Many higher education researchers and professionals now agree that the sophomore year is just as pivotal as the first and last years of a student’s college experience. As Schaller (2007) notes,

[T]he sophomore year may be particularly difficult because the newness of college has worn off. Sophomores face at least three years of hard work in front of them, with increasing financial burdens over the first year. At the same time, these students may be struggling to determine career goals and to deal with personal development issues. (p. 7)

Often, the key to ensuring that the sophomore year does not become the “forgotten year” lies in the programming and resources offered by the institution (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006). Some colleges host on-campus welcome-back events for their sophomores; others invite them to go on exclusive outdoor retreats. No matter what the venue, more and more colleges and universities are recognizing the importance of paying special attention to sophomores, thus making them feel like a valued and integral part of the student community.

Whereas retention was previously the number-one goal driving the development of second-year programs, campus professionals and faculty are also working to help sophomores stay engaged in their college experience, helping them overcome what is often referred to as the “sophomore slump.”

What is ECU doing to ensure continued engagement during the sophomore year and beyond? The Office of Student Transitions and First Year Programs (OSTFYP) is currently reviewing programs from other colleges that are considered to have “best practices” in innovation aimed specifically at increasing sophomore academic and social engagement. These campuses include but are not limited to Beloit College, Colorado College, Loyola College, and the University of South Carolina.

What else are we doing? We have reviewed results from past sophomore surveys to understand what our students want from their sophomore year. We are engaging key campus stakeholders including administrators, faculty, staff, and students to facilitate the development of sophomore specific programming. Most importantly, we are linking all to the mission of our institution.

Our plan focuses on eight areas: academic engagement through living/learning centers; coursework and research; build a sense of community and identity; faculty interaction beyond the classroom; self-reflection; planning and goal setting; majors exploration; social interaction/peer networks; and campus involvement and leadership. This year we are offering four new sophomore programs. The two fall programs were Rally at the Rec (a Fall semester welcome back) and a Faculty/Sophomore “Consider This” dinner. The two spring programs will include a resource fair and a Sophomore Run (you’re halfway there) event.

We want to hear from you, parents and families, as well. Please send any suggestions you or your student has on future sophomore specific programming to Mary Beth Corbin at corbinm@ecu.edu.
Volunteer and Service Learning Center

Servire: To Serve

You’ve fed them, clothed them, put a roof over their head, and now you’ve sent them off to college. You want your child to achieve the most they can during their time at ECU; after all, your child’s college years are supposed to shape and ready them to enter the “real” world. You can help your child thrive inside and outside of the classroom by encouraging him or her to visit the Volunteer and Service-Learning Center (VSLC). Located in the Old Cafeteria Complex, the VSLC engages students in effective volunteer and service-learning activities to strengthen communities, promote an enduring commitment to social responsibility, and enhance the academic experience.

The VSLC offers myriad opportunities for students to engage in service activities. Our Calendar of Events provides basic details and contact information for one time events like food drives and community clean-ups. The Service Opportunities Guide lists more than 100 community non profit and human service agencies that welcome ECU students, particularly those looking for ongoing volunteer and service-learning experiences. Included in the guide are student led programs under the VSLC, which include Adopt-A-Grandparent, the Campus Kitchen at ECU, tutoring and mentoring programs, alternative spring break immersion experiences, and Pirate Playtime. These programs provide your child with the ability to serve, and the capacity to grow as a leader. Each opportunity involves a preparation and reflection component.

Students can also enroll in service-learning courses throughout their academic career. Service-learning is a method of instruction that has the benefit of meeting academic course objectives and helping students develop a sense of engagement and social responsibility—service-learners have the chance to apply their skills and knowledge, make real decisions that positively impact their surroundings, experience and embrace diversity, gain deeper understandings of themselves and society, and develop as leaders.

Students who volunteer or enroll in a service-learning course should register with the VSLC. This is an easy online process: students just log into OneStop, click on the Volunteer and Service-Learning Center link, and then fill out the simple form. By registering with the VSLC students can track their service hours and qualify for coverage under the VSLC’s free liability insurance policy. Time sheets are available on the VSLC website—students may return completed time sheets to the VSLC, after which they can view and print their service record on OneStop.

So why should service be important to your pirate? By engaging in various service opportunities college students are able to explore a major and possible career path outside of the classroom while also learning from the wisdom in the local community. They can meet likeminded peers, develop strong community networks, and identify new hobbies, passions and goals. Service is also profitable addition to resumes. Additionally, employers and professional schools look for individuals that have a variety of practiced skills in their back pocket. Students active in volunteering and service-learning also have increased self-awareness and satisfaction.

The VSLC staff is always willing to help students find connections to service. We can be contacted by e-mail (vslc@ecu.edu), phone (252-328-2735), or fax (252-328-0139). For more information visit our website at www.ecu.edu/vslc.

Book Corner

The Naked Roommate: And 107 Other Issues You Might Run Into in College by Harlan Cohen.

Book Summary taken from back cover.

“In college, there’s a surprise around every corner but that doesn’t mean you can’t be prepared! From sharing a bathroom with 40 strangers to sharing lecture notes, The Naked Roommate is your behind-the-scenes look at EVERYTHING you need to know about college (but never knew you needed to know).

