and graduation rates. (Salisbury has the highest four-, five- and six-year graduation rates in the University System of Maryland.)

“Research tells us that often within the first six weeks of classes students determine if they will return the following year,” said Lawanda Dockins-Gordy, director of New Student Experience. “The connections established with the New Student Experience give first-year students a familiarity with the campus community that creates a comfort zone early on and ultimately breeds academic success.”

Pearline Mitchell’s Journey

When Pearline Mitchell graduated in May at age 79, she became the oldest first-time college graduate in SU history. Along the way, she encountered and conquered prejudices against her race, gender and age. And throughout her life’s journey she communicated through her poetry. After graduating from the all-black Salisbury High School in 1938, Mitchell married and raised seven children. Mitchell was thwarted on her first attempt in 1963 to enter then Salisbury State Teachers College, advised by an administrator that the school already had its requisite quota of blacks. But 25 years later, at the urging of son Bryant, a business professor at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, she was supported by SU in earning her B.A. in English. Her continued perseverance and writing prowess culminated in a family throng delivering May commencement’s biggest cheer.



Tyler Patton: State Leader

Tyler Patton, a freshman political science major from Hagerstown, MD, was elected chair of the University System of Maryland Student Council. He is the first SU student to hold that distinction. Patton sits on the Chancellor’s Advisory Council, providing a student voice on USM issues to the System leadership as well as to the Board of Regents.

