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UWF launches first-year experience program for Fall 2016

Pensacola, Fla. – Sept. 19, 2016 - The University of West Florida's University College is piloting a first-year experience program to help first-year students transition to university life. The "Dive Deep" First-Year Experience features several components, including a first-year introductory course, a common experience, a discussion series, a student showcase and an incentive program.

Introductory Course

Academic Foundations for Success is the introductory course. According to Dr. Kim LeDuff, dean of University College and associate vice provost, the course was designed to help students navigate university life. Throughout the semester, students are introduced to campus resources, support services and the campus and community culture. The course features 10 sections — each created to accommodate the students and taking a different focus on the first year in college.

Rick Duke, founding director for the Center for Entrepreneurship in the UWF College of Business, is the instructor for "The Creatives, the Innovators and the Entrepreneurs." The section features several components that encourage creative thinking and innovation, such as team-based projects, guest speakers and experiential learning. Activities take place both inside and outside the classroom, from local business to outdoor team-building.

One team-building activity, dubbed the "Starbucks Challenge," had students visit the Starbucks in Argonaut Village, located at the east entrance of the UWF Pensacola Campus. Teams were given a set amount of money for food and drinks for each team member. The goal was to spend as close to their gift card amount as possible. Tyler Wyche, a student in Duke's class, reflected on the experience, "I feel like it was a quick, easy way to get to know one another and come together as a team. The challenge really helped us become connected as a team and we had a fun time doing it!"

Common Experience - Listening Party

Previously, UWF has hosted a "Common Read," which required students to read a book and discuss it with their peers. The program was developed to promote cross-cultural engagement and understanding through a common experience. On Sept. 20 and 21, the University is hosting a "Common Listen," or listening party, which will achieve the same goals with a fresher approach.

Instead of a book, students will listen to a Dive Deep playlist, curated by the first-year experience work group. These songs, featuring various genres and artists, focus on self-identity and motivation. UWF faculty and staff have also been involved, posting their theme songs in their offices.

The playlists are available on [Spotify](#) and [Google Play](#).

Discussion Series

Immediately following the Listening Party, students will meet in smaller discussion groups covering a range of topics led by faculty and staff. Topics include “Making Music ‘Note-worthy,’” “Rhetoric of Sound and Ethos” and “A Zine Workshop on the Top 20 Soundtrack.” Additionally, students enrolled in the introductory course will participate in class discussions around the theme.

Student Showcase

On Nov. 28, 2016, UWF will host a showcase where students can submit scholarly and artistic work, including term papers, artwork, essays, poetry, songs and speeches. All submissions will be related to their personal theme songs and how their university experience will help them in their personal and professional development.

Incentive Program

First-year students will be encouraged to dive deeper into their college and campus experience by getting connected to resources, programs and events in the first semester. As they participate in these activities, they have the opportunity to win prizes, such as an umbrella, an exclusive tailgating experience, and dinner with the dean of University College.

University College encourages the local community to get involved and join the conversation:

- **Share and play the Dive Deep: 20 for 20 Playlist.** Listen to the playlist on [Spotify](#) and [Google Play](#). 'Follow' the playlists, if possible.
- **Post a theme song.** As a great conversation starter, sharing a theme song of choice will help students recognize resources and allies in the community. The theme song “bumper sticker” is attached.
- **Share events and theme songs on social media platforms.** Spread the word and encourage students to take part. Use **#UWFDiveDeep** on social media.

“Dive Deep” will help new Argos build a firm academic foundation and have a stronger connection to the University of West Florida and Pensacola communities.

For more information, please visit uwf.edu/divedeeep.

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