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SINO-US COMPARISON OF FIRST-YEAR PROGRAMS

Kennesaw State University vs. Lushan College of Guangxi University of Technology

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SUMMARY

First-year programs play a key role for first-year students' successful transition to higher learning at Kennesaw State University. The Department of First-Year Programs runs these programs very well and has a strong national reputation. The Department was built in 2007 but the relevant first-year programs have been performed close to 20-year.

Lushan College of Guangxi University of Technology, which is a new local college formed under the Chinese higher education reform in 2005, also runs first-year programs for first-year students.

This paper combines the writer's internship experience in the Department of First-Year Programs at Kennesaw State Department and work experience at Lushan College of Guangxi University of Technology, applying Public Administration's theories, comparing the following aspects from structure of department, faculty and staff, programs, curriculum requirement, teaching skills, vision, mission and core values, to SWOT analysis between the first-year program of KSU and LSC. This paper adequately recognizes and objectively analyzes the strengths and the weaknesses of two schools, and proposes some suggestions that will improve Lushan College's first-year programs.

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INTRODUCTION

I began my internship in the Department of First-Year Programs of Kennesaw State University (KSU) Jan. 7th, 2009. The Department is significant part of University College's interdisciplinary, collegial faculty. It dedicates to student engagement, scholarship of teaching and learning, professional service. In the meantime, its two key programs, First-Year Seminars and Learning Communities for first-year students, are nationally recognized. (The Department of First-Year Programs Bylaws)

Kennesaw State University

Kennesaw State University (KSU) was founded in 1963 and is located in Cobb County. It is a comprehensive university with the development of undergraduate and graduate programs in student population. Currently, in the University System of Georgia, KSU ranks the top three. In past ten years, KSU has seen remarkable growth and development of its facilities. KSU takes pride in its plenty space for administration, instruction and student support facilities. KSU has more than 60 bachelor's and master's degree programs, including undergraduate degrees in education, health, business, the humanities, the arts, science and math, and graduate degree programs in nursing, business, information systems, conflict management, public administration, education and professional writing. KSU has kept expanding its graduate programs by adding a new Doctorate of Education in Leadership for Learning in 2006. This is the first doctorate in its history. KSU dedicates to fostering excellence in public service. The student population of KSU is close to 20,000, including commuter, residential students, and more than 1,700 international students came from 136 countries. The proportion of ethnic minorities covers 20 percent of the student body approximately. KSU provides a myriad of opportunities to experience campus life for the students. There are more than 150 student groups and organizations across the campus, including student government, sororities and

fraternities, social and special-interest organizations, student publications, and honor societies. In addition, KSU's athletics also gained achievement. "KSU has won more than five team championships since joining the NCAA with numerous appearances at national championships." (<http://www.kennesaw.edu/about/>)

University College was formed in 2004-2005 and has two purposes at KSU. One is to provide academic residences for exploratory students because they have not yet determined their academic major. The second purpose is to provide academic support services and programs well. University College has many programs with long history of excellence at KSU while others are new. All of them are designed to boost student engagement and student success, wherever they are in or out of the classroom. University College offers programs and services to enhance the college experience for all students with the other units, like the Academic Colleges, the Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning, the Institute for Global Initiatives, the Office of Academic Affairs, the Division of Student Success and Enrollment Services. University College has three departments, including Department of First-Year Programs, Department of University Studies, and Center for Student Leadership. (<http://www.kennesaw.edu/universitycollege/>)

First-Year Programs at KSU

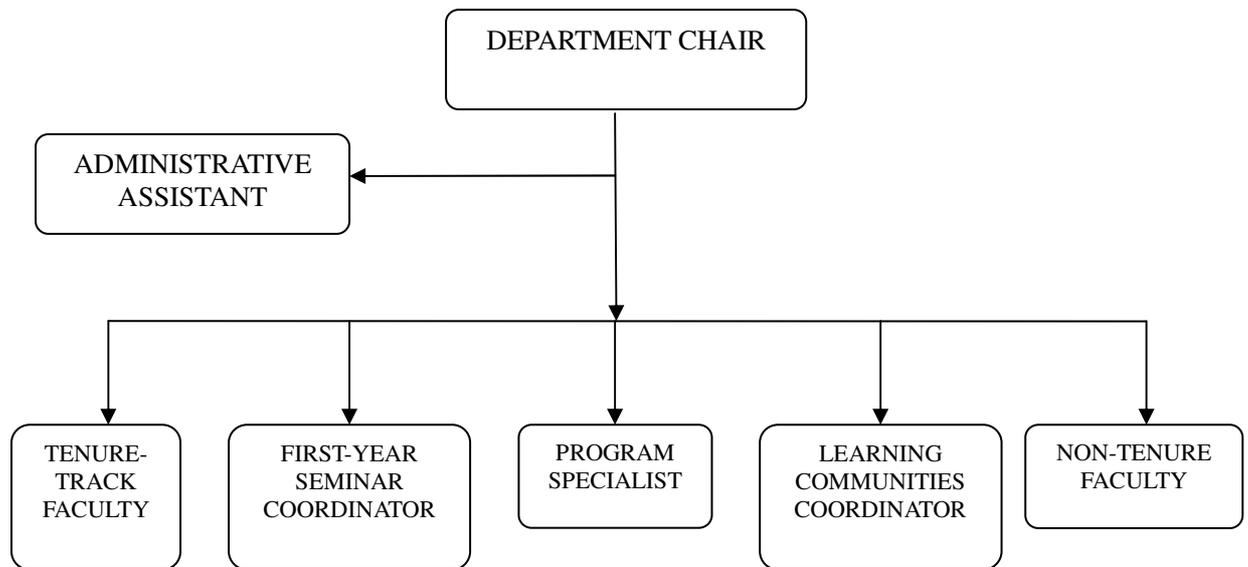
In 2003, KSU was named one of 12 institutions which served as a benchmark for the Foundations of Excellence in the First-Year program. Additionally, KSU has been recognized for several years in the U.S. News & World Report for excellence in its first-year programs.

The Department of First-Year Programs is part of the University College. It was created in Fall 2007. "It houses key programs that are central to the mission and strategic plan of KSU and that contribute markedly to the success of KSU students." (The Department of First-Year Program 2008-2012 Strategic Plan-History) It focuses on first-year students' successful transition to higher learning. Due to its nationally recognized first-year programs, the

Department of First-Year Programs has become well known. The department pays attention to undergraduate students. It is the best way to meet students' unique needs in their transition.

