The challenges and opportunities of engaging this new generation of students in learning

University of Rhode Island

January 2010
“We’re in a nicotine delivery business…”
We’re in the high impact practice delivery business...
Wabash National Study

- 49 institutions
- More than 17,000 students to date
- Longitudinal
- Purpose - identify high impact practices that promote liberal education
What do students bring to URI?
• Raising a family
• Talking with people whose ideas and values are different from their own
• Learning complicated new material
• Taking courses that challenge their beliefs and values
• Working to find a cure for a disease or illness
• Becoming passionate about or committed to their occupation
• Having administrative responsibility for the work of others
• Being recognized for contributions to their field of expertise
• Making a theoretical contribution to science
• Keeping up to date with political affairs
• Improving their understanding of other countries and cultures
• Working in a prestigious occupation
• Making a lot of money
• Getting the best grades they can
• Working to preserve and enrich the environment
Entering URI students place *more importance on*

- Being recognized for contributions to their field of expertise
- Making a theoretical contribution to science
- Working to find a cure for a disease or illness
- Working to preserve and enrich the environment
- Keeping up to date with political affairs
- Raising a family
- Having administrative responsibility for the work of others
- Making a lot of money
- Working in a prestigious occupation
Entering URI students place less importance on

- Becoming passionate about or committed to their occupation
- Improving their understanding of other countries and cultures
- Talking with people whose ideas and values are different from their own
- Getting the best grades they can
- Learning complicated new material
- Taking courses that challenge their beliefs and values
Compared to entering students at other large schools

- Do URI students enjoy reading?
- Do URI students enjoy writing?
Reading Enjoyment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>URI</th>
<th>Large Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry/Literature</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>34%</td>
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</table>
Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enjoy Expressing Ideas</th>
<th>Writing for Understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39% (URI)</td>
<td>33% (Large Schools)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45%</td>
<td>33% (Large Schools)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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www.liberalarts.wabash.edu
**Expectations**

- 59% of entering URI students say that their academic experiences will be the most important part of college
- 24% say that their academic experiences will be the most enjoyable part of college
- 55% say that URI is their first choice
- 76% plan to earn an advanced degree
What do students say about their experience at URI?
Compared to first year students at other large schools

- How many readings do URI students report being assigned?
- How many papers do URI students report being assigned?
- Do URI students report stronger or weaker relationships with faculty?
- Do URI students report spending more or less time preparing for class?
- Do URI students report binge drinking more or less?
Number of assigned readings

- 1 to 4: URI 16%, Large Schools 15%
- 5 to 10: URI 46%, Large Schools 38%
- 11 to 20: URI 22%, Large Schools 32%
- More than 20: URI 14%, Large Schools 15%

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Number of 5-19 page papers or reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>URI</th>
<th>Large Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 4</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 10</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Relationships with faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>URI</th>
<th>Large Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unavailable, unhelpful, unsympathetic</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available, helpful, sympathetic</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Time per week preparing for class

- **0-10 hours**
  - URI: 39%
  - Large School: 38%

- **11-20 hours**
  - URI: 39%
  - Large School: 39%

- **> 20 hours**
  - URI: 22%
  - Large School: 23%
Binge drinking episodes per week

- None: URI 42%, Large Schools 61%
- 1-2 times: URI 44%, Large Schools 31%
- 3 or more times: URI 14%, Large Schools 8%

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What have most of your grades been up to now?

- A or A-: 41%
- B+ or B or B-: 53%
- C+ or C: 6%
- C- or below: 1%
What educational experiences make a difference?
High-impact practices

1. Good Teaching
2. Academic Challenge
3. Diversity Experiences
4. NSSE Deep Learning
High-impact practices

• Good Teaching and High-Quality Interactions with “Faculty”
  – Faculty interest in teaching and student development
  – Out-of-class student/faculty interactions
  – Organization, preparation, clarity, prompt feedback

• Academic Challenge and High Expectations
  – Hard work, challenging assignments and interactions

• Diversity Experiences
  – Meaningful interactions

• NSSE Deep Learning
  – Synthesis, judgment, integration, and reflection
Outcomes

- Openness to diversity
- Academic motivation
- Literacy
- Need for cognition
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Integration</th>
<th>Diversity Experiences</th>
<th>Teaching Clarity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity/Challenge</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Motivation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for Cognition</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</table>
Diversity experiences

- Attending a debate or lecture on current political/social issues
- Participating in a cultural awareness workshop
- Having serious discussions with student affairs staff whose political, social, or religious opinions differ from their own
- Having serious conversations with students who have different ethnic identities, religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values
- Institutional emphasis on encouraging interaction among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds
Integration

- **Courses that**
  - Help students understand the historical, political, and social connections of past events
  - Help students see the connections between their intended career and how it affects society

- **Out-of-class experiences that**
  - Help students connect what they’ve learned in the classroom with life events
  - Help students translate knowledge and understanding from the classroom into action
Teaching clarity and organization

- Clear explanations
- Making good use of examples and illustrations to explain difficult points
- Effectively reviewing and summarizing material
- Clear interpretations of abstract ideas and theories
- Giving assignments that help students learn course material
- Well-organized presentations
- Being well prepared for class
- Using class time effectively
- Explaining course goals and requirements clearly
- Have a good command of what you are teaching
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Levels</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity experiences</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching clarity and organization</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
**High impact practices**

- Students have changed, but the core elements of high impact practices have not
- Intentionality and a willingness to experiment are the most important resources for implementing these practices
  - Money helps, but waiting for money doesn’t
- Can be assessed by talking with and listening to your students
  - Student perception matters, even if it doesn’t match yours
- [http://www.wabashnationalstudy.org/wns/research.html](http://www.wabashnationalstudy.org/wns/research.html)