



# The National Dialog on Student Retention

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Students Retaining Students: Peer Programs as a Means to Combat Attrition.

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# Dalton State College

## COLL 1101 to FYES 1000

Starting in the Fall of 1998, Dalton State College initiated a Student Retention Program called College Success 1101.

This was a lecture style class. There was little student interaction, and the retention rate was not up to the college's expectations.

The Freshman Year Experience Program (FYE) was implemented in 2006 to face the challenges experienced in College 1101. The Peer Instruction Program (PIP) grew out of the FYE Program.

# What is the PIP?

**The Peer Instruction Program is a student centered program created to help students succeed academically in college. The Peer Leaders in the program encompass three separate positions that help mentor students both academically and socially.**

## ▶ Freshman Year Experience Peer Leader

- **Although led by a trained and qualified teacher, FYES also has a Peer Leader in the class. The Peer Leader is a currently enrolled student who has been at Dalton State for at least one academic year, and who has an in-depth knowledge of how the campus works. The Peer Leader is an essential piece of the puzzle when creating an effective FYES class.**
- **The FYES1000 class helps prepare freshman for their college experience. It helps eradicate misconceptions about college life, it helps students better their study habits, and it makes students seriously think about their career paths.**
- **Most importantly though, FYES helps facilitate peer interaction, creating strong inter-personal bonds and essential support networks.**

# What is PIP? continue

**Supplemental Instruction, or SI, is a Peer led endeavor that engages the students in their own studying. At the core, it is an interactive and facilitated study group.**

**SI is offered for the student enrolled in “Killer Classes,” otherwise known as classes with the highest drop/fail rates. Although the material from these classes is covered in these sessions, it is not re-lecturing, but rather large scale tutoring.**

## **Supplemental Instruction Peer Leader**

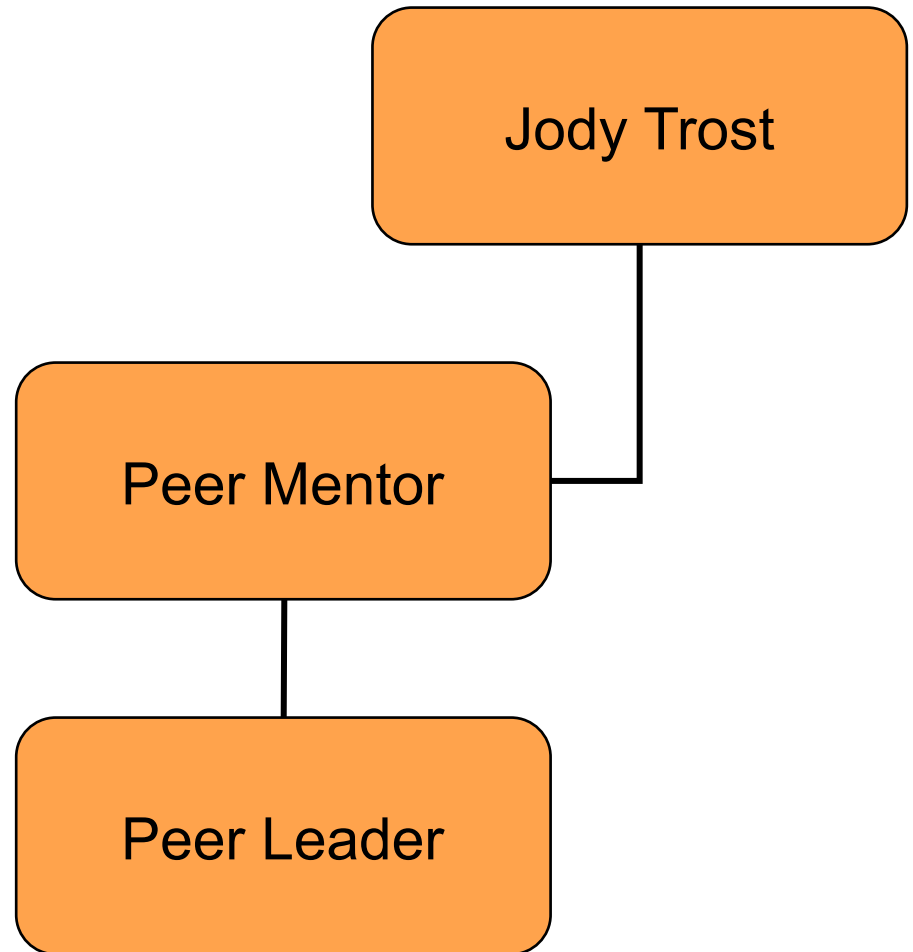
The SI Leader is actively involved in the learning process of the students in the content course. SI Leaders facilitate study groups with students several times a week. They do not tutor individually; they help the students participating in the session learn how to study for their class.

