

# NJANSA News

New Jersey Association of New Student Advocates

Volume 1, Issue 1

Spring 2009

## Keeping the Faith in Hard Times:

### John Gardner's Twelve Steps for New Jersey First-Year Advocates

As I was organizing my thoughts for this article, I heard a news report that the Conference Board, which is headquartered across from you in New York City, had just reported that its periodic survey of consumer confidence had reached its lowest level ever. I thought of you all across the river and I was reminded one more time, that no matter what we must "keep the faith". I would like to reflect briefly here on strategies for doing that, and thus simultaneously for helping your new students, for whom you are their primary advocates.

I have a very fresh memory of your students, their needs, talents, hopes and dreams as a result of seeing them this October on the campus of Union County College, and having the opportunity to teach one class session of the first-year seminar. What a thrill it was to see this mélange of students, drawn from some 80 nations, presenting me with their variegated hues, dress, and modes of communication. But they all shared in common their potential to be successfully taught, how to be successful in college, and their belief that New Jersey higher education was their key to sharing in the American dream. I was truly inspired by my interactions with these students for whom you are their equivalent to the Statue of Liberty, which also looks out over the Garden State.

In the media barrage of gloom and doom, it is absolutely essential to remind ourselves that one of the few things we can count on as timeless, enduring, and a harbinger of hope and better times, is that there are always going to be new students

coming to our campuses. And they are going to need you more than ever.

My own career spans four previous "rough patches" as our President recently described them, the recessions of: 1973-74, 1980-82, 1990-92, and 2000-2002. These are some of the lessons I have learned for enhancing our roles as First-Year Advocates during hard times:

**1. Advocating that the first year matters:** No matter how short monies are, campuses always find the money to do what they most want to do. The question becomes then: what do we want to do? What are our priorities? The answer, in part, is based on our campus values, as espoused by colleagues like you. Moral of the story: we need Advocates more than ever.

**2. Sticking with your mantra:** This means that you can never take for granted that allocation decision makers understand why the first year matters. You constantly have to remind them. Stay the course. Don't change your campaign theme.

**3. Assessment needed more than ever:** When times get tough and it is more important than ever for "deciders" to seek out empirical bases for decision making, then assessment of your first-year program outcomes are more important than ever.

**4. Link the first year with accreditation:** Even in tough times, your campus still has to undergo reaffirmation of Middle States accreditation. Accreditors want to know the holy trinity of accreditation: 1) what is your institutional mission? 2) what do you know about whether or not

you are achieving your mission? 3) what do you do with what you know? (i.e. to improve educational outcomes). More than ever a focus on the first year is a suitable one for assessment, planning and improvement steps related to accreditation. You need better data to make your case even more compelling.

**5. Collaboration needed more than ever:** Especially when times are tough we can't all have our own sandboxes to play in. We need instead to share our resources, facilities, personnel, activities. Collaboration as an alternative to a Lone Ranger going it alone modus operandi are imperative. The first year is a focus rich in potential for partnerships, especially between academic administrators, student affairs administrators, and faculty. Who have you been thinking about reaching out to? What could you share and collaborate on instead of asking for resources for just your initiative?

**6. Attention to needs of the whole student needed more than ever:** Our students absorb the same cultural themes, trends, stresses that we do; only they don't have our coping skills, resources, and employment base. They bring all their externally generated stresses into our classrooms and they need support more than ever. The American college campus is one of the few social safety nets still functioning relatively well.

**7. It's time to reorder your priorities:** Take your destiny in your own hands. Offer to give up something you are doing that is less essential to provide resources for others. You need to



**Dr. John Gardner**  
Executive Director,  
*Policy on the First Year of College*

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## A Message from NJANSA's Chair



Terry Y. Fung, Ph.D.,  
NJANSA Chair  
Professor of Mathematics,  
Kean University

Dear NJANSA Members,

Since the induction of NJANSA by John Gardner in April 2006, we have passed a few milestones. I would like to have this opportunity to highlight them for you. We had our statewide inaugural conference at Kean University in October 2007. The conference was entitled, "First-Year Experience: Not Just a Course." Dr. James A. Anderson was the Keynote Speaker. There were over 200 attendees from various universities and colleges that participated in this conference. The conference was well-received and rated as "good to excellent" by 96% of the attendees.

We held our first election in March 2008. I was honored to be elected to serve you as your chair. As our association has grown, we have established By-

laws, the Executive Board, and other structures. The Executive Board has worked very hard to shape the By-laws and they are ready to be voted on at our next general meeting in March 2009. I want to commend our Vice-Chair, Kim Daniel-Robinson for her expertise in putting the By-laws together and steering the Executive Board in the right direction in the discussion.

We launched our website in September 2008. It looks professional and it will be our platform to communicate with our members. To this end, we need to give applaud to our Web Coordinator, Dave Ross. Please visit our web site at [www.njansa.org](http://www.njansa.org). If you have any suggestions, please let us know.

