WORKSHOPS FOR
TRANSITION TO FIRST-YEAR COMMERCE
PROGRAM

by

MANDY DANIEL

A project submitted to the Faculty of Education
in conformity with the requirement for
EDUC 898, Master’s Project

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
(April, 2013)

Copyright ©Mandy Daniel, 2013
ABSTRACT

The aim of this workshop series was to create a First-Year Transition Program designed to attain help Commerce students achieve first-year success. The workshops were designed based on current student success literature surrounding academic, social, and motivational issues, and the needs of the students in the Commerce program at Queen’s University. The series includes four workshops: 1. Academic success boot camp, 2. Do I have time for a life?, 3. OMG my grades have dropped? Now what?, and 4. Reboot. Each workshop is designed to be offered at a different time during the first year of the program. The topics were chosen to advise students of important information that pertains to them at the particular point in time at which the workshop is being offered. The goal is that the students will attend to and process the information in the workshops because it applies to them at that moment and will help ease their transition.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr. John Freeman for his support and guidance throughout the planning and development of this project. I will forever be thankful for his willingness to work around my work and family obligations. Without question, he has made what has often felt impossible, possible.

I also take this opportunity to show my appreciation to Dr. Penina Lam. She took an interest in my research when I was enrolled in her Adult Education course. Despite a busy schedule changing roles, she agreed without reservation to act as a second reader on my project.

In addition I want to acknowledge Shannon Goodspeed, Executive Director, Commerce Program. She acted as one of my referees for my Graduate Studies application in 2009 and has supported and encouraged me throughout the long journey a part-time student has to completion. She has been the most inspiring mentor a person could have, and I am endlessly grateful.

Lastly, I thank my husband and son for their constant love and encouragement. Ted and Will Daniel have given me the freedom to accomplish my goals without guilt. Lifelong learning is so important, and my hope is that this project inspires my son to follow his dreams and never stop learning. My love for them both knows no boundaries.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ......................................................................................................................................... ii  
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ..................................................................................................................... iii  
TABLE OF CONTENTS ....................................................................................................................... iv  
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................ 1  
The Students ................................................................................................................................ 1  
The Challenges ............................................................................................................................. 3  
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................................................... 5  
Academics and First-Year Success ............................................................................................... 5  
Socialization and First-Year Success ............................................................................................. 8  
Motivation and First-Year Success ............................................................................................. 11  
First-Year Experience Programs ................................................................................................. 15  
CHAPTER 3: WORKSHOPS .............................................................................................................. 20  
Workshop Series Overview ........................................................................................................ 20  
Aim ......................................................................................................................................... 20  
Rationale ................................................................................................................................ 20  
Definitions .............................................................................................................................. 20  
Prerequisites .......................................................................................................................... 20  
The Workshops ...................................................................................................................... 20  
Workshop #1: Academic success boot camp ............................................................................. 22  
Goal ........................................................................................................................................ 22  
Instructions to Students Prior to Workshop .......................................................................... 22  
Resources ............................................................................................................................... 22  
Venue & Budget ..................................................................................................................... 22  
Course Content Overview ...................................................................................................... 23  
Activity Plan ........................................................................................................................... 27  
Links to On-Campus Resources .............................................................................................. 30  
Workshop #2: Do I have time for a life? ................................................................................... 32  
Goal ........................................................................................................................................ 32
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As an Academic Advisor for the Commerce program at Queen’s University I have many interactions with students, often about a great deal more than academics. In many ways my role is a resource for students in terms of what university services are available to them. I refer students to our personal counsellor, Learning Strategies Development, and a number of other student support units throughout Queen’s. Over the years that I have been in the position, the same recurring themes emerged in most of my advising appointments. The more I heard, the more I thought that there must a way to disseminate the information about the Commerce program in a more efficient and effective manner.

The Students

The majority of first-year students in the Commerce Program at Queen’s University are of traditional age. This generation of student falls into the category of a Millennial student, meaning the students were born between 1977 and 1998. When describing Millennial students, Bigger (2005) states, “as a rule they are driven to improve the world, have a positive attitude and are team players” (p. 3). Millennial students demonstrate distinct learning preferences, such as “preferring teamwork, experiential activities, structure, and use of technology” (Jonas-Dwyer & Posposil, 2004, p. 195). Millennials are different than the generations before them (Howe & Strauss, 2003; Jonas-Dwyer & Pospisil, 2004), so that educators need to ensure they are well informed and be cognisant of the learning preferences of Millennial students to provide a meaningful learning environment.
The Commerce Program at Queen’s School of Business is an extremely competitive program into which to gain acceptance. Admission data for the Class of 2016 indicate that approximately 5,300 applicants applied for 450 spots in the first-year class. A student applying to the Commerce program is expected to not only excel academically but within extra-curricular activities as well. To be considered for the Commerce program, an applicant must have a minimum average of 87%. The average is composed of 4U (Grade 12 university bound) Calculus, 4U English, and an additional supporting 4U Math, and the best three 4U or 4M (Grade 12 university or college bound) courses. Once applicants have met the minimum criteria for their grades and courses, their Personal Statement of Experience (PSE) can be reviewed by the Commerce Admission Committee (AC). The PSE document allows applicants to list their extra-curricular activities as well as answer a number of essay questions. One essay question is for all applicants to Queen’s University to complete; students applying to the Commerce program must submit the Supplementary Essay, which typically involves two Commerce-specific essay questions. This is applicants’ opportunity to tell their story to the Admission Committee. The AC consists of current Queen’s School of Business staff and faculty and Commerce alumni. The Commerce program states that it is looking for students who demonstrate clear thinking, diverse interests, leadership skills, involvement in supporting their school and community, an interest in international studies, enthusiasm, ambition, team skills, and a keen interest or some experience in business. (Queen’s Bachelor of Commerce Booklet, p. 2)

Each qualified PSE is read by two members of the Admission Committee. AC readers do not know the incoming average of the applicants; they simply know that the individual has met the minimum criteria to have the PSE read.
Due to the quality of the applicants and stringent application criteria, the Commerce class is typically comprised of high-achieving students who are involved in a variety of commitments outside the classroom. Many of the Commerce students were leaders amongst their peers, and they were recognized as well-rounded individuals who could balance academics and a rich social life filled with a myriad of activities.

**The Challenges**

Inevitably there are students accepted into the Commerce program who feel they do not fit what they refer to as the “Commerce mould.” The very nature of this program creates an environment in which students can feel out of place in a number of significant ways. As the Associate Director with the Commerce program, part of my portfolio is to manage the Academic Advising team and advise as well. I am privy to many comments and concerns of students that they would not necessarily share in an open forum. While they remain in the program, they do so feeling like the absolute opposite of what they perceive to be the typical Commerce student. Students struggling academically often feel like they are alone in their struggle. Their perception is that everyone else has it completely together. Commerce students definitely project an air of confidence that suggests they are doing well in the program. Often times they do so even when they are not succeeding. They seem to feel like failures when they have to admit they are struggling. It is almost as if those students are trying to live up to a false persona, one that is not necessarily attainable. Because of the rigorous admission standards, many of the students admitted have never really struggled academically before. They begin to question themselves and their abilities; this struggle can lead to
forms of anxiety that further remove them from their classmates, which will not allow for connections to grow. Any personal and academic connections formed are jeopardized and are at risk of dissolving.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines the first-year university success through four lenses: academics and first-year success, socialization and first-year success, motivation and first-year success, and First-Year Experience Programs. Academics and first-year success reviews the potential challenges with their university classes for first-year students and identifies the need to prepare students for those challenges. Socialization and first-year success reviews the notion that the first year at university is a key time for social transition, both inside and outside of the classroom. Motivation and first-year success discusses the role that students’ motivation plays in their success as well as ways to actively engage students to help increase their level of motivation. The First-Year Experience Programs section identifies the importance of students connecting to their institution in more meaningful ways for them to successfully transition from first year to second year.

Academics and First-Year Success

Admission requirements are necessary for entry into post-secondary institutions for a number of reasons. It would be unethical to make an offer of admission to a student who was incapable of completing the rigours of a university workload. When offers are given to students, the assumption is made that they will be able to handle the particular program to which they are admitted. University programs set their admission requirements to a standard at which they feel a student will be successful. Of course an
offer of admission does not guarantee a student will have a successful university career.