(The Department of First-Year Program 2008-2012 Strategic Plan-History)

Figure 1: Structure of the Department of First-Year Programs



The Department makes efforts to become a premier program in the Southeast (the Department of First-Year Programs' vision). It helps first-year students to be further developed on their way toward graduation by academic and life skills. Working with other units, "it assists students in the transition to college life by reinforcing the value of general education, by exposing students to the concept of global citizenship, by expecting students to engage in critical thinking, and by promoting personal growth through academic and social opportunity" (the Department of First-Year Programs' mission).

The Department has clear core values, including a Student-Centered Approach; Collaborative Teaching and Learning; Interconnectedness of Learning; Internationalization and Global Learning; Diversity and Multiculturalism; Scholarship and Lifelong Learning; Civic Engagement; Leadership; and a Culture of Optimism (the Department of First-Year Programs' core value).

The Department is one of the units of University College. The Department Chair is

appointed by the Dean of UC who reports to and serves the Dean. His/Her duties include academic and administrative leadership in the department and are carried out by him/her. For instance, “supervising daily operations; administrating budgets and schedule; overseeing recruitment efforts; hiring full-time, temporary, and part-time faculty; managing workload; assigning office space; evaluating faculty and staff; monitoring enrollment; presiding over department meeting; representing the department in College and University affairs including a permanent seat on the Chairs Council; informing the faculty of events affecting the department or welfare of the faculty; and performing such duties as assigned by the University or the Dean of UC”. (The Department of First-Year Programs Bylaws)

The Department Chair appoints First-Year Seminar course coordinator after consultation with the Dean of UC. The Coordinator responds to other duties that are assigned by the Department Chair. He/she oversees the teaching content and schedule, selects textbook and other required material, mentoring of support faculty, evaluates the course’s learning outcome, and answers to student questions or involves related to the course. (The Department of First-Year Programs Bylaws)

The same as First-Year Seminar course coordinator, the Learning Communities coordinator is appointed and responds to other duties that are assigned by the Department Chair. He/she becomes an Ex-Officio member of General Education Council. He/she promotes discipline-specific communities with other departments, assesses faculty proposals for general-interest communities, cooperates with the Department Chair and the First-Year Seminar Course Coordinator to deal with Learning Communities, designs and monitors the annual faculty development program, and evaluates the program’s learning outcomes. (The Department of First-Year Programs Bylaws)

Committees are an important internal part of the department. The faculty comprises standing committees with different functions, including permanent, full-time appointments and

full-time professional staff members. They will become standing committee members just in some cases. Committee members are selected by an election at a March department meeting every spring. Each committee's Chair is elected annually by department meeting or department planning retreat in August. Standing Committees include Department Strategic Planning Committee, Department Curriculum Committee, Department Awards Committee, Department Tenure & Promotion Committee, and Common Reader Committee. (The Department of First-Year Programs Bylaws)

Ad hoc committees are created as needed by the Department Chair for a specific term and purpose. The faculty should be notified about the ad hoc committees' existence. If faculty members felt that an ad hoc committee is warranted, they can petition to the Department Chair. The Chair will decide whether create and charge the committee. (The Department of First-Year Programs Bylaws)

KSU has been recognized for having one of the best "First-Year Experience Programs" in "America's Top College 2008" by U.S. News & World Report. KSU was the only institution in Georgia to receive this honor once again. This also is the sixth time that KSU has been given this recognition in this field. The outstanding national reputation was earned by the First-Year Programs Department.

First-Year Seminar (KSU1101) and Learning Communities program are the two key programs of the Department of First-Year Programs. KSU 1101 provides a strong cornerstone for first-year students. It helps first-year students achieve academic and personal success by close faculty interaction and involvement with the university community. (<http://www.kennesaw.edu/fyp/ksu1101/index.shtml>) Learning Communities are creative offerings with clusters of General Education courses. Twenty-five students enroll in the same sections of 2-4 courses. Learning Communities have interesting themes, such as "Think Before You Speak And Write", "Power Up And Make A Difference", "Making Sense Out Of Dollars

And Cents”, and “Mens Sana In Copore Sano (Healthy Mind In A Healthy Body)” (Learning Communities Schedule: Spring). It also has disciplines and majors. Learning Communities are an additional support to aid students’ success very well. (http://www.kennesaw.edu/fyp/learning_communities/index.shtml) Both of them are most important efforts related to first-year students.

The Learning Communities initiative began in Fall 2000 after KSU1101 had been offered for close to 20 years. With the natural growth of the KSU1101 First-Year Experience seminar, students went from voluntarily choosing it at the beginning to “all full-time, first-year students with fewer than 15 credit hours are required to sign up for either a Learning Communities or a First-Year Seminar”; from “not given themes, not any requirements or opportunities for faculty interaction” to “all Learning Communities were thematically based” and “faculty worked closely to incorporate these themes into their in-class or out-of-class activities”; all of these showed to us the significant development of the Department of First-Year Programs. (History of KSU’s Learning Communities Program)

Guangxi University of Technology

Guangxi University of Technology (GXUT), authorized by the China State Department, is a local engineering university directly under the leadership of the government of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. GXUT was established in Nanning in 1958, the capital city of Guangxi Province. In 1985, GXUT moved to Liuzhou, the most famous industry city of Guangxi Province.