Last but not the least, our first issue NJANSA News is here!! This is a forum where ideas can

being exchanged, strategies shared, and encouragements are being given. I hope many of you will write articles for us and share your experiences, expertise, and strategies with us, especially since our second conference is coming up in October 2009!

As a marathon runner, I always feel like running an association is just like running a marathon. It is a journey. We are just at the beginning of our journey. I need your support to make NJANSA work for you! I hope I can count on you to walk, run, and crawl this journey with me and to make NJANSA grow! Hope to see you all at the next meeting!

Sincerely,

Terry Y. Fung, Ph.D.  
NJANSA Chair

## NJANSA Member Spotlight: Kim Daniel-Robinson, Ph.D.



Kim Daniel-Robinson, Ph.D.,  
NJANSA Vice Chair  
(alongside Dr. John Gardner,  
Kean University 2006)

It is difficult to think about NJANSA without Dr. Kim Daniel-Robinson coming to mind. After all, it was Daniel-Robinson's meeting call in 2004 that served as the catalyst for our prospering organization. When asked about what inspired her to summon first-year professionals together, Kim responded, "I was actually doing what I always tell my students. I tell the students they are not in a class by themselves – that they should reach out for support from their fellow students. So I started the organiza-

tion as a support network for university professionals in the state of NJ."

Dr. Daniel-Robinson holds a terminal degree in Counseling Psychology, has spent over 20 years in higher education, and presently serves as the *Director for the First Year Experience* at William Paterson University. There she works collaboratively with faculty, administration, students and various departments to implement a comprehensive university plan for the

retention of first-year students.

As Vice Chair of NJANSA, Kim Daniel-Robinson has been instrumental in formalizing the organization through the creation of our by-laws, which will officially take effect this spring.

When asked about her vision for NJANSA, Daniel-Robinson replied, "I would like to see it grow, and have representation from all 2- and 4-year institutions in the state; and to continue to be a valuable support network for student advocates."

— Written by: Mildred A. Broccoli  
NJANSA Newsletter Editor

**"Hard times provide us with an opportunity to take a hard look at what we are doing, why, with what results, and how could this be improved."**

## Keeping the Faith, Gardner (cont'd from pg. 1)

offer up some possible reductions before it is forced on you.

**8. Duplication cannot be afforded:** what are areas of program overlap and duplication, even of good, well thought out activities? What could be combined, integrated? You need to do so before it is done to you.

**9. Find ways to create more employment opportunities for your students:** Increasingly,

colleges must be the employers of last resort. I had a mentor at the University of South Carolina who taught me that in tough times the very last places you want to cut are student employment funds. This also provides us the opportunity to think about how could we create more options for students to serve as peer leaders, advisors, counselors. Students have huge impact

on fellow students and they are highly cost effective.

**10. Urge your institution to develop, usually for the first time, a strategic plan for the first year:** Hard times provide us with an opportunity to take a hard look at what we are doing, why, with what results, and how could this be improved. If we are going to achieve more collaboration, less competition, less duplication, smarter pedagogies, in-



stitutions need a coherent plan and vision for the first year from which all first-year initiatives flow. This is the primary work I do now in a strategic planning process known as "Foundations of Excellence in the First College Year" ([www.fyfoundations.org](http://www.fyfoundations.org)).

**11. More than ever collaboration between New Jersey two and four-year institutions is desirable:** Given the enormous cost pressures we all are facing more New Jersey students will be starting in your community colleges. But your students will not maximize their chances for baccalaureate degree attainment, assuming that is their goal, without improved coopera-

tion between sending and receiving schools. This would include also the phenomenon of "reverse transfer" from four-year to two-year sectors.

**12. Let's Get Entrepreneurial:** If ever the times called for looking for new, meaning "external" sources of revenue, it is now. Been thinking about applying for that grant but just been putting it off? Now's the time. Other colleges get Title III and V and foundation grants: you can too. And don't forget New Jersey based corporate and private family foundations! There has been lots of money made in New Jersey which is now redirected towards the public good,

which means you and your students.

In conclusion, you are the first and only state so far to establish a state-wide advocacy organization for first-year educators. I am proud to be associated with you and am confident you will find ways to keep the faith for our new students during our current recession and beyond. Please feel free to stay in touch with me during this trying time ([gardner@fyfoundations.org](mailto:gardner@fyfoundations.org)).

— Written by: *Dr. John Gardner, Executive Director, Policy Center on the First Year of College*

**“More than ever collaboration between New Jersey two and four-year institutions is desirable.”**

## Linking Content Area Courses to FYS

I am teaching what we at William Paterson University call a linked course, defined as the same students registered in two separate courses. I am teaching both: a freshman composition course, and *First Year Seminar* (FYS). Thankfully, my *First Year Experience* and *English* departments are supportive of this innovation. Having taught this combination twice, I encourage others to consider linking content area courses to FYS.

The linking creates a learning community of first-year students with increased interaction, help-

ing them establish friendships. I use icebreaker exercises early in the semester, and later, peer-revision groups and team projects. By creating assignments that require interaction, my hope is that even shy students will connect with classmates. Linking also increases interaction with me. FYS meets once a week for 1 ¼ hours. Since writing meets twice weekly, by teaching both courses, I see students three times as much. I get to know them better; my ability to offer individualized support is enhanced.

