

In my 34 years at Fairmont State these are some of the events, activities that I took part in creating.

1. **The Fairmont State Statewide Leadership Conference.** The conference is designed to help student leaders gain tools and information to allow them be exposed to information that will help them go back to their residence halls, fraternities, sororities, student government, and other campus groups and practice good leadership skills. The leadership conference is in its 22 year.
2. **New Student Orientation Program.** I took over the Orientation program in 1979 that at that point was just a few student leaders who helped new students the first few day of school. In 1979 there were 15 peer counselors involved and the program was not well known on campus. With the help of some wonderful staff and dedicated students the program grew and expanded. We grew from 15 student volunteers to over 150 students in the program. Fairmont is a small school with a large number of students that are first generation college students from small rural towns that needed special attention. We improved the program by adding a three day training program where we worked with the student volunteers teaching them skills for working with this special group of students. A side development was the growth and development of the peer counselors. Over the 34 years of the program we have a 97% graduation for the students that participated. These students became the leaders on campus and changed the entire atmosphere for the campus community. These students also went out into the world and took the lessons they learned and became very successful..
3. **Festival of Ideas Lecture Series.** When I first came to Fairmont in 1978 I took an assessment of what I thought was needed that fell under my responsibilities. There was a glaring lack of cultural events and I felt that the students needed to be exposed to a variety of cultural programs. We brought in ballet, chamber music, modern dance, jazz, plays, and other events. Also as part of our effort to expose our students and really our community, we began to bring in speakers on current events. We stated out with one or two speakers a year and this eventually grew into the Festival of Ideas Lecture Series. We currently bring in six to eight speakers a year and the series is known throughout the state.
4. **Diversity scholarship Outreach.** We have tried over the years to be an active participant in the surrounding community and because of that we recognize the need to try to do something to work with the minority students in our community not only to help encourage the students to attend college but also to give them one-on-one help with math and science. We started a two-week camp for minority students where the students lived on campus and took classes but also had fun. They were taken on field trips to Washington DC, Baltimore and Pittsburgh to visit museums, aquariums and science centers. The idea was to expose them to cultural events that they might never have the opportunity to experience. We tried to find minority teachers and we used minority students from our college to be counselors. We decided to concentrate on students going into the eighth grade because that is a critical time for making decision about attending college. The program was very successful.
5. **Student Affairs Hall of Fame.** We were successful creating a hall of fame for past staff who worked in Student Affairs to recognize them for their past

contributions and being in a program that works with and for the students. Too often student affairs staff are overlooked and underappreciated. It also gave us an opportunity to show other student affairs staff examples of what we all should be trying to strive for.

6. **The Fairmont State University and University of Calabria Exchange.** I was instrumental in helping to create an exchange program with our school and the University of Calabria in Italy. I helped convince the government in Calabria to contribute \$100, 00.00 for scholarships for their students to attend Fairmont State University. Currently 23 students from Italy have taken advantage of the program. Five students from Fairmont State have participated and we are currently in the process of raising funds to use for students from Fairmont State to take advantage program.
7. **Learning Without Borders Cultural Exchange Camp.** With the contacts we made with the University Of Calabria we began talks with high school administrators about the possibility of having a summer camp for the students from their schools with the main emphases being to improve on the students English skills and giving them a first hand opportunity to learn about the American culture. The first year of the camp we had 23 Italian students. This year we decided to expand the camp. We invited students from Italy, students from a charter school in Washington DC, and students from rural West Virginia. What an extraordinary experience. The students from the United States got college credit for either English or math and the students from Italy took English as a second language. The students also had chance to take other classes in drama, photography, science, and digital media. We changed students' lives, the camp was huge success.
8. **Michael C. Belmear Scholarship Fund.** Past Freshman Counselors got together and decided to start a scholarship in my name (The Michael Belmear Freshman Scholarship) which currently has close to 10,000 in it. To qualify you must be a student at Fairmont State, a freshman counselor, and be involved in the community.
9. **Frank Mangano Scholarship.** Several years ago at a dinner to honor past freshman counselors I met Frank Mangano and we became friends. He had served as a counselor before my time. He decided that the program was so good that he would donate monies scholarships. Up until the time of his death he gave 1,000. After his death he wife contacted me and said that her husband had talked about his visit and our conversation and that her plan was to give us one check instead of the yearly amount. Her lawyer sent me a check for 150,000 that we now use for scholarships for our outstanding freshman counselors.

“He will know the inherent dignity of each person. He will know one person can make a difference. He will know the power of one kind word. He will know that everyone deserves a chance. And, he will know that right is not always popular and sometimes you must stand alone.”

Rico Tyler  
Director of Student Services  
DePaul University

“You taught me to really see people in their souls and to see a student where they are and help them go beyond where they thought they could. You are a beautiful man that lights the lives of so many. Thank you for dedicating your life to being a “rainbow” for so many people”.

Dr. Jennifer Knight, MD  
Freshman Orientation Counselor 1996-1998

“Best experience of my life in college...helped me become who I am today.”

Brandi Smith  
Admissions Counselor at Fairmont State  
Freshman Orientation Counselor 2005-2008

”Freshman Counselor was such a great experience. "True Colors" really helped me learn to accept others for who they were...most importantly myself. Thanks for being such an inspiration Michael.”

Megan McKenery Dodd  
Teacher/Educator  
Freshman Orientation Counselor