At present, all of the students come from 28 provinces and municipalities, and the student population is more than 32,000. The campus covers close to 280 acres, with a total floor space of 374,000 square meters. GXUT has 16 academic departments, five teaching sections, one independent college, and 14 scientific research institutions. GXUT has 42 bachelor’ s and 5 master’s degree programs in engineering, natural science, management, liberal arts, economics,

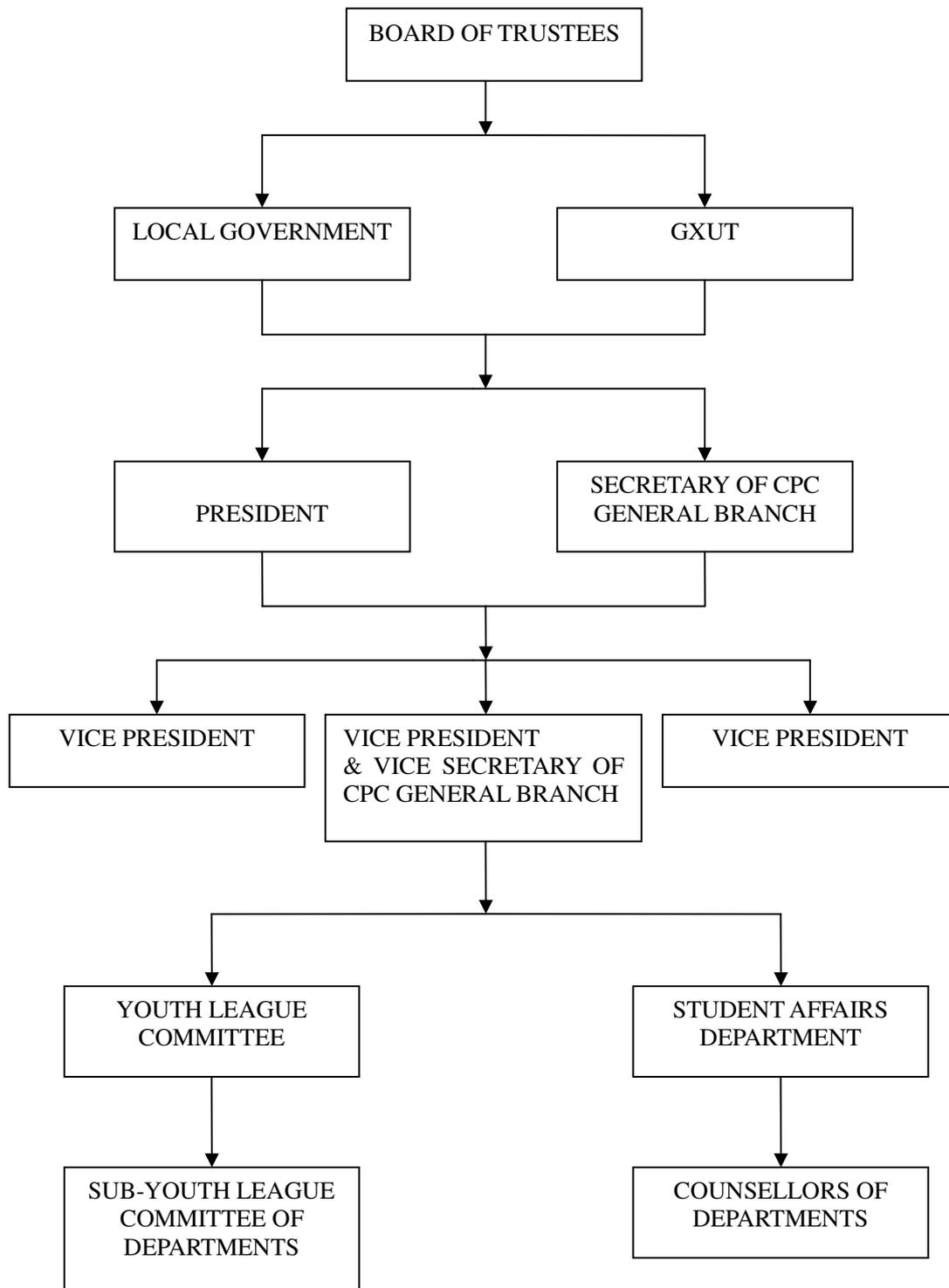
and law and pedagogy. Engineering is its main focus but at the same time it coordinates many disciplines. So far, GXUT is dedicated to fostering talent at different levels, including undergraduate, graduate, continuing education, and international students, as well as higher vocational education.

In 2000, GXUT was recognized as a national key training centre for vocational education teachers by the Ministry of Education (MOE). In addition, the university stresses the work of international cooperation and exchange. It has successfully established academic exchange and cooperation relations with the USA, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and other countries and regions.

Furthermore, the university has been recognized as “National Establishing Unit of Red Flag Youth League Committee”, and has been awarded the “Advanced Unit for College Students’ Social Practice” eleven times. (The recognition of National Social Practice about excellence organizations, excellent teams and excellent individuals)

During the reform of higher education in China, GXUT also faces the same difficult situation of most institutions of higher education, for instance, inadequate financing, land, and the other involved resources. GXUT needs urgently to attract more resources and keep running better, so GXUT created a new college named Lushan College (LSC) in 2002, according to the MOE’s Document – “Points Regarding How to Expedite Reforms and Vigorously Develop Ordinary Higher Education”. After that, the sixth Document of the MOE – “Promotion Law of Minban Education of the People’s Republic of China and the Implementation Rules” was issued by MOE in 2004, GXUT adjusted their rules and operated LSC with the local government in 2005. The local government has over 70% of LSC and builds all infrastructures. GXUT has the rest, provides faculty and staff, and charges all daily affairs.

Figure 2: Structure of Lushan College of Guangxi University of Technology



LSC can issue diplomas and degrees covering Engineering, Management, and Arts. The current student population is close to 6,000 with an area close to 75 acres. LSC shares most of faculty with GXUT, and has about 120 staff. Over the past three academic years, LSC has developed 12 academic departments. Eight of them have their majors and major orientations including 19 majors and 28 major orientations. The rest four departments only respond to teach the general courses and relevant affairs.

Figure 3: LSC Academic Departments and Majors

Departments	Majors
Department of Management Engineering	Financial Management(Focusing on Assets Appraisal)
	Management Of Public Affairs (Focusing on Culture And Art Operation And Management)
	Management Of Public Affairs (Focusing on Athletics Industry Operation And Management)
	Business Administration (Focusing on Physical Distribution Management)
	Business Administration (Focusing on Real Estate Operation And Management)
	Business Administration(Focusing on Marketing)
Department of Mechanical Engineering	Mechanical Engineering And Automation (Focusing on Numerical Control Technology)
	Mechanical Engineering And Automation (Focusing on Mould Design And Manufacture)
	Mechanical Design, Manufacturing And Automation
	Industrial Design
Department of Civil Engineering	Civil Engineering
	Architecture (Focusing on Building Decoration)
	Engineering Management
Department of Electronic Information and Control Engineering	Electronic And Information Engineering
	Electrical Engineering And Automation (Focusing on Enterprise And Public Institution Power Supply And Distribution And Automation)
	Electrical Engineering And Automation (Focusing on Building Power Supply And Distribution And Intellectualization)

	Automation
Department of Automobile Engineering	Traffic And Transportation (Focusing on Automobile Electronic Technology And Diagnostic Test)
	Automobile Service Engineering
	Traffic And Transportation (Focusing on Automobile Marketing)
	Vehicle Engineering
Foreign Language Department	Business English
	English for Science And Technology
Department of Computer Science	Computer Science And Technology (Focusing on Software Engineering)
	Computer Science And Technology (Focusing on Animation)
Department of Art and Design	Apparel Design And Engineering
	Interior Architectural Design
	Environmental Art And Design
Department of Ideological and Political Teaching	
Department of Basic Teaching,	
Department of Computer Teaching,	
Department of Foreign Language Teaching	

LSC also has 11 administrative departments, such as Administrating Office, Budget and Plan Office, Academic Affairs Department, Student Affairs Department, Youth League Committee, Library, Network Center, and the other departments.

