Supporting BU Student Organizations

COE Living Learning Community

LIVING AND LEARNING Communities (LLCs) provide an extraordinary opportunity for students at Bloomsburg University. While each LLC operates in a manner somewhat unique to its particular area of emphasis, there are common characteristics across all LLCs. One of these is the role of part-time live-in mentors who provide guidance and support.

The McDowell Institute has been providing structured support and resources for the College of Education’s LLC during the 2014-15 academic year. This has occurred in many ways, including regularly scheduled meetings and guidance sessions with lead mentors. In tandem with these meetings, thematic emphasis this year has been on:

- Facilitating logistics associated with relevant events, such as freshmen move-in, a joint LLC picnic and the COE open house for undeclared majors
- Expanding and facilitating service project opportunities
- Coordinating a series of topical presentations for COE majors to add value to their undergraduate student experiences
- Exploration of expanded opportunities for undergraduate student research in positive behavior intervention and support (PBIS)

Topical presentations this academic year included presentations on completion of the initial teacher education packet, Angela McCabe; PAPA preparation, Candy Trate; e-portfolios, Mary Bracilli; urban practicum, Frank D’Angelo; and the Reggio Amelia practicum, David Walker. Additional topical presentations during spring 2015 will emphasize themes that directly translate to instructional practice in schools.

The McDowell Institute also has been working with lead COE LLC mentors in targeting service project opportunities at BU, including participation in Bocce Bash, the Big Event, UNICEF collections and possible CPR training. Planning also has been initiated to explore ways in which the McDowell Institute can support the expansion of undergraduate student research opportunities through its relationship with Pennsylvania’s Positive Behavior Support Network across PBIS implementation sites in the Commonwealth.

Bullying Prevention Symposium Fall ’14 Creating a Positive Culture in Education

THE MCDOWELL INSTITUTE hosted the fall 2014 Bully Prevention Symposium for BU teacher education majors entering student teaching.

Bullying, a pervasive concern in our schools, is receiving additional attention at the national, state and local levels. Bullying behavior contributes to lower attendance rates, lower school achievement, low self-esteem and depression, as well as higher rates of juvenile and adult crime. It is been estimated that more than 160,000 K-12 students in the United States skip school daily for fear of being bullied. This estimate is further borne out through data reflected in the bi-annual Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS 2013) which reports that more than one in five students (20.9 percent) in Pennsylvania’s schools report that they had been bullied in the past 12 months and more than one in seven students have experienced electronic bullying during the past year.

Through the Bully Prevention Symposium, more than 100 BU entry-level student teachers, faculty and representatives from local school districts received information on the prevalence of bullying, training on evidence-based prevention strategies and information on resources to prevent bullying. Speakers were Charisse Nixon, Associate Professor of Psychology at Penn State Erie; Tina Lawson, Educational Consultant with the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN); and Justin Patchin, Professor at University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. They addressed topics related to bullying, including prevention, relevant aspects of child development, and forms of cyber bullying and relational aggression. The integration of bully prevention practices were translated within the context of both school-wide prevention and classroom level practices during this symposium.
TO WRITE LOVE ON HER ARMS

TO WRITE LOVE ON HER ARMS (TWLOHA) is a non-profit movement that offers hope and provides help for people struggling with depression, addiction, self-injury and suicide. Jamie Tworkowski founded TWLOHA in spring 2006 at age 19 after composing a story about his friend who struggled with self-injury and addiction that appeared on a MySpace page. Jamie used the page to sell T-shirts to fund his friend’s treatment.

As this story reached a larger audience, people began sharing their own stories of depression, addiction and self-injury, as well as stories of those mourning loved ones who lost those battles.

Stepping out of MySpace and into our communities, TWLOHA can be found on college campuses, conferences, programs and events. This movement has become more than just one person’s story of hope. TWLOHA offers messages of love and encouragement, in addition to investing in treatment and recovery and offering financial support to organizations, centers, and individuals amidst the process of healing.

Bloomsburg University’s chapter of TWLOHA meets every Thursday from 7 to 11 p.m. in Kehr Union to provide support and plan ways to support one another. The McDowell Institute, in collaboration with TWLOHA’s executive board and faculty advisor, are in the early stages of providing additional supports to further build capacity on campus to increase mental health awareness. For more information on TWLOHA and to get involved go to http://twloha.com/home.
PA PBS Implementers Forum: Higher Education Strand

THE PENNSYLVANIA POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT NETWORK (PA PBS) hosts an annual Implementers Forum to showcase the continuing implementation of Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) across early interventions sites and school systems in the Commonwealth. The forum typically draws more than 1,000 participants.

As of fall 2014, more than 600 school building staffs have received training and technical assistance in Universal Prevention (Tier One) in K-12 school buildings in the Commonwealth. A number of these schools have established, or are in the process of establishing, supports at advanced tiers of the PBIS framework. This number has been steadily increasing over the past five years and is projected to grow further.

The McDowell Institute continues to collaborate with staff from the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) in planning and conducting the Implementers Forum with emphasis on the Higher Education Strand within the conference program. In spring 2014, the Higher Education Strand included breakout sessions highlighting relevance and application of the PBIS framework within higher education environments. The McDowell Institute also continues to collaborate with PaTTAN in the planning of the Implementers Forum to be held May 27 and 28, 2015, at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center. Go to www.PaTTAN.org or www.PAPBS.org to access additional information about the spring 2015 Implementers Forum.