There are many factors that impact student success both in the classroom and beyond.

First-year student success is defined by Upcraft et al. (2005) as: (1) successful completion of courses in the first year and (2) continuing enrollment into the second year. There is general agreement amongst much of the research (Barefoot, 2000; Bigger, 2005; Pitkethly & Prosser, 2001) that attrition is a large issue for first-year university students and the institutions in which they are enrolled. Barefoot (2000) cites the American College Testing Program statistic that the overall national dropout rate is 33%. Therefore, programs that address the need to retain students have been and are becoming increasingly important. Bigger (2005) highlights three theories that she finds to be of particular interest to those individuals seeking to understand the development of retaining students. She first discusses Tinto (1993) and his notion of the three stages a student moves through: separation, transition, and incorporation. The final stage, incorporation, is the point at which a student “has achieved full membership into the social and academic communities of the institution” (Bigger, p. 1). Bigger also points to another developmental theory, one that is attributed to Schlossberg, Lynch, and Chickering (1989). The theory surrounds the notion that students need to feel that they matter and are appreciated. The final theory examined is based on Astin’s Involvement Theory that was expanded further by Upcraft (1995). The original theory surmised that “students learn and develop when they become active in the collegiate experience” (Bigger, p. 1). Upcraft expanded the theory by stating that the greater the quantity and quality of activities that connect the students to their university, the more likely there
will be student success. According to Barefoot (2000), student attrition and retention are very complex issues with various nuances.

For students entering university, the experience is often much different than it was in high school (Wolniak & Engberg, 2010). The transition can be stressful for many incoming students. Expectations are often higher and yet students find themselves with much more autonomy than they have ever experienced. They have freedom to make decisions about their education that may have been previously governed closely by their parents or secondary school (Pratt et al., 2000). Suddenly they find themselves in what is likely a new city in a new home (residence), and they must manage those new experiences alongside preparing for and attending classes (Chow, 2010; Parker et al., 2004). First-year students are often forewarned to expect a drop in their grades from their incoming average. The Queen’s Commerce Program notes that students should expect an approximately 15% decrease from their incoming average. Given the age and stage of traditional-aged first-year students, they may hear the message but are really not able to conceptualize that the drop in grades will likely happen to them.

As educators, we must take some form of responsibility in helping students recognize potential challenges. Chow (2010) stresses the importance of providing programs and activities that will enhance the quality of life for students. Roe Clark (2005) suggests that students’ perceptions of the university student role responsibilities can hinder their ability to navigate some university challenges. It is important to use forms of proactive advising to continually remind students about their role and the resources that are available to them. These discussions must happen early, and they
must be ongoing; “conversations could begin early in the first semester and cover the rights and responsibilities not only of students, but also of college faculty, administrators, and support staff” (Roe Clark, 2005, p. 310). Specific examples should be given in terms of what is deemed acceptable and unacceptable. For instance, a professor could say to her or his class that it is not acceptable for students to indicate that they have special accommodations for test writing as the professor is distributing a test. However, it is acceptable to provide a professor the information regarding accommodations at the beginning of a course or as soon as a need for accommodation is identified. Letting students know what is expected of them gives them a sense of control and eliminates confusion. Fraser and Killen (2003) found that, from students’ perspectives, “a better understanding of the mechanisms and functions of the institution would contribute to their success in the institutions and programs of choice” (p. 262).

Socialization and First-Year Success

The first year of university is a key time for transition, not just academically but socially as well (Gibney et al., 2011; Svanum & Bigatti, 2009; Tinto, 1999). If students have difficulty with transition in their first year, they often experience difficulty throughout their university career or disengage completely (Pitkethly & Prosser, 2001). Transitioning to university life can be a challenge both inside and outside of the classroom. A large part of student transition depends on socialization to their new environment. Bogler and Somech (2002) define socialization as a “continuing learning process in which individuals become members of a group whose norms and culture they
internalize” (p. 235). Therefore, students must learn how to adapt to their new surroundings if they want to successfully navigate university life.

Traditional-aged first-year students have for the most part moved from a highly structured environment to a relatively unstructured environment in which they are responsible for managing themselves. It is probable that they have experienced structure through their education, home life, and extra-curricular activities. Prior to university there are more immediate consequences for their actions. For example, if they begin missing school or not submitting assignments, the school would reach out to parents or guardians to inform them. The family and school would likely address the problem swiftly. However, once in university, students are responsible for ensuring their work is submitted on time, and they make the choice to attend class or not. Gibney et al. (2011) suggested that “having left the comparatively highly structured environment of secondary education, many students flounder with what they perceived to be so much time on their hands between classes” (p. 362). Couple the notion that most students are living away for the first time with this sudden lack of structure, and it can be a recipe for difficulty. This new found freedom can be difficult for some students to manage so that they can quickly find themselves struggling academically.

Gibney et al. (2011) conducted a study examining first-year students’ recollections of a variety of areas such as their concerns, motivations, preparedness, and perceived skills upon university entry. For the majority, by week eight into their first semester, students recognized what it took to be successful in university, such as, attend lectures, complete assignments, and take responsibility for their own learning.
However, this knowledge did not necessarily translate into action. A wide range of anxieties was reported by respondents through an open-ended question. The most cited concerns related to the social aspects of university life. Social integration emerged as a key issue, in that respondents worried about meeting new friends at school or not having friends in their classes. Hence social networks appear to play a key role in a successful transition to university.

The first year of university is the foundation for future university years. Tinto (1999) surmised that the more students are academically and socially involved the more likely they are to persevere and graduate. He noted, “this is especially true during the first year of university study when student membership is so tenuous yet so critical to subsequent learning and persistence” (p. 4). Students must learn to manage themselves and the expectations of university life and become active participants in their socialization process (Gibney et al., 2011). It is not surprising that students report that the transition from high school to university is a stressful time. Parker et al. (2004) noted that first-year students are confronted with a number of personal and interpersonal challenges. “Along with the need to make new relationships, they must also modify existing relationships with parents and friends. They also need to learn study habits for a relatively new academic environment” (p. 170). It is important for incoming students to have realistic social and academic expectations of university. Tinto (1993) suggested that “students are more likely to succeed when they find themselves in settings that are committed to their success, hold high expectations for their success, provide needed academic, social, and financial support, frequent feedback, and actively involve them,
especially with other students and faculty in learning” (p. 5). Incoming students must learn to navigate a new world.

According to Mattanah et al. (2000), peer-led social support groups can help with social adjustments. A group of 171 traditional-aged, first-year students agreed to participate in a transition to university study. After completing a number of online assessment instruments, they were randomly assigned to social support groups or the control group. First-year students who were selected to be part of peer-led social support groups had enhanced social adjustment. When compared to the control group, students in the support groups reported less loneliness and greater perceived social support. Interventions such as this could have important implications for the university experience of incoming students. First year is a period of great adjustment in which students need to develop a social connection that will allow them not only to rise to the challenges of their first year of studies but beyond.

**Motivation and First-Year Success**

Motivation plays a tremendous role in choices all people make. Students entering university are not an exception. Which institution and field of study students decide to pursue are determined by a variety of reasons. Students can be motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically when it comes to their decisions (Bogler & Somech, 2002; Gibney et al, 2011). Gibney et al. (2011) stated that intrinsic motivations are determined by self and extrinsic motivations are determined by external influences. A student choosing a program and university purely for interest and passion is an example of an intrinsic motivation. An example of extrinsic motivation is students choosing a
program and/or school because their parents want them to. Gibney et al. (2011) noted that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have their “own logic and may be associated with different degrees of engagement, types of learning behaviors and likelihood of success” (p. 354). It cannot be assumed that students would be solely intrinsically or extrinsically motivated when they make their choices; it’s likely a combination, especially as many students view university as involving both personal and academic development (Byrne & Flood, 2005).

