

# Moving Forward

## Campus Center's Compass Points to Success

By Shane M. Liebler

Peer Navigator **Katy Harrington '09** helps **Alma Hidalgo '10** search the internships database in the Compass.



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“I just happened to wander in one day,” **Jessica Lyons '07** said.

The day she walked into the Compass in the Campus Center ended up changing her life. After switching majors twice and taking a year off of school to have her son, Lyons had just about had it when she decided her history degree wouldn't fit her career aspirations either — two months before graduation.

Today the Enterprise management trainee says she found Assistant Director of Career Services **Gary Morris '88** just in time.

“I met with Gary and he saved my life,” Lyons said. “I felt like I was really lost in the college system and he was able to pull me out.

“He didn't do it for me, he just lent me the tools,” she said.

The Compass unites several student services that had been spread out across campus. “We wanted to position ourselves as a comprehensive educational and career planning center,” said **Kathy Smits Evans '84**, assistant vice president for student affairs.

The Compass places Student Advisement, Career Services, Experience-Based Education, Service Learning and Community Service, Civic Engagement, Orientation, First-Year Programs and Transfer Services under one roof. Within the Compass are several donor-named spaces including corporate and alumni support.

### One-stop shopping

“We never had anything like the Compass before,” said public relations major **Lauren Layton '09**, who interned with the Compass as a student navigator

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**Christy Harrison Huynh '98, M '08** (left) goes over service opportunities with **Michele Miller '08**.



*There's a lot more people hanging out in this building, rather than Hewitt Union as when I first got here. It gives students a good place to learn and access to resources.*

— **Ron Williams '08**



*It's been remarkable to watch the culture change that's happened on campus since this building opened.*

— **Tom Simmonds '84, M '88**

her junior year. “If you walk in, no matter what stage of school you’re in, no matter what year you are, there’s something here for you.”

The central move works geographically and philosophically for the staff as well, Morris said.

“Putting this particular group of departments together in one area simply makes it easier for all of us to work with students,” he said. “For instance, I can walk a student over to the internship office myself.”

The interdepartmental collaboration is changing the professional culture.

“What is evolving is a different mindset here,” Morris said. “I think that

most people working here think of themselves as working for the Compass as opposed to working for their individual departments.”

Student advisement, orientation and first-year programs and transfer student services also reside at the Compass. **Sarah Lewis '11** said she appreciated the accessibility and resources available to her and other new students.

Since high school, Lewis had dreamed of becoming a meteorologist. It was a major reason she chose Oswego. However, a few weeks into the program, she realized it wasn't for her.

“It was very scary at first,” Lewis said. “I was happy to eliminate one thing, but looking at the list [of other majors], I didn't even know where to start.”

The Compass offered her a one-semester course designed to help explore career paths and with guidance from adviser **Christy Harrison Huynh '98, M '08**, Lewis decided to pursue a public justice degree.

“Christy helped a lot of us find out what we really wanted to do,” Lewis said, referring to some classmates who joined her in the program. “I couldn't be happier with what I've picked.”

**Jessica Lyons '07** works as a recruiter at the Fall Career and Internship Fair in Swetman Gym this fall. The Enterprise management trainee wouldn't be on the corporate career path if not for the career services at the Compass, she said.

JIMM RUSSELL '83



### Focus on service

As the name suggests, the Compass can lead students in many directions. **Bailey Garfinkel '08** was heavily involved with the Center for Service Learning and Community Service at the Compass as a student.

Now she works there as the AmeriCorps VISTA coordinator. Community service became an important part of her Oswego experience as she sought to improve the image of Greek life with civic projects.

“As I was getting the Greek organizations more involved, I wanted every student to have the experience,” said Garfinkel, who was president of the Phi Sigma Sigma sorority. With AmeriCorps VISTA, she connects students with more than 180 service opportunities, including Alternative Spring Break and Adopt-A-Grandparent.

Garfinkel said she may go to law school and someday return to the Oswego area for a career in politics. Better connecting the college and Oswego community is a big motivator, she said.

“You can make a huge difference when you break down those barriers.”