



# The First Year Experience Community Update

January 2016  
Vol. 4 Issue 5

## Cornerstone Faculty Feature



**Dr. Rebecca Harris**  
Professor of English  
& Cornerstone Experience

### Why did you choose to teach SLS 1515?

In the fall of 2013, our Provost/VPAA and Dr. Eileen Deluca announced that the goal for Cornerstone sections was to have the majority taught by full-time faculty at the college. This was my second year as a full-time faculty member at FSW, and we were going to start requiring the class for all incoming students in the following year. The 2013-14 academic year seemed like the perfect time to be trained to teach the class, since it would be touching every student at the college. I believe very deeply in the mission of Cornerstone and I know the research on the subject backs up the reasons we are offering it at FSW--students who take classes like this are more engaged with their institution and courses. This engagement, which Cornerstone definitely fosters and encourages in students, results in better retention, faster time to degree, and more successful academic work, from higher GPAs to better preparation for the job market for those who really invest energy in the course.

### What do you enjoy most about teaching the Cornerstone Experience course?

The best thing for me about teaching the class is getting to interact with students in a different way, to foster mentoring relationships with students in an environment dedicated to their success as a college student in a holistic sense, rather than just in a single class. I'm a full-time faculty member in English, where I teach composition courses. In those classes, I work very hard with students on some of the things they need to be successful at college and in the workplace, such as writing and critical thinking, but I don't always have the opportunity to find out about what they are doing in other areas of their coursework or their life. So, getting to break out of my usual habits and learn new things in order to teach Cornerstone is not only rewarding, but also fun.

### How did the course change you?

As a faculty member, I'm always learning. I'm a "nerd" when it comes to educational policy and pedagogy, so I love digging into the research for how best to teach in general, but also for how best to teach this course. One of the things I'm always learning from my students is how *they* learn, versus how *I* learned in college. I think it is easy for a lot of us, including me, to assume that we (the professor) are typical examples of students who were successful, especially in our disciplines, and one thing that is really hard about teaching is continually adjusting your pedagogy and fine-tuning your approach to your subject area in order to meet the needs of your students, who may or may not learn in the same way that you have successfully employed in the past. Cornerstone has really brought that lesson home for me, as I continue to meet different students and foster close relationships with them through the course. I really get to see a wider range of personalities and learning preferences not just as they apply to writing and rhetoric (my subject area) but to multiple disciplines and subjects. I've really learned to keep asking my students about themselves, as that helps me understand how to direct my own learning about teaching.

# Cornerstone Financial Literacy Essay Contest

*Sponsored by Suncoast Credit Union*

This fall, we worked with Suncoast Credit Union to provide a week of financial literacy presentations to students at all FSW service locations. We have extended this fantastic partnership with a financial literacy essay contest. Students submitted thoughtful essays reflecting on what they learned about financial management through the Cornerstone class and supplemental FYE Programming. Suncoast Credit Union has graciously partnered to support the awarding of 12 winners, six in the fall and six in the spring semesters. FSW faculty and academic administration along with Suncoast Credit Union educators and branch managers reviewed and selected the essay contest winners. Student winners will receive a \$50 Suncoast bank account, certificate of achievement, and recognition at an end of year awards ceremony.

## Congratulations to the Fall 2015 Financial Literacy Essay Contest Winners!



**Veronica  
Aguilera**



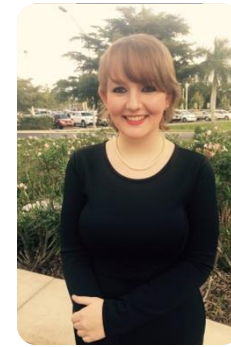
**Junior  
Pierre Louis**



**Alexis  
Rojas**



**Cassandra  
Romano**



**Natalie  
Scarbrough**



**Sarah  
Temple**



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