NOTES ON PROVOST’S MEETINGS WITH COLLEGE STUDENT GROUPS:

The Provost met with student groups in each of the York Colleges during the Fall and Winter of 2013-14, in order to hear about students’ experience – including the transition to university, academic and social orientation, various forms of academic and “life” advising, and enrolment – and ideas about how that experience could be enhanced. In some cases the college structure was also discussed. Each meeting lasted about 1.5 hour and drew 10 to 25 students.

A number of general observations can be made:

The students were all very positive about their College-related experience; it is not clear how representative they are of the overall student population or how many students beyond the “core” of those directly involved in the College Council or other College-specific activities avail themselves of the Colleges’ supports and services. Furthermore, it is not always clear to students which supports are appropriately provided by the Colleges and which are rightly provided by the Faculties or centrally, and students appear to seek advice in the Colleges when they are not able to find the assistance they need elsewhere. Some students also rely on peer supports who, despite best intentions, may not be in a position to provide accurate academic information.

A number of specific matters were discussed in virtually every meeting:

1. Many students reported that they regard their College as their “home away from home” and that, had it not been for their College connections, they might have left the University. Several suggested that College pride leads to York pride.

2. Students appreciated orientation efforts but there are varying views about how successful they are: they were a good way to connect with other students in an informal, non-intimidating way; some praised the integration of academic and social orientation while others advised separating them; it was suggested that academic orientation was too long and too much like a lecture.

3. Most students support the alignment of Colleges with programs; the Colleges provide an environment for students to get to know other students in their programs in a smaller, less intimidating environment. They also welcome the opportunity to get to know students from other programs through the College and appreciate the cross-program interaction.

4. York’s websites with student information are seen as difficult to navigate and links are often broken.

5. There are important issues around responsibility in relation to advising. Students would like to be able to find (and they have a right to expect) accurate and complete information in response to their questions and concerns, ideally in a single location (or at least to have clear direction about where to go for various kinds of advice and services – perhaps indicated on a map). They are frequently sent from office to office and get incomplete or conflicting information or advice. In particular students want accurate and consistent academic advice from professional advisors. At the same time they welcome the personal connections offered by College-based advisors. Students often report getting advice from other students in the absence of other sources or because they feel they get more relevant and straightforward information from someone who has been through the same experience.

6. It is important to distinguish between academic advising (from professional advisors – usually staff - in Faculties or programs) and non-academic advising/mentoring (in the Colleges and various other offices). The fact that there is a position title “Academic Advisor” in most Colleges contributes to confusion about roles. When students don’t know where to go for information or if they are given conflicting information, those with strong College ties frequently go to their
Colleges for that information and advice, even though they recognize that is not the most appropriate place for academic advice.

7. Timely access, program specificity, and consistency are important factors for students in advising.

8. There is a need for a mechanism for centrally tracking interactions with and advice/information given to students at different times and locations by different advisors.

9. Students do not know where to go next (e.g., to an Associate Dean) if approaches to programs or Faculty advising offices are unsuccessful in resolving their issues.

10. Students appreciate and utilize the automated degree audit, but it does not work for all programs yet (e.g., double majors).

11. Students in several Colleges indicated that changes in program requirements that they were expected to follow were not communicated to them clearly (this may suggest some misunderstanding since students may, but are not required to, follow new program requirements implemented after they began their programs).

12. On the specific question of a possible single mastership for Stong and Calumet Colleges, students in those Colleges (and in others where the matter was raised) strongly believed that each College should have a separate Master, both for workload reasons and in order that the Master could continue to foster and advocate for the particular culture of the College.

Note: Glendon College students have a somewhat different perception with regard to advising, with most reporting easy and timely access to good advice in the student services office.

A number of possible next steps emerged for consideration:

1. When students are accepted to York, they could be provided with a coordinated package of information about advising, enrolment, financial support, student support resources, etc. and where to get more information (perhaps including a map of key offices).

2. Review York websites to ensure they reflect clear, accurate and consistent information.

3. Provide a single, regularly updated “official” York Calendar with institutional and program-specific information on courses, requirements, etc.

4. Clarify roles and responsibilities of advisors in programs, Faculties and Colleges around academic vs. “student life” advising, as well as the role of peer mentors.