Bogler and Somech (2002) classified three types of motives for students to study at university:

Instrumental, which applies to students who attend institutions of higher learning to acquire degrees that pave the way to social and occupational mobility; scholastic, which refers to students driven by intellectual stimulation and purely academic reasons; and social, or collegiate, which corresponds to students’ aspirations for their social life on campus. (p. 234)

The authors found that a particular area of motivation was often directly linked to the type of socialization tactic students would adopt to help them be successful in university. However, students with collegiate motivation and the corresponding socialization tactic were not analyzed because, according to students, this particular motivation did not stimulate them to study. Bogler and Somech concluded that socialization tactics are an important measure of enhancing student success and for teachers to promote satisfaction in their students. Both scholastic and instrumental tactics affected both academic achievement and satisfaction.

Self-determination theory is a motivational theory that often gets applied to the education system. Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, and Ryan (1991) explained that self-
determination theory is rooted in the basic psychological needs that are intrinsic in human life. The theory principally focuses on three inherent needs: the needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy (or self-determination). Competence involves understanding how to attain various external and internal outcomes and being efficacious in performing the requisite actions; relatedness involves developing secure and satisfying connections with others in one’s social milieu; and autonomy refers to being self-initiating and self-regulating of one’s own actions. (p. 327)

They further posited that, for students to be actively engaged in the educational endeavour, “they must value learning, achievement, and accomplishment even with respect to topics and activities they do not find interesting” (p. 338).

While students are often highly motivated to attend university, their enthusiasm can quickly diminish in the first few weeks of their studies (Gibney et al., 2011). Students often have an over-inflated view of their academic strengths prior to commencing their studies and that notion can have a negative impact on their motivation. If students’ high school careers consisted of high grades with very little effort, they can experience a real shock when their grades fall fairly significantly in university. Smith and Wertlieb (2005) found that students with unrealistically high academic or social expectations had lower GPA scores than students with average or below average expectations. “The modification of expectations toward a more realistic view apparently did not diminish motivation or impact achievement” (p. 167). Therefore, they suggested that perhaps students adjusted their expectations because they had a more realistic view of academic settings in university.
Baker (2004) carried out a study that examined the relationship between motivational orientation and adjustment to university, stress, well-being, and academic performance. Baker’s study involved 91 second-year psychology undergraduates enrolled in a medium-sized campus-based university. A series of questionnaires were administered to the psychology class during a lecture. Amotivation had the most significant impact on affective outcomes. Amotivation, or absence of motivation, had negative outcomes, such as, poor psychological adjustment to university life and high levels of perceived stress. Students must continue to be engaged with their program or they could be in jeopardy of losing interest or motivation in their studies.

Through the use of surveys and interviews, Cannon, Umble, Steckler, and Shay (2001) found that the students’ motivating factors for enrolling in their distance learning programs in public health included career advancement, job performance improvement, convenience, and the reputation of the program. “Students’ motivations for entering the program shaped their expectations for the curriculum, instruction, and program support, and also their expressed strengths and concerns” (p. 58). It is therefore central to make prospective and incoming students well aware of what they will be doing and what will be expected of them throughout their program. In addition, the importance of highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the program before students formally enroll is crucial.

Debnath, Tandon, and Pointer (2007) investigated the concept of designing business school courses to promote student motivation. They hypothesized that student motivation in the classroom is a widely recognized problem and that business schools
are not exempt. Their conceptual article identified the structural characteristics instrumental to an effective course design using the Job Characteristics Model (JCM) designed by Hackman and Oldham (1980). Traditionally, the JCM has been used for work settings, but Debnath et al. (2007) applied it to the classroom setting. They concluded the article by offering a number of useful suggestions to help business school instructors enhance student motivation through effective course design. They determined the following structural elements should be used for course design: task variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, evaluation, and feedback. The authors suggested that utilizing the JCM approach would promote a classroom environment “conducive to motivation and enhance students’ academic performance and learning” (p. 828).

**First-Year Experience Programs**

The Commerce Program at Queen’s University has stricter progression rules than many other undergraduate Faculties at the institution. To progress to the next year of study, a Commerce student must:

a. attain an academic year GPA of not less than 2.0 at the end of the academic year; and
b. maintain a cumulative GPA of not less than 2.0 (upper year students); and
c. pass all courses attempted (including Arts and Science and Commerce electives); and
d. take all of the courses required and be registered as a full-time student in the Commerce Program. (Queen’s School of Business website, 2012)

A student who fails to meet one of these requirements will be placed on Academic Probation for the following academic year. A student may not be placed on Academic Probation more than once in the Commerce Program. While there is an appeal process, this policy can put a great deal of stress on students who find
themselves struggling in a course their first semester of university. Handling this type of situation is just one of the many tools students need as they transition to university.

Many institutions have implemented First-Year Experience (FYE) programs designed to welcome and support students, as well as give them the tools to transition into university life (Bigger, 2005). Farlowe (2006) suggested that designing a required first-year experience program allows for administrators to be assured that incoming students are introduced to the myriad of campus resources available to them. She also noted that a required FYE program “allows freshmen to become actively involved in an on-going advisement process that leads to their successful transition to university life” (p. 3). Some FYE programs are going beyond the standard programming, such as library skills, time management, and orientation to campus facilities. These programs are taking the opportunity to educate their captive audience in a number of other areas to reduce potential risky behaviours (Barefoot, 2000; Bigger, 2005). Some examples of risky behaviours have been identified as binge drinking, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), sexual assault, and eating disorders. Barefoot (2000) referenced a program introduced by Duke University in which they moved first-year students to their East Campus, which was formerly an all-women campus, “so as to restrict what Duke officials believed to be negative behavioural influences of upper-level students and to create an environment within which to design and deliver targeted residential programming” (p. 14).

Bergen-Cico’s (2000) study of substance abuse and attrition among first-year students found that alcohol abuse and other drug use (AOD) is disproportionately evident among first-year college students. “Prevention of AOD abuse among first-year
students needs to address effectively first-year social adjustment through cognitive and behavioural curricula” (Bergen-Cico, 2000, p. 71). Some of the rationale behind an FYE program would be to educate students on the realities of participating in risky behaviours.

Schnell et al. (2003) conducted a study in which 1,700 students were tracked to determine whether or not college graduation rates of students voluntarily enrolled in a first-year seminar course differed from students not enrolled in the first-year seminar course at the same institution. Graduation rates for students who took the first-year seminar course were 12-15% higher than their counterparts who did not. In their discussion, Schnell et al. (2003) stated that “given the goal of higher education, the amount of money spent on student recruitment, and public perceptions, it is to the university’s advantage to retain students to graduation” (p. 68).

Pitkethly and Prosser (2001) gathered data from students participating in the development phase of an FYE project. Pitkethly and Prosser’s (2001) three-year study surveyed 1,000 students from a variety of sample schools. It revealed the following:

1. Students value explanations of expectations and explanations of the different teaching and learning methods.
2. They seek purpose and direction for their subjects and courses, valuing clear course aims and objectives.
3. They emphasize the need for ongoing support throughout their first year. (p. 190)

When designing an FYE program, it can be advantageous to look beyond the research that is directly associated with FYE programs. For example, research in the area of communities of practice can certainly be applied to the design of an FYE program. Wenger (2000) and Au (2002) used communities of practice to investigate two different
areas. Wenger (2000) focused on the success of organizations, while Au (2002) researched teacher education. However, both studies used the modes of belonging model conceptualizing the social learning systems of engagement, imagination, and alignment. Wenger (2000) described participating in communities of practice as “essential to our learning. It is at the very core of what makes us human beings capable of meaningful knowing” (p. 229). Wenger (2000) discussed how organizations must learn to participate in “broader learning systems in which they are only one of many players” (p. 244).

Service-learning is an interesting element of many FYE programs (Barefoot, 2000; Bigger, 2005; Camarena et al., 2006; Donahue, 2004; Domizi, 2008). Bigger (2005) discussed the practice of encouraging civic engagement through the introduction of service-learning opportunities. Projects such as “Habitat for Humanity, food banks, and adopt-a-highway have dramatic effects on the community and are great ways to get students involved” (p. 2). Donahue (2004) suggested that “collaborative learning in the class and out-of-class assignments like service-learning and campus involvement requirements would encourage students to create important personal connections” (p. 96).

