13 Supporting First Year Students in their Academic and Social Adjustment to Higher Education. A Case study of the First Seven Weeks Programme at the University of Limerick.

Yvonne Diggins, University of Limerick; Angelica Risquez, University of Limerick; Maura Murphy, University of Limerick.

Corresponding author: yvonne.diggins@ul.ie

Introduction

Transition to university takes place during the first few months of a student entering higher education and is characterised by the new academic, social and personal challenges that the student experiences. At university, students are required to develop competences related to accessing information, participation in university life, facing academic challenges, study, and work abroad (IUQB, 2006; Diggins, Risquez and Murphy et al., 2011; DES, 2011). In Ireland, the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (DES, 2011) advises higher education institutions to address identified shortfalls in students' skills during their first year in higher education, by providing induction and preparation courses such as self-directed learning, time management and information literacy. This chapter showcases an example of the practical application of this policy through the *First Seven Weeks* programme at the University of Limerick (UL), a proactive transition programme underpinned by research, which integrates existing on-campus student support services. Using Facebook, a free social networking website, as the main method of communication, the initiative aims to help students find their way around, clarify expectations, and facilitate their academic adjustment and socialisation. The findings show that students of the programme agree that Facebook is useful for university student support initiatives and that the programme is an extremely helpful resource. The programme is sustainable in terms of funding, as the cost-benefit is maximised through engaging with existing student services, staff, faculty and students; it is further sustainable by using Facebook, a free social networking website, as the main communication method with students. However, it is clear that guidance initiatives are intensive from the point of view of coordination and require adequate funding as well as the strategic support of university authorities. The following sections explore the context for the programme and the use of technology within the programme. We then discuss the results collected from two online surveys and conclude by outlining proposed future developments.

Context

Transition to higher education involves many changes. Whatever their previous contexts, new arrivals to university frequently find the academic culture challenging. Knox (2005) acknowledges that transition to university is a life-changing event for a student, which extends beyond academic adjustments. The shift from the generally controlled environment of school and family, to an environment in which students are expected to accept personal responsibility for both academic and social aspects of their lives, can cause them to experience both stress and anxiety. Attending university involves substantial adjustment in routine and intellectual engagement for most students. For some, it presents challenges that have been described by McInnis et al. (1995) as an 'intimidating leap into the unknown'. Research shows that the first year experience involves the development of many new and complex routines that are not always easy to acquire, and may be particularly challenging for certain groups of students, such as mature students and other non-traditional learners (Risquez et al., 2007-2008). The issues facing students at the start of the academic year are not necessarily the same issues that they encounter throughout the year, though adjustment is often a matter of dealing with the unfamiliar. Lowe and Cook (2003) show that in the United Kingdom, although most students coped adequately with the transition into higher education, there was 'a considerable minority' who had problems, many of whom found university to be a negative experience and who failed to come to terms with the academic and social demands of university life. The results of Lowe and Cook's (2003) study indicate that a substantial proportion of students were poorly prepared for the emotional aspects of separating from their previous situation and adjusting to their new environment at university.

Astin's 'Theory of Involvement' proposes that successful integration of students into the campus environment influences academic success (Astin, 1984; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). Social adjustment, sense of identity and a feeling of belonging are all important parts of a student's effective transition into university life. However, this sense of belongingness can often be a troublesome goal when we take into consideration how 'tribal' and 'territorial' (Becher, 1989; Becher and Trowler, 2001) universities and academic disciplines themselves can be. Becoming 'socialised into a discipline' (Becher, 1989; Becher and Trowler, 2001) is a challenging process often deemed to be a problem of misinterpretation on the part of the 'novice' learner, but perhaps more correctly conceived of as a 'barrier to entry' created by the mysterious rules and routines of disciplinary practice. Becher and Trowler (2001) conclude that those working in different disciplines could be understood as belonging to different 'tribes', having distinctively different cultures and ways of knowing. This process is further complicated with the widening access to higher education and the attendant danger of isolation (Morley et al., 2004). In Ireland, the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* highlights the need for a transitional programme as it states that 'a positive first-year student experience is crucial to achieving the goals of higher education; failure to address the challenges encountered by students in their first year contributes to high drop-out and failure rates, with personal and system-wide implications' (2011: 56).

