

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

FACULTY PRESENTATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA:
“FIRST YEAR ONLY”

Action Requested: Receive the presentation.

Executive Summary: Freshmen who enroll in a first-year only section of a general education course during their first semester at the university are retained at a higher rate into their second year of college compared to those students who do not take a first-year only section. One key aspect of these freshmen-only sections is the mentoring relationship between host instructors, course-embedded peer mentors, and first-year students. The peer mentors in these classes are 2nd, 3rd, or 4th year students who work with the host instructors to effectively address students' first-year transition issues. A faculty/staff leadership team and host instructors guide peer mentors in the use of best practices for engaging students, while the peer mentors model this similar behavior with first-year students. This presentation will describe how the presence of the mentoring relationships creates a learning community and make a difference in the classroom and students' lives.

Professor Deirdre Heistad has been a faculty member in the Department of Languages and Literatures since 2000. In her role as Director of UNI's Liberal Arts Core, Dr. Heistad promotes UNI's commitment to excellence in innovative undergraduate education at both the regional and national levels by providing administrative support and oversight to new and existing interdisciplinary and cross-divisional programs whose success depends on close, constant, and on-going collaboration between students and academic affairs.

Dr. Kristin Woods is the Assistant Dean of Students and Director of New Students Program. She coordinates retention and student success initiatives, including peer mentoring, the MAP-Works early intervention program, and success coaching for first-year students. She collaborates with faculty members on the implementation of First-Year Only (FYO) course communities, provides individual assistance to at-risk students, and co-chairs the university's Transfer Council. Dr. Woods also works with campus partners to facilitate the Jump Start extended orientation program, Transfer Welcome events, and Family Weekend.

Peer Mentor students will also be available during the presentation.