In other research focusing on an FYE program, Donahue (2004) analyzed end-of-semester reflection papers from first-year seminars to research perceptions of students’ learning environments. All students enrolled at the institution in which Donahue’s research was conducted must take a one-credit first-year seminar as well as participate in a learning community consisting of two courses linked by a common theme. In
addition, students were assigned to the same residence hall. In their reflection papers, students continually wrote on the importance of forming close relationships in “order to feel positive about their learning environment and connected with their campus community” (p. 82). Overall, students seemed to perceive that they obtained the most learning through classroom setups that consisted of a small number of students and an interactive format. They highly valued personal connections and found friendships to be important to the overall first-year experience, both socially and academically.

Barefoot (2000) summarized the facets FYE programs should have to promote student success:

1. Increasing student-to-student interaction.
2. Increasing faculty-to-student interaction, especially out of class.
3. Increasing student involvement and time on campus.
4. Linking the curriculum and the co-curriculum.
5. Increasing academic expectations and levels of academic engagement.
6. Assisting students who have insufficient academic preparation for college. (p. 14)

If Queen’s University can get our students to connect to the institution in more meaningful ways, we can educate them in regards to the myriad of resources available to them. We may never reach everyone, but we need to try. FYE programs might be one of the answers.
CHAPTER 3: WORKSHOPS

Workshop Series Overview

Aim

To create a First-Year Transition Program designed to attain first-year success. The purpose of this workshop series is to educate and inform students about the steps needed to help ensure academic, social, and motivational success in the first year of the Commerce Program at Queen’s University.

Rationale

Transition to university is difficult; this workshop is designed to give first-year Commerce students the tools to successfully navigate their first year. Often students are not able to successfully transition to second year because they have not met progression rules within the Commerce Program. Besides genuinely not being able to handle the material, many students disclose that they became overwhelmed and did not ask for or seek help from faculty and staff to help them succeed.

Definitions

First-Year Experience (FYE) – For the purpose of this workshop series, first-year experience is a term used in higher education in reference to the year in which a former secondary school student transitions into the world of a university student.

First-Year Student Success – First-year student success is defined by Upcraft et al. (2005) as (1) successful completion of courses in the first year and (2) continuing enrollment into second year.

Prerequisites

The students who sign up for the workshop must be enrolled in their first semester in the Commerce Program. Typically they will be first-year students, but the workshop can be open to new transfer students from another Faculty or institution.

The Workshops

This is a four-workshop series. The first in the series will be offered at the end of Orientation week. Workshop 2 will be offered in the first week of classes. Workshop 3 will be offered the second week of classes after mid-term examinations. The fourth workshop will be offered in January. All workshops will be 1.5 hours in length. With the
exclusion of the first workshop, the workshops will be on Tuesday afternoons. The new curriculum for the Commerce Program, passed at Faculty Board in November 2012, does not have any electives. Students are enrolled in their courses by the Commerce Program Office. Administration has intentionally left Tuesday afternoons open for program-related activities.

**Workshop 1 – Academic success boot camp**
Delivered at the end of Orientation Week. First week of September 2013.

**Workshop 2 – Do I have time for a life?**
Delivered the first Tuesday afternoon of the first week of classes. September 10, 2013.

**Workshop 3 – OMG my grades have dropped! Now what?**
Delivered on Tuesday afternoon of the second week of classes after mid-term examinations. November 5, 2013.

**Workshop 4 – Reboot**
Delivered on Tuesday afternoon of the first week of classes after the winter break. January 13. 2014.
Workshop #1: Academic success boot camp

Goal

To provide the tools to help first-year students succeed academically in their first year of the Commerce program.

Instructions to Students Prior to Workshop

- Ensure that you have your student card with you.
- Bring your laptop.
- When you register you must input one question that you would like answered during the workshop. Please note that your question will not be linked to you at all during the workshop.

Resources

Information regarding navigating SOLUS

Information regarding the Commerce Portal

Classroom expectations

Weekly Schedule Worksheet and Weekly Schedule Sample

On-campus resources

All material should be available in soft copy

Venue & Budget

Staff of Queen’s School of Business can book space in Goodes Hall for no charge. The lecture theatre is equipped with a podium, computer, projector, screen, speakers, and wireless internet access.

The workshops will be delivered by Commerce staff. There may be some lieu time issued to the staff member leading the session. This workshop is not seen as over and above academic advising. It is proactive advising. Coffee and treats will be served at the workshops at a cost of approximately $200 per workshop.
**Course Content Overview**

Welcome and congratulations for making it through Frosh Week!

**Resources for First-Year Students**

This webpage is part of the Queen’s Bachelor of Commerce website and is not password-protected. It is a useful place for students to refer to throughout the year for first-year specific resources.

http://business.queensu.ca/bcom/current_students/first_year/index.php

---

**Figure 1 Queen’s Commerce Portal**

**SOLUS**

SOLUS: students will be given a tour. They will be encouraged to log in themselves; hence they will need their student cards. Some may not have their IDs memorized yet. SOLUS: Commerce students will no longer have an elective in their first year of the program beginning in September 2013. Therefore, some students may not be very familiar with SOLUS. They should be shown how to swap course sections and add/drop courses. Some other critical areas include updating their address and emergency contact information and updating the area in which they can give to their parents the permission to speak with university representatives. They should understand that they are not obligated to give their parents such permission.
Figure 2 SOLUS

Commerce Portal

The portal is used for all announcements regarding the Commerce program. It is password-protected and only available to students in the Commerce Program. It is also where students can book appointments with an Academic Advisor and Personal Counsellor. There are links that bring students to the Business Career Centre, Centre for International Management (Exchange Office), and the Centre for Responsible Leadership (manages Certificate in Socially Responsible Leadership). A screenshot will help students understand what they will be looking for. Display the portal using the following link:

https://commerce.queensu.ca/commerce/commerce.nsf/homepage?readform
CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

It is important for students to understand what their instructors expect from them and what they should expect from their instructors. The following section is a modified excerpt from the Commerce Faculty Handbook for the 2012-13 Academic Year.

I. CLASS START AND END TIMES

Classes commence on the hour or half hour. Typically course instruction ends 10 minutes prior to the “official” end of class. This early ending allows students to travel to their next class, and allows the next instructor to set up.

II. CLASSROOM ANNOUNCEMENTS

Students will often ask to make announcements about extracurricular activities. Some instructors are comfortable leaving a couple of minutes at the start of class for announcements from students; others are not. This decision is up to the individual instructor.
III. OFFICE HOURS

Professors are expected to have office hours. These hours may be scheduled for specific days and times throughout the semester, or they may be held by appointment only. Students find it very helpful to have these hours and the process for contacting their instructor clearly outlined on their syllabus and course website. Some professors have two hours per week of office hours, whereas others choose to set up appointments to meet with students, rather than have drop-in sessions. It helps students to know the expectations of their professors regarding email, particularly the timeframe within which they can expect a response. Professors may include this information on their syllabus. The Academic Progress Committee was surprised at the number of students who had academic difficulty and yet told the Committee they had never been to see the Professor or the TA because they felt they had fallen too far behind to ask for help. Students should remember that instructors are accessible and willing to assist them throughout their course.

IV. STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Students may miss classes for a variety of reasons including illness, interviews, varsity sports, conferences, etc. Many students are involved with the Commerce Society (COMSOC) and may be responsible for conferences and competitions. However, these are extracurricular roles. Activities are secondary to class attendance and course work. It is up to the instructor to determine what is reasonable. For example, some professors allow students to miss one class/term without penalty. Instructors may wish to outline their expectations on their course syllabus.

V. PARTICIPATION MARKS

It is up to the instructors whether or not they wish to give participation marks as part of their evaluation structure. Some courses are better suited to allocating participation marks. However, if instructors decide to include participation marks, they must have clear methods for evaluating and tracking such participation.

VI. GROUP WORK

Most courses have some element of group activities and/or assignments. It is up to instructors to decide whether groups are assigned or self-selected. Instructors have experimented with both structures depending on the nature of the course and the assignment. Instructors should be sure to clearly outline the evaluation criteria for group work. If it is a first-year course, it may be helpful to students living on West Campus to form groups together. Peer evaluations may be used with group work.