First-Year Programs at Lushan College

Most higher educational institutes did not run first-year programs as a specific project until the late 1990s. There was not a functional department to engage in first-year programs until now. Basically, the Student Affairs Department is in charge of first-year programs because they deal with everything about student from studying to living, from ideology to behavior. Usually first-year programs are composed of a series of lectures, including the school history and current situation introduction (2-3 hours), ideological and ethical education (2-3 hours), mental health education (2-3 hours), Communist Party of China (CPC) basic knowledge education (12-15 hours), school discipline and rules education (2-3 hours), profession introduction (2-3 hours), and learning and living education (2-4 hours). In addition, every

institution of higher learning will do national defence education for half a month. These lectures have the main goal that assists first-year students in the transition to college life by reinforcing the value of general education. However, they lack a good vehicle to run them as a system in order to make these first-year programs more effective and efficient.

The Student Affairs Department holds responsible for ideological and moral education, situation and policy education working with other departments. It makes and implements relevant regulations, rules and regulations of the administration, rewards and punishments of students. It manages and evaluates student grant, scholarship and student loan. It is also in charge selection, assessing, rewarding and punishment, and training to full-time staff, counselors, and Class Adviser with all of academic department. It cooperates with the relevant departments to construct the CPC branch, educate and manager CPC student members, and increase the number of CPC student members, etc. It instructs and supervises the plan of Youth League Committee to construct basic organization and recommend outstanding students to join the party. It also instructs the Student Association and student organizations to organize the work-study programs, social practice activities and cultural activities on campus. The department manages student records and respond student questions; as well as the other uncertainly affairs.

The Vice President & Vice Secretary of CPC General Branch of LSC is appointed by the President of GXUT. He/she reports to and serves the President of LSC and the Vice President of GXUT. His/her duties include academic and administrative leadership in the following departments: the student affairs department, and enrollment and placement offices, the Youth League Committee, logistics service center, and Trade Unions. He/she represents LSC in GXUT and Guangxi Province affairs. He/she designs ideological and political education. He/she organizes patriotism education, collectivism education, and socialist education. He/she coordinates external and internal relationships of LSC. He/she presides over correlative school

meeting. He/she supervises the departments' daily operations, budgets and schedule, recruitment and training effort, workload, and evaluates the department's faculty and staff. He/she informs the departments of events affecting them or welfare of them. He/she monitors student enrollment & placement. He/she reports to the President of LSC about faculty and staff questions, emergency and crisis. And he/she responds to other duties that are assigned by the President of LSC, the Vice President of GXUT and Guangxi Province. (The LSC Bylaws)

The Director is appointed by GXUT. He/she reports to and serves the Vice President and Vice Secretary of CPC General Branch of LUC. His/her duties are administrative leadership in the department. For instance, the Director represents the department in LSC affairs. He/she presides over department meeting. He/she implements ideological and political education of student. He/she organizes patriotism education, collectivism education, and socialist education of student. He/she makes academic year's planning. He/she drafts the important department documents. He/she supervises daily operation. He/she administrates budgets and schedule. He/she coordinates external and internal relationships. He/she informs the staff of events affecting the department or welfare of the staff. He/she evaluates the staff. He/she manages workload. He/she assigns office space. He/she monitors and controls student enrollment and placement. He/she responds to student questions, emergency and crisis. And he/she responds to other duties that are assigned by the Vice President & vice Secretary of CPC General Branch of LSC and GXUT as well. (The Department of Student Affair Bylaws of LSC)

The counselor plays a very significant role in Chinese universities and colleges. They take on huge responsibilities and obligations. A specific document was issued by the MOE in 2006 to emphasize how to build a better counselor team. Basically, the counselors' duties include to implement the ideological and political education of students; to organize patriotism education, collectivism education, and socialist education for students; to teach school rules and bylaws; to know about the full situation of student; to manage student records, and to keep in touch

with instructors and family very often; to organize student evaluations, rewards and punishments; to monitor tuition payments and student loans; to respond to the class affairs; to report and handle student emergencies; to assist students in designing their career planning and guiding placement; to take charge in of students' health and mental education; to organize the first-year and senior student enrollment, first-year programs, and graduate affairs; and responds to other duties that are assigned by Student Affairs Department. (The LSC's Counselors Bylaws)

Committees will be created by the top level for a certain and regular affair, such as Scholarship Administration Committee, Undergraduate Instruction Advisory Committee, Appeal & Arbitration Committee, and Physical Education and Sports Committee, etc. As far as who will be appointed as the chief of these committees, it depends on the committee's function and level.

COMPARISON BETWEEN DEPARTMENT OF FIRST-YEAR PROGRAMS AT KSU AND FIRST-YEAR PROGRAMS AT LSC

Department of First-Year Programs at KSU

First-Year Programs were housed in the Department of University Studies close to 20 years before University College was formed in 2004. The development of KSU, the increasing of the student population, the requirement of curriculum, the need for specialization, and the structure confusion emerging between University College and University Studies after University College was formed in 2004-2005, all provided for building the new academic department named First-Year Programs. Dr. Ralph Rascati became the new Dean of University College in Fall 2006. He piloted a new structure vision of the college that gave First-Year Seminar and Learning Communities Program a new home. Dean Rascati split the one academic department in the college and moved both KSU1101 and the Learning Communities Program (which had dropped the class acronym) into the new Department of First-Year

Programs. It spent a whole year to achieve the essential structural changes and the split.