5. Provide a range of options (in person and online) for students to receive pre-enrolment advising and to enrol.

6. Provide timely access to academic advising by professional (staff) advisors trained to offer accurate Faculty/program-specific information and advice.

7. Consider ways to enhance access to advising throughout the year (e.g., drop-in appointment times, evening appointments, online chats, Q&A of common questions) on matters such as change of major, course loads, etc..

8. Expand the degree audit program capability to all programs (including bilingual version for Glendon).

9. Introduce a centralized tracking system to maintain a record of all advice given to students regardless of subject or location.

10. Identify “at risk” students early and provide access to assistance.

Clearly students who are involved in their Colleges feel positively about their role and impact in building community. There is perhaps a need to engage in a general discussion about how the role might be better publicized for the benefit of a broader range of students.
Note re. Colour Codes:
- comments relating primarily to college membership or structure generally
- comments relating primarily to transition and orientation
- comments relating primarily to advising and enrolment
- other

Notes on Student Views Expressed at College Meetings:

**Vanier College:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students like having people from the same majors in their College; it's a challenge to make connections at York and clubs and Colleges help to make those connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the same time, the College is a good place to get to know people from other programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-curricular activities help connect to academic and provide an “anchor” to the school experience; they help build pride and confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An “undecided major” was able to meet other undecided majors in the College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A student on the track team was paired with an upper-year student; this broke down barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College provides a community environment, a place to have a good time (students do better if they enjoy themselves), a nice place to study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanier students have close ties to the Master's Office, and can talk to the Master about academic or other matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International students also have difficulty getting to know other students (especially if they are commuters); efforts should be made to get students more socially active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student who had applied to Carleton as well as York; Carleton students called applicants and discussed the major program and what could be done with it; applicants could also talk to the head of the department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For international students, York systems (e.g., GPA) are different from what they are used to and it took a long time to get clarification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming to university is confusing and overwhelming no matter how prepared students are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Frosh Week” provided an amazing “jump start”; it helped students feel a part of the group and get to know each other; and the student leaders provided information about athletics, clubs, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only a small percentage of students were involved, however (one student said he did not have enough money to get a Frosh kit so missed events and felt isolated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New students were given a tour of the campus but it was at night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Red Zone provided information about where to go for various kinds of advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students find staff [not clear which staff] understanding but not always very helpful; not willing to take the extra step; upper year Vanier students were more help with academic life questions; should capitalize on more experienced students (mentorship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who tried to get responses to questions by phone or email frequently did not get a response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would like to have one place to get answers to questions; they frequently get sent around to multiple locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is some information online about changing majors but there should be more counselling for people about how to pick their courses, prerequisites, etc., or for those who are unsure about their path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment can be done online but information is vague and confusing; it would be helpful to have someone to talk to as well about course loads, availability of summer courses, etc.; there are not enough people to provide help</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- The advising sessions are large (40 people in a room) with only two people advising; sessions could be made more efficient and effective, e.g., have people all from the same program in each session.
- It is difficult to navigate through the York online enrolment site; an online tutorial or video to guide students through the steps or online chat opportunities would help (even those who found it relatively easy to enrol felt a tutorial and/or individual advising would help).
- Enrolling is a start of the student's future; there should be more person-to-person interaction. International students have to get advising and enrol online; this takes a long time and there is no one to ask questions.
- University calendars are helpful but students don't know they exist.
- It should be clearer what courses are mandatory for programs.
- Other more senior students often provided more help than staff; they can tell new students who the "important people" are.
- Academic advisors in Faculties and programs are not always able to answer questions; would like more personal interaction with students; follow-up is missing.
- Student had to go to an Associate Dean to get a petitions matter resolved.
McLaughlin College:

- Students who are engaged have a sense of community and take pride in York; commuter students do not have this opportunity
- Extra-curricular and networking activities are important for success; there should be better advertising of social activities, including to commuter students
- Student began studies in January; little information or anything to engage students was offered; felt lost until September since it was difficult to integrate into the existing community
- Student was connected through a student-run (Tumblr) website before arriving at York, so when got here felt part of the community
- Red Zone helped to answer questions; like location in Vari; people working at Orientation were too busy; incoming students in YUSStart did not feel connected; it was great for York-wide but did not connect students to Colleges
- Partnership of the Faculty and the College does not work; it is great to give information online but breaking connections at the end of the summer is not good
- Not much information was provided prior to enrolment
- Frosh Week advising were intimidating but well done looking back
- Advising seemed rushed
- Did enrolment from home using videos; would prefer advising done on campus or some combination of in person and online (e.g., Skype)
- 4th year student found the advising appointment useful (students at other universities do not have them); discussion of course loads, credits, majors, etc.; session was led by a senior student with three other students
- 3rd year student found academic advising session not useful; College orientation was useful; important to have peer advising
- Student had to wait until late in summer to find out if admitted; when she enrolled the program was filled so she enrolled in a program that was not really relevant to her
- Advising was rushed and she was not fully informed so she enrolled in too many courses
- College orientation is useful; College Academic Advisor provides "life advising," e.g., re. applying to law school; it is easy to access him; helps students to find their own paths and to see implications of what they are doing
- The Faculty provides systematic advice; the College helps students on a personal basis as well as with degree information; Faculty wait times are too long or there is no response, and students cannot always speak to the same person; the College knows its students
- Students need someone who is knowledgeable about all majors and Colleges, someone they can go to every year
- Degree audit is a very useful program that students can access from anywhere; however, it is not available for students in double majors
- Some students do not know they can make an appointment for advising with the Faculty; they often get advice from other students
- A combination of online and in-person is useful
Glendon College:
- Organizations at Glendon are run by students, not by Council.
- Glendon as a small community is better adapted to helping students make the transition to university.
- The Jump Start program is helpful as a lead-in to Frosh Week, providing strategies for success; about 100 students participated.
- YUStart is supposed to be a university-wide program, but does not recognize that Glendon is different from other Colleges; should all have their own culture; it would be necessary to translate all the resources into French to use YUStart at Glendon; however, Frosh Week is enough.
- Frosh Week was successfully planned jointly by students and administration; the orientation team works with Student Services to incorporate academic orientation (this has been the case for years).
- Commuter students are allowed to stay in the Manor for orientation, helping them to bond since they could attend academic and social events and get to know the campus and its people.
- A Commuter Club is being started.
- Student reported she received a phone call with acceptance and a two-hour conversation; was not expecting that but it was really important.
- Red Zone is being phased out; it is better than YUConnect.
- The College has more academic advisors than it needs, and there is no waiting time for appointments in the advising office.
- A one-on-one advising appointment is required for all students in Academic Services before enrolment.
- This may disadvantage international students: student reported he could not enrol until after an in-person advising appointment but by then most courses were full; in addition, the grading system in France is different; transfer credits should be better advertised; international students have to pay too much and only have emergency bursaries available.
- Glendon makes efforts during Frosh Week to make the advising office known to students.
- The advising office remembers students from visit to visit; the offices are close together and the advisors talk to each other.
- There are also students helping students (Lions Den — run through the Associate Principal’s office and involving about 30 student volunteers) and directing them to the right places.
- The Frosh leaders take students to the advising office if they have academic questions.
- The self-monitoring application (degree audit?) is not offered at Glendon because it is not bilingual.
- Program changes are not communicated fully to students; sometimes information is updated on the main York website but not on the Glendon website.
- Professional staff advisors are preferable to faculty advisors since faculty members do not necessarily keep up with requirements and new programs.
- Students do not have an opportunity to meet with potential employers, career advisors; this is different from Europe where students must do an internship as part of their program; this would be attractive to students.
Founders College:

- College provides a "home" especially for students who do not have friends and family here; friends who went elsewhere have not made as many friends.
- Prior to involvement in college, student just went to school, home and work.
- There is a big gap between Faculties and Colleges that needs to be bridged.
- 50% of learning is socializing and students pushing each other.
- Faculties and programs give students information; colleges give different information.
- Student found the college experience socially the greatest experience of his life; made amazing friends and bonds; student has had an illness and his friends’ response brought his spirits up; this is not just a college – it is a home.
- It is scary that at university students can become just numbers; colleges provide spaces and friends.
- Colleges are important for university pride; they bicker like brothers and sisters but band together; provide a place to bond (student’s boss is a York alumni).
- Student learned about herself through the colleges; they helped her break out of her shell and develop leadership qualities; helped her develop social skills to get a job and interact with coworkers.
- International student is housed in Founders; finds it confusing how colleges work.
- International student is proud to be in Founders; has met students from other parts of the world, after coming here without knowing anyone; in Frosh week it was difficult to join a group; gets email from both Vanier and Founders.
- York is well situated; friends went to downtown school and hung out downtown; student would prefer to hang out here; the secluded area forces students to get to know each other.
- Experiencing York as a College student leads to pride.
- Student did not go to Frosh week and thought university was just homework and school; then went to the Founders lounge and saw that everyone was having fun; York is large and the college provides a smaller scale.
- With merged academic and orientation activities it has been difficult for colleges to get their message out; orientation helps students link to other students in the same program and helps new students get acquainted; students then see each other in classes and work together; it is important how the programs are divided among the colleges.
- Orientation provides an opportunity to build mentorship relationships – to mentor and be mentored; Faculties do not provide this kind of one-to-one experience.
- Student first came to York in July to do scheduling and got lost; then at orientation met people and on the first day of classes was ready for it; without orientation, still would have felt lost.
- Frosh week tells students how lectures go, how to take notes and provides a campus tour.
- Student did not expect to meet people with the same interests at orientation but did; it is best that orientation be “dry,” would take away from the experience otherwise; there is a lot to do on campus including things for people who do not want to party.
- Academic orientation should be program based; there is a huge range of programs in LA&PS.
- Orientation should be changed to the day before classes start.
- It is important that orientation be offered face-to-face not online; online would not provide the connection or offer the chance to ask questions.
- Students should not be allowed to opt out of face-to-face orientation; York prepares students socially and academically and they learn to have conversations about ideas, out of their comfort zone; these are things that would be lost online.
College advisors do not know the academic level but are helpful when students need to talk; re: academic advising, everyone gives a different answer (faculty tell you one thing and then an advisor in LA&PS tells you something different).

General education credits, Honours and Specialized Honours are confusing; students are not informed of changes on time.

There is only one program advisor in FES; the person is helpful but very busy and it is difficult to book a time.

Student took four weeks to get an appointment to see if s/he was eligible to graduate.

It should be mandatory for students to see an advisor before enrolling in order to get correct information; however, there are long wait times and advisors rush students.

All of the LA&PS appointment times were booked in the first 5 minutes.

International students have to go to advising, then to York International, then back; this is confusing; it would be easier if all advising for international students could be in one place with access to the student's documents.

It would be helpful for students to be able to pick a day to come to York and talk to students to pick their courses based on their experiences.

Students should get a package telling them the courses available.
Calumet College:

- Interaction goes beyond academics; athletics are important too.
- There should not be one Master for two Colleges; two Colleges are too much for one person to manage and each college should maintain its distinctive culture; the Master is a mother or father figure for students and creates a "homey," feel in the College.
- Student found the transition to university difficult; has a short attention span and listening to a long lecture is not a strength; likes interactive online courses which break down lectures; liked social aspects; sports; met people at Frosh Week.
- Got to know people through YUStart.
- Liked Destination Graduation.
- Liked Frosh Week; did not know about advising office so went to advising with a peer advisor; peer advisors told the student to take the wrong courses so he had to change and take extra courses.
- International student met friends through Facebook, then met them in person on arrival; Frosh Week is important to get information about libraries, exams, etc.; more consideration should be given to international students to make their transition easier; everything is new, e.g., academic terminology.
- Orientation is very valuable as a way of meeting people; it is difficult to meet people and make friends in a class of 500 people.
- Faculty members helped to make the transition easier by welcoming students, knowing their names, and providing office hours to offer assistance.
- The university should monitor students better in the first two years and help them understand their strengths and weaknesses.
- Orientation was useful but long; clubs were there to talk about what they offer and the campus tour was valuable; social orientation was useful to meet people in a less intimidating setting.
- Integration of academic and social orientation seemed like a good idea but students do not want to sit in a room and listen for a long time (four hours); should separate academic and social parts; Orientation was not what expected; should be shorter.
- Orientation was useless; already knew what to expect.
- Liked advising in groups rather than one-to-one (too intimidating).
- Student was nervous for the first few weeks, then got to know people; likes online lectures because they mean he does not have to make a long commute; did not know what an Academic Advisor was; an upper year student told him to see an advisor in the Faculty of Health; there was no problem getting an appointment without a long wait.
- Went to the Psychology office to make sure meeting requirements, what needed to take; also looked on the website.
- Student decided late to come to York; the academic appointment was useless; picked courses from the calendar.
- Would be good to have Faculty academic advising located in the College, with the Master's office providing co-curricular advising.
- Student likes one-to-one interactions with the professor; lectures are not useful.
New College:
- Coming to university has been a great experience; got involved and found out how to pick courses.
- Information about the College system should be available on the main York webpage.
- Orientation was very welcoming and the events afterwards were a good way to make students feel comfortable; it was good that academic orientation was incorporated with social activities.
- There should be additional ways of communicating with students, e.g., website or McLaughlin communicates on Facebook.
- Received YUStart material but nothing about Frosh Week; YUStart was okay but confusing.
- International student liked having an opportunity to meet other students but orientation was too long and gave too much information (clubs, academic, international); students did not pay attention.
- A separate international orientation should be provided after general orientation.
- There should be orientations based on programs rather than just the general orientation.
- Student was told to take the wrong courses; and the system dropped her from courses (she thinks this happens a lot).
- The degree progress program is helpful and the university should let students know about it; however, it does not work for double majors.
- New College and Stong College are the only Colleges without Academic Advisors; students have to find other sources of advice.
- Student changed majors; spoke to the program coordinator who was very supportive and well informed about the program; faculty should talk more to students about what courses might be good for them.
- Should provide step-by-step instructions about how to enrol and only list courses that are open to first-year students.
- Did not like doing everything for enrolment online; wanted personal interaction.
- Student did not know s/he could take more than 24 credits (the BAS website says students must take 24 credits); had to take summer courses to make up courses; did not know about Fall and Winter term courses.
- Transfer student was not allowed to choose courses; was sent to the department but the department sent him to OSAS; some general courses were reserved for first-year students so he had to go to the department to enrol.
- Student was not told how many courses he needed, how courses would help in his program, how to finish courses faster; talked to student mentors who had different opinions.
- Courses needed for graduation were cancelled with little notice; student had to take an extra course the following semester to graduate; suggestion to reserve course spaces for students who have courses cancelled.
- Students have to take courses that do not contribute to their programs because courses are closed.
- There should be clearer jurisdictions around advising and what various advisors are allowed to give advice about; advisors should not simply give opinions.
- It takes a long time to get an appointment; advising offices should allow walk-ins for quick questions; there could also be access to live chats.
- Many people ask the same questions of advisors, so it might be good to develop a set of online Q&As for standard questions.
- If advisors were paid more they might be more helpful.
- More information should also be available about academic resources available, e.g., academic writing centre, as well as policies, deadlines, first-year leniency policy, etc.
- Student did not have access to internet in the summer so did not get the email about paying fees so was dropped from courses; no one seemed willing to help her get re-enrolled.
- There are not enough spaces for students to use computers; they have to sit on the floor in the Library.
- There is no study space in New College, especially for commuter students; a space (Room 104/105) is available but there are no funds for removal of a wall.
- Residences (especially Vanier and Calumet) are dirty and unsanitary.
- Would like to see more professors involved in student life, e.g., the Master held a breakfast to which professors in the College were invited to connect with students, but they did not come.
Winters College:

- Recently graduated student reported Winters College was the reason he’s here; the college connection gave another purpose to university; students feel York is trying to take things away from the Colleges; students had to fight for the dining hall and student and practice spaces were allocated to education; money intended for the second student centre should be put towards the colleges; colleges support commuters; competition among colleges is important for York pride; Stong and Calumet were “deconstructed” without student consultation; staff support for event planning and alumni support has been reduced.
- The College is home and students feel welcomed; when students don’t know where to go for information and advice they go to the Master, Academic Advisor or peers in the College.
- There is need for space where commuters can go, not just the student centre (students are concerned about the voting process used for the new student centre; an evote was not used and there was no review).
- The colleges serve a cultural and administrative function, pointing students in the right direction for what they need.
- Master performs the role of linking to the Faculties; should create a position to liaise between Faculties and Colleges.
- Masters reporting to the Vice-Provost Students works better than reporting to Deans; colleges come second when they report to Faculties; they should work together; students should have a more active role and feel heard.
- Student reported signing up for a mentor but was never contacted.
- Student leaders can’t give information at Orientation because they don’t have the information to give.
- Overarching concern is access to information.
- Student was trying to switch programs and was blocked from changing courses by a financial block; she was sent to several departments but did not know where to go for advice; had to try to get more money in order to enrol; may have to become part-time which will have OSAP implications.
- People in administrative positions tend not to know the whole story with regard to a student’s situation; it would help if people knew what they are talking about; administrators (undergraduate advisors) are hired and then move on.
- The computer tracks only courses and grades, so students have to tell their stories over and over.
- Should have advisors who know the students and know what they are talking about.
- Student tried to add a course online; could not do so because it was an extra course (beyond the credit limit); it took months to get approval.
- Student was trying to graduate last year and got permission to take the course needed to graduate, but the course did not appear on the transcript; the paperwork was completed but professor was not able to enrol the student; student had to wait a full year to try to graduate.
- Some of the people students talk to show little concern or interest and do not get back to the student with an answer; in some cases (e.g., enrolment) there is no alternative to the undergraduate advisor to take action; it is not right for one person to have all the power and students are powerless to resolve issues; this is a “victimizing” experience.
- There is a discontinuity between in person and website information; the website is poorly designed and there are many broken links; suggestion: hire upper level design students to redesign the website.
- Students are paying money but getting roadblocks.
Fine Arts advisors in the Office of Advising and Integrated Student Services (OAISS) are now supposed to know everything but students feel they do not know about all programs; advisors in departments are more helpful; the website is not clear about what office offers what services.

Financial services: student is working full-time and has a mortgage; OSAP says s/he is making too much money; someone in the Bennett Centre told the student not to fight for support but s/he cannot live without it; the form is unclear and s/he wants to be able to tell someone the story.

The online student financial profile does not give enough information; cases should be judged individually; student cannot get a job to pay tuition; OSAP is based on parents' income but parents do not contribute to tuition.

A student who came from a CEGEP to the Music program could not come to the advising appointment but was told online that CEGEP courses counted as electives; 1st year Music courses turned out to be repeats of courses already taken; student had to take extra courses; was given conflicting advice by the same person.

When students approach "higher ups" with issues, they are sent back to undergraduate program directors.

In some programs students believe more students were admitted than should have been; there was not enough equipment in the Film program to meet the needs of all of the students and students were working on several projects; there is a high drop rate and students cannot move from the studies stream to production because there is no room; this program is advertised as having small numbers; if fewer students were accepted they would become better students and there would be a better retention rate.

There is a similar situation in the Dance program; students have expressed concern to the Faculty; too many students were accepted a few years ago and the "bubble" is now moving through; student is just taking courses to complete the program; there are very few males in Dance.

Student feels the Dance program is already too big but they allow auditors to take courses without paying; students lose connections with professors.

It is difficult to do a double major with Dance because of a change in the Techniques schedule.

The only time studios are available to students is 12:00 to 4:00 PM; students do not have access to studios at other times and cannot rehearse; some use College space for rehearsals; the College is a Fine Arts student hub; there should be investment in studio space in the College.

Student who lived in residence: did not want the meal plan because s/he was trying to eat healthy; did not use up the meal plan but was not allowed to transfer it to the next year (this may now have been resolved).
Bethune College:

- Bethune has a number of student-led programs involving peer mentorship and advising, class reps, assisted study sessions, working closely with the Student Council and Academic Advisor; the intention is to make academic and social aspects more seamless.
- Students in Bethune are from Science and Engineering programs; taking a high number of credits and are passionate about their programs; they get social aspects from academic connections.
- International student found the first semester did not go as well as he hoped, particularly since he was coping with a different culture; the second semester has been better; applied to be a Don; lives in Tatham Hall (McLaughlin) and it would be better if he lived in Bethune with other Bethune students; clubs help him relate to the culture here.
- Orientation was awesome but student still had a tough first semester; student advisors were helpful; academic orientation was led by SOS (Student Ombuds Services) and students were introduced to PASS (Peer Assisted Study Sessions).
- Student was an undecided major, which was stressful, and had been off school for two years; also a commuter; the first term was overwhelming; orientation was good and made him feel more comfortable.
- Students help guide other students through the course through study sessions, even if they ask stupid questions.
- Fresh week social experience was life-changing; the leaders did a great job and gave good information; student met people right away; 700 people attended this year; created a sense of community.
- Student was a class rep; got to know people this way.
- Student is in Calumet College (which is more athletic, less academic) but involved in Bethune; the class rep program helps build leadership and also helps with social aspects and introduces those involved to people, programs and facilities; student commuted in first semester so was not very involved; studied in Steacie Library; now lives in the Village.
- Commuter student is a class rep; class reps are influential but there is also pressure because you are between the professor and the class.
- Commuter student met people through social orientation; found the academic adjustment tough; no going to more PASS sessions since understands the point (numbers at PASS sessions range from about 7 to 100 depending on time and subject).
- Should reclaim the term "Yorked" to have a more positive meaning.
- Student is from another culture; there is much more freedom here than at home so he was out of control and his grades went down; tried to talk to advisors over the break; a staff member helped him to drop some courses and pick others; now on the right track.
- Student experienced a difficult first semester; was not good at time management; would like advisors in the Science academic advising office to provide more than general advising, to ask about students' strengths and weaknesses; did not see the College Academic Advisor—they have a different role.
- Before enrolment peer mentors emailed new students, making them less nervous and providing somebody they can talk to; every first year student gets a peer mentor (some students did not appear to be aware of this); student did not follow advice given at advising appointment re. number of credits, etc.
- Peer advisors have office hours; if students have degree questions they send them to the department; students should not be giving that kind of advice but can tell students where to go to get it.
- Students should be given as much information as possible about academic advising and support systems; faculty and staff may not tell students about student-led initiatives such as SOS; at the student's appointment should be given a brochure describing supports available instead of having to look for them; professors should also have this information; should let students know they don't have to do it themselves – this would make York more attractive.
- Students have to wait for advising; advisors should reach out to students and make them feel welcome, e.g., go to classes, make themselves available, offer evening advising hours.
- The Master organizes a “meet the professors” event every year but few professors come; research opportunities should be provided for students so they can see the professors as professors.
- Student would like to see more professors use PowerPoint or the board to help students who are visually oriented.
- College provides a perfect bridge for professors to engage with students.
Stong College:

- Without Stong the transition would have been more difficult; College events give opportunities for interaction and to meet upper year students; make students feel comfortable and part of the College; student is a commuter rep.
- Student is a member of New College but switched to Stong even though it does not have his majors; importance of work/life/school balance; College gives opportunities and opens doors.
- Student was not aware of colleges until arrival at York; should be better promoted; colleges provide a sense of belonging and community; the culture of each college is different and students should go to whichever meets their needs; the mix of programs and interaction with other students is helpful.
- One reason students in Health programs do well is because there are English students in the college as well; being in English does not take away from the college experience; student still has to go to LA&PS for program advice; students should not have to walk back and forth—all advising should be in one place.
- Diversity is important at York; the different majors in Stong contribute to diversity and lead to pride; pride also comes from intramurals.
- Student is a Psychology major; was in Calumet but did not make connections; the culture did not appeal; Stong students have to go to the OSA office in Calumet for advising; this provides an interaction they would not have otherwise.
- Colleges have their own enduring distinct culture beyond a particular group of students; cultures work well separately and together; however, colleges should not be integrated.
- There should be one Master per College in order to make connections with students.
- Stong tries to minimize the feeling of being by oneself among 55,000 students; having Masters helps students to feel less alienated.
- Issues are deeper than the structure.
- York is a prestigious university; meaningful connections and a human touch to academics lead to York pride; having a Master helps create those connections.
- Colleges can work together to create connections and pride.
- Student's high school only had about 1500 students; university was a big change; Frosh week was vital; he made connections (including connections with more senior students) and friends without whom he would not be here; there were minor technical issues but everything else was well done; YUSmart was helpful but it was too much classroom—tours of campus would be good.
- When students want advice about majors they ask older students; there is vast knowledge and a range of majors in the College; older students know the system and tell junior students.
- But in terms of advisors, students need academic advisors who are available to answer questions about programs and student life advisors who are there just to support them.
- Student went to the Student Council President last year for advice; wanted to hear from someone who has been through the experience and can present a different point of view.
- Students prefer to speak with someone with a meaningful connection; an academic advisor just provides information about requirements rather than making a personal connection; Stong College is big—how can a whole Faculty make meaningful connections?
- York's website is too convoluted; you have to get an appointment before being advised; got information from other students.
- There is a stigma associated with getting "Yorked," being "Yorked" could be turned into a more positive thing.