VII. HANDING IN AND RETURNING ASSIGNMENTS

If instructors have requested to have a mailbox assigned to them, assignments can be handed in through a course or section specific mailbox system in the Commerce Office. The Commerce Office is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday. Please note there should be no major assignments or tests in the last two weeks of classes unless clearly stated in the course outline.
Assignment boxes will not be opened for any reason unless requested by instructors or their TAs. If students request to have their assignments back after they have been submitted, they will be instructed to contact their instructor or TA for assistance. The Faculty Support person for an instructor may also collect and return assignments. The Commerce Office does not return assignments.

**Activity Plan**

Because the first half of the workshop is very content heavy, this is the point when the activity should be introduced. The goal of this activity is to get students thinking about their own schedule and how they will organize their time.

1. Give each student a copy of the planning your schedule sheet. Acknowledge the simplicity of the form. Ask the students to map out their class schedule. In addition to their classes, they should also include any study or preparatory time, and extra-curricular activities. They should additionally be cognizant of meals and exercise. (approximate time for activity: 15 to 20 minutes)

2. Once the exercise is completed, put a sample schedule on the screen. Note the following:
   - There are 18 hours of classes each week.
   - Students should use the 2:1 ratio for Study/Prep, meaning that for every hour of class they should plan to do 2 hours of prep or study. Therefore an 18-hour class week means an additional 36 hours of prep/study.
   - It is recommended to switch the subject area in which a student is studying after approximately 50 minutes. This shift can help a student keep focused during longer study/prep periods.
   - The program recommends a maximum of 6.5 extra-curricular hours per week.
   - While students’ daily schedules change, they need to create a routine that will allow them to live a balanced life.
   - Discuss the need to be realistic. If students like to sleep in on weekends, they must make sure they build that possibility in. If they work better in the morning, they should not schedule all their study time at night.

3. Ask students to review the schedule of the person next to them. Students should ask each other such questions as: Are your schedules realistic? (approximate time for activity: 3 to 5 minutes)

4. Once students have had a chance to discuss their schedules, it is a perfect opportunity to move on to the useful resources available to Commerce students.
### First Year Commerce Sample Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tues</th>
<th>Weds</th>
<th>Thurs</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
<th>Sun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7-7:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30-9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-9:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30-10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-10:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30-11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-11:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30-12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-12:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30-1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-1:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-2:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30-3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-4:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-5:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30-6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-6:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30-7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-7:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-8:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30-9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-9:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30-10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-10:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30-11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-11:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30-12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Classes: 18 hours  
Study/Prep: 36 hours (2:1 ratio)  
~ take break and switch subject after 50 min  
Extracurriculars: 6.5 hours
# First Year Commerce Sample Schedule ~ Comm '17

## WINTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tues</th>
<th>Weds</th>
<th>Thurs</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
<th>Sun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7-7:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gym</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30-9</td>
<td>COMM 112</td>
<td>ECON 110</td>
<td>Study Prep</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30-10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>COMM 112</td>
<td>COMM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-10:30</td>
<td>Study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30-11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-11:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30-12</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>COMM 162</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-12:30</td>
<td>/ Gym</td>
<td>/ Gym</td>
<td>/ Gym</td>
<td>/ Gym</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30-1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-1:30</td>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Study</td>
<td>COMM 162</td>
<td>Study</td>
<td></td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>COMM 151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-2:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30-3</td>
<td>COMM 131</td>
<td>Study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-4:30</td>
<td>Study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-5:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30-6</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-6:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30-7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-7:30</td>
<td>Extras</td>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-8:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30-9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-9:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30-10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-10:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30-11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-11:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30-12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Classes: 18 hours

Study/Prep: 36 hours (2:1 ratio)

~ take break and switch subject after 50 min

Extracurriculars: 6.5 hours
**Links to On-Campus Resources**

Below are important resources that need to be highlighted and explained to students. Students may have heard the messaging about possible resources before but the Commerce program feels that such messages cannot be repeated enough. Experience with previous cohorts has shown that students do not really hear the message until they are in need; therefore the information needs to be reiterated a number of times especially throughout students’ first year.

**Health, Counselling and Disability Services** – great time to reiterate that Commerce contracts their own Personal Counsellor to work with Commerce Students and that she is available in Goodes Hall.

- Counselling Services [www.queensu.ca/hcds](http://www.queensu.ca/hcds)
  - 613-533-6000 Ext. 78264
- Disability Services Office (DSO) [www.queensu.ca/hcds/ds/](http://www.queensu.ca/hcds/ds/)
  - 613-533-6467

**Academic Supports** – Commerce Office, Academic Advising, Commerce Writing Coach

The Commerce Office should be the primary resource for Commerce Students. The office should be able to direct students to the appropriate area. Students can book an appointment with an Academic Advisor or the Commerce Writing Coach through the Commerce Portal.

  - 613-533-6315

The Learning Strategies are an academic support for Queen’s students. They “help fine tune the skills of high achieving students, and enhance the skills of students trying to reach academic potential” (Learning Strategies website, 2013). They offer a wide variety of services and programming, from individual consultation to skill-specific workshops.

**Emergency Services** – Campus Security, Residence Life & Dons

- Campus Security (Emergency)
  - Ext. 36111 (on campus) 613-533-6111 (off campus)
- Residence Life Office & Dons 613-533-6790

Highlight the importance of the Residence Don. Share the job description introduction. This information may help ensure that students understand that Dons are just not for team building and programming; they are there for students in distress as well.

A Don is a member of the Queen’s community appointed by the Department of Residence Life staff to mentor, support, and compassionately challenge residents, while also serving as a resource to them. This is a live-in, part-time position. The role consists of, but is not limited to:
advising students on personal and academic matters, and making appropriate referrals to University or community services;

ensuring that ResRules are communicated and maintained, which includes conducting front-line intervention and reporting;

maintaining building safety and security by participating in a rotational, on-call pager system;

providing a first response to emergency or crisis situations;

facilitating educational programming that meets the needs of students in residence;

facilitating community development; and

supporting house team members. (Queen’s Residences, 2013)

http://residences.housing.queensu.ca/residence-life/
Workshop #2: Do I have time for a life?

Goal
To provide first-year Commerce students with tools to manage the challenge of trying to balance their school work with other interests and obligations.

Instructions to Students Prior to Workshop

- Ensure that you have your student card with you.
- Upon registration you must submit a question that you would like to ask a Commerce student in 2nd through 4th year.

Resources

A panel of 5 – 7 upper year Commerce students.
Weekly Schedule Worksheet (see Workshop #1)
Weekly Schedule Sample (see Workshop #1)
Links to On-Campus Resources

Venue & Budget

Staff of Queen’s School of Business can book space in Goodes Hall for no charge. The lecture theatre is equipped with a podium, computer, projector, screen, speakers, and wireless internet access. For the panel discussion, there may be a need for additional seating for the panelists. The key to the storage room is located in Commerce Office, Room 130.

This workshop will be moderated by a Commerce staff member. There may be some lieu time issued to the staff member leading the session. This workshop is not seen as over and above academic advising. It is proactive advising. The panelists will consist of the ComSoc High School Liaison committee members. Their presence will be on a volunteer basis. This voluntary contribution is consistent with other events organized by the Commerce Program in which the High School Liaison committee has participated. Coffee and treats will be served at the workshops at a cost of approximately $200 per workshop.

Panelists

Approximately 1 month prior to the session email the High School Liaison (HSL) Co-Chairs. The Commerce Office has their email addresses if they cannot be located by the moderator. The co-chairs for the 2013-14 academic year are Betty Lu and Tyler Schenk. The High School Liaison Committee promotes the Queen’s School of Business to high school students across Canada. Committee members speak at the Ontario Universities' Fair in Toronto, volunteer at the Queen’s Fall Preview Open House, and organize the Commerce portion of the Queen's March Break Open House (Queen’s Commerce Society website, 2013). In recent years, the Commerce Program has also requested that
the senior HSL members participate in events that are designed for current Commerce students, not just prospective or incoming students. In March 2013, they joined Queen’s School of Business faculty members on a panel discussion designed for 2nd year students going into 3rd. The session was held for students investigating the various areas of study and attempting to determine what they planned to pursue.

