A PLU Communication major was certain she wanted to be a journalist – it was the career dream she had envisioned for years and she knew journalism was going to be her vocation in life. She stormed through the curriculum successfully and near the end of her academic journey at PLU had an opportunity to do an internship as a journalist to prepare for her imminent career.

During this short experience she made a rather important discovery – SHE DID NOT WANT TO BE A JOURNALIST. The vision of journalism she had in her mind did not match the reality of the day to day activities of the profession. Now, late in the game, she had to change course. Fortunately, the experience led her to a career in Public Relations but this significant change occurred very late in her education and could have added a great deal of time and expense.

The Communication department has worked together for years to integrate the professional internship experience with the general education and capstone, giving students an opportunity to be aware of their future. While there have been changes over time, the current Comm 399 sophomore course sets students up for success in both the internship and capstone. **Amanda Feller** has been instrumental in developing the 399 course where students learn the importance of networking and job shadowing, integrate their liberal arts experience at PLU and take time to prepare for capstone by conducting research and writing.

Center for Media Studies Director **Robert Wells** has developed strong relationships with industry giving students relevant and meaningful exposure to careers and the ability to develop projects that often lead to an applied capstone experience. **Amy Young** and **Michael Bartanen** instruct the capstone for Communication majors and guide students through their industry related culminating experience.

Capstone is now done as an electronic portfolio; a meaningful way for students to prepare for careers. In addition, e-portfolios are helpful for faculty to reflect upon student work and identify areas where students show strengths and weaknesses in an effort to improve curriculum and pedagogy.
Know Your Students: History

At Fall Conference student retention was introduced as a priority given the recent drop in enrollment. The ARTS committee survey on student success showed that strong relationships with faculty are a key factor in retention.

In the History department, Mike Halvorson took the lead in turning this idea into action. With the help of Kevin Berg, Mike created a simple Excel file of History majors including their overall GPA, Major GPA, Grade in History 301 and foreign language progress. The faculty spent the next three department meetings going through the list one student at a time – identifying not only the students that needed assistance but also those excelling that might apply for a Fulbright or consider graduate school.

Interestingly, faculty found that students transferring into the major sometimes bring a legacy of poor academic performance and an overall GPA below 2.5, the minimum required to be in good standing in the major. The department has proposed to EPC that the requirement be lowered to 2.0, the PLU standard, to address this problem and give students that may have struggled previously an opportunity to succeed.

Importantly, the faculty learned that there were very few students performing poorly but the ones struggling were predominantly transfer students. Stay tuned for next steps as the History department continues to engage in thoughtful inquiry regarding their students and the hidden dynamics of student retention.

Initial Inquiry

Freshmen Warning?

Students put on Freshmen Warning have a retention rate of 11%.

Students put on Probation after Freshmen Warning have a retention rate of 1%.

Data indicates the system currently structured does not provide warning, support and an opportunity to succeed but instead, a rationale for dismissal. What should we do about this, if anything?

Contact Dave Veazey for the full report academic warning, with any questions and with any future submissions to Improving the PLU Experience. dav@plu.edu  x8145 For a copy and to see other editions go to: www.plu.edu/institutional-research/