

Strategic Plan – Initiative Work Plan FY2015

Initiative Name Augument college-going education for admits and families via multi-media tool entitled Sycamoreology Date 5/28/14

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Thesis Statement The primary purpose of this strategic initiative is to provide an interactive tool that will be used to encourage students and family members to engage more closely with University resources, and educate them on how to find information on their own.

1. Introduction/Background – What?

An interactive game, Sycamoreology, was developed to help students and their families explore important areas of the University through various media over the summer, as well as providing 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 is the ability to ask questions and interact with classmates, which helps in many ways with a successful transition to college.

2. Proposal/Purpose/Justification – Why?

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.

3. Discussion of Past Years Results – Benchmark Successes?

(This section needs to be as long as is necessary to assess whether funding should be continued.)

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

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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 for fall 2013. 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.

Sycamoreology also played a role in encouraging students to timely submit immunization records and to take the Maple TA math test. In association with fall 2012, 147 immunization records had been received prior to June 1, 2012 from incoming freshmen and 686 records from June 4, 2012 to June 28, 2012. In fall 2013, 217 (48% increase) immunization records had been received prior to June 1, 2013 from incoming freshmen. In addition, 1,041 (52% increase) immunization records were received from June 3, 2013 to June 28, 2013. In regard to the Maple TA math test, 337 fall 2012 freshmen admits took the test prior to June 1, 2012. In fall 2013, 624 (85% increase) freshmen admits took the math test prior to June 1, 2013.

4. Work Plan, Next Fiscal Year – Action Steps – Process – How?

Sycamoreology is well underway for FY 2015. Questions are currently being released and students are actively engaged in playing the game. Initiative student workers are tracking participation and are regularly communicating with student participants. From information gathered during last year's pilot, questions are being released in fewer numbers at a time. In addition, transfer students are now included. Participation incentives have been ordered and incentives are being discussed regarding keeping students on campus for Welcome Week.

5. Reporting and Deliverable Schedule – When?

FY 2015 participation rates, etc., will not be known until the game comes to a closure after the start of the fall 2014 semester. Fall 2014 to spring 2015 retention data will not be known until January 2015, while retention to the second year (fall 2015) will not be known until late August 2015. Second year retention rates for the fall 2013 cohort will be known at the close of fall 2014 registration.

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6. Budget – How Much, a General Discussion of Funds Use?

This initiative is unique in that some monies existing at June 30, 2014 have already been committed to program costs associated with the FY 2015 initiative. This is due to the fact that marketing, inclusive of commitments regarding participation incentives, have already been publicized. In addition, funding being requested will also be used for the 2015-2016 program. Because of early commitments to potential program participants, there will always have to be financial balances at June 30 that will carry over to cover those commitments. Future commitments that have to be made due to when the program must start, have to be pre-funded a year in advance in order that they can be made with assurance.

7. Stakeholders and Management Plan – Who?

Domenic Nepote, Melissa Hughes, and Ann Malloy, as initiative co-chairs, will be overseeing this initiative and ensuring progress in regard to the work plan.

8. Outcome Assessment & Future Testing

(How will we know that we were successful?)

Sycamoreology has been very well received. (T-shirts indicating participation were hot items at NSO 2013, and they garnered support for playing the game from parents who readily questioned their students if they did not receive one.) 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 are very important as well. While the intent is to track students through retention and graduation, what the game may prove most useful for, is in identifying those students that choose not to participate so that they may be targeted for earlier supportive intervention.

9. Line Item Budget Discussion that tracks Budget Templates ...

(These sections also need to be as long as is necessary to articulate each of the budget line items.)

As noted in Item 6 above, this initiative is unique in that it needs to transition into a new fiscal year with not only funding for the Sycamoreology cohort already being worked with, but also with funding in place to be able to make, and fulfill, commitments to the next Sycamoreology cohort. Undergraduate student workers are used to **track participation and to facilitate communication**, such as via Blackboard, etc. It is anticipated that **\$8,000** will cover these wages for the fall 2014 class and allow for the start of the process next spring, which will impact fall 2015 freshmen/transfer enrollees.

Publication and marketing of the Sycamoreology game is done in collaboration with NSO. These activities should not exceed **\$8,000**, again, for not only the remainder of the work to be done in conjunction with the fall 2014 class, but also to introduce the game to the fall 2015 class next spring.

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The remaining **\$14,000** of the requested budget is to be used to **purchase participation incentives**. Each incentive is thought through to maximize the benefit. For example, \$100 book awards are presented in association with a drawing from names of those that participated in quizzes. The intent here is to not only encourage participation in the game and in the taking of the quizzes, which will result in both a better informed student and one with Blackboard experience, but also to help with textbook acquisition.

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