Y1Y2 Student Experience Work Team: 2024-2025 Progress Report

Original Goals Recap

The Y1Y2 Student Experience Work Team was formed to enhance the first- and second-year student experience at NDSU by focusing on three key initiatives:

1. **Building Classroom Community**
   Supporting instructors in creating stronger classroom communities in General Education courses through the use of Learning Teams.

2. **Coordinating First- and Second-Year Student Support**
   Improving communication and collaboration between instructors, advisors, and student support services through a Coordinated Care Model.

3. **Developing More Mentoring Opportunities**
   Establishing a Peer and Professional Mentoring Program to connect Y1Y2 students with upper-level students, alumni, and community professionals.

Members from the President's Council on Retention served on three project teams, one associated with each of the three goals. Project teams met on a weekly or biweekly basis throughout the Spring 2025 semester and early Summer 2025.

Goal 1: Help instructors build classroom community in General Education courses through the creation and use of Learning Teams

Progress Summary:
Initial planning and resource development began, including drafts of guidance materials and in-class slides to support team formation. While the implementation of learning teams in AY24-25 was limited, the team made progress in developing resources for department and instructor use, as well as identifying instructors who could serve as faculty champions for classroom community building. Three instructors identified through this process will facilitate a Lunch & Learn session on classroom community building at the Fall 2025 academic Faculty and Staff Conference.

Achievements:

- Drafted instructor resources for classroom community building
- Developed a student retention guide for academic units to increase instructor awareness of and interest in classroom community-building practices [Departmental-Discussion-Guide-For-Retaining-Students-2025](#)
- Laid groundwork for a more robust pilot in Fall 2025 by recruiting faculty champions with experience building community in different course sizes and modalities

Challenges:

- Limited incentives for participating in teaching initiatives when post-tenure review has faculty focused on maintaining or increasing their research productivity
- Competing demands for department and faculty time in AY24-25 (departments were asked to develop post-tenure review policies, workload equity policies, action plans for employee engagement, etc.)

Next Steps:

- Finalize and distribute the student retention guide to departments; linking to the community-building toolkit in the Teaching section (page six)
- Identify and support pilot instructors for Fall 2025
- Offer workshops or peer-led sessions during AY25-26 to encourage adoption
- Consider integrating community building into G.E. course approval process

Goal 2: Connect students with support systems through a Coordinated Care Model

Progress Summary:
This goal saw the most progress. Chairs and heads participated in a workshop on Early Alerts during the Fall 2025 leadership retreat. 25-30 instructors participated in BisonAdvise training sessions offered throughout AY24-25. The quantity of early alerts increased compared to past semesters. However, the proportion of instructors issuing alerts did not increase to the same extent (signaling more frequent use of alerts by the same instructors).

Achievements:

- Defined *Coordinated Care* as a first step in implementing a truly coordinated model
- Increased use of early alerts / collaboration between instructors and advisors
- Developed system of systematic follow-up by professional advisors
- Met with departments to improve understanding of the early alert system and increase awareness of other student success/retention tools

Challenges:

- Limited understanding of existing student support resources among instructional staff made referrals more challenging
- Instructor frustration with needing to add data from one system into another (especially for those teaching large-enrollment courses) reduced buy-in

Next Steps:

- Implement Learning Technology Implementation (LTI) that enables Bison Advise alerts to be entered through the Blackboard LMS (starting Fall 2025)
- Expand outreach on resources, supports, and referrals to all departments
- Collect quantitative data on student outcomes to track impact of increased alerts

Goal 3: Develop a Peer and Professional Mentoring Program

Progress Summary:

While the departure of the project lead impacted the original plan to launch a formal mentoring program, the team made meaningful progress by conducting a landscape analysis of existing peer leadership and mentoring programs on campus. This included programs such as ACE Tutoring, Bison Bridge, college-level student ambassadors, Peer Navigators, and Rising Scholars. The team began developing a framework that units could use to design peer mentoring programs and identify gaps in populations currently served.

Achievements:

- Compiled an inventory of existing peer leadership programs
- Identified opportunities for alignment and collaboration across units
- Initiated the development of a shared framework for peer mentoring

Challenges:

- Competing definitions or operationalizations of peer mentoring
- Loss of project leadership (departure of Assistant Director for Learning Services) mid-year limited momentum on this project
- Need for coordination across multiple units with distinct program goals

Next Steps:

- Finalize and share the draft framework with stakeholders for feedback
- Explore opportunities to pilot the framework in select units in 2025–26
- Develop a proposal for scaling up peer mentorship at NDSU

Proposal: Formation of a New Project Group for Y1Y2 Experience

To further support departments and instructors in making continuous improvements to their teaching, we propose the formation of a new work group. This group would focus on:

- Partnering with the Office of the Teaching and Learning to match professional development opportunities with current teaching challenges/opportunities
- Partnering with the Faculty Affairs committee to review and revise Policy 332: Assessment of Teaching, clarifying shared expectations for quality teaching
- Encouraging peer observations and feedback sessions in departments
- Increasing recognition of best practices and innovative teaching strategies