Expert and student advice about: roommates, relationships, classes, friends, finances, dorm life, sex, no sex, alcohol, Greek life, laundry, and everything that really matters in college...”

Also available by Harlan Cohen -

The Happiest Kid on Campus: A Parent’s Guide to the Very Best College Experience (for You and Your Child).
Winter Wellness Tips
Karen Warren, Director, Campus Wellness

Winter has arrived in full force with some warm weather and come cooler weather. Keeping yourself well during the winter has some special challenges since we tend to spend more time indoors and be less active. Here are some tips that will help you have a well winter.

**Wash your hands.** Be sure to model this good behavior for your family. When you come in the house the first thing you need to do is wash your hands. This is the #1 way to prevent the spread of germs. Wash hands with soap for 10 to 20 seconds before and after eating and after touching things others have touched, especially remote controls and computer keyboards. If someone in the family is sick, now is the time to pamper them (or yourself) by restricting kitchen use.

**Keep exercising or start now.** It can be a challenge to exercise when it is cold and dark outside but now is the time to enlist an exercise partner to help motivate you and to try out things you enjoy. It is all about movement, so it could be taking a dance class, playing a sport, or being adventurous and taking a Zumba class. This is the time to make use of your recreational center membership or bring out the Wii Fit. There are also many exercise DVD’s, videos, and TV exercise programs. Remember that you are more likely to keep up what you enjoy, so try a lot of ways to get more movement in your life.

**Stay hydrated.** All the dry heat in our houses plays havoc with our sinuses so drink eight glasses of water each day. This will help keep you feeling energized and make your mucous membranes (such as those in your sinuses) more resistant to bacteria. A salt water spray from the drugstore can be beneficial as well.

**Eat vegetables and fruits that are in season.** The more local the produce, the higher the nutrient levels. Here is a list of what is in season now: avocados, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, cauliflower, celery root, chicory, fennel, grapefruit, greens, wild mushrooms, mandarin oranges, sweet oranges, pears, spinach, and sweet potatoes.

**Seasonal Affective Disorder**
Seasonal affective disorder (also called SAD) is a type of depression that occurs at the same time every year. If you’re like most people with seasonal affective disorder, your symptoms start in the fall and may continue into the winter months, sapping your energy and making you feel moody. Less often, seasonal affective disorder causes depression in the spring or early summer. Don’t brush off that yearly feeling as simply a case of the “winter blues” or a seasonal funk that you have to tough out on your own — you may have seasonal affective disorder. Treatment for seasonal affective disorder includes light therapy (phototherapy), psychotherapy, and medications. Addressing the problem can help you keep your mood and motivation steady throughout the year.

Winter seasonal affective disorder (winter depression) symptoms include: depression, hopelessness, anxiety, loss of energy, social withdrawal, oversleeping, lost of interest in activities you once enjoyed, appetite changes (especially a craving for foods high in carbs), weight gain, and difficulty concentrating and processing information. Especially if your seasonal depression symptoms are severe, you may need medications, light therapy, or other treatments to manage seasonal affective disorder. However, there are measures you can do on your own that may help, such as make your environment sunnier and brighter, get outside, and exercise regularly.

Several herbal remedies, supplements, and mind-body techniques are commonly used to relieve depression symptoms. It’s not clear how effective these treatments are for seasonal affective disorder, but there are several that may help. Keep in mind that alternative treatments alone may not be enough to relieve your symptoms. Some alternative treatments may not be safe if you have other health conditions or take certain medications. Nutritional and dietary supplements used to treat depression include: St. John’s wort, melatonin, and omega-3 fatty acids.

Mind-body therapies that may help relieve depression symptoms include: acupuncture, yoga, meditation, guided imagery, and massage therapy. (SAD Information Source: Mayo Clinic)
The Office of Student Transitions and First Year Programs provides a coordinated, comprehensive approach to enhancing first year student success, and beyond, by achieving four fundamental goals: developing a sense of belonging, collaborating with academic affairs, serving as a liaison for parent council, and maintaining a sense of progression during the first year of college and beyond. These goals are accomplished through the following functional areas: New Student Orientation, Transfer Student Orientation, Freshman Seminar (COAD 1000), Plunge Into Purple, Student Convocation, Parent Services & Diversity Outreach, Transfer Student Services, and successfully transitioning beyond the freshman year.

Parent Philanthropy

Parent philanthropy is becoming one of the fastest growing trends nationally at public universities. As defined by Webster, philanthropy is the *effort or inclination to increase human well-being, as by charitable aid*. The mission of the ECU Parents Council is to *serve the families and university by fostering partnerships, communication and philanthropic support in efforts to promote and support ECU and its mission*. Through parent giving, we have been able to fund many initiatives on campus, and I would encourage you to view some of those areas of support by visiting [www.ecu.edu/parentscouncil](http://www.ecu.edu/parentscouncil). As we continue to grow a culture of parent philanthropy here at ECU, we would like to share with you our Leadership Parents brochure. While the Chancellor’s Society is the first level of giving that recognizes benefits at the university, no donation is too small. We strongly encourage parents to consider supporting the Parents Fund. Should you have questions regarding giving or becoming involved with our Parents Council, please feel free to contact me at hawkinsz@ecu.edu or by phone at 252.737.4827. No matter your reason for giving, at the heart of each gift is your desire to make an impact on your child’s experience here at East Carolina University.

Go Pirates!