Off to A Good Start

The First Year Advising Office is committed to engaging first year students in the academic aspects of college. With an incoming class of nine hundred and sixty-four, our first year advisors have been busy assisting students with their fall and spring schedules. First Year Faculty Advisors play an integral role in helping students become acclimated to their new environment. Students are able to build relationships with their advisors, both as mentors and professors, because the first year advisors are also Monmouth faculty. Our advisors know how to help their students because they are also the ones teaching them.

First year students are faced with a unique load of challenges that can at first seem a bit daunting. Transitioning into college effects many diverse aspects of one’s life. New academic and social pressures can be both challenging and rewarding. When first year students need a little extra help along the way, our first year advisors are there to guide and assist them in many ways. They always make sure to suggest the various support services that are available to all Monmouth students. These include faculty and peer tutoring, the Writing and Math Learning Centers, counseling, and other important resources. The First Year Advising Office is the first connection to all of the helpful services Monmouth University has to offer.

This fall, first year students met with their advisors to plan their academic schedules for the upcoming semester. Continuing this year, our online appointment scheduling program, Advisortrac, made it easy for students to make appointments with just a few clicks of their mouse. Once they met with their advisor, they had the opportunity to sit in our twelve-station computer lab to pick out sections with our SAMs (Student Advising Mentors). The SAMs are an important aspect of schedule making because they were first year students themselves, and they are able to offer assistance based on their own knowledge and experience. A new program was also implemented this semester, which allowed students to meet with a SAM in Mullaney Hall, the new residential dorm building. This has made accessing our services even easier for first year students. In these ways, first year students are better prepared to navigate their future years at Monmouth University.

Debbie Kavourias, Director of Advising
A Student’s Impressions of Her First Semester at MU
By Marissa Cusanelli

The transition from high school to college is a new experience that can be hard for some, but Monmouth University has made it a very easy transition for me. In high school, I was very involved in extracurricular activities. I knew, even before I started here, that I wanted to become involved in some of the clubs on campus. By automatically receiving weekly emails about club meeting dates and times, it has been very easy for me to become involved and be a part of the activities here at Monmouth University.

The faculty members that I have encountered have been nothing but helpful, friendly, and kind. My first year advisor has been excellent at answering my questions right away and always being there to help me figure out exactly what I want to accomplish during my time here at Monmouth University. My professors are always there to help me in any way and always answer my questions. The courses that I am taking not only teach me valuable academic knowledge but also teach me about real life experiences that I will encounter after college and how to deal with them. My First Year Seminar course, The Working World: College and Transition, is especially helpful in this way. The course has given me insight about what to expect during my four years here at Monmouth University and also what to expect after I graduate and go into the working world.

Additionally, I am very lucky to be a part of the amazing student body here at Monmouth University. I have met many new people that I will build friendships with that may last a lifetime. I am very grateful to be a part of the school pride and spirit that we express as a whole. I will carry my Hawk pride with me throughout my life. I know that I will have an incredible college experience here at Monmouth University and that my future will be very bright because I am a part of this prestigious institution “where leaders look forward.”

Advising 101: Reflections of a First Time First Year Advisor
By Kathryn Kloby, Ph.D.

After completing my third year of teaching at Monmouth, I realized that I was not as nimble as I should be when answering student questions about general education requirements, declaring a minor, changing a major, selecting courses, and many other concerns. I felt as though I was getting a handle on the demands of teaching. I established good relations with my colleagues, and was making great strides with my research agenda and other service activities. And yet, I was not fully comfortable with student advising. In an institution such as Monmouth, that emphasizes teaching and providing a quality education for students, I felt compelled to learn more and become a better advisor.

Where better to turn to sharpen my advising skills than to First Year Advising in the Center for Student Success. I signed up for summer advising where I was part of a small cohort of faculty who engaged in a comprehensive training program prior to summer advising. We met all of the folks who are responsible for making sure that students settle into residential halls, make sure they are registered, and are on track with billing or financial aid. We met key personnel who are responsible for tutoring and providing a safety net of care for students who encounter challenges along the way. We carefully examined the new General Education Requirements. We asked questions. We received the one-to-one attention we needed to build our knowledge base and confidence as advisors.