**Training for Panelists**

When sending the email request, please ask for a mix of students ranging from 2nd through 4th year of the program. It would be beneficial to request that the panelists have some diverse interests to reach as many of the first-year Commerce students as possible. Some extra-curricular activities that one could specifically target might include: a varsity athlete, a Dual Degree student, a student who has a part-time job, and a student who is involved in activity in the greater Queen’s community such as the Alma Mater Society or something in the area of fine arts.

Meet with the HSL co-chairs the week prior to the workshop to briefly outline the goal of the panel discussion. Send electronic versions of the weekly schedule worksheet and sample. Ask that the panelists complete their weekly schedule to be shown to the students attending the workshop. Remind the HSL members to not inflate or exaggerate their schedule for shock value because it is valuable to have a variety of schedules. Provide panelists with a list of 4 questions that will be posed to them during the workshop.

**Content**

Introduce the workshop. Ask panel members to introduce themselves and provide the following information (if applicable, for example, 2nd year student would not have an area of study),

- Name
- Year of study
- Area of study
- Current extra-curricular activities
- What residence they lived in first year

After the introductions the following questions should be posed by moderator to the panelists.

1. What activities, if any, were you involved in outside of your class time during your first year in the program?
2. Do you feel that your involvement in activities outside of class has helped or hindered you academically?
3. What would you say is the single most important method you use to balance your school and activities beyond the classroom?
4. If you could go back and tell your first-year self something about schoolwork-life balance, what would it be?
The questions above can certainly be substituted with other ones if there is a major theme in the questions submitted by the students.

Now open the floor to questions. The introduction should make the students more relaxed and get them comfortable enough to ask questions of the panelists. If the questions are not forthcoming, use the questions that were submitted at registration. Have some of the questions posted on slides with Commerce student pictures. There are many pictures on file in the Commerce office that are gathered and used for social media and other promotional materials. Have the panelists’ schedules on slides as well. These schedules would be useful to show the first-year students and might be valuable if panelists are getting into some detail about their schedules.

**Links to On-Campus Resources**

Before finishing the workshop, quickly go over resources available to the first-year students. The group may be ready to listen to some of the services offered by Learning Strategies. They can register for any of the workshops listed below at www.queensu.ca/qlc

**Learning Strategies**  613-533-6315
### Winter Learning Strategy Workshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Date/Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Make a Fresh Start - Academic Success Strategies</strong></td>
<td>Monday, January 14 1:30-2:20pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catch Up/Keep Up - Time Management Tips</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, January 22 11:30am-12:20pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation and Procrastination</strong></td>
<td>Wednesday, February 6 1:30-2:20pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active Reading and Note-making</strong></td>
<td>Thursday, February 7 3:30-4:20pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Memory Strategies</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, February 26 2:30-3:20pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Draft Your Exam Study Schedule</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, March 26 11:30am-12:20pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparing For and Writing Short Answer and Essay Exams</strong></td>
<td>Wednesday, March 27 11:30am-12:20pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparing For and Writing Multiple Choice Exams</strong></td>
<td>Thursday, March 28 10:30-11:20am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://www.queensu.ca/learningstrategies/undergrad/workshops.html](http://www.queensu.ca/learningstrategies/undergrad/workshops.html)
**Health, Counselling and Disability Services** – great time to reiterate that Commerce contracts their own Personal Counsellor to work with Commerce Students and that she is available in Goodes Hall.

Counselling Services  
www.queensu.ca/hcds
613-533-6000 Ext. 78264

Disability Services Office (DSO)  
www.queensu.ca/hcds/ds/
613-533-6467

**Commerce Academic Supports** – Commerce Office, Academic Advising, Commerce Writing Coach

The Commerce Office should be the primary resource for Commerce Students. The office should be able to direct students to the appropriate area. Students can book an appointment with an Academic Advisor or the Commerce Writing Coach through the Commerce Portal.
Workshop #3: OMG my grades have dropped! Now what?

Goal

To provide students with the confidence to continue and stay focused despite their disappointment with their lower grades.

Instructions to Students Prior to Workshop

- Ensure you have your student card with you.
- Bring a pen or pencil for the activity.
- Upon registration, please indicate if you’ve met with an academic advisor.

Resources

- University Matters Study Protocol Worksheet
- The 10% Solution Handout
- Thriving in High Pressure Environments: Worksheet and Handout
- Feedback from faculty

Venue & Budget

Staff of Queen’s School of Business can book space in Goodes Hall for no charge. The lecture theatre is equipped with a podium, computer, projector, screen, speakers, and wireless internet access.

The workshops will be delivered by Commerce staff. There may be some lieu time issued to the staff member leading the session. This workshop is not seen as over and above academic advising. It is proactive advising. Coffee and treats will be served at the workshops at a cost of approximately $200 per workshop.

This workshop will have the Commerce Personal Counsellor, currently Ms. Marissa Piribauer, as a guest speaker. There may be a fee associated with Ms. Piribauer’s participation in the workshop; however, the Commerce Program might be able to change her counselling hours that week to reflect her involvement in the workshop.

In preparation for workshop

Faculty Survey

Send an email to the faculty members who teach the three courses that will be discussed in the workshop. Let them know that their responses will be compiled and used during the workshop. Ask the following questions:

1. How can students improve their work in your class?
2. What is a common mistake made by students in your course?
3. If you could only give one piece of advice to a first-year student regarding her or his academics, what would it be?
The Commerce Personal Counsellor

Marissa Piribauer is a staff member at Queen’s Health, Counselling, and Disability Services. She provides professional counselling services to Commerce students at no charge to them.

Context for Commerce staff member regarding Personal Counsellor

Welcome Message from Counselling Services at Queen’s

While university can offer many positive opportunities for engagement, growth, and learning; it can also be a source of pressure, stress, and overwhelming experiences. Sometimes these challenges, while tough on their own, can magnify other difficulties or trigger emotional vulnerabilities as well.

At Counselling Services we are here to help. We work to foster student success and well-being while providing services that respect the values and unique needs of all people.

We are committed to providing services which respect the dignity and values of all people inclusive of age, gender, ethnicity, physical qualities, sexual identity and ability. We encourage you to not put off making an appointment until the issue escalates. (HCDS website, 2013)

The Commerce Program understands that it is important to emphasize to students the need for ongoing support throughout their degree, specifically in the first year as they transition to life as a university student. It is important to meet with Marissa approximately 2-3 weeks prior to the session. The Commerce staff member and Marissa should discuss the overall themes that they are seeing with the first-year students to determine if Marissa needs to address specific issues during her portion of the workshop.

Content

This workshop will be delivered 2 weeks following mid-terms. The timing of the workshop is to attempt to ensure midterm marks have been received. However, there will most likely be some students who do not have their marks. The majority of students will have a relatively good idea as to how they have performed. Some will be practicing some avoidance and will not have picked up particular midterms. This behaviour is often seen in students who feel they may have underperformed. Encourage students to go and get their midterms and to make an appointment with an Academic Advisor through the portal if they have concerns.

If these are available, provide the course midterm averages for the following 1st year courses. Typically professors in the program are willing to provide this information.

- COMM 103 Business Management
- COMM 111 Intro to Financial Accounting
- COMM 161 Intro to Mathematical Analysis for Management (Calculus)

ECON 110 and COMM 153 marks do not need to be pulled. ECON 110 is a full-year course, midterm in December. In the new curriculum COMM 153 is a 4-week course that runs from September to the beginning of October; COMM 103 begins immediately
following COMM 153, so the marks for COMM 103 are more reflective of student progress at this point than those from COMM 153.
As a point of comparison show the final marks in the same courses for the 2012-13 academic year. This information is available through the Commerce Office. Allow a sufficient amount of time for the data to be compiled before you are conducting the workshop.
Remind the group that most students see a 15% drop in their marks from high school in the first year of Commerce. Students were given this statistic during SOAR (summer orientation) and then again during Frosh Week, but this is the time that they might absorb the information.
Remind the students that it is important that they meet with their Instructor or TA to review their midterm if they did not perform well. They need to know where they struggled and gain some insight on how to make improvements in the course.
Introduce the questions that were posed to the faculty members that teach COMM 103, COMM 111, and COMM 161. Identify any themes that the faculty members listed. Because the courses are so different, there will be likely be some course-specific advice as well.