After a few years of trial and error KSU1101 and Learning Communities have succeeded in their field. The best witness is that KSU has been recognized for several years in the U.S. News & World Report for excellence in its first-year programs.

The Department of First-Year Programs has good leadership, experienced faculty, and hardworking staff. Behind this better work environment, the department chair, Dr. Keisha Hoerrner makes a great effort. “The faculty members are student-focused, hardworking, and highly involved in a variety of initiatives both on and off campus.” Many of them not only take on leadership roles in the department, but also beyond it like American Democracy Project, Political Engagement Project. (The Department of First-Year Programs 2008 Spring Summary of SWOT Analysis) There are three types of faculty in the Department of First-Year Programs: full-time faculty of KSU, but not included in the department; full-time faculty of the department; and part-time faculty. The department depends on their needs to hire faculty. Faculty also is classified into two types. One is tenure-track faculty who teaches six classes per year, researches and offer service to the university. Another is non-tenure faculty who teaches 10 classes per year, but is not expected to engage in research and service. KSU Human Resources will recruit staff if it has a certain position available.

Despite the department’s hardworking and self-sufficiency, whether or not they get the high-level’s support is very important to its development. The Dean of UC, Dr. Rascati, strongly endorses and supports the Department of First-Year Programs, such as financial support. The top administration at KSU supports the department as well. (The Department of First-Year Programs 2008 Spring Summary of SWOT Analysis)

KSU1101 has been proven to work after more than 20 years. The appropriate course structure-small class size is good for communication between instructors and students in the classes. The appropriate textbook, Foundations of Academic Inquiry, is good for first-year

students' successful transition to higher learning. The various components of KSU 1101 – such as community service, the common reader, and engagement not just awareness both on and off-campus – are also assisting to the course and the department. And the department can get the faculty's support across campus to run the Learning Communities Program.

One of the primary focuses of University College and the University College Advisory Council (UCAC), during University College's first year of existence was to design a curriculum requirement for first-year students that included KSU 1101 and Learning Communities. The curriculum required all first-time, full-time students whose semester credit hours fewer than 15 would be required to choose either KSU 1101 or a Learning Community. All levels of the curriculum review process approved the proposal, and received a 12-1 vote of approval from the Undergraduate Policies and Curriculum Committee. After that the curriculum requirement began to enforce from Fall in 2005. This prepared a condition for Learning Communities initiative to enlarge to more than 50 communities serving more than 1,400 students. Simultaneity, First-Year Seminar program increased to more than 70 sections, serving both learning community students and those who enrolled in independent sections of KSU 1101. (KSU University College 2007-2012 Strategic Plan)

The clear and correct vision, mission, and core values are good foundation for the Department of First-Year Programs. There are not only a series of standards to define the responsibilities and obligations of the department, but also guide it to run their programs. Though there core values, everyone can easily understand the department's foundation.

Although the Department of First-Year Programs has been formed almost two years old, it has its own SWOT analysis last spring. This is good ideology. The department will know more about the situation and develop better.

A SWOT analysis provides direction and serves for the organizational development. It is very popular in marketing plans. It is popular in public administration too. It will let an

organization know clearly that what is it can do; what is it can not do; opportunities, what is its potential favorable conditions; and what is its potential unfavorable conditions by assessing an organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats respectively. That is SWOT Analysis. The SWOT analysis is pretty important. An SWOT analysis will build an effective framework for visioning, developing and confirming the organizations' goals. It separated all information to two parts, including internal issues (strengths and weaknesses) and external issues (opportunities and threats). After identifying internal strengths and weaknesses as well as examining external opportunities and threats, and then organizations will find how they relate to each other. Strengths and opportunities are relegated to be helpful to attribute the organization's objectives. On the contrary, weaknesses and threats are classified to be harmful achieve its objectives. Once the SWOT analysis is completed, it will assist the organization to achieve its objectives. (Figure 4) "On the whole, a SWOT analysis not only increases organizations' awareness of the unique situation whatever individual or firm is in. But it will also provide direction to maintain and promote strengths as well as prevent or clear weaknesses in order to succeed on the opportunities even while fight against potentially threats. (<http://images.google.cn/imgres?imgurl>)

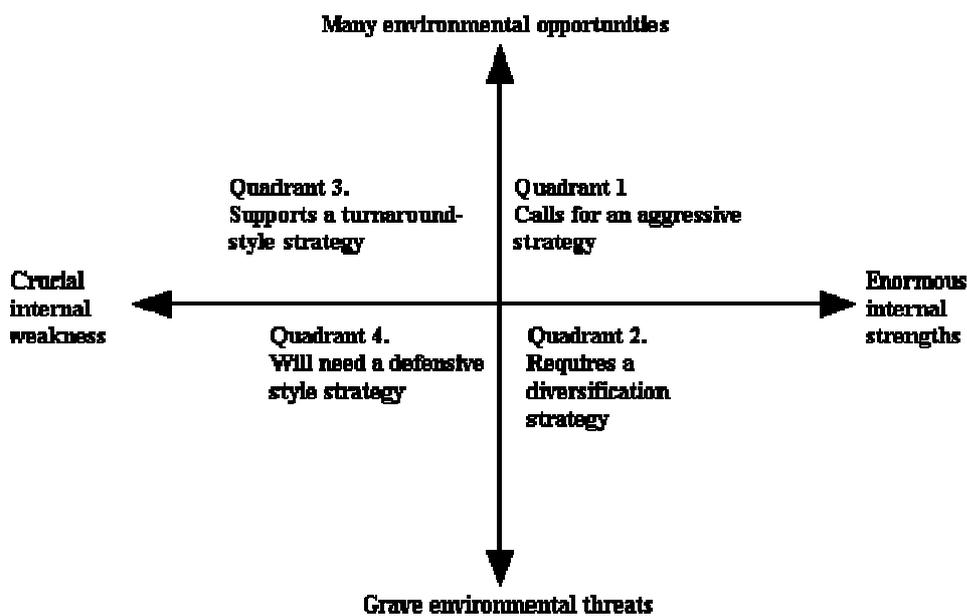
As figure 5 shown, quadrant 1 is the best position among four quadrants. Here means plenty of opportunities with excellent internal strengths in front of organizations. Growth oriented strategies should be exploited or capitalized on the competition. On the contrary with quadrant 1, quadrant 4 is the worst situation. Organizations not only have to face many environmental threats at its weak position. Thus, organizations should reduce or redirect involvement in their products or markets examined by SWOT analysis. In quadrant 2, organizations have excellent strengths but face a bad environment. Organizations have to take advantage the current strengths to find out long term opportunities. In quadrant 3, plenty of opportunities are shown to organizations, but the internal weaknesses constrain Organizations'

development. How do organizations eliminate the internal weaknesses so that market opportunities can be used more effectively? SWOT analysis is an excellent way which assists organizations to identify their current situation. (<http://images.google.cn/imgres?imgurl>)

