

Final report of work completed in Spring 2017 by two Faculty Fellows

Faculty Fellow: Dr. Chitra Akkoor, Associate Professor of Communication
Topic: First Generation College Students

The objective of this faculty fellow project was to understand the experiences of first generation college students based on prior research and conduct a study of KSC students, with the goal of sharing this knowledge with faculty. With 43%, KSC is above the national average of 30% in enrolling first generation college students. Therefore, this project was intended as the first step in helping faculty understand the needs of this population. As part of this project, I reviewed research on the specific challenges of these students and ways in which to address those challenges. This report describes the work completed during the semester, shares some of the findings of the research, outlines initial steps taken to increase faculty's knowledge about the topic, and makes suggestions on how best to continue this project.

At the beginning of the spring semester an email went out to faculty who attended the first-generation college student panel in November 2016, the LLC faculty, BEST faculty, and Education faculty, inviting them to join a journal club co-facilitated by Chris Odat and me. The first meeting was held in early February and attended by 5 people. Chris and I chose two research articles for us to read and discuss. The group met again in March and April to discuss more articles. During these meetings we discussed the usefulness of "first generation" as a category, understanding the specific challenges of this population, and whether these challenges were limited only to first generation or whether most KSC students faced similar challenges, particularly because we are not a selective institution. We discussed the merits and demerits of specifically catering to first generation students rather than all students, and whether categorizations might increase the potential for negative stereotypes. Some faculty were skeptical while others described experiences with students that supported experiences described in the research.

I also applied for IRB at the beginning of the semester and got approval for my study by February at which point I met with Kristin Sweeney in Aspire to understand the resources they offer first generation students. Kristen was extremely helpful in explaining the TRIO program, providing me with a list of first generation students, and connecting me with Aspire staff. I began interviewing students in late February and early March. A total of 13 first generation students participated, giving their perspectives. I also interviewed all the Aspire staff in March and April. These findings were disseminated in a workshop during professional development day in May.

Literature on first generation college students reveal a number of challenges that students face both before and upon entering college. Lacking the social and cultural capital of having parents who have attended college, these students must navigate the process of applying for colleges on their own. Some are fortunate enough to have counselors or teachers who mentor them through the process, while others do it with minimal help. Both the literature and interviews with students and Aspire at KSC revealed that the Upward Bound program (one of the TRIO programs) helps motivate these students to go to college, aids in filling out applications, writing the college essay, deciding on schools, applying for loans, and offering summer camps to fill the gap that parents are unable to provide.

Upon arriving in college, FGC students often feel a lack of belonging. They must also negotiate their identity as a college student, and balance the demands of college with the expectations of family particularly because parents might not understand the demands of a college education. For students who are both first generation and low income there is often the additional stigma of class differences. From interviewing both students and Aspire staff at KSC, I found that the institution offers a great deal of support to these students. Besides Upward Bound, the college offers a summer Links program that brings students who have committed to coming to KSC on campus for a summer program. Students who have gone through this program report a much easier time adjusting to college. Aspire offers a College 102 preparatory course for first generation students, as well as ongoing support in time management, managing finances, applying for loans and scholarships, help preparing for GRE for those who wish to pursue graduate school, offer tutoring services, and advising in addition to that provided by faculty advisors.

One question that I was interested in was whether faculty should be doing something to support these students as well. Prior research tells us that informal faculty interactions outside the classroom, inviting these students to participate in research, or simply giving affirming messages predict student success. Research also shows that FGC students need more structure in the class and more directives. Administration, staff, and faculty must work collaboratively to support these students. It is also suggested that faculty discuss FGC issues deliberately in classes dealing with diversity to increase general awareness. Finally, an important advice from scholars and students I interviewed is not to conflate low-income status and first generation status because not all first generation students are low income. It also became evident that low-income status is more stigma causing than a first generation status.

The first generation college student experience has a great deal of complexity that needs to be understood. It is not yet clear whether having prior knowledge that a student is first generation can help faculty better support these students. A lot of research has focused on the first generation experience at more selective colleges; the question remains as to whether the difference between first generation and non-first generation students at KSC is that big. Something that became evident during my research was that thus far we have not undertaken any research that directly compares first generation and non-first generation experiences and this might be a natural next step if the institution feels a need to find out if these students are already well supported or more needs to be done. It would help to get a clearer picture of who our first generation students are, what their needs are, how they are currently being supported, and what if anything is lacking, before we develop faculty enrichment programs. There is also likely to be pushback from faculty if they suspect that they are being asked to do more or if enrichment efforts come across as being prescriptive. It would also be helpful to educate faculty on all the good work Aspire does so that we can at least point students in the right direction. Right now most faculty are not aware of all the services that Aspire offers. This would be a good direction for faculty enrichment to follow next, while the institution collects more data on our first generation students.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Faculty Enrichment Office and committee for this opportunity to dedicate time to this project. The course release was necessary to carve out time for the project. I appreciate the support offered by Chris Odato, Pru Cuper, Jamie Landau, and Glenn Geiser-Getz. I hope to continue with this project to understand more in-depth who our first generation students are at KSC.

