

# WHEN BEST PRACTICES CHANGE

**Working Across Divisions  
for  
Student Success**

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## Your Presenters & Their Institution

- Lara Ferguson, Provost and VPAA
- Jennifer Green, AVP for Enrollment Management and Student Success
- Emily Heady, Senior Director, Student Success & Retention
- Longwood University, Farmville, VA
  - Public, with a history of being a women's college/normal school
  - Approx. 5000 students, mostly undergrad, missional focus on Citizen Leadership
  - Blue-ribbon majors in Nursing & Liberal Studies (Education)
  - High-touch student experience, strong emphasis on involvement

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## Higher Education Has Changed... and that is hard.

- Post-Millennial Students...
  - Communicate more constantly (though not more deeply) via technology
  - Expect a more bespoke approach to education
  - Focus on ROI or job-related outcomes, even at the individual course level
- Related Best (or Required) Practices
  - Communicating personally in various media, using minimal lingo, at the right time
  - More and wider cross-walks between K12 and college; degrees as strategic collaborations rather than four-year odysseys
  - Transparency about internal and external decision-making and outcomes

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### What We Collectively Know about These Best Practices

- Communication
  - Most of our email is deleted...but sometimes Twitter isn't effective.
  - Example: How do we get students to file their FAFSA?
- Customization
  - It's expensive, and we can't build everything to suit individual preferences...but we have to try!
  - Example: How do we do first-semester scheduling
- Transparency
  - It matters...but it requires context.
  - Example: "How many students are we going to have this fall?"

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How Do We Do All These Things Better?

## Partnerships

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### Today's Agenda

- Umbrella Point: We Need To Understand What, How, and Why Our Colleagues Are Doing
  - How Academic Affairs reached out during a curricular revision process
  - How Student Success reached out via a Student Coaching initiative
  - How physical spaces can encourage collaboration
  - How data analysis enables partnerships

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### Case Study #1: Longwood's General Education Revision

- Salad bar or Chinese menu version → A more coherent, skills-focused approach
- Smaller class sizes with more focus on writing/speaking
- More face-to-face time with senior faculty at the 100/200 level
- More customization/responsiveness to individual needs with fewer broad requirements (rather than many check boxes)
- Mostly faculty-driven at the planning stages, but more wide-ranging at implementation phase
  - *The Great Scheduling Exercise of Summer 2018*
  - *Cross-divisional Pro Dev Offerings, Summer & Fall 2018*

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### The Genesis of Civitae

- 2013-2016, primarily a faculty-driven process but with collaborations with all of these in the "building" phase:
  - *Building/Facilities personnel*
  - *First-Year Experience*
  - *Admissions*
  - *Institutional Effectiveness*
- 2017-Present, a whole-university process with Faculty Senate at the helm:
  - *Registrar*
  - *IT & Marketing*
  - *People who design buildings and technology and...and...*

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### Case Study #2: Longwood's New FYE/Student Success Model

- Previously: LSEM + a heavy focus on freshman experience/social engagement
- Now: Coaching + Cross-Divisional Transitional Programming + Heavy-Duty Back Office Data Analytics
- Wins: more partnership, more holistic approach to student experience, more personalization, less "run-around," more synching between academic and engagement calendars
- Challenges: it's not required, and it's sometimes invisible. Also...inertia.

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### Specifics

- 1064 students placed in coaching groups
- 58 coaches, drawn approximately 50/50 from faculty & staff
- Departments providing coaches ranged from the Office of the President to Recreation to Math to Student Conduct to Development to Education to Counseling and Psychological Services to Athletic Training...and on and on.
- Budget: \$900/coach + \$150/group = \$63,000
- Info/Development Provided
- Regular Activities & Special Interventions
- Assessment

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### Case Study #3: Buildings! Brock & Upchurch, plus more

- Brock – uniting many student service offices in one area (Registrar, Disability Resources, Student Success, Academic Success, Financial Aid)...and much needed study and hangout spaces.
- Upchurch – student services, food, student clubs/organizations, meeting rooms, multipurpose rooms, and hangout spaces.
- As Yet Unnamed New Academic Building – the usual, plus collaborative learning spaces, research/inquiry spaces, faculty development.
- Wins: Lots of cross-purpose spaces, lots of build-in collaboration...and the ability to meet on neutral territory in the presence of many witnesses.

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### Case Study #4: Data & Decision-Making, or, “We’re Still Learning”

- Challenges:
  - Lack of clarity about IR and University Analytics
  - Lack of centralized data and data governance policies
  - Prevalence of anecdotes and personal experience
  - Lack of formal mechanisms to use data to drive decision-making
- Opportunities:
  - Small-scale data distribution to faculty, advisers, and coaches
  - Student Success reach-outs to chairs/deans
  - Cross-divisional standing meetings to make decisions re: enrollment and program growth

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### Takeaways

- Major stakeholders need to initiate partnerships.
- Projects and programs provide opportunities to learn to partner (partnerships without an end goal amount to little).
- Each division must learn to articulate its assumptions, priorities, and desired outcomes.
- Data should inform discussions (and there's a learning curve in analyzing it!).
- Neutral (or shared) spaces are best.

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