Figure 4: SWOT Analysis



Figure 5: SWOT Factors Relationship



Based on the Department’s summary of SWOT Analysis, according to the common questions about SWOT analysis, building the following figure:

Figure 6: The Department of First-Year Programs’ SWOT Analysis of KSU

<p>Strength</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty and Staff • Programs • National Reputation 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities & Technology • Resources • Identity & Marketing • Academics and Programs
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academics and Programs • Funding & Budget • Collaboration • Beyond Campus 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities & Technology • Academics and Programs • Funding and Budget • Collaboration

Figure 7: First-Year Programs’ SWOT Analysis of LSC

<p>Strength</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open mind • High level support • National reputation 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of curriculum system • Unclear function and goal • Inadequate experienced faculty and staff • Unreasonable employee proportion • Inadequate financial and human resources • The lack of awareness and understanding • The lack of motivation of first-year students • Limited facilities and technology
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The national and the local government pay attention to LSC’s development 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited facilities and technology • The programs design • Misunderstanding and misperception about the programs • Inadequate financial and human resources • The rapid growth of student population

First-Year Programs at LSC

LSC was created under the Chinese reform of higher education. It is a new style of higher education in China. Due to lack of experience to run the new style school, both national and local governments pay more attention to them by issuing special policies. LSC's development is a typical learning process approach. We have more flexibility and preferential policies as well as more autonomous rights.

LSC is a new school. It is easy to accept new thinking and manners, and adjust its current ways during its development. Student success is the most important and decides for the development of LSC. Because schools are like enterprises and then students are like enterprises' outcome under the pre-condition of market-orientation. LSC's high level administration has known that deeply. We have broken through the traditional first-year programs. Except for the traditional first-year programs, we have increased a new program, Youth Quality Development, in 2005. We employed some professional companies to do Youth Quality Development, paid by LSC. Until now this program has lasted four years, and we paid close to 18,000 Yuan (around 2650 Dollars) for it each year. We paid about 60,000 Yuan (around 8800 Dollars) for first-year programs per year.

We don't have an experienced faculty team. The staff of Student Affairs Department and the counselor team who engage in first-year programs lack experiences, including the director of the Student Affairs Department. All of them are recent graduator and most of them are the same age with students; some are younger than their students. No matter knowledge or experience they have is inadequate to properly manage a first-year programs. How can we expect they can instruct first-year students' transition to higher learning?

As far as the traditional first-year programs, it is hard to attract students' interest, and further decrease the influence of transition. Basically, the traditional and common first-year programs are composed of a series of lectures, including school history and current situation

introduction, ideological and moral education, mental health education, CPC basic knowledge education, school discipline and rules education, profession introduction, and learning and living education. Most first-year programs include these contents at school in China, like Guangxi University of Technology, Guangxi University, Central China Normal University, South China University of Technology, and the other schools. The current students were born in the later 1980s. Their educational context is very complex. They know more by mass media than when we were their age. They own active thinking and individual opinion. They need a better and more appropriate channel to learn new knowledge and experience. School, as a vehicle to spreading civilization, can not use the inflexible style to instruct and communicate with students.

We pay more attention and expenditure to run the first-year programs but among the programs lack logical relationships which results in they can not form a system. Most of these programs should be finished at the end of the first month after first-year students enroll. These programs do not have any textbooks except the basic knowledge of CPC. All first-year students are required to take part in first-year programs but do not receive credits of them. Different programs have different speakers whose knowledge and experiences structures are very different. Most speakers use one-way communication and big class size very often because instructors and classrooms are too limited.

After they become college students, students loose their motivation. Before that, their goal was very clear: "I must become a college student!" This goal accompanies them the whole high school stage. Parents, teachers, family members, and their neighbor cared about this goal. Just at that time, college life was described like a fairyland, no burden, no stress, a lot of fun, and so on by parents, teachers, family members, and their neighbor. They wanted to encourage that students would strive very much to achieve their goals. At the same time, students had very strong stress. They, however, went to university or college, what would be the next goal? This

is a very common phenomenon among the first-year students in China. They do not think about how to transform their learning and life habits and set up the next stage goal.

The value of SWOT analysis is it aids organizations to clarify and summarize the key roles, issues, implications, and opportunities facing its development. And then it helps to set objectives and develop new strategies. The ideal outcome is to take advantage of external opportunities and overcome the threats by maximizing strengths and minimizing weaknesses. The SWOT analysis is simple and only costs time. But it can make new ideas about how an organization uses its particular strength to defend against threats. Any organization should have a capacity which is aware of the potential threats and should get rid of these threats when they happen.

As far as LSC, we lack a SWOT analysis about the entire college. All of functional departments also lack their SWOT analysis. We just follow some experiences came from different events and activities. We did not systemize our SWOT. As we know LSC's background, current situation, national policies, and development perspectives have a lot of uncertain factors, including strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. If we can not recognize and define our SWOT under the very complex current situation, I have no reason to believe we can develop smoothly and steadily.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO LUSHAN COLLEGE AND KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY

RECOMMENDATIONS TO LSC

Constructing First-Year Programs Curriculum System

Based on my internship experiences, LSC should consider adopting the KSU model of the KSU1101 and Learning Communities Programs. The model provides a prospective way to better prepare for first year students. All first-year full-time students are required to take KSU 1101 and Learning Communities Programs at KSU with fewer than 15 semester hours. "This

requirement must be satisfied during the students' first term of enrollment at Kennesaw State University. Students with 30 or more credit hours are not eligible to enroll at KSU 1101 or Learning Communities." (Undergraduate catalog P40 "Academic Advisement & Academic Policies") This requirement provides an academic guarantee to KSU 1101 and Learning Communities. At the same time, this is also a requirement of a more specialized curriculum structure. KSU1101 and Learning Communities Program last a whole semester. There is a progressive relationship among the content. The textbook, *Foundations of Academic Inquiry*, from the very beginning contents talks about Kennesaw State University, as you journey to the future, learning outcome for KSU1101 to student success- you and your college experience; talks about from the language of the university, learning strategies for academic success, motivation, the college detective, time management, the way to wellness, successful speech presentations for the classroom, discover yourself and your career, budget your way through college and life, successful skills for diversity, to ethics, leadership, and citizenship, and the changing world and the creation of a global community. (Braden and Hoerrner, ed. *Foundations of Academic Inquiry*, 2nd ed., the United States of America, Kennesaw State University, 2008, iii-iv.) The faculty is like guider and content are like the guide's compass. Both of them accompany the first-year student to adapt to their new lives. It can be seen from this progressive relationship, construction of the first-year programs curriculum system is very important from choosing a good textbook, to arranging a schedule, to designing teaching events and activities.

Redefining Foundations and Goals of First-Year Programs

We should think about why our current first-year programs did not achieve the anticipative goals. Although the Student Affairs Department has its explicit responsibility and obligation, in fact, everything that is relevant to students almost should be responded to by the department and counselors from learning to life. The counselor's duty is wide-ranging and

complex. For instance, counselors should calculate the attendance rate of classes; inquire about grades; deal with the relationships between student-student, student-faculty or staff, student-school, even student-family; organize students' events and activities; manage dorms, and the other needed responsibilities. A suitable nickname might be similar to "babysitter" for counselors and staff of the student affairs department. Nobody is so important like a counselor to assist student success. Excessive workloads, too much psychological stress, and lack of relevant experiences result in the young work team with responsibility for students' affairs can not think about and understand the foundations and goals of first-year programs well. They don't know how to run and evaluate these programs. Although we have recognized and known first-year programs as excellent and important for students' success, we do not combine our recognition with our behavior very well, which resulted in first-year programs' poor efficiency and poor effectiveness. We should redefine the foundations and goals of first-year programs based on a better first-year programs curriculum system, not only for students but the young work team also.

Adjusting the Staff Structure of the Student Affairs Department and the Counselor Team

Because, whatever the department or staff and counselor, they play a key role during the process which assists first-year students' transition to higher learning. We have to rethink our standards of recruitment. According to the specific document issued by the MOF in 2006, the Prescript about the Construction of Counselor Team at Regular Institutions of Higher Education, emphasized how to build a better counselor team. This prescript requires the counselor-student ratio is 1:200 at colleges and university all over the country. Could you imagine a counselor who takes on the huge burden as the same age as the students? Throughout the years, we have excessively emphasized the candidates' educational context. We emphasized whether the candidates have some experiences about organizing student events and activities during their college lives; whether they were recognized some honors; and whether

they are a member of CPC. We, however, ignored their capabilities and their personality when we recruited counselors and staff of the student affairs department. From now on, we have to carefully consider what kind of candidate will fit our students' success.

Setting Up Evaluation System

Evaluation is an important way in the modern era. "Evaluation is systematic determination of merit, worth, and significance of something or someone using criteria against a set of standards. Evaluation often is used to characterize and appraise subjects of interest in a wide range of human enterprises, including the arts, criminal justice, foundations and non-profit organizations, government, health care, and other human services." (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evaluation>) Here, the evaluation system includes first-year programs evaluation and its faculty evaluation two aspects.

Organizations have a lot of reasons to implement an evaluation, like improving first-year programs' result, decreasing first-year programs' cost, demonstrating a commitment, ensuring first-year programs' efficiency and effectiveness, monitoring and controlling first-year programs' processes, promoting teaching skills of first-year programs, and the other reasons. Professor Emison's book, *Practical Program Evaluations: Getting from Ideas to Outcomes*, presents the C⁴ approach about program evaluation. There are client, content, control, and communication. Only we have client, the program will become true. Emison thought understanding clients is the key to success because program evaluation almost always for the clients. As far as "content", we should understand the important features of the program work. A successful program evaluation means excellent management. That is the reason why Emison emphasized the importance of "control" during the program evaluation. The last "C" but not the least, is communication. Excellent and effective communication results in successful program evaluation. (Gerald Andrews Emison, *Practical Program Evaluations: Getting from Ideas to Outcomes*. Washington, D.C., CQ Press, a division of Congressional Quarterly Inc.,

2006, 8-10.)

The quality-first culture has been accepted at LSC. As a new school, students' success is one of the priority targets of LSC. Especially, in order to ensure students' academic success, we have a committee to supervise all disciplinary academic plans, to monitor and control all disciplinary academic inspections, and to evaluate all disciplinary faculty and staff. We have a set of documents to standardize these behaviors. The ad hoc committee responds to implement these documents every semester. The high level administration emphasizes students' academic success.

However, we should clarify that students' academic success does not equal students' success. Students' success includes more comprehensive contexts, and academic success is just one of the aspects of student's success. Based on the first three suggestions, construction of first-year programs curriculum system, redefining foundations and goals of first-year programs, and adjusting the staff structure of the Student Affairs Department and the counselor team, LSC should set up an evaluation system like the other academic evaluation system for first-year programs and faculty who response for first-year programs, enlarge its academic administrative range, and achieve first-year programs' success in the end.

Restructuring Students' Motivation

Andrew Carnegie said, "People who are unable to motivate themselves must be content with mediocrity, no matter how impressive their other talents." (Stephen Braden & Keisha Hoerrner, *Foundations of Academic Inquiry*, Second Edition, 61) If we want to achieve our goals of first-year programs, we have to know more about our target. Based on Emison's the C⁴, we should know our clients. In our experiences, when we organized first-year programs for students, we found most of them did not care about these programs, whatever the topic or the style, even if they really thought these programs would be good for them. Their counselor tried their best to require students to attend first-year programs every time. This really let us feel