## **Individual Tutor**

We currently have 17 Peer Leaders who tutor a wide range of subjects from Accounting to Psychology, to Business to Science. This helps students not feel overwhelmed and increases their confidence in their own ability.

# Essential Piece Hierarchy

As in any good business, there is a chain of command, and the PIP is no different. As you see to the right, there is the Coordinator, followed by the Peer Mentor, and then the Peer Leader. Out of the 17 current Peer Leaders, there are three Peer Mentors: Emily, Corey, and Shaun



# Peer Mentor and the Peer Leader

**Both the Peer Mentor and the Peer Leaders participate in FYE, SI and Individual Tutoring. The main difference between the Peer Leaders and Mentors is in their involvement with the planning and development, the implementation, and the evaluating stages of PIP.**

**Emily is involved with organization of materials and people. She assigns Peer Leaders with a well matched Peer Mentor, and schedules SI and FYES classes for the Peer Leaders**

**Shaun is involved in the creation and implementation of new classroom activities and ways to increase student engagement. His Peer Instruction Training is essential to the program.**

# Peer Mentor and Peer Leader Continued

**Corey handles assessment of both the Peer Leaders and the Peer Mentors. He also helps to evaluate the effectiveness of the program as a whole by “crunching numbers.”**

**For example, without the invaluable help of Corey we would never know that 12 Peer Leaders serviced 436 students in the Spring semester of 2008. This is only in SI and individual tutoring, and does not include the 327 students enrolled in the FYES program.**

**Emily, Shaun, and Corey are all involved with each area and help the PIP work as effectively as possible.**

# Retention

Although the program as a whole helps retain the students which it serves, it also helps to retain the people who service the student body. The Peer Mentors have an increased sense of belonging at the college, feel more actively involved in campus life, and understand the ways of life-long learning.

The people working within PIP have better inter-personal relationships with their peers, college professors, and the administration of the college. This helps create a sense of community and responsibility. Furthermore, it also makes the Peer Mentors feel that they are needed at the college, which is always a great feeling for students and employees.

# Retention Continue

The Peer Mentors feel like they are doing a good job, are needed on campus, and feel a sense of enthusiasm about college. The Peer Mentors are able to transfer this enthusiasm to the Peer Leaders that they supervise.

The Peer Mentors instill a sense of dedication to the college and, in turn, the Peer Leaders project the dedication to the students they mentor. This indirectly keeps an increased number of students actively involved in college life, and therefore, increases student retention.

## Meet the Peer Mentors

<p>Emily Jones</p> <p><u>Major:</u></p> <p>Early Childhood Education</p> <p><u>Career Goals:</u></p> <p>Public School Administration</p> <p><u>Tutoring:</u></p> <p>Chemistry</p>	<p>Shaun Mursell</p> <p><u>Major:</u></p> <p>Psychology</p> <p><u>Career Goals:</u></p> <p>Criminal Attorney</p> <p><u>Tutoring:</u></p> <p>Biology and Social Science</p>	<p>Corey McAllister</p> <p><u>Major:</u></p> <p>Business Administration</p> <p><u>Career Goals:</u></p> <p>College Professor</p> <p><u>Tutoring:</u></p> <p>Mathematics</p>
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