Community & Common Courses

This fall was the second year for the STEM Residential Learning community. Each year the program has had approximately 40 first year students take part. These students all live together on the same floor in Woodward Hall and are supported by a team of upperclassmen STEM students, including 2 STEM major RAs, 2 STEM major paid peer mentors, and 4-8 additional STEM upperclassmen who choose to live in the RLC to be further role models for the first year students.

The RLC provides incoming freshman the opportunity to study in formal study sessions as well as receiving special programming related to college life and study habits with a unique STEM focus. The upperclassmen hold study sessions four times per week as well as many recreational programs for the students. Community member Joseph Beberman says that one of the biggest contributions of the RLC is that it “thrust me into an environment of friendly peers and especially useful resources”.

This fall the RLC saw a new edition to its structure in the form of a 1 credit course that was mandatory for all first year students living in the RLC. The course was taught by Dr. Ward Heilman of the mathematics department. In this course the students learned about STEM majors & fields of work, attended professional meetings and presentations, and gave a scientific talk on a topic of interest to them.

Combining academic, professional, and social opportunities is perhaps what makes the community so successful. Beberman stated that “it brought me into a community where I could be successful with my transition to college on many levels”. Since this transition is one of the hardest adjustments for incoming freshman, the community is attracting a wide range of students. Next Fall the RLC will be moving to Scott Hall, an upper-class resident hall, which will be better able to accommodate it’s growth.

More STREAMS Activities

- Look soon for information about PAL positions in the fall. STREAMS will need PALs to assist in Structured Learning Activities in biology, chemistry, computer science, math and physics.
- Look for opportunities to support the summer bridge by being a summer research advisor.
- The 2013-2014 Residential Learning Community will be in Scott Hall, an upper-class hall, which will attract more students to the program.
Bridgewater State University’s STEM departments supported by STREAMS have seen a large growth in student enrollment since 2008. Overall, the departments that comprise the Bartlett College of Science and Mathematics have grown from 9% of the undergraduate population in 2008 to 11% today.

The increase is due to enrollment changes across the board. Between 2008 and 2012, we see

- 25% more freshmen science & math majors
- Increased retention of majors & lowered DFWI rates
- 60% increase in the number of science and math transfers

And students are doing better in their introductory classes due to the efforts of faculty in revising their teaching and student peer leaders, or PALs. This table shows the percentage of students receiving D, F, or W grades in courses supported by STREAMS before and after the support. The composite shows the headcount weighted average of all sections.

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That’s the number of D, F, or W grades prevented by STREAMS interventions including SLA and new pedagogy.