Teaching both courses also affords me great opportunities to use the writing curriculum to demonstrate and reinforce FYS skills-related and acclimation goals (note-taking, using tutoring facilities, avoiding plagiarism, etc.). The greatest benefit is the legitimizing of FYS, a course that students sometimes discount. Now if they skip my FYS class, they must face me the next day for English. By connecting the two, and because I treat the two with equal respect, my students are much less likely to think of FYS as a throw-away class.

— Written by: *Beth Ann Bates, Adjunct Instructor, William Paterson, Wayne, NJ*  
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**“Teaching both courses affords me great opportunities to use the writing curriculum to demonstrate and reinforce FYS skills-related and acclimation goals...”**

## Empowering Male Minority Students

Nationwide, colleges and universities struggle to engage male minority students in leadership roles. To address this challenge, the Saint Peter's College Educational Opportunity Fund Program (EOF) has established a new initiative; The Male Empowerment Network (M.E.N.). The program was created in September 2007 to promote retention and graduation by engaging males in various activities that enhance their personal development.

In its first year, M.E.N. enrolled nine members, who were committed to the involvement and promotion of the organization. During the 2007-2008 aca-

demical year, the organization conducted a group seminar series, which was held on a monthly basis. Topics of discussion ranged from; the importance of networking to academic leadership to having healthy relationships.

M.E.N. has been gaining support throughout the college community; just this semester the program has added 2 faculty members who serve in an advisory position. This year is looking to be a monumental year for the organization. Members recently participated in a voter's registration drive and volun-

teered off-campus feeding the homeless during the holiday season and have been involved in networking opportunities both on and off campus.

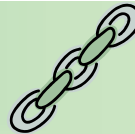
— Written by: *Marshal Cole, EOF Counselor, Saint Peter's College, Jersey City, NJ*  
[mcoles@spc.edu](mailto:mcoles@spc.edu)



Marshal Coles (seated left) and Dr. Peter Gotlieb, Associate Dean of Experiential Learning and Career Services (seated right) along with members of the Saint Peter's College Male Empowerment Network (M.E.N.)



## NJANSA Resource Links & Reviews



### Cyber Help for Students in Seek of their Future

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" This rather esoteric question typically boggles the minds of our students. Face it, trying to get college students to commit to an academic major is at times akin to pulling out one's own teeth. But as first year experience professionals we know that career-focused students are at less risk than their undecided counterparts. So how do we as faculty, professional advisors, and administrators steer our students toward enlightenment even if we are not experts in career counseling ourselves? In pursuit of an answer to this less than esoteric question, I embarked upon a useful website that I wish to share with our readers.

MyPlan.com is an independent and comprehensive online

resource center for education and career-seekers to explore unbiased data about colleges, majors, financial aid, job projections and salaries. The site also provides forums for community discussions and networking. Career assessment tools such as interest inventories, personality tests, skill profilers, and "career matchers" are also available to the user at a relatively low cost. Speaking of cost, most of the information on MyPlan.com is free, which is certainly an added bonus during these difficult economic times.

But from my professional perspective, the most helpful feature is the "What Can I Do With a Major In...?" section. Here students can explore popular majors alongside related careers. The user simply selects

the major of interest and the site renders "Career Tiers." The tier level refers to how highly related the major is to the respective career. For every career highlighted, there is a full job description, educational and training summary, in addition to salary and other industry data.

However, I must admit to one notable drawback. If you are in search of a career in "First Year Experience" via this site, regrettably your efforts will prove fruitless. So I think I might have to contact these folks to get us on their radar. ☺

— Written by: *Mildred A. Broccoli*  
*NJANSA Newsletter Editor*  
*Dean of Freshmen/Sophomores*  
*Saint Peters College, Jersey City, NJ*  
 MyPlan.com [mbroccoli@spc.edu](mailto:mbroccoli@spc.edu)

## NJANSA Upcoming

### State-Wide Meeting

March 6, 2009

10:00 a.m.

"Strategic Planning Under Economic Stress"

Seton Hall University

### 2009 Conference

October 30, 2009

"The Changing Student in a Changing World"

William Paterson University

**A Call for  
Conference Proposals  
Submission Deadline:**

**April 30, 2009**



## NJANSA News

### Contact NJANSA

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**Find NJANSA  
on the web @  
[www.njansa.org](http://www.njansa.org)**

Established in 2004, the New Jersey Association of New Student Advocates' mission serves to promote and develop student success in higher education from various two-year and four-year institutions, both public and private, from areas of student and academic affairs. The chartering institutions are Bergen Community College, Bloomfield College, Caldwell College, Kean University, Monmouth University, Montclair State University, Saint Peter's College, Seton Hall University, Union County College and William Paterson University.

#### Executive Board Membership:

Terry Y. Fung, Chair, Kean University  
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Debbie Kavourias, Treasurer, Monmouth University  
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David Ross, Web Coordinator, Raritan Valley Community College  
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