The *First Seven Weeks* Programme and the Use of Technology

The national strategy for Higher Education advises that 'higher education institutions should prepare first-year students better for their learning experience, so that they can

engage with it more successfully' (2011: 18). The quality of the student experience is now the cornerstone in the institutional strategy at UL, and in response, practical efforts have been made to move towards a greater degree of centralisation in the guidance strategy at the time of entry to the university. An example of this is evident with the introduction, in September 2010, of the transition initiative *First Seven Weeks* led by the Office of the Associate Vice-President Academic and managed through the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). The programme is designed to enhance transition proactively, promoting an open, flexible and systemic approach that coordinates the efforts and resources of multiple student support stakeholders at UL. Its main aim is to support and prepare students in transitioning to higher education and to aid them in adjusting to new routines and intellectual engagement. The initiative was successfully piloted at the beginning of the academic year 2010/11 and was mainstreamed as a learner support in the academic year 2011/2012. The programme is organised around seven weekly themes, which integrate existing student support services that are central to student transition to university and are as follows:

1. Welcome, settling in and finding your way around
2. Study skills and time management
3. Health and wellbeing
4. Meet your advisor
5. Learner support centres
6. Career and civic engagement awareness
7. Critical thinking and longer term planning

A multi-disciplinary, inter-departmental working group is assigned on an ongoing basis to each weekly theme, which involves intensive coordination. These working groups develop and source online materials, for example videos, photos, downloadable documents, maps and panoramas of the UL campus, to be communicated to students along with innovative face-to-face on-campus events. A Facebook page is used as the main method of online communication with the first year students for each weekly theme. Existing student support services, staff, academic staff and the *First Seven Weeks* student guides carry out online and on-campus communication with the first year students. The *First Seven Weeks* newly developed online 'community' of past and current students of the programme also communicate with new students. In 2011, the *First Seven Weeks* 'Hub' was established as a physical presence of the programme on campus in order to support the activity on the Facebook page, enabling a face-to-face connection with first year students through the *First Seven Weeks* guides.

Why use Facebook?

Anderson (2007: 5) advises that in recent years the Web has both returned to its roots as a read/write tool along with entering a new, more social and participatory phase, which facilitates 'a more socially connected Web where everyone is able to add to and edit the information space'. These trends led to a 'second phase' of the Web - a new, 'improved' Web version 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2005). Anderson (2007) stresses that there has been a lot of discussion within higher education surrounding the use of Web 2.0 and its implications for education. Web 2.0 provides services and applications that enable individual production and user generated content, harness the power of the crowd, and gather data on an epic scale. A number of Web-based services and applications that demonstrate the foundations of the Web 2.0 concept are being used to a certain extent in higher education, with some

of the most common being: social software; social media; collaboration; sharing content; tagging; social networking (Myspace, Facebook, Ning); blogs; wikis; social bookmarks; podcasting; mash-up; media sharing (through YouTube); RSS; and tag cloud. Educators are realising the potential of social networking tools and are experimenting with them for a variety of reasons including, communication with students, enhancement of the first year student experience, and innovative assessment techniques (O'Keeffe and Igbrude, 2010). ECAR (2009) identifies a major increase in the usage of social networking tools among undergraduate students, where these tools now shape how college students connect to the world and with each other. Eurostat (in Redecker et al., 2010) report that 73% of all Europeans between 16 and 24 years use the Internet to communicate through social media. Furthermore, YouthNet (Hulme, 2009) reports that 82% of those questioned stated that they use the Internet to seek advice or information and 75% of those in this age group state that they cannot live without the Internet.

Taking Action

Informed by this research, the *First Seven Weeks* Task Force, which included on-campus technology experts, decided to develop an innovative programme, where current technology trends would need to be embraced. Thus, research into various social and online communication methods was carried out. It was important for the Task Force that the chosen method of online communication was safe, sustainable, reliable, low cost, user friendly, open, easily accessible, and had the ability to gather usage data. While the programme would be aimed at first year students (undergraduate and postgraduate) entering UL, it was hoped that the 'open' element of the programme, i.e. information and resources, would also attract future potential students interested in studying at UL. The benefits and challenges of three main online communication methods; namely Sulis UL's Learning Management System (LMS); Ning; and Facebook - two free social networking websites, were discussed by the Task Force. Firstly, UL's LMS was presented as an option as it was safe (password protected and monitored by an internal member of staff); reliable (an externally hosted solution but with Information Technology Division support); sustainable (use of existing staff members as well as user generated content); low cost (benefiting from the existing LMS infrastructure); and user-friendly (user support documentation was available); and could generate usage data. However, the access restrictions were deemed unsuitable for the project, as the LMS is available only to registered students, so potential future students would not be able to explore or interact with the space.