Faculty Fellow: Dr. Karen Cangialosi, Professor of Biology
Topic: Open Pedagogy

Note: Several hyperlinks in this document provide additional information

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to serve as a Faculty Enrichment Faculty Fellow and to facilitate the Open Pedagogy Learning Community (OPLC) during the Spring 2017 semester together with Chris Odat. My [personal journey](#) into learning about and practicing techniques of Open Education in my teaching inspired me to seek ways to bring awareness to the KSC campus about the benefits of Open Education, including Open Educational Resources (OER), Open Pedagogy and Open Access. There were a total of 19 faculty and 3 staff members that participated regularly (or semi-regularly) in the OPLC.

The Open Pedagogy LC focused on what it means to teach and learn in the Open, and began with a discussion of "What is Open Pedagogy"? I gathered a [list of resources](#) and we had time to read and discuss some of them. While there are as many definitions of Open Pedagogy as there are educators and academic technologists practicing and theorizing about it, we continued with considering the principles outlined by [Robin DeRosa](#) to center our discussions:

Open Pedagogy is pedagogy that-

1. Emphasizes community and collaboration over content.
2. Empowers students to drive learning. ([Open licenses](#) change the relationships of learners to content, encouraging students to contribute to, not just consume, knowledge).
3. Connects students to their scholarly and professional communities of practice and the wider public (the open license builds a commons-oriented community where learning becomes a participatory practice rather than an event).
4. Provides a mechanism for students to continue to contribute and learn after the course or semester is over.
5. Increases access to higher education and public support, including, but not limited to, use of OER. (DeRosa also explains that the open ecosystem encourages transdisciplinary partnerships, sustains the economic growth of nonmarket goods and resources, and helps us articulate ways that the university and the public can help each other thrive.)

Our discussions continued throughout the semester as we considered various techniques and the philosophy of incorporating the practices of Open into the teaching of our courses.

As I serve as a member of the USNH Academic Technology steering committee, I was particularly fortunate to have been able to connect the work of the OPLC with an ongoing USNH initiative to promote Open Education at GSC, PSU, UNH and KSC. Having the privilege to work closely with Jenny Darrow (Academic Technology Director) and Chris Odat, (Instructional Consultant, Faculty Enrichment) strengthened my ability to co-facilitate a very successful learning community. Funding from the USNH initiative allowed us to coordinate an [Open Education Speaker Series](#) where we brought in several exceptional speakers working in Open Education, Web Domains and Digital Identity and Citizenship:

1. Andrew Rikard (student at Davidson College) and Erika Bullock (student at Georgetown University)
2. Robin DeRosa, Director of Interdisciplinary Studies at Plymouth State University

3. Martha Burtis, Director of the Digital Knowledge Center at University of Mary Washington
4. Bonnie Stewart, Educator, Social Network Researcher, University of Prince Edward Island

The OPLC met nearly every Friday of the semester and we had the special privilege of having these speakers join our discussions. I wrote about these experiences in my posts [Student Drivers](#) and [More Questions than Answers about Open Ped](#). I also ran several workshops focusing on some of the primary tools used by Open educators including Wordpress, Hypothes.is and Twitter.

Outcomes and Plans for the Future

1. Several OPLC faculty members plan to incorporate Open Pedagogy or continue to enhance their use of Open techniques in their teaching this coming AY 17-18.
2. Several OPLC faculty will continue to study and investigate its possibilities.
3. Some OPLC faculty members will become KSC Open Ed ambassadors AY 17-18 as part of the USNH Academic Technology Institute 2017. For example, OPLC member (Nora Traviss) was so inspired by OP that she is attending the Institute with colleague Tom Webler to learn more about OE. As a criteria for attending ATI, they have committed to a 1-year OE project in ENST.
4. Continuing discussions with OPLC member Mark Long (Director of the Integrative Studies Program), led to the initiation of a pilot project called 'Domain of One's Own' (DoOO) which will connect ISP outcomes with the philosophy and goals of Open Pedagogy beginning Fall 2017.
5. The DoOO project will also include faculty teaching non-ISP courses that integrate the practices of Open Pedagogy, and staff utilizing web domain spaces for other projects related to Open Education. In total, we anticipate 250 web domains used by students, faculty and staff.
6. For AY 17-18, I plan to continue to facilitate the OPLC as an Open Education ambassador with support from the USNH initiative campus capacity building funds.
7. Partly due to my status as an Open Pedagogy faculty fellow, I was invited to give a presentation and run a workshop on Open Education at the University of New Hampshire foreign language teachers technology day in Durham.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that the opportunity to serve as a Faculty Fellow in the Faculty Enrichment program gave me a unique experience that not only allowed me to spend concentrated time working with others to learn more about the power and potential of Open Pedagogy, but was a critical jump start to continuing this important work in the future.