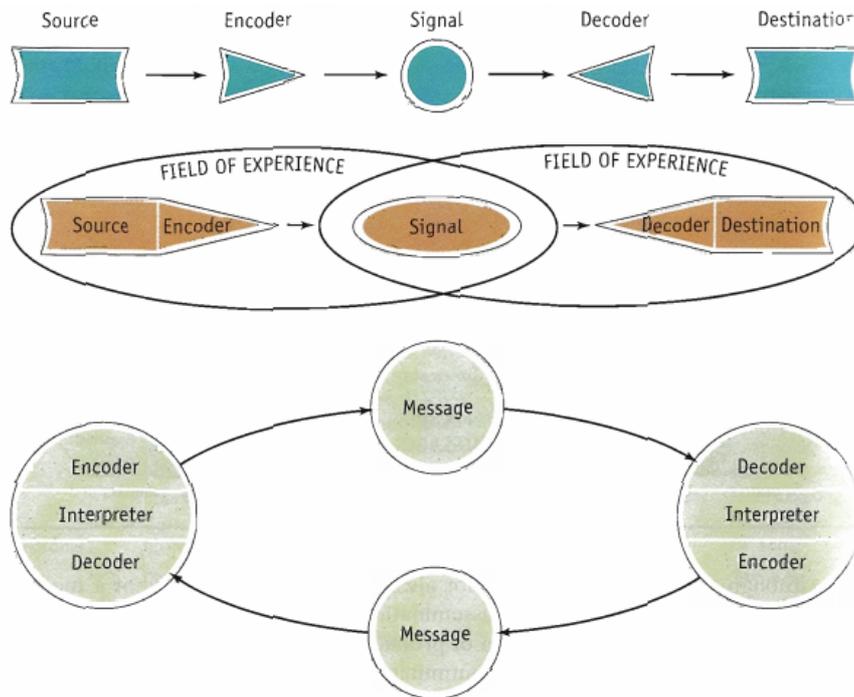
dispirited and like failures very much. After thinking deeply about the phenomenon, in my opinion our students lack motivation. As I said before, during their high school stage, their only goal was go to college. But they seldom considered why they have to go to college. We easily found out our students have no clear college picture in their minds based on their observed behaviors, like lack of academic motivation, lack of career planning, and the others. If we said that students once had a motivation at their high schools, I have to say that is society's expectation, parents' expectation, teachers' expectation, and the least important is students' expectation. Students just follow them, like after kindergarten is elementary school, after elementary school is secondary school, and then is high school, and than should be college. They lack clear motivation about their college lives, about their future lives. They are unaware that college is different. It has more rich content needed to learn, as Foundations of Academic Inquiry shows to us. That is why we should run first-year programs for them.

Reforming Teaching Skills and Class Size

“KSU 1101 and Learning Communities are designed around clusters of General Education courses and provide a strong foundation for first-year students. Twenty-five students make up of a group and learn the same sections of 2-4 courses. KSU1101 focuses close faculty interaction and involvement with the university community in order that first-year students achieve academic and personal success. The Learning Communities concerns on interesting themes as well as disciplines and majors. Both of them have the same goal is much more likely to assist students' success at KSU through the additional support afforded. (http://www.kennesaw.edu/fyp/learning_communities/index.shtml&<http://www.kennesaw.edu/fyp/ksu1101/index.shtml>)

As the picture shown, the three models illustrate the evolution of portraying communication as an interactive process between a sender and a receiver. Effective communication takes place within a sphere of “shared experience”. Wilbur Schramm

formulated the three models. (Dennis L. Wilcox and Glen T. Cameron, *Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics*, 9th ed. the United States of America, Pearson Education Inc., 2007, 174.) Excellent and effective communication not only enhances first-year programs' efficiency and effectiveness, but also achieves first-year programs' goals.



One-way communication teaching skill is always a very traditional and important skill of class teaching in China, except that the instructors ask questions and require students answer in the class. But here, instructors use interactive ways to pilot and enlighten students in the class, which gives me a deep impression and changes my opinion about teaching skills, like two-way community, focused discussion, multidimensional thinking (individual opinion, group opinions and the third party opinion), team work, common reading, presentation, and the other ways. Especially, in the first-year programs class, students are eager to know about the new environment. They have a lot of questions and individual opinions that should communicate with their instructor and new classmates. At the same time, this is a good opportunity for the instructors to give students some appropriate suggestions.

Because our teaching resources are limited, (for example instructors, classrooms, finance,

etc.), we have to use large class size. It is not good for first-year programs. There are more than 100 and close to 200 students in a class, and the teaching effect is conceivable. We should adjust the class size in order to improve the effort. The Department of First-Year Programs gets faculty support across the campus at KSU; we also try to get more faculty support. After all, students' success is good for LSC.

Promoting the Relationship Between Faculty and Student

The traditional relationship is strained between faculty and students. This is not shaped by chance. Schools and teachers always set up too strict requirements for students, even beginning with element school. Facing these strict requirements for a long time, a strained relationship has been shaped naturally between them. In students' minds, the image of an instructor is always stern and unfriendly. It is hard to become good instructors and good friends for students. In fact, college instructors will influence students by their charm, personality, intelligence, and profession rather than their career authority. Because the traditional role is very impressive, college students still keep a "psychological distance" from their instructors. This "psychological distance" has created obstacles for first-year programs. A totally different relationship is friendly and equitable between faculty and students at KSU. Another different relationship between faculty and students at KSU is instructors encourage students very often, and students keep their confidence very easily. But instructors seldom do that in China. We should think how to get rid of the "psychological distance" between instructors and students. In my opinion, getting rid of the "psychological distance" is one of the pre-conditions to run first-year programs better.

Improving the Environment of Computer-Aided Instruction (CAI)

A super strong system of computer-aided instruction will assist the administration to further integrate all kinds of resources, will facilitate the school population to further take advantage of school resources, and will improve the teaching resources environment. During

the teaching process of traditional first-year programs, instructors seldom use CAI skill, which makes it hard to attract first-year students' focus and reduce the teaching effort, especially under the large class size condition.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO KSU

As an international graduate student, based on personal opinion, the first-year programs should include international graduate students. International students come from all over the world. They have their language, culture background, and educational context. After they come here, they have to fit everything here as soon as their possible, including how to learn and live. How to assist international students achieve their success? That may be a new field to the Department of First-Year Programs.

In general, first-year programs are very useful way for students' success. This has been accepted by whatever KSU or LSC, whatever American experiences or Chinese at school. In virtue of the advantages of the Department of First-Year Programs at KSU and combining LSC's context, propose some suggestions for LSC's first-year programs' development. Look back at this period, I learned and gained a lot. Different language, different state, and different culture, but as a teacher, wherever you are, whatever you do, we have the same vision and mission that serve student's success.

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