Secondly, Ning was considered as it was also safe, sustainable, reliable, had no cost associated, was user-friendly, and could gather usage data. Along with these benefits, the Ning site for the programme would also be open and easily accessible. Although students would have to register to 'join' the area, registration would not be dependent upon student registration at the university, so effectively the area would also be open to usage by future students. However, after initial piloting it became obvious that a critical mass would not be achieved through the use of Ning as it required students to create accounts in a brand new platform with little adoption in Ireland. The situation was quite the opposite in the case of Facebook in Ireland, which has an audience that is currently reaching 2,110,600 users, roughly half the population of the country. It is estimated that 24% of the audience in Ireland are 18-24 years and 30% 25-34 years, common age-groups for first year higher education students - undergraduate and postgraduate (Facebook, 2011). A Facebook page for the project was agreed by the Task Force as being sustainable, reliable, with no cost associated, user-friendly, open, easily accessible, and could gather

large amounts of usage data. In addition, Facebook provides a customised uniform resource locator (URL) for the Facebook page: www.facebook.com/first7weeks, which supports the marketing and promotion of the programme. At this time, Facebook was a popular social networking medium and research studies, such as Roblyer et al. (2010) found evidence of students' openness to the possibility of using Facebook to support learning and other structured activity. The potential use of Facebook however, also raised concerns amongst the Task Force, especially concerning the safety of students on this social networking site. The danger of going 'open' through Facebook enabled students to interact with the programme through the page: all users had to do was to 'Like' the page using their Facebook profiles. This 'openness' resulted in the possibility of the programme being vulnerable to the posting of inappropriate content and information on the page. It was agreed by the Task Force that if Facebook was to be used that the page would have to be monitored at a high level by assigned staff. In addition, it was very important for the Task Force that students were informed about how to stay safe on Facebook, through the use of awareness documentation and videos. Furthermore, in the case of an 'emergency activity' on the page, it was agreed that the page would be taken offline. With such a high level of monitoring by staff for inappropriate behaviour, along with the *First Seven Weeks* online 'community' itself, this has not happened.
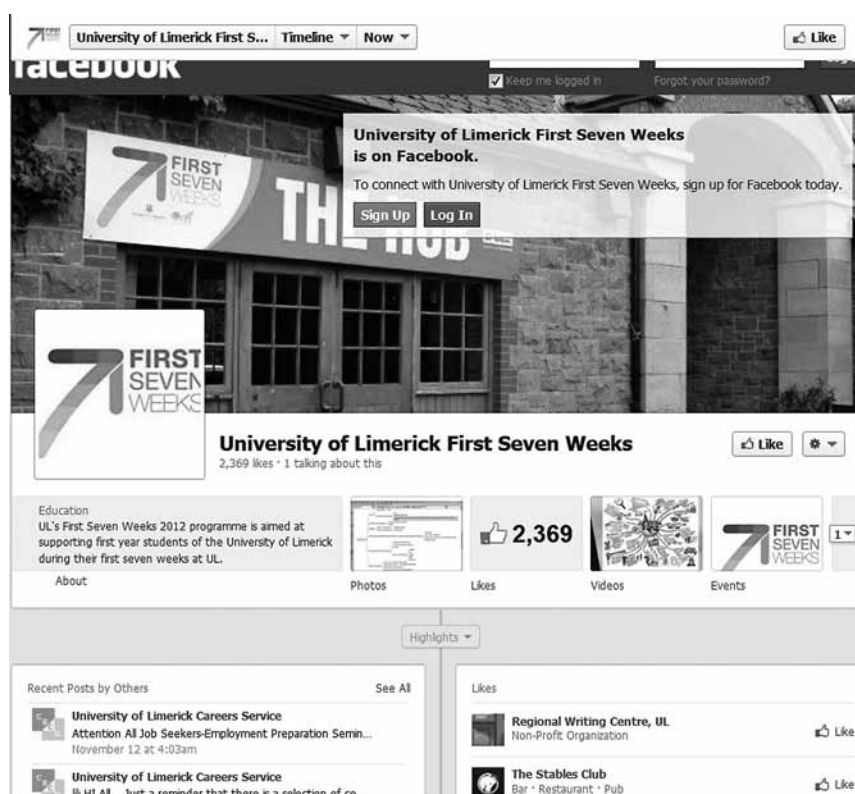

