



## The Pathway To Success



### We're For Strategic Planning

#### **Goal One:**

#### **Increase Enrollment and Student Success**

**Initiative:** 12C **Initiative Name:** Augment college-going education via a multi-media tool entitled Sycamoreology

#### *Introduction*

This initiative is intended to encourage new admits and their families to engage more closely with University resources, and educate them on how to find important information on their own. An interactive game, Sycamoreology, was developed that helped students and their families explore important areas of the University through various media over the summer, as well as having provided exposure to Blackboard, which is used in many ISU courses. The objective was for participants to find as many Sycamore Leaves as possible, which are located near important information pieces, thus helping to introduce participants to various resources available. NSO students are enrolled in Sycamoreology 101, providing Blackboard access. Each leaf is connected to a code, which the students can enter on Blackboard as a "quiz" answer. Other activity taking place in Blackboard was the ability to ask questions and interact with classmates, which helps in many ways with a successful transition to college.

#### *Purpose*

It is believed that students will be more successful if the information and services they need are known to them, and are readily available whenever they need them. This initiative builds upon the empowerment given students thru the Sycamore Express strategic goal initiative, by encouraging students to learn as much as they can about the University before their first semester even begins. In addition, Sycamoreology provides excellent exposure to Blackboard long before a student attends their first class. Believing that informed students will make informed decisions, and comfort and proficiency with an on-line academic tool will enhance academic performance, and having the ability to ask questions and interact with classmates early on will ease the transition to college life, are all beliefs and objectives of Sycamoreology that will lead to successful students, resulting in enhanced retention and graduation rates. Sycamoreology will have a positive impact on recruiting as well.

#### *Methods*

1. Identify objectives and concepts of the interactive tool
2. Identify key information locations and Blackboard strategies
3. Schedule multi-phased release of Sycamore Leaves
4. Secure personnel for Blackboard Q/A communication
5. Develop and continually market the interactive game
6. Identify objectives of participation incentives and procure appropriate items
7. Perform assessment and analysis
8. Continually refine the interactive tool based on that learned

### *Discussion*

As opposed to waiting for a fall 2013 launch of an interactive tool, which would have provided results in association with the fall 2014 freshmen class, it was decided to quickly develop a pilot that could have a positive impact on the fall 2013 class. This pilot provided results that were used to alter that which has been introduced in conjunction with the fall 2014 freshmen class, allowing for a more comprehensive program encompassing that which was initially learned. In addition, new fall 2014 transfer students have been incorporated into this initiative. Results associated with the fall 2014 class will be reported in conjunction with FY 2015 reporting responsibilities.

Clicking on a leaf does not require the student to enter Blackboard, however, the number of students that actually did so was 1,671, which is 57% of students who participated in orientation. Of these, approximately 50% of them actually participated in quizzes, which they did after having visited information sites to obtain the needed codes. 68% of the students took one quiz, 20% took two quizzes, and 12% took all three quizzes. Over 10% of those participating in quizzes achieved a perfect score on at least one of the quizzes they took, meaning that they visited all information sites associated with that particular quiz. Participant retention from fall 13 to spring 14 was 84.92% as compared to 80.78% for non-participants. Not only is Sycamoreology indicative of students learning things that provided help for a successful transition to college, they also received excellent exposure to Blackboard well in advance of the start of their academic endeavors. In addition, they became more comfortable in their transition to becoming college students via the question/answer feature and networking opportunities provided by their Blackboard participation.

Participation incentive objectives included increasing participant counts, textbook acquisition support and keeping students on campus during the Friday night of Welcome Week activities.

### *Summary*

Sycamoreology was very well received. (T-shirts indicating participation were hot items at NSO.) Key information has been accessed, Blackboard utilization has occurred, and data can be mined given that 991#'s have been captured. There were four sections of Sycamoreology 101, with students automatically being enrolled by the week of orientation they were scheduled to attend. This provides for additional capability to understand the impact that Sycamoreology has on not only all incoming freshmen as a whole, but it allows for additional analysis by each section of Sycamoreology 101. This can be useful in identifying if there are differences in students by week of orientation chosen, ranging from the perspective of average participation levels to average quiz score attainment. The comfort level and sense of inclusion that can be provided via the question/answer and networking opportunities the game affords should not be overlooked, as they were very important as well.

### *Initiative Chair(s) and Contact Information*

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