

Spring 4-1-2016

# The Effect of a First Year Experience Program on Student Retention in Community College

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The Effect of a First Year Experience Program on Student Retention in Community College

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### Acknowledgements

I will forever be thankful for my experience with the Counselor Education program. Thank you to the faculty and staff for the endless support academically, personally and spiritually over the past three and a half years. Your guidance in the classroom and as leaders in our field has been inspiring as I have developed as an individual and professional counselor. Thank you to my site supervisors, Heather and Amie, for being exemplary role models in the field of College Counseling. I hope that I am able to become half the woman that you two are; I admire your strength, courage, grace and diligence, both personally and professionally. To Anna – I thank you for being an outstanding role model, advocate, boss, and friend. Even though you're not a counselor by trade, you've taught me more than I can imagine about social justice and advocating for the rights of our students to make our campuses a safer place. I send love to anyone who has supported me throughout this process. To my family, friends, classmates, peers, and especially my cohort – I honestly would not have made it without each and every one of you. Mom – words cannot express how your endless support, love and selflessness has made all the difference in the as I've transformed – if anyone deserved a vicarious diploma, it'd be you! To Tommy P – you entered my life at the start of this transition. You've walked alongside me as I've struggled to find myself, always encouraging me to be the best version of who I strive to be, and to shoot for the stars. We've grown together as individuals and as partners, and I cannot wait for what's next to come. Cheers to what the future holds!

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### Abstract

This mixed-method study explored the effect of a First Year Experience program on student retention and persistence of students attending an urban community college in the North Eastern United States. Program facilitators implemented a series of psychoeducational workshops with the intent of providing students with support, resources and skills for academic success in order to increase the likelihood of student persistence and retention. The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of the program, examining retention rates of students enrolled in this program in comparison to the institutional average. 125 students participated in the intervention, and completed a pre-assessment, midterm evaluation, end-of-semester survey and a final essay assessing student concerns, successes and recommendations for future first-year students. Student retention was not directly correlated to participation in this program, but smooth transitions and social support were identified as key themes to student success. This result calls for further assessment of retention practices at the institution in order to appropriately support the needs of the student population.

### The Effect of a First Year Experience Program on Student Retention in Community College

Community colleges have become first-choice starting places for an array of individuals seeking a degree in higher education. The community college campus has become a melting pot of individuals at different places in life, personally, academically, and socially. Community colleges, in particular, struggle to provide services to their incoming students. Members of the community college student population are often underprepared for the rigor of postsecondary education (Fike & Fike, 2008). The adjustment into community college is often difficult to navigate for the ill-prepared student, regardless if students are transitioning directly from high school, another college or university, or from the workforce. The success of this transition is essential for retaining students and their persistence to degree completion. Possible explanations for a lack of preparedness include incoming educational level, lack of motivation to complete a degree program, little external support, or lack of information regarding expectations in higher education.

In order to account for these potential explanations, interventions are put into place by higher education administrators and support staff to increase the likelihood of student acceptance, knowledge, and feelings of support. These interventions range from orientation programs and overnight visits, to in-semester courses and psychoeducational workshops covering an array of topics pertaining to student success (Bers & Younger, 2014). Traditionally, these programs are practiced at four year colleges and institutions.

This study examined the impact of a series of psychoeducation workshops, referred to as a First Year Experience (FYE) program, as a method of impacting student retention at the community college. This researcher compared pre-assessment survey data, which the researcher assumed would represent student concerns entering college for the first time, to the advice

students provided to their incoming peers after completing not only their first semester of college, but the First Year Experience program. This information was originally gathered by the initial First Year Experience facilitator at the time of the intervention. This researcher also determined the student retention and persistence rates from the college database system, by examining the academic progress of each student whom took part in the two cohorts included in this study.

There is little research on the use of an FYE program at the community college level and this study aimed to add to the literature on this topic. The results of this study are intended for use at the research site, so that administrators and student service professionals can attempt to understand their current retention practices and improve services for future students to increase academic success.

Overall, this paper aimed to address issues pertaining to college student retention, the academic readiness of students entering community college, the role that a First Year Experience (FYE) program has in helping students that may not be prepared for the caliber of work in higher education, and how lack of readiness influences student retention and persistence rates. The following review of the literature will examine the current trends in college student retention pertaining to higher education as a whole, and more specifically to community college.

### **Literature Review**

The number of individuals enrolled in community college makes up approximately one-half of first-time students enrolled in undergraduate programs, which indicates that there is popularity and enticing reasons for students to enroll in a two-year program (American Association of Community College, 2014). Highlights of enrolling in a two-year community college include: completing an array of courses for those students who may be unsure about a

major or future career, taking general education requirements before transferring to a four-year college or institution, having the opportunity to complete a trade or technical program and completing a degree at a faster pace and lower cost (Couch, 2011). The literature suggests otherwise, that regardless of matriculation status, almost 50% of students are not retained (Schuetz, 2008). The following review of the literature aims to explore the current trends and practices in student retention.

### **Definitions**

Retention and persistence rates have become common points of assessment in validating the success of higher education. The terms retention and persistence are at times used interchangeably, but have different meanings. For the purpose of this literature review, the following definitions should be utilized. Students that are *persisting* are those students who have continued enrollment from semester to semester. For example, a student that enrolled in the fall semester, completed coursework and went on to enroll and complete courses in the spring semester has persisted. This is similar to the idea of retention, in that a student has been “retained” at the university consistently from one semester to the next. However, for the purpose of this paper, *retention* will be defined as a student who is making academic progress at the college on a year-to-year basis. This definition of retention includes students who have persisted, but then continue on to enroll and make further academic process the following year (Arnold, 1999).

### **Community College Student Retention**

Few studies accurately represent the dynamics of student retention at community colleges. The majority of retention studies are based on the experiences of students enrolled at four year colleges and universities that are academically exclusive (Windham, Rehfuss,

Williams, Pugh, & Tincher-Ladner, 2014). More research needs to be conducted to appropriately examine the current trends in community college retention, indicating which retention efforts have been successful thus far and where the areas for improvement lie.

**Tinto's student integration model.** Vincent Tinto is one of the key figures in studying and understanding student retention, with research dating back to 1975. Tinto has remained a prominent researcher in the field, and much of the literature on student retention and success in higher education cites both his early and current work (Fike & Fike, 2008; Mayo, 2013; Windham, Reh fuss, Williams, Pugh & Tincher-Ladner, 2014). He is best known for his theoretical model of student retention. This theory was created based on Durkheim's Theory of Suicide, which states that suicide is more likely to occur when individuals are not appropriately interwoven into society (Durkheim, 1961). Tinto utilized Durkheim's ideas to conceptualize the interaction between institutions of higher education and the specific conditions under which students drop out, or, for short, factors that lead students to leave higher education institutions (Tinto, 1975). Tinto's model states that students who do not develop a sense of belonging in institutions of higher education are less likely to remain enrolled. Those students who do integrate to their campus culture develop commitment to the institution and are more likely to reach their academic goals (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). The literature summarizes that a predictive factor in student retention is the student's successful progression through stages as he or she transitions from being a first time student in college to one who is experienced and accustomed to the ways of the college. This process is strongly influenced by academic and social characteristics (Fike and Fike, 2008). These characteristics include understanding the academic processes: topics like registering for classes, knowing where to seek academic support

and accessing financial aid. A sense of social connection also is deemed to be important for students feeling welcome, accepted and as though they are members of their campus community.

**Retention concerns for administration.** Student retention is an essential topic of focus and research for colleges, specifically for college administrators. The role of