Figure 1: *First Seven Weeks Facebook page*

Methods

At the end of the academic years 2011 and 2012, user statistics from the *First Seven Weeks* Facebook page were collected along with data from two (academic year 2010/2011 and 2011/2012) online surveys. The surveys were jointly designed by the multi-disciplinary working team and were based on open-ended questions addressing a range of indicators of successful transition. Both surveys focus on evaluating the seven themes of the programme and the results of both are discussed accordingly. Through the online survey

895 individual responses were gathered in the pilot year 2010/11. These responses comprised of 75% first year undergraduate students and 25% postgraduate students. 892 individual responses were gathered in the second year (2011/2012), and this second version of the survey included specific questions on the use of Facebook. In the second survey, responses recorded an increase in the first year undergraduate student contribution to 92% and a decrease in the postgraduates to 8%. In both surveys, gender distribution and origin of respondents is representative of registration records: 45% male and 55% female; 78% Irish; 10% other EU country and 12% other non-EU country. A response to each survey question was not compulsory, so total responses to questions vary and are noted where relevant. Finally, while the results portray a useful picture of the transition process of respondents to the survey, no absolute cause-effect conclusions can be drawn in relation to the direct impact of the programme.

Discussion of Results

Week 1: Welcome, settling in and finding your way around

Table 1 presents students' responses using a scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Finding your way around a new campus can be a daunting task for new students. Approximately 92% in the 2011 survey and 96% in the 2012 survey stated that at the end of the first seven weeks at university, they could find their way around campus and could locate relevant classrooms. Approximately 57% in the 2011 survey and 63% in the 2012 survey stated that they felt on top of their coursework and able to do the course that they had chosen.

	Survey 1: Evaluation 2010/11					Survey 2: Evaluation 2011/12				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
I know my way around the campus and can find the classrooms that I need to be in	2.2	1.6	4.3	39.1	**52.7**	0.4	1.5	2.5	42.9	**52.7**
I feel on top of my work and able to do the course I have chosen	3.3	10	30.1	**46**	10.5	2.4	8.7	25.7	**51.7**	11.6

Table 1: Finding your way around and course work (as percentage of total)

To support students in this Week 1 orientation phase, the *First Seven Weeks* student guides are located in each of the main buildings where first year students have lecturers. Through the Facebook page, students are provided with videos and maps of the campus buildings and lecture halls. Students could also drop in to the FSW Hub and ask the student guides about location of buildings, registration queries, or anything related to college life. In 2012, an Android Application was launched, which included indoor maps of the campus; using this application students receive their current location as well as directions to and from on-campus buildings on their mobile phone. Quick Response (QR) codes are displayed on posters throughout the campus, so that students can scan the code and access the application on their mobile phones (Figure 3).
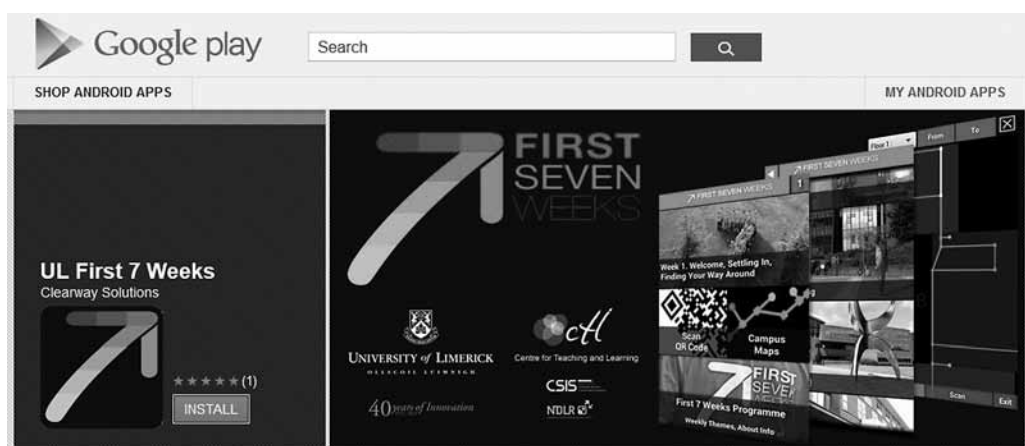
Figure 2: *First Seven Weeks* App

