



Improving Student Learning and Success

An Overview on The First Year Experience

The Past, Present, and Future

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Workshop Road Map

- The First Year Experience – Past, Present, & Future
- An Integrated Approach to the First Year Experience
- Learning Community Clusters
- Developing the UNLV FYE Plan





The First Year Experience: 30 YEARS

After 30 years, why do professionals in higher education continue to attend the National Conference on the First Year Experience and Students in Transition, AACRAO's SEM conference, and other national conferences which focus on improving student learning and success?

- What has been accomplished on the first year experience movement?
- What is missing?
- What are some questions that still need to be asked?
- What do the next 30 years hold?





What goal is missing from the initial FYE movement?

– No reference to **RETENTION!**

- This is the 800 pound gorilla.
 - This is what gets attention.
 - This is what motivates many to invest in “FYE programs”.
- And, from the opposite spectrum, that of our nation, improving retention is a commendable national public policy goal.
- And we are under a lot more pressure to do so: from legislatures, Congress, the US Department of Education, and indirectly, from the regional accreditors who are demanding, and getting in some cases, more evidences of practices leading to educational improvements, and thus retention.





What goal is missing from this initial movement?

- **Retention is not really the end(s)**, the goals of higher education. There is nothing fundamentally, intrinsically academic about retention.
- **Retention is a measurement**, a benchmark, of educational attainment.
- And Dr. John Gardner would argue, often a minimum one at that. **Retention is a C minus and a pulse**, the ability to fog a mirror. This is not sufficiently aspirational.
- Retention restrains us, it limits our vision and our capacity for creativity and excellence.





The First Year Experience Today

- The notions of the “first-year experience” are well established in the lexicon of higher education.
 - Now it is not only or even primarily **chief student affairs officers** who are pushing the agenda for an improved focus on the first year, but the **chief academic officers**.
 - Hundreds, actually, thousands, of campuses now have the archetypal **first-year signature interventions** such as the first-year seminar, learning communities, service learning, Supplemental Instruction, early-alert, and campus-wide initiatives known as “the first-year experience.”





The First Year Experience Today

- A focus on the needs of first-year students has led to the creation of a quasi **first-year profession such that professional positions** are advertised in higher Education trade publications.
- **Disciplinary, and professional associations** focus on first-year courses and improvement strategies.
- The **press covers campuses' efforts** to improve the first-year experience.
- The **original language**, “the freshman-year experience” has become more inclusive and accurate in its reconstitution as **“the first-year experience.”**
- And many campuses have stopped referring to their **new students** who are predominantly female as “freshmen” and replaced it with **“first-year.”**
- **Graduate courses** on the study of the first-year experience movement are beginning to find their way into the curricula of schools of education.
- A **legitimate new field of scholarly research and publishing**, thanks largely to USC (and Jossey-Bass) has developed around this larger effort to improve the first year of college.



The First Year Experience Today

- **Foundations and government agencies** award grants to improve the first year.
- A **huge for-profit industry**, or industries, have developed to cultivate, support, sell products and services to this burgeoning field of activity.
- The focus on the first year has led to an expanded application of lessons learned to other critical transitions during the undergraduate years; in particular, what is called **“the sophomore year experience”** and **“the senior year experience.”**
- Thanks to The Pew Charitable Trusts and George Kuh and the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Education a powerful national conversation and action steps have occurred focusing on the concept of **“engagement” behaviors and practices** of both students and institutions (as in the use of the NSSE and CCSSE in four-year and two-year institutions, respectively).





The First Year Experience Today

- The first year improvement efforts are gradually being folded into the work of **regional accreditors**, most notably now, the Higher Learning Commission, whereby any of their 1000 institutions may now accomplish reaffirmation of accreditation by doing either a special emphasis self study focusing on the first year. In the SACS region a focus on the first year is increasingly being integrated into Quality Enhancement Plans.
- A **set of standards for excellence** in the first college year, for purposes of both measurement of institutional performance and aspirational design, have been developed by over 300 participating two and four-year colleges and universities (see www.fyfoundations.org).
- And what began as, at best, a **national set of activities** has greatly expanded to a true **international set of partnerships**, scholarly works, convenings, and movement.





The FYE and Students in Transition movement is just now coming of age....

- After the first 30 years, the first year experience is today marked by the increased emphasis on...
 - philosophy, core values, set of assumptions about a comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated first year experience.
 - programs and services designed with intentionality, purpose, integration of effort, service efficiency, and positive interventions with students.
 - integrated cross-campus collaborations and partnerships between faculty, administrators, and staff.
 - use of assessment and use of data for informed decision making.
 - understanding how campus cultures impact enrollment management efforts.
 - importance of shared leadership at multiple levels.





Reflection on the past 30 years.... What are the results of these energies and actions?

- there is abundant evidence that **students are not as engaged as we would like**
- there is also evidence that **students are not as engaged during the first year of college as they thought they would be!**
- levels of performance in high **DWFI rate courses should be a cause for embarrassment and action**, especially in mathematics
- there is still **too much unacceptable attrition**
- there is much **instability in the viability and leadership of first-year “programs”**
- the **response of the academy to the challenges of the first year has been primarily to design “programs” rather than a more comprehensive institutional response** and on some campuses these “programs” are, at best, still eating crumbs on or under the table the mantra that surrounds the first year as the basis for reform is not academic and not sufficiently motivational (i.e. retention) to take us to the next level
- we are **competing for ever scarcer resources in a larger society** that does not currently share our values
- and we are competing for **students’ most precious of resources**: their time, energies, attention, priorities, discretionary monies—our first college year endeavors vis a vis their jobs, families, pursuits of pleasures, busy demanding lives.





The Future of FYE....and the Questions that We Must Ask...

- How, if you wanted to, could you look at the **entirety of the first year**, as a unit of analysis per se (i.e. beyond the program level)?
- Does your campus have a **grand design, a plan, for the entirety** of the first year?
- Does your campus have a **philosophy, an explicit statement of core values**, assumptions, aspirations for what the first year should be all about (I will show you what I mean in a moment)?
- How is this **philosophy emergent from, connected to the institutional mission**?
- What about your **organizational structure**? Is anyone, any office, in charge?
- How **coherent, integrated, coordinated** are your institution wide efforts? What **coordinating mechanisms, bodies** to you have?
- What **“transitions”** are your new students going through and how is your campus **organized to address these transitions**?
- What are your **goals for student learning in the first year**? What do you know about how well you are accomplishing those goals?



Dr. John Gardner, Executive Director,
The Policy Center on the First Year Experience
Senior Fellow, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience
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The Future of FYE....and the Questions that We Must Ask...

- What do you believe is so important that you want to be the **first-year experience for ALL students**? Beyond what all students experience, how well do you **meet the needs of unique sub populations**?
- To what extent are your **faculty invested in and owning** of these first-year initiatives and what are you doing about this? How can you make the first year a higher priority for faculty?
- How do you **ensure that all new students have intellectual and personal experiences that engage them with diverse ideas and people** in structured learning experiences, inside and outside the classroom?
- How can you **promote new student understanding of the roles and purposes of higher education** and of the potential of your institution to help them attain these broader societal and personal goals?
- What are your **strategies for assessment and institutional improvement** of the beginning college experience? What do you know about your effectiveness? And what are you doing with what you know?



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Intentional, institutional decision to create systemic, university-wide changes that potentially affect every student as well as involve virtually every staff and faculty member.





- Four Theoretical Models of Retention – Keys to Persistence

- **Tinto's Student Departure Theory**
 - Academic integration (academic performance) and social integration (participation in college life)
 - Students who are unable to connect with either the academic or social subsystems are more likely to leave
- **Astin's "I-E-O" (Input-Environment-Output) or Student Integration Model**
 - Assesses the impact of the various institutional environments and experiences by determining whether students grow or change
- **Pascarella and Terenzini's** focus on the institution's quality of effort to involve students with the resources of the institution.
- **Bean and Eaton's Psychological Model** of college student retention on four psychological theories: attitude-behavior, coping behavior (approach-avoidance), self-efficacy, and attribution (locus of control).
 - Factors affecting retention are ultimately individual and form the foundation for retention decisions
 - Given the understanding of these processes involved in developing academic and social integration, an institution can create programs and environments that increase academic and social integration and increase student success



Systemic and Comprehensive Programming

- Academic Skills Preparation (time management, test-taking, preparation, textbook reading skills, note-taking skills, listening skills, etc.)
- Assessment/Placement (English, Math, Science, Language, Computer Competency) – Tools (COMPASS, Institutionally Developed)
- Career Planning
- Centralized Academic Support
- Collaborative Learning Techniques
- Computer and Internet Training
- Commuter Student Services
- Cross-cultural Awareness Events
- Developmental Education
- Early academic progress/warning monitoring
- Experiential Learning
- Faculty Mentoring
- Frequent Purposeful Interventions with Students
- Freshman Seminar Course Type
- New Student Orientation
- Group Learning Opportunities
- Group Study Sessions
- Learning Communities
- Leadership Development
- Proactive and Intrusive Advising
- Residential Living/Learning Experiences
- Service Learning
- Student-Faculty Research Opportunities
- Summer Bridge Programming
- Supplemental Instruction (SI)
- Transfer Student Services
- Part-Time Student Services
- Tutoring





“Front-Loading Program Services”

While the learning community could be defined as the deliberate or intentional restructuring of the curriculum to connect students and faculty to foster greater intellectual connections, the Freshman Year Experience could be defined as a “deliberately designed attempt to provide a rite of passage in which the students are supported, welcomed, celebrated, and ultimately assimilated.”

The freshman year is the foundation upon which the rest of the college experience is based. It also acknowledges the fact that not all freshmen are the same, and consequently have a variety of special needs for orientation, support, and programs due to the heterogeneity of their backgrounds.



“Frequently Front-Loaded Program Services”

- Orientation & Pre-Matriculation Communications
- Learning Communities
- First Year Seminar
- Early Alert
- Academic Skills Preparation/Learning Assistance
- Positive Interventions - Academic Advising
- Career Exploration and Planning
- Tutoring Interventions
- Student-Peer and Student-Faculty Mentoring



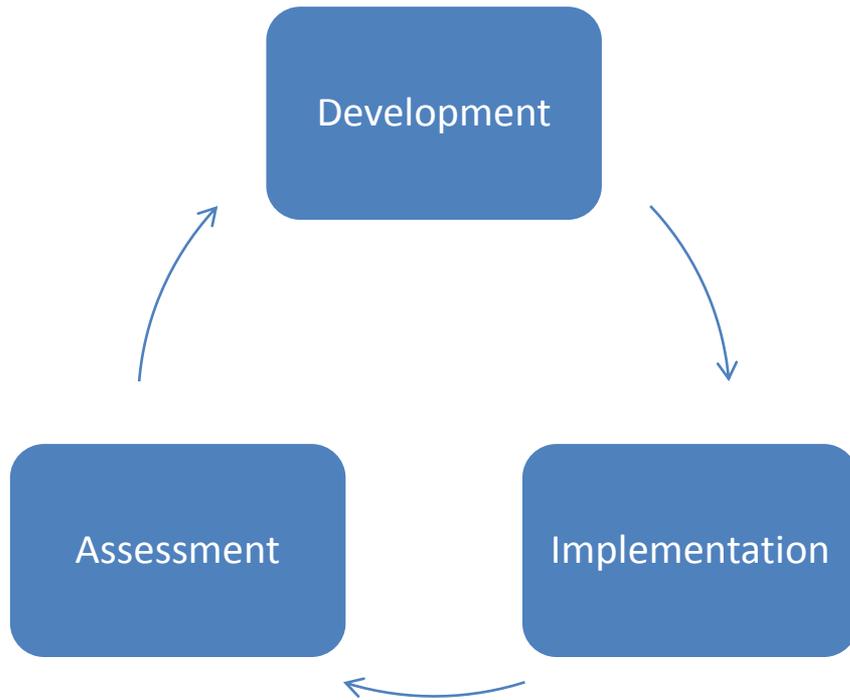


“Front-loading” Program Services

- A structured first year program
- Pre-freshman-year academic and social preparation for high-risk students
- A major programmatic role in students’ initial course selection and an intrusive advising process throughout the freshman year
- Provision of academic services that buttress the courses in which the students are enrolled
- Grouping services that extend service hours and web services
- Sending a powerful message of success through conscientious effort



Program Accountability



Characteristics of Programming

- Intentionality – Specific, measurable outcome program objectives
- Integration of Effort
- Collaborations & Partnerships
- Positive Interventions with Students
- Using Data to Inform Decision-Making
- Quality Assessment





FYE OVERVIEW THE END



QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION?