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Updates in Academic Affairs - May 5, 2014

Transition phases for incoming undergraduate students in detail

by Dr. Toni Woolfork-Barnes and Dr. Christopher Tremblay

With the orientation season beginning on May 16, we are writing to highlight the various transition phases planned for our new incoming undergraduate students.

This graphic shows the progression of those phases:



Summer orientation, first-year students, parents and transfer students: New first-year students' journeys begin with summer orientation in late May this year. Required for all first-year students, orientation is a two-day program designed for students, parents and families. During orientation, students learn about WMU and connect with faculty, staff and academic advisors. Students also register for classes at this time and experience "The Bronco Way," a fun and engaging show that gives students more insight about WMU.



Meanwhile, transfer students participate in the half-day Transfer Transition Program that is offered mid-May through August. The program is designed to make the transition to WMU as smooth as possible. Students have the opportunity to receive their WMU student ID and attend many helpful presentations, including from Residence Life, Financial Aid, Student Activities and Leadership Programs, and Career and Student Employment Services.

Online Modules: Incoming first-year students are required to complete three modules as part of their continued orientation to college. These three modules focus on the topics of financial literacy, academic success choices and alcohol-management/sexual-assault awareness. Typically, these modules are completed in July and require the student to spend about seven to nine hours learning about these important topics.



Fall Welcome: Fall Welcome builds on the foundation created at new student orientation. Fall Welcome is a highly interactive program that connects first-year and new transfer students with WMU, their peers, and faculty and staff members. The

four-day program promotes and assists with academic and social transitions to college life. All first-year students are expected to attend Fall Welcome. Transfer students are not required to attend, but are highly encouraged to participate in Transfer Express, a program designed to help them acclimate to WMU, both socially and academically, before classes begin. Fall Welcome occurs the week of Aug. 25 and includes the annual Matriculation Ceremony.

Common Read: WMU's Common Read began in 2012 and is an opportunity for all new students, along with the entire University and Kalamazoo community, to experience a common conversation regarding one selected reading. This year's Common Read is "Life of Pi" by Yann Martel. First-Year Experience will be staging activities related to "Life of Pi" during Fall Welcome Week and will continue staging activities through April 2015. In addition, students registered for the First-Year Seminar will be reading the book for class. Related events planned for fall include a presentation by Martel titled "Healing Journeys: Crossing the Pacific, Dealing with Trauma," set to take place on Oct. 23 in Miller Auditorium.

First-Year Seminars (FYE 2100): Learning how to navigate WMU and build a strong foundation here is very important for first-year students. The First-Year Seminar is designed to help students maximize their success by developing the necessary foundation for the collegiate experience. The seminar is a two-credit hour course that provides shared opportunities for students to successfully make the academic and social transition to college life. Seminar activities and programs prepare students for the first year and beyond. Students receive instruction from a WMU faculty or staff member and an upper-level student leader who together facilitate FYE 2100. This course expands upon New Student Orientation and Fall Welcome.