Students can feel very overwhelmed when entering and trying to settle into a new study environment. To welcome students and to support them in 'settling in' to the university, the programme launched a 'Breakfast with your Dean', which invites students to attend breakfast and meet their Dean, along with other students in their discipline. The initiative encourages student contact with faculty, an important factor for student transition to higher education. In the first survey (Table 2) approximately 50% 'agree' and 15% 'strongly agree'; and in the second survey, 55% 'agree' and 18% 'strongly agree' that they have had useful contact with faculty. However, there is still a significant number 21% in 2011 and 17% in 2012 that are unsure if they have had useful contact with faculty.

	Survey 1: Evaluation 2010/11					Survey 2: Evaluation 2011/12				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
I have had useful contact with my teachers/tutors	3.2	11	21.3	**49.6**	14.9	1.4	8.7	17	**54.7**	18.1

Table 2: Student-teacher contact (as percentage of total)

When asked about the method of contact with faculty (Table 3), in both surveys 85% stated that they had communicated with their teachers/tutors mostly during classroom time. 40% in 2010/2011 and 39% in 2011/2012 stated that they had contacted their teacher/tutor through conversations and work outside class. In the first survey 17% and in the second survey 19% stated that they contacted faculty within small groups outside of class.

Response	2010/11	2011/12
Classroom time	85.0%	84.9%
One to one conversations outside class	40.4%	38.5%
Small group contact outside class	16.7%	18.5%
Email	78.3%	79.0%
Virtual learning environment	38.3%	32.2%
Facebook	1.5%	1.1%

Table 3: Method of communication

Online communication appears to be an important medium for faculty-student contact, as 78% in the first survey and 79% in the second survey stated that they had email contact with faculty. In 2010/2011, 38% and 32% in 2011/2012 stated that they had communicated with teachers/tutors through the university virtual learning environment. However, the survey showed that communication with teachers/tutors through social networks such as Facebook was very rare (1.5% in 2010/2011 and 1% in 2011/2012). The results delineated in the chapter by Risquez et al. in this book also support this finding. The virtual learning environment appears to provide a safer forum for students unwilling or unable to communicate with lecturers in class, or in person.

Week 2: Study skills and time management and Week 7: Critical thinking and longer term planning

Students need guidance and support to acquire new skills to enable them to adapt to study within higher education. The programme organises workshops and events focusing on study skills, critical thinking, planning, time management and Sulis, UL's Learning Management System. These workshops and events are announced through the Facebook page. Along with this, students can download UL's Student Timetable Android Application through the Facebook page. In addition, in the first survey, 35% and in the second survey to 37% of respondents 'agree' that they were aware of new and useful study strategies. However, in both 2011 and 2012 31% stated that they were unsure if they had become aware of new useful study strategies and in 2011, 19% and in 2012, 17% 'disagree' with this statement (Table 4).

	Survey 1: Evaluation 2010/11					Survey 2: Evaluation 2011/12				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
I have become aware of new and useful study strategies	6.8	19.2	31.4	**34.7**	7.8	5	17	31	**37.4**	9.5
I feel confident about managing my time	3	11.1	29.7	**45.6**	10.5	2	8.9	26.6	**50.3**	12.1

Table 4. Study strategies and time management (as percentage of total)

Furthermore, while in survey one, approximately 46%, and in survey two 50%, of respondents 'agree' that they are confident about managing their time, a significant number of respondents, 30% in 2011 and 27% in 2012, were unsure that they felt confident about their time management (Table 4).