**Activity Plan**

Introduce the activity by explaining that students often believe that they are putting hours of time into studying. While they may indeed be doing so, they might not be going about the task in the most efficient way.

1. Hand out the University Matters Study Protocol Worksheet and 10% Solution by Queen’s Learning Strategies.

2. Tell students to choose one course, perhaps the course they find the most challenging. They should complete the form using that course as an example. (10 minutes)

3. Once the worksheet has been completed, explain that they should take the time to complete the worksheet using all of their courses. It is a good checklist to determine if they are making the right decisions regarding preparing and studying course material.

4. Explain that the 10% Solution is a simple way of looking at succeeding in university. Encourage them to put it up somewhere that they can look at it to remind themselves of their role as students.

**Task List**

Now that the students have identified some potential areas in which they need improvement they need to plan their next steps. Prior to introducing Marissa ask them to write down their plan going forward.
➢ What are you going to do in the next 24-48 hours?
➢ Is there something that you’ve been doing when studying or preparing for class that you now realize isn’t working and that you’re going to stop?
➢ Is there something that you haven’t doing when studying or preparing for class that you now realize you should be doing and that you’re going to start?
➢ What is a long-range goal for this semester?
University Matters
Study Protocol Worksheet
Course Number _____

The purpose of this worksheet is to provide a self-test of your study protocol. Complete a worksheet for each course and make notes on items/courses that require more effort.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protocol</th>
<th>Expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before class</td>
<td>Exceeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refer to your course outline at least once a week.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read the relevant chapters before class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a note of elements in the readings that are not clear to you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print off the professor’s lecture notes before class, skim through them and bring them to class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skim your notes from the previous class to ensure you remember where the professor left off.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During Class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The obvious? Go to class!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen well and take concise notes in class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask questions in class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you don’t understand some of the material, go down to the front of the room right after the class and ask the professor for additional explanation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soon after class, review the notes you took. Annotate them where they are unclear or too sketchy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skim the readings to see if you have highlighted the parts the professor indicated are important.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you understand everything?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you are unclear on a concept, consult the assigned chapters, re-read your notes, discuss with your classmates, see your teaching assistant or visit the professor to clear them up.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review returned tests and assignments right away and make sure you fully understand all areas where you lost marks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few more things</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend tutorials.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do practice problems.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start assignments and projects early; hand them in on time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 10% Solution

Studies show that students who DO the following things average grades 10% higher than those who do not!

♦ Consider school your job.
♦ Go to class.
♦ Read over your notes once a week.
♦ Preview your readings before lectures.
♦ Study with a group 25% of the time.
♦ Make up exam questions as you study.
♦ Study during daylight hours.
♦ Don't just read and highlight, RECITE!
♦ Compare notes with a classmate.
♦ Write exams neatly.
♦ Exercise / Eat right / Sleep enough.
♦ Balance work and play.

Source: Learning Strategies Development, Queen’s Learning Commons,
www.queensu.ca/qlc
**Guest Speaker**

Introduce Ms. Marissa Piribauer and remind students that they can make appointments with her through the Commerce Portal.

Marissa will lead an approximately 45-minute session on managing stress in a competitive environment. Because Marissa works specifically with Commerce students, she will share advice and tips that directly pertain to the audience.

Marissa will work with the group at learning to identify their stress triggers to help recognize ways in which to thrive in a high pressure environment. Below (Figure 1) is a sample worksheet and handout that will be given to Marissa as an example of an activity that has been used by the Commerce Program in the past. She may choose to alter or change this worksheet entirely.
Thriving in High Pressure Environments: Worksheet 1 – Assessing Stress

What gets me worked up? Identify current sources of stress in my life.

How do these things affect my day-to-day quality of life?

What steps am I ready to take to optimize my level of stress?

Figure 2 Sample Worksheet
(Source: Ashley Vanstone, Ph.D. Candidate, Psychology, Queen’s University, used with permission)
Thriving in High Pressure Environments:
What works for me? Ideas for managing stress (PACES)

Pay Attention
- Start a mindfulness practice for ___ minutes per day
- Choose some daily activities that I could practice more mindfully
- Use a yoga practice to make mindfulness physical
- Take a moment to stop and re-focus when I find that my thoughts have drifted away from the task at hand and into anxiety-provoking areas
- Spend a few minutes to do something pleasant that totally absorbs my attention

Evaluate Assumptions
- Ask myself: “why does this situation upset me/make me nervous/get me down?”
- Is there another way to look at this?
- What would I say to a friend who was in a similar situation?
- Decide what is good enough
- Challenge self-critical thoughts
- Look for opportunities to be more compassionate to myself and those around me

Change the Environment
- Be more intentional about how I use my time
- Maybe procrastination is a problem for me?
- Get some coaching on my learning/study strategies
- Change my work structure to make flow experiences more likely
- Be honest about my needs with my group members

Support a Lower-Stress Lifestyle
- Get regular exercise
- Make more time for sleep
- Change some of my sleeping habits to get better quality sleep
- Make sure I’m getting the food I need
- Talk to an academic advisor if I’m worried about my performance in school
- Go see a personal counsellor if there are personal concerns I’d like to talk about in a confidential, non-judgmental environment

(Source: Ashley Vanstone, Ph.D. Candidate, Psychology, Queen’s University, used with permission)
Workshop #4: Reboot

**Goal**

To give students a fresh start. To address questions and concerns students might have as they reflect on their first semester in Queen’s Commerce.

**Instructions to Students Prior to Workshop**

- Ensure you have your student card with you.
- Upon registration, please input a question that you would like answered regarding making a fresh start in the program.

**Resources**

2-3 current Commerce students who struggled in some way during 1st year

**Venue & Budget**

Staff of Queen’s School of Business can book space in Goodes Hall for no charge. The lecture theatre is equipped with a podium, computer, projector, screen, speakers, and wireless internet access. For the panel discussion, there may be a need for additional seating for the panelists. The key to the storage room is located in Commerce Office, Room 130.

This workshop will be moderated by a Commerce staff member. There may be some lieu time issued to the staff member leading the session. This workshop is not seen as over and above academic advising. It is proactive advising. The panelists will consist of current Commerce students. Their presence will be on a volunteer basis. Coffee and treats will be served at the workshops at a cost of approximately $200 per workshop.

**Panelists**

The panelists should be in 3rd or 4th year and chosen by the Academic Advising team for Commerce. The Advisors work with students in all years of the program and see first-hand the growth and development. They would know who good candidates would be to approach. The ideal student panelists might have had some of the following experiences:

- From out of province or country and homesick first year.
- Failed COMM 161 or 111 and was released from probation at the end of 2nd year; still went on exchange.
- Overly committed to extra-curricular activities.
- Not involved enough in extra-curricular activities.
Training for Panelists

The Academic Advisors should send separate emails on behalf of the workshop leader to the students they would like to approach about the panel. Many students state that they would like to help other students who are experiencing the challenges they faced but that does not mean they want to be part of an open forum. The emails should explain the audience and the goal of the workshop. The Commerce Program is trying to encourage students to persevere through their difficulty. These students are not alone and almost every, if not every, student struggles from time to time.

Meet with panelists and provide them with the following questions for the workshop:

1. What was the most difficult part of first year for you?
2. What did you do, if anything, to get back on track?
3. How did you seek support?
4. What do you do now if you start to feel overwhelmed or lonely?

Content: Part 1

Through experience with Commerce students three of the main concerns that students have after they have had a difficult academic transition to university are:

1. Am I going to get kicked out?
2. Will I still be able to go on exchange?
3. Am I the only student going through this experience?

1. Am I going to get kicked out?

Probably not.

Commerce Program Progression Regulations:

In order to progress to the next year of study, a Commerce student must:

a. attain an academic year GPA of not less than 2.00 at the end of the academic year; and
b. maintain a cumulative GPA of not less than 2.00 (upper year students); and
c. pass all courses attempted (including Arts and Science and Commerce electives); and
   d. take all of the courses required and be registered as a full-time student in the Commerce Program

A student who fails to meet one of these requirements will be placed on Academic Probation for the following academic year. A student may not be placed on Academic Probation more than once in the Commerce Program.

A student who fails to meet more than one of these requirements will be required to withdraw from the program (Queen’s Bachelor of Commerce website, 2013).

Tell those in attendance to make an appointment through the portal with an Academic Advisor if they did not pass a course or if their GPA is under 2.0. An Advisor can explain the progression regulations in more detail and can talk to a student about the appeal process if required to withdraw (RTW).
Will I still be able to go on exchange?

Probably.

Exchange Eligibility Regulations:
To be eligible, students must be in good academic standing with 2.0 GPA and have completed all first- and second-year core courses. Students apply for exchange in their second year and will be well aware of the application process and the exchange opportunities available thanks to vigorous promotion of the exchange program by the Centre for International Management (Queen’s Bachelor of Commerce website, 2013).

Am I the only student going through this?

Absolutely not.
Students struggle. Sometimes things don’t work out the way we thought they would. You cannot be too hard on yourself. The Commerce Program wants you to persevere, and we try to give you the tools to do so. Also sometimes students find themselves in the wrong program or even the wrong school. It doesn’t matter if you thought you would be in the Commerce Program since Grade 8. Sometimes students need to forge a new path. Just don’t panic. Make sure you meet with someone from the Commerce Program.

Content: Part 2

The Panel
Invite panelists up and ask them to introduce themselves and provide the following:

- Name
- Year of study
- Area of study

After the introductions, the present questions should be posed by the moderator to the panelists.

No need to leave a lot of time for questions at the end but do leave some time for mingling. Often students will come up and address their questions one-on-one. End the workshop at least 10 to 15 minutes prior to the scheduled end to allow for mingling.

Links to On-Campus Resources

At times problems can escalate to the point that is beyond a student’s ability to cope. Please reach out if you find yourself in that position.

Leave the information below on a slide. The students have been given this information before.

The group may be ready to listen to some of the services offered by Learning Strategies. They can register for any of the workshops listed below at www.queensu.ca/qlc

Learning Strategies   613-533-6315
## Winter Learning Strategy Workshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Make a Fresh Start - Academic Success Strategies</strong></td>
<td>Monday, January 14</td>
<td>1:30-2:20 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catch Up/Keep Up - Time Management Tips</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, January 22</td>
<td>11:30am-12:20 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation and Procrastination</strong></td>
<td>Wednesday, February 6</td>
<td>1:30-2:20 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active Reading and Note-making</strong></td>
<td>Thursday, February 7</td>
<td>3:30-4:20 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Memory Strategies</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, February 26</td>
<td>2:30-3:20 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Draft Your Exam Study Schedule</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, March 26</td>
<td>11:30am-12:20 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparing For and Writing Short Answer and Essay Exams</strong></td>
<td>Wednesday, March 27</td>
<td>11:30am-12:20 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparing For and Writing Multiple Choice Exams</strong></td>
<td>Thursday, March 28</td>
<td>10:30-11:20 am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://www.queensu.ca/learningstrategies/undergrad/workshops.html](http://www.queensu.ca/learningstrategies/undergrad/workshops.html)
Health, Counselling and Disability Services – great time to reiterate that Commerce contracts Marissa Piribauer, Personal Counsellor, to work with Commerce Students and that she is available in Goodes Hall.

Counselling Services  
www.queensu.ca/hcds
613-533-6000 Ext. 78264

Disability Services Office (DSO)  
www.queensu.ca/hcds/ds/
613-533-6467

Commerce Academic Supports – Commerce Office, Academic Advising, Commerce Writing Coach

The Commerce Office should be the primary resource for Commerce Students. The office should be able to direct students to the appropriate area. Students can book an appointment with an Academic Advisor or the Commerce Writing Coach through the Commerce Portal.

Extension

There is a possible opportunity to augment or extend this workshop if the Commerce staff member is interested.

Queen’s Learning Strategies offers a session in January annually called Make a Fresh Start to Queen’s undergraduate students. The workshop leader from Commerce may want to ask Learning Strategies if it is possible to condense their Make a Fresh Start session. Perhaps they can prepare a 25- to 30-minute session directed specifically to Commerce students.

The Commerce Program has worked with Learning Strategies many times, and the staff members there have been very accommodating in terms of tailoring their workshops and delivering the tailored workshops in Goodes Hall.
CHAPTER 4: REFLECTION

This workshop series highlights a number of beneficial elements of many First-Year Experience programs. While all institutions are different, there are some key areas to consider when designing a FYE program. The overarching goal of the FYE program is to help first-year students transition to university with the hope that they will continue on to second year. In essence a FYE program is a win-win; it helps students to transition to university and allows for a stronger retention rate for the universities in which they are enrolled. Many FYE programs now go beyond just introducing new students to the wide variety of campus resources. Program designers must look at the needs of their particular student population. The programs can facilitate student transition through a number of ways. The elements that can be integrated into a First-Year Experience program are limitless.

My interest in First-Year Experience programs was sparked when I became an Academic Advisor for the Queen’s Commerce Program three years ago. Initially, I was impressed with the level of connection many students had with the program. The Commerce program is a relatively small Faculty, and it enlists three full-time Academic Advisors. Administration values the role of the Academic Advisor and allows the advising team a great deal of autonomy.

The advising team not only works with students throughout their 4-year program; they are also the front line of contact for recruitment and admission. The team gives presentations to prospective students at Queen’s Fall Preview, Academic Advisors staff the booth at the Ontario Universities Fair, and they have one-to-one
meetings with students interested in applying to Commerce. For approximately seven years, the Commerce program has led orientation days offered to incoming Commerce students in the summer prior to their arrival. However, despite all of these great relationship-building activities, I still felt there was something lacking in the first-year transition.

When I began my position, I was hired to mainly work with first-year students. One of the books I was given as a resource was *Challenging & Supporting the First-Year Student: A Handbook for Improving the First Year of College* (Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot, 2005). Like so many in a busy work environment, I quickly skimmed through this resource and then got involved in my role. It was only after I started to hear the same comments from students over and over again about how they felt alone and/or confused, that I picked this book up and really started to read it. I began to question what was missing in our program. I started to deeply consider the impact of proactive advising, which is essentially reaching out and informing/supporting students before they ask for help. As I started researching transition to university, I kept discovering information on First-Year Experience (FYE) programs and University 101 courses. A University 101 course is basically a FYE program that earns credits towards a degree.

While I think a University 101 course would be ideal in the Commerce program, I do not see that as a possibility in the near future. The program has recently undergone a curriculum review and 6 more Commerce units have been added to first year to replace the required 6 units of Arts and Science electives. However, I do believe there is room to deliver the workshop series. My experience with first-year students has shown that
early in the program they are very eager to get involved and feel prepared. Offering a richer introduction to the program and guiding students through first year will introduce them to the tools that could help them be successful in the program and allow them to progress into second year and beyond.

In July 2012, I became the successful candidate for the position of Associate Director, Commerce Program. Part of my portfolio is academic advising so I still advise students. It has been an exciting and challenging year. I was able to be directly involved in the hiring of the Commerce Academic Advisors and have found that they share my interest and passion for proactive advising. In the last year alone, we have been able to introduce new events and get additional training that we believe will ultimately help our students make an easier transition.

While designing the workshops I identified some potential challenges with their delivery. I expect there will be four major challenges.

1. **Attendance** – The workshops are not mandatory; therefore I will need student buy-in. If the students do not believe in the benefits of the workshop they will not attend.

2. **Staff** – The workshops have been designed to be led by a Commerce program staff member, more specifically an Academic Advisor. If the advising team does not believe in proactive advising, it will be difficult to get the enthusiasm needed to deliver and continue to develop the workshops.

3. **New curriculum** – Because the new curriculum is being introduced at the same time as the workshops, there may be issues or concerns that will arise that I have not addressed in this workshop series.

4. **Complete focus on students** – These workshops have a theme throughout that puts the onus on student actions being the reason why they find themselves struggling. It is entirely possible that they might have a faculty member who was the cause for concern. In that case, a similar workshop series for faculty members might be helpful.
I am eager to introduce the Transition to First-Year Commerce workshop series to our incoming Class of 2017. I must be aware of the potential challenges when delivering the workshops. This workshop series will constantly change and develop over time. I look forward to discovering new ways to improve the workshops based on the needs of our students.
REFERENCES


