



## The First-Year-of-College Experience

### *First-Year of College Philosophy*

Madonna University believes that the first year of university study calls for a focused program of study, advisement, and orientation, based on the following philosophical perspectives:

- We believe learning is **social** and is best promoted and supported by a community of learners. To this end, the University encourages first-year-of-college students to participate in the Collaborative Studies Program, a curriculum that links first-year courses to create a community of learners.
- We believe learning is **developmental**, that is, that first-year students are at individual levels of maturation and intellectual, social, and personal development. As educators, the faculty is committed to understanding where students are when they come to us, accepting and valuing them as persons, and identifying strategies for fostering their development.
- We believe learning is **holistic** and strive to fulfill our mission of intellectual, spiritual, and personal development. To this end, the Collaborative Studies Program promotes interdisciplinary approaches to learning and problem solving so that students recognize the interconnectedness of knowledge and human experience.
- We believe our educational practice should be **learner-centered**. This implies that students need to be taught to take responsibilities for their learning in order to promote the ideal of life-long learning. One aspect of this goal relates to the component of UNV 1010, Transitions to Higher Education, that familiarizes students with the variety of academic support services available to them as Madonna University students and encourages them to use these services when they experience academic difficulty.
- We believe education at Madonna University should promote the idea of **service** to our communities, particularly to those in the global community who are less fortunate. This is a reflection of the University's commitment to Catholic teachings on social justice and the ideals of St. Francis of Assisi. To this end, the University requires all students in UNV 1010 to participate in a service learning experience.
- We believe students benefit from understanding the **history, traditions, and foundational values** of the university they attend. Through the continuum of admissions, orientation, pre-enrollment, first semester, and second semester, the University has designed intentional strategies for communicating these ideas to first-year students.

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Madonna University recognizes that students experiencing their First Year of College are in a unique time of transition. Madonna University is people-and to help students make new friendships, form relationships with faculty and staff members, and make the adjustment to a new community and environment, the University sponsors a first-year-of-college program, which includes the following components:

- **Orientation:** All first-time university students are required to attend one of the orientation programs sponsored in late spring and summer, prior to the beginning of the fall semester.
- **UNV 1010, Transitions to Higher Education:** This 1-s.h. course is required of all incoming students who are less than 24 years of age and have fewer than 12 college transfer hours. It is designed to address transition issues that first-year students face when entering the University; introduce them to thought-provoking, challenging, and interesting ideas to enhance their critical thinking, research, writing, and presentation skills; engage them in a community of learners; and incorporate a service learning experience that fulfills the University's mission of service.
- **Collaborative Studies:** Incoming students are encouraged to participate in the Collaborative Studies program, which typically links two General Education courses with a section of UNV 1010. The faculty members create learning experiences in which students work collaboratively, cross the boundaries of different academic disciplines, and engage in discussion and conversation about relevant ideas and issues. The linked courses also integrate reflection on the service learning project conducted in UNV 1010.

The overall goal of these programs is to help students to make a healthy embrace of their new identity as college students and assist them in assuming responsibilities for themselves and their education.