Week 3: Health and wellbeing and Week 5: Learner Support Centres

There are a number of student and learner support services and centres on campus, which engage with students in week 3 and week 5. These include the following: the counselling service; the contemplative centre and open relaxation rooms; the medical centre; the pastoral centre; the Regional Writing Centre; the Mathematics Learning Centre; the ICT Learning Centre; the Language Centre; and the Science Learning Centre. The aims of Week 3 and Week 5 are to generate an awareness of these services and supports amongst students. For example, the learner support centres have a drop-in facility where students can ask questions and have a look at the supports available to them. In both surveys, 80% of respondents stated that they were aware of the services and centres that were available for them to access on campus.
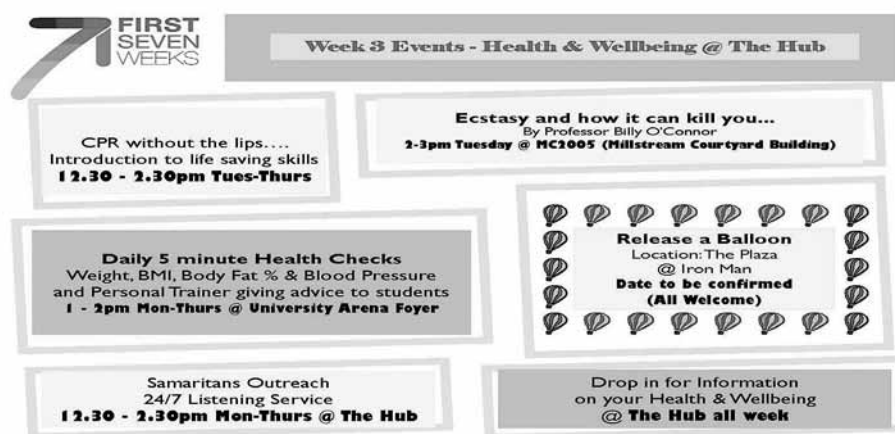
Figure 4: Health and Wellbeing week poster

Week 4: Meet your advisor

On entry to UL, each new student is appointed a faculty advisor. The aim of the *Student Advisor System* is to develop a network of concerned lecturers with adequate resources to deal with the difficulties which students face. Through this system, student-faculty interaction is encouraged and promoted, with a view to contributing significantly to the broader development of students on campus. While reported faculty-student contact is high (Tables 2 & 3), usage of the 'advisor system' by respondents is less encouraging, as in both surveys only 34% of students made contact with their designated faculty advisor at the outset of the programme. Where they had made use of this service, both surveys showed that more than half (58%) found it to be beneficial, but it is interesting to note that a sizeable number (42%) did not appear to find it so.
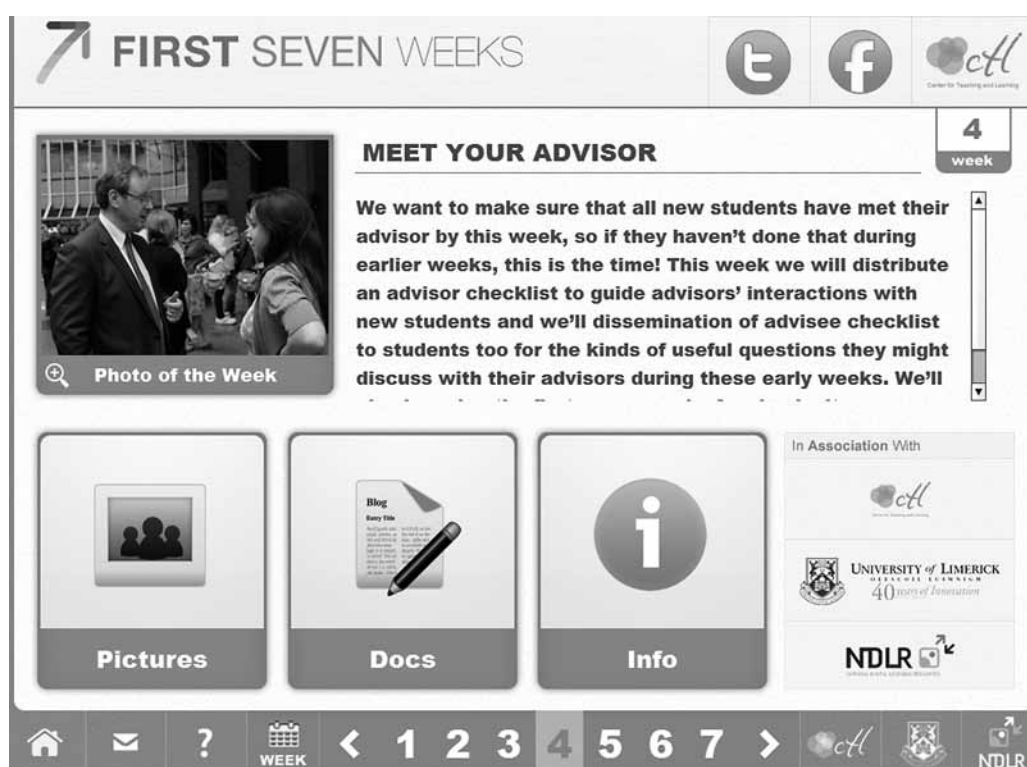

Figure 5: Meet your Advisor Week

Week 6: Career and civic engagement awareness

During Week 6 a representative from the Co-operative Education and Careers division is present in the Hub to answer student queries. In addition, Week 6 coincides with the careers' fair on campus. First year students are interested in careers particularly with regards to future career choices and cooperative education work placement.

	Survey 1: Evaluation 2010/11					Survey 2: Evaluation 2011/12				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
I know where I can find advice and information on career choice	6.3	12.5	20.6	44.5	16.1	2.8	13.8	23.6	39.2	20.6

Table 5: Advice and information (as percentage of total)

In the first survey, approximately 45% 'agree' and 16% 'strongly agree', and in the second survey 39% 'agree' and 21% 'strongly agree' that they know where to find advice and information on career choice (Table 5). Civic engagement is also considered a very important aspect of the student's transition to higher education and students are made aware of civic engagement opportunities that are available to them. The President's Volunteer Award Ceremony is held in Week 6, where UL student volunteers representing all academic departments are presented with awards by the President for their volunteering commitment to communities. Data were not gathered focusing on civic engagement within the 2011 and 2012 surveys, but this will be added within the 2013 survey.

General use of technology and Facebook

As Facebook was the main method of online communication used with the students, the 2011/2012 survey, included specific questions pertaining to how students use Facebook. 91% of respondents 'agree' that they are comfortable using computers; 95% stated that they had a Facebook account; 86% 'agree' that Facebook is easy to use; 90% 'agree' that they 'have adequate access to the web outside college'; and 71% thought that 'Facebook is useful for university student support initiatives'. Out of 670 responses, 94% state that they use Facebook on a daily basis, with 5% accessing it on a monthly basis and 1% once every six months. Currently, the audience of the *First Seven Weeks* Facebook page comprises 53% female and 47% male users. 42% of female users and 37% of male users are in the 18-24 age group categories (first years transitioning from second to third level and potential post-graduates/mature learners); and 7% of female users and 5% of male users are in the 25-34 age group categories (potential mature students or first time postgraduate students).

The Facebook page has generated high amounts of views from both 'logged in' Facebook users and the general public which suggests that the open aspect of the Facebook page is thriving. The highest weekly number of people (unique users) who viewed a posting on the Facebook was on the 7th September 2011 (Week 1 – Phase 2) with 34,193 unique views of the page. This number was followed by 33,404 unique views of the page also in Week 1 of the programme. Out of 608 responses, 22% stated that the Facebook page was 'very useful'; 54% stated that it was 'more or less useful'; and 23% stated that it was 'not very useful'. Out of 604 responses the top five resources accessed through the Facebook page were: 45% Events; 34% Useful Links; 24% Photos; 19% Discussions; 17% Videos.

