

GOODWIN COLLEGE TURNS OVER A NEW LEAF

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Quick show of hands: How many of you used to be a part of Goodwin College of Professional Studies?

According to the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Effectiveness, 106 of you should be raising your hand.

"Our college was once filled with people who still remain at the University, they're just now in the School of Education, or Drexel University Online or some of our other units," said Tim Gilrain, executive director of Goodwin College.

In addition to the employees at the School of Education and Drexel Online, Drexel employees in construction management, the Math Forum, and other programs were once under the Goodwin umbrella but moved after re-divisions over the years.

So we know who isn't in Goodwin anymore. What does that leave? What is Goodwin now? Even the people who just raised their hand might not know anymore.

"That's our biggest question mark," Gilrain said. "On my first day, in Gerri C. LeBow Hall, [LeBow College of Business Dean] Frank Linnehan took me around the building and introduced me and a lot of people said 'What is Goodwin?'"

Gilrain believes Goodwin is a "blank slate," full of potential. He and eight other employees at the college hope to make the legacy institution one that is not just ready to continue serving its traditional population of degree completion students but a new population of freshmen. Through those initiatives and others, Goodwin is set to prove itself as a distinct value to other colleges and schools across the University.

New Kids on the Block

This year, 13 freshman students are calling Goodwin home after they were accepted to the college's pilot First-Year Exploratory Studies program.

Designed to set students who are undecided on their majors, the program lasts a year before the students are funneled into the major and college of their choosing.

"It's for your 18-year-olds who aren't quite sure what they want to do but know they want to come to Drexel," Gilrain explained.

Students can take several courses in areas in which they have an interest to effectively "try on" majors before settling into them. For that year, Goodwin College provides advising and other forms of oversight for the students.

Regina Ruane, PhD, director of Goodwin's First-Year Exploratory Studies program, feels that the program aligns well with the University's initiative to improve retention and boost graduation rates.

"I think the program is right in line with that focus and we're very cognizant of the students' needs and welcoming them," she said. "The freshman population is the most critical population for retention. If a freshman stays, you're over the initial hurdle, so we want to make sure they have everything they need."

For the exploratory program to work, though, Gilrain said communication with all of the University's colleges and schools is vital. That way, any course changes or requirement shake-ups can be accommodated for the exploratory students.

"It's interesting because Goodwin has always served what people call a 'non-traditional' student population," Gilrain said. "This first-year exploratory program actually gives us a new student population that Goodwin has never historically worked with."

Next year, the program plans to expand to 50 freshman students, according to Gilrain, and he has hopes that it will continue to grow and serve all of Drexel's undecided students.

Ruane feels the First-Year Exploratory Studies program won't just serve Goodwin's expansion, but the expansion of the University's offerings as a whole.

"This program is going to allow students to come here who normally would not have," Ruane said. "It's going to expand the college's repertoire and also the University's repertoire."

Goodwin's Traditional 'Un-traditional' Students

The students who fall into Goodwin's traditional category are actually the "un-traditional" ones Gilrain mentioned: part-time students seeking to complete their degrees or continue their education.

"We have a large population of part-time students who are really what Drexel was built around," Gilrain said. "I think that's an importance piece, to hang onto some of the legacy programs that Goodwin has been a part of."

Roughly 145 students are in enrolled in Goodwin's Degree Completion program this fall. Gilrain expects most of those students to be involved with Drexel University Online.

Degree Completion at Goodwin helps build access to higher education, according to Lamont Wilson, director of the program.

"We fall in line with President Fry and Mayor Nutter's initiatives," Wilson said. "We can help increase the level of education of the population as a whole. We're in a position to provide that."

Increasing diversity is another benefit of Goodwin's Degree Completion program, Wilson said.

"This can help individuals who might not otherwise have that opportunity to finish their education — and under-represented minorities are of that group — because they're working and providing for their families," Wilson explained. "We improve people's lots in life in the local community and beyond, online, extending the University's original mission."

No Credit? No Problem

Goodwin is also moving to position itself as Drexel's center for non-credit programs, such as corporate trainings and skill courses.

Pat Gremmel, administrator for Goodwin's Continuing Professional Education program, feels the non-degree programs could be a boon for the University.

"This is a great way to bring in the population that is already working, has a degree and is looking for the extra boost to get a raise, promotion or just get ahead," she said.

Gilrain also feels the program can foster new connections between Drexel and companies.

"Individual corporations at times will come to us and say, 'We loved the project management course you did for some of our employees, can you do one specifically for us?'" Gilrain said.

Non-credit courses could stoke the educational desire in some who participate in them, which might steer new applicants to Drexel's master's and PhD programs.

"We bring in a lot of students who are not familiar with Drexel," Gremmel said. "Once they get here and start taking a class and get the hands-on training, it gives them a sense of what Drexel is about. It's a stepping stone for the University's other programs."

Goodwin of the Future

In the future, Goodwin College looks to be a important player in the University.

A large portion of the University's undecided students could be funneled through the college's exploratory program on their way to their eventual majors.

"I think that is a program that can be as big as we let it become," Gilrain said, citing universities like Penn State and Purdue who have exploratory programs with thousands of students.

With finishing degrees and acquiring special skills becoming more important, Goodwin's role at Drexel will develop even further.

So Gilrain feels the "What is Goodwin?" question will soon fade away and give way to "What is Goodwin going to do next?"