Pre-student Teaching Professional Development Refresher on Preventive Classroom Management

PREVENTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT strategies are emphasized in coursework in the College of Education leading up to student teaching. To add further value to the preparation of education majors, the McDowell Institute has provided a professional development experience emphasizing preventive classroom management. This professional development session was initiated in fall 2013 and continues to be embedded within the first day activities each semester for all of our student teachers. The event for this upcoming semester is scheduled for January 20, 2015, in Kehr Union.

This professional development event stresses Positive Behavior Support within the classroom, which serves as a refresher in essential skills for our student teachers and provides an encouraging start to their capstone experience. The program focuses on the core foundations of building rapport, providing clear and explicit behavioral expectations and providing high density behavior-specific positive reinforcement to students as they acquire and demonstrate appropriate behavioral skills and meet performance expectations.

Stop It Now!®

Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

THE TRAUMA EXPERIENCED by victims of child sexual abuse can profoundly affect learning, healthy development and general life functioning. Stop It Now! is a national non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention of child sexual abuse based on the concept “it takes a village to raise a child.”

The organization promotes action by adults, families and communities in the protection of children from sexual abuse. Founded in 1992 by Fran Henry, a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, Stop It Now! provides support, information and resources to form safer and healthier communities. Statistics suggest that as many as one in four women and one in six men may have been victims of child sexual abuse and project that one in 10 children may victims of sexual abuse by their 18th birthday.

Stop It Now! and the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) have developed a system-wide approach to help prevent child sexual victimization on college campuses. This initiative, known as “NOW! PASSHE Prevention Squads,” will equip faculty and student leaders across all 14 State System universities with information, skills and the supports to address the growing concern associated with child sexual abuse.

The McDowell Institute in support of this State System initiative and emerging “NOW! Squads” hosted an initial, two-day training event, “Creating Circles of Safety,” on Oct. 20 and 21, 2014. Representatives from System schools participated in sessions on topics including “Trauma Informed Approaches to Prevention, Promotion and Early Intervention,” “Recognizing and Responding to Children’s Sexual Behaviors” and “Culture of Prevention in Youth Service Organization.” Participation in these sessions was bolstered through structured and facilitated planning sessions.

For more information about getting involved with “NOW! PASSHE Prevention Squads,” contact the designated local campus leader across State System institutions. Elizabeth Mauch, Dean of the College of Education, serves as the campus leader at Bloomsburg University. Additional information about Stop It Now! can be obtained at www.StopItNow.org. If you or anyone you know is suspected of experiencing child sexual abuse call 1.888. PREVENT.
SAMHSA Safe Schools/Healthy Students Partnership Grant

Facilitating healthy development for children and youth through social and emotional learning and the development of behavioral competencies serves as a cornerstone to addressing non-academic barriers to learning. In summer 2013, the McDowell Institute partnered in developing a proposal for a federal grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA); in fall 2013, the $8.7 million proposal was funded over four years. This federal project was awarded to Pennsylvania’s Office of Mental Health in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Education and other child-serving systems in the Commonwealth, including Juvenile Justice.

Tim Knoster, Professor in the Department of Exceptionality Programs working under the auspices of the McDowell Institute, serves as the lead program evaluator for this initiative, “Pennsylvania Safe Schools/Healthy Students (Partnership).” This partnership provides a mechanism to establish prevention, early intervention and effective services and supports for 7,500 students in three Local Education Agencies (LEAs). Working in collaboration with educators, mental health providers, juvenile probation officers and community members, the partnership aims to decrease bullying, youth violence and criminal behavior through promotion and prevention endeavors associated with healthy development, social and emotional learning and academic achievement.

The framework being applied represents Systems of Care within the multi-tiered framework, Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS). The PBIS framework is an evidence-based approach to addressing non-academic barriers to learning in school settings. Through this partnership, compatible, evidence-based programs and practices from both the mental health and juvenile justice communities will be strategically situated within the PBIS framework across schools. This work will occur in early childhood learning settings, such as publicly funded Head Start Programs, and in feeder school systems K-12 across the three LEAs. The three LEAs involved in this funded project include, 1) Lehigh Learning Achievement School, operated by Intermediate Unit 21 in Lehigh County, 2) Northeastern York School District in York County, and 3) PENNCREST School District in Crawford County.

Materials and processes developed will also be integrated within state-wide scale-up plans for PBIS. Pennsylvania’s Positive Behavior Support Network (PAPBS) serves as a lead collaborative entity for implementation of PBIS with approximately 10 percent of the Commonwealth’s schools implementing school-wide PBIS and 500 out of approximately 6,000 schools receiving initial training via the PAPBS Network. A smaller portion of publicly funded early childhood education programs are implementing program-wide PBIS.

In addition, more than 20 percent of Pennsylvania counties – 14 of 67 counties – have varying degrees of formal engagement with implementation of Systems of Care. As such, implementation of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Partnership will further build capacity at the state level to support scale up and roll out across counties and schools in the Commonwealth.