Conclusion and Future Developments

Results from the evaluation during academic years 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 are encouraging, as they show a high level of satisfaction with different indicators of the early transition process. Open survey responses stated that the programme was 'well run', 'an extremely useful resource', 'helpful' and a 'great idea'. However, the results also show that there are a number of areas that need consideration for enhancement within the programme. Open suggestions from respondents on how to improve the Facebook page for future first year students includes comments such as 'More advertising/Greater visibility/More awareness'; 'More entertaining events/photos/reminders/info'; 'link it better with other UL initiatives'; 'more students from the older years to help out'. In light of these suggestions, each of the individual seven weekly themes could be enhanced in order to maximise the level of support and skills provided to first year students during this transition phase. This could be done through increasing the number of induction and preparation courses and by maximising the usage of the Facebook page to include, for example, an online presence for the guides and the tutors in the learning support centres or links to the Facebook groups/pages that promote their services. It would also be useful to link the *First Seven Weeks* Facebook page to Sulis, the UL VLE.

The second area that the authors identify for improvement is that of assessment and evaluation of the programme, potentially through the use of an end of academic year survey that is emailed to first year students. Although the *First Seven Weeks* programme has surveyed first year students for the past two years, a proposed future development would be to survey UL staff, the first seven weeks guides, and the broader UL community (Brown, 2012). The third suggestion for improvement, as noted by students, is in relation to promoting the programme even further and reaching and supporting non-Facebook users, through the 'Hub' as well as through the provision of more events and workshops.

Overall, the *First Seven Weeks* programme is sustainable in terms of funding, as the cost-benefit is maximised. The main method of communication, Facebook, is free to use and is currently sustainable due to the year-by-year increases in its users. Updating the Facebook page is done by UL staff, faculty and students, and the online resources used for each of the seven weeks have been developed by UL staff or have been sourced online or through the National Digital Learning Resources (NDLR) service. Nonetheless, in our experience, the advantages of social media may cover up the administrative and support resources required for them to be effective. It is important to note that online facilitated programmes and communication, similar to the use of Facebook within the *First Seven Weeks* programme, are not necessarily a cheaper solution. Indeed, they can be even more intensive from the point of view of coordination as it is expected that frequent communication will be maintained with increasingly large cohorts. Hence, return on investment is essential and best practice should be observed and maintained. In the words of Harris (O'Neill et al., 2002: 9) 'electronic guidance programmes should never be planned as primarily publicity for the sponsoring organisation, and should only be done when a genuine need is perceived and a realistic plan can be implemented long-term'.

An important factor for the programme was that it was mainstreamed as a learner support in 2011. For as long as the programme has the strategic support of UL, it will continue to exist and to enhance the first year experience, as well as acting as a centralised structure for the provision of existing university student supports and services awareness generation. The programme will continue actively to collaborate on a national, and hopefully at an international level, and aspire to continue to provide a best practice structure.

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Response to

Supporting First Year Students in their Academic and Social Adjustment to Higher Education. A case study of the First Seven Weeks Programme at the University of Limerick.

by John R. Schermerhorn, Jr., Charles G. O'Bleness Professor of Management Emeritus, College of Business, Ohio University.

I was delighted to read this chapter and learn that the University of Limerick had embarked on such a timely and innovative approach to student retention and development. Instead of leaving the processes of on campus socialization to chance, the *First Seven Weeks* program takes control and helps tailor students' early experiences in positive academic and personal directions.

First Seven Weeks is efficient as well as substantive and creative. Its use of existing university resources and free social media access is an important advantage in today's trying financial times. The program substance and creativity shows lots of forethought and concrete goals. The authors were systematic to the point of being prepared to handle any security problems that might arise with their use of Facebook. Their careful thinking and empathy with the student experience also shows in the adoption of the seven weekly themes. Each one seems on target and relevant in terms of the early first-year student experience.

I give great credit to the authors for including a solid literature review in this chapter. It sets strong foundations and lends further credibility to the program design. The evaluation is similarly strong and offers many formative ideas and directions. With such a commitment to evaluation I have no doubt the program will stay dynamic in adapting to feedback and future conditions. The strong evaluation component should also give interested readers the confidence to modify and utilize the program with local success.

My final thought relates to the comment made at the end of the chapter about 'strategic support' received from the University of Limerick. This point should not be underestimated in importance. It would be hard to envision *First Seven Weeks* being as successful as it is without strategic support from the highest level. In arranging for this support the project staff obviously did their 'setup' work very well. This is a further standard for other potential adopters to follow.

I congratulate the authors for a fine chapter that makes *First Seven Weeks* visible as an attractive and achievable early socialization tool. I hope some version of it will soon be found on many more campuses.