Taking on the Sophomore Slump:
Intentional Learning through Campus Collaboration

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General Education & Assessment
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Introductions
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What the Literature Says about Freshmen!

- Motivated to dive into college
- Establishing friends
- Embracing common experience
- Optimistic and determined
- Defining themselves (relishing new independence)
...and about Sophomores!

• Three-pronged identity crisis: personal, social, academic

• Abandonment by institution—hung out to dry
Sophomore Symptoms

- Decreased motivation and focus
- Uncertainty about life goals
- Doubts about how academic life relates to post-college life
- Socially disconnected
Slump and Funk
(not a musical genre) . . .

- Declining GPAs
- Lack of success and satisfaction
- (Masked) self-doubt
- “It’s just me”
- Fear of failure
Why a “Sophomore Experience”?

• Deepen community
• Create satisfaction
• Improve academic performance
• Foster leadership
• Build confidence
• Sharpen focus
• Diversify options
• Expand opportunity
• Augment success
Institutional Motivators . . .

- Enhance recruitment
- Increase retention
- Boost graduation rates
- Plant loyal alums
Live Together

GOAL: Building community

- Sophomore-only housing
- Differentiation from freshman campus living experience
- Early move-in/assisting first years

Sophomore Station

Still looking for your PLACE at BELMONT?
Learn Together

Goal: Align learning goals of existing “sophomore specific” courses to the needs of sophomores
Building a Sophomore Experience...

• Major Components
  – Academic
  – Academic Direction
  – Spiritual/Character
  – Social/Community

• COM 1100 & Learning Communities
• Guided self-analysis
• Personal Purpose Statement
• Accountability
• Living a Better Story
• Spiritual Discernment series
• Sophomore living experience
• Sophomore Serve
Building a Sophomore Experience...

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Building a Sophomore Experience...

• **What was already in place**
  - Strong First-year Experience
  - Vertical Core Curriculum
    - Some requirements are intentionally placed in the first or second 60 hours
  - Learning Community Courses
    - Semester 2; involve 2 disciplines
  - Fundamentals of Speech
    - Semester 2, 3 or 4

• **What was modified/added**
  - Growth & Purpose for Students
    - Full-time staff member + part time coaches
  - Sophomore Dorms + increased programming from Res Life
    - Co-curricular programming
  - Speech course
    - Focused self-exploration
    - Craft a personal statement of purpose
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Belmont’s “GPS”: Growth & Purpose for Students

- Belmont’s Sophomore-Year Experience

- Our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP); part of SACS (accreditation) evaluation
GPS Office: Growth & Purpose for Students

Components
- Initial Written Assessment
- IAP
- Strengthsfinder/FOCUS
- Group Meetings

Assessment
- Collegiate Link
- Database
Build a Sophomore Experience

• Use what you have to do new things
  – Res. Life → Soph. Dorms and programs
  – University Ministries → Immersion Trips
  – BELL Core → COM 1100 & Learning Communities
  – Library → Learning Commons

• Create new
  – GPS Office with Director and Coaches
  – Sophomore Serve
Building a Sophomore Experience

1) What common experiences (academic or co-curricular) do you already have?

2) What experiences could you modify or enhance?

3) What do you think you need to add?
Use Existing Resources When Possible

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Sophomore Issues

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