Summer advising during the third week of summer registration was somehow intense and fun. Morning meetings rallied the advising troops and informed every one of how we should shift our advising strategies based on class availability. New advisors were shadowed by First Year Advising’s experienced and gracious leaders and staff. SAMs were helpful and provided encouragement to incoming students who seemed a little overwhelmed. I made some new friends among program staff and other First Year Advisors. We ate well during breakfast and lunch. It was like our own faculty version of summer camp...but without mosquito bites, smores, and missing my parents.

As I reflect on the value of my experience as a new First Year Advisor there are several elements that should be stressed. Going through the training, summer advising, and now advising through the academic year have made me a better advisor. I have a stronger sense of how students should plan their academic schedules. I am aware of all of the dedicated folks on campus who work to make sure our students succeed in their first year of academic study at Monmouth. I know that I can call them when a student presents a question that I cannot readily answer. My confidence in my first year advising transcends to advising juniors, seniors, and even graduate students. And most importantly, when I meet with students, they know that I am there for them, that I can solve their problems, and that I am strategically helping them to chart the course of a successful experience at Monmouth University.
For the third year in a row, Monmouth’s newest students have been shown the importance of giving back through the first year service project. The Class of 2014 has come together to address the issues of hunger and homelessness throughout their first semester at Monmouth. After being introduced to the first year service project during new student orientation, the student committee has come together to find new ways to involve their peers in their efforts to raise awareness and take action against poverty in Monmouth County.

Collecting non-perishable food items has been a successful project that has taken many forms throughout the first semester. During new student orientation, first years brought donations from home to kick-start their involvement in July. In September, the service project committee partnered with Residence Hall Association (RHA) to launch You Can Build It, a new competition added to RHA’s Battle of the Buildings. Each residence hall team was challenged to collect as many food items as possible and then to create a sculpture using the food. Judges evaluated the quantity of food and the sculpture. Beechwood Hall’s sand castle sculpture took first prize. In total, students donated over four hundred pounds of food to the Food Bank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties through Move For Hunger.

In October, student leaders went into the community to work with local agencies that help to combat homelessness. First year students were responsible for planning Halloween parties at Spring House and Linkages and others helped to serve meals at Meal at Noon and Sarah’s Feast. Upperclassmen got involved in the first year service project by helping to support projects hosted by the committee during Student Government Association’s Big Event. Professor Sanford’s first year seminar classes also battled in a Penny Wars competition raising $60 for the first year service project.

November brings Hunger and Homelessness Awareness week and the start of the holiday season. One of the most exciting events planned by the student committee, “Houseless Not Hopeless,” was a powerful program meant not only to involve students in service but also to educate them on the realities of living in poverty. Forty-five students participated in service activities and in a “sleep out” in cardboard shelters on Friday, November 12. After inspiring words from Professor Barbera of Social Work, students built their shelters in teams and began a night of service. Over thirty blankets were assembled for Project Linus and three hundred peanut butter and jelly sandwiches were made for local soup kitchens. Students were excited about the ways they were able to fight poverty and were very affected by a night spent in the cold. The student committee will finish the semester by using over $1000 donated by students, faculty, and staff to feed families for the Thanksgiving holiday and support campus efforts like “The Giving Tree” to help families in need celebrate a wonderful holiday season.

Susan Damaschke, Coordinator of First Year Student Retention
Discover the Avenues Possible Regarding Major and Career Choices

Career and Major Exploration

The First Year Advising Office places a high emphasis on engaging students early in the process of career development and self-assessment. First year students, particularly, are strongly encouraged to participate in a variety of career education programs and services, including workshops and individual appointments where technological resources will be matched with majors and minors. In addition, job outlook, salary information, graduate school information, and other related information will be explored.

Our office utilizes various resources for career and major exploration including the FOCUS Career Assessment which will help you analyze your career planning status; self-assess interest values and skills; explore and analyze occupations based on your interests and work values; explore and analyze occupations based on personality and life values; and find information for specific occupation and compare the occupations side by side. In addition, we can help you connect with our Shadow Alumni Directory where you can contact alumni in a field of interest to ask them important questions regarding their careers.

Career decision making is a lifelong process that is revisited throughout one's life. Choosing an academic major and selecting a potential career field can be both an exciting and overwhelming time. It involves an in-depth process of self-discovery centered on finding a fit between who you are and possible careers that interest you utilizing resources and services along with professional guidance available to you through the First Year Advising Office.

For an individual appointment, please stop by our office (Center for Student Success-lower level of the Student Center) or call 732-571-3458.

Danielle Schrama, Coordinator of Advising