



FIRST YEAR STUDENT LEARNING AND WELLNESS

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Purpose of Today's Discussion



Higher education research has documented challenges experienced by first year students in their transition to college.

- High levels of attrition from first to second year.

At USC, concern about high rates of binge drinking, mental health, suicide, sexual assault and overall student engagement.

Objectives of this session:

- to learn about the purpose and structure of FY courses and programs
- to learn about the information first year (FY) students at USC are receiving through orientation
- to understand the needs of FY students
- to learn about current work on our campus related to FY self care
- to discuss possibilities for addressing their needs more systematically and broadly.

Panelists



1. Introduction to **first year seminar courses** and the topics that are covered -Tracy Poon Tambascia, Rossier
2. What information do our students currently get during **Orientation**?
– Tim Brunold, Dean of Admissions
3. Understanding the **problems students face** - Lynette Merriman, Assistant Vice Provost for Student Affairs Student Support and Advocacy
4. **Student panel** on first year experiences – Edwin Saucedo, Mykaila Williams and Ivana Giang
5. The Occupational Therapy Freshman **Self-Care Program** - Ashley Uyeshiro and Julie McLaughlin Gray, Occupational Therapy

What is a First Year Seminar or Program?



Courses or programs specifically for first year students to support their transition to college.



Objectives

Much of what now constitutes 'the first year experience' in U.S. higher education are programs and activities that have the following overall research-based objectives:

- *Increasing student-to-student interaction*
- *Increasing faculty-to-student interaction, especially out of class*
- *Increasing student involvement and time on campus*
- *Linking the curriculum and the co-curriculum*
- *Increasing academic expectations and levels of academic engagement*
- *Assisting students who have insufficient academic preparation for college*

(Barefoot, 2000)

Common Structures/Format



- Course for credit, usually 1-2 units; meets for 1 semester or less.
- Content integrated in a course all students take, like first year writing.
- First-year Interest Group (FIG): 2 academic courses +1 FY course.
- Living and Learning Community (LLC): 2 academic courses +1 FY course, and also living in proximity for the whole year.
- Mandatory (for all, for provisionally admitted, etc) or optional.

First Year Seminar Topics



Academic: Study skills, time management, note taking, test taking, intro to tutoring or other support services.

Engagement: Services on campus, faculty and peer relationships, mentoring, co-curricular activities.

Wellness: Intro to health and counseling services, yoga or meditation programs or courses, peer support programs, diet and nutrition services, recreation facilities or intramural athletics.

Purpose & Identity: Self Authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2004), identity development, developing self efficacy.

Why Offer FY Courses or Programs?



Increased retention and graduation rates, esp for at-risk students

Improved student **satisfaction and engagement**

Relationships – peer, faculty, peer mentor

Co-curricular involvement

Stronger **self management** skills

Improved **wellness** - physical and mental health

Identity development – understanding self, personal values,
decision-making, sense of purpose



High Impact Practices

Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)

- First-Year Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- Undergraduate Research
- Diversity/Global Learning
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Internships
- Capstone Courses and Projects

Nationwide



In a 2006 survey by the National Resource Center for First-Year Experience (FYE) and Students in Transition, 821 colleges and universities reported offering a FY seminar.

- 335 were private, four year universities.
- Nearly 52% had offered these courses for more than 10 years.
- 35% had “linked” courses (FIG or LLC).
- 40 % had a service learning component.
- 46% required the course for FY students; of those, more were private universities.
- More than 90% carried course credit (units).

(Tobolowsky, 2008)

Impact of FY Programs



University of Oregon reports that FIG students have a 11% higher graduation rate than students who do not enroll in a FIG.

A study of 10 years of extended orientation course data from **Ohio University** found that for 8 out of the 10 years, participants returned for their second year at higher rates than nonparticipants, and graduation rates were higher as well.

A large study in 2001 examined students who participated in the **Your First College Year (YFCY) survey**. Researchers found that participants were more likely to speak up in class, study with other students, participate in community service and develop close friendships with other students.

Pac 12 Campuses



Stanford

- IntroSems - 16 students, course focused on a discipline, may satisfy a breadth requirement
- Learning community; occasional events, meals or field trips
- Most take at least one; can take up to 3 in FY (one per quarter)

University of Oregon

- FIG: 2 academic courses + 1 FY seminar course ("College Connections")
- College Connections co-taught with a upper-level UG student
- About ½ of new students enroll in a FIG.

University of Washington

- FIG: 2 academic courses + 1 FY seminar course, GEN ST 199 (2 units; CR/NC).
- GEN ST 199 courses are developed from the UW Common Curriculum. This curriculum is comprised of five components:
Transition, Critical Thinking, Academics, Community, Professional Pathways

AAU Campuses



Cornell University has the Tatkon Center for First-Year Students; FY living communities and FY writing seminars.

University of California, Santa Barbara has a University Success Course (3 units; ED20) and Student Success Seminars offered in the residence halls.

Duke University has the FOCUS program; 13 interdisciplinary clusters; 20-25% of FY students take this; residential component.

University of Michigan has ALA 171- Making the Most of Michigan course; 1 unit, 7 weeks; taught in the residence halls.

The Ohio State University has the Success Series; 300 sessions covering 6 topics related to career, wellness, diversity, or finances.



References

Barefoot, B. O. (2000). The first-year experience. *About Campus*, 4(6), 12-18.

Magolda, M. B. B., & King, P. M. (2004). *Learning partnerships: Theory and models of practice to educate for self-authorship*. Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Kuh, G. D. (2007). What student engagement data tell us about college readiness. *Peer Review*, 9(1), 4.

Tobolowsky, B. F. (2008). *2006 National Survey of First-Year Seminars: Continuing Innovations in the Collegiate Curriculum. The First-Year Experience Monograph Series No. 51*. National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. University of South Carolina, 1728 College Street, Columbia, SC 29208.

See this study for an overview of several FY outcomes studies:

Williford, A. M., Chapman, L. C., & Kahrig, T. (2001). The university experience course: A longitudinal study of student performance, retention, and graduation. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 2(4), 327-340.



Discussion

If we were to offer a course or program for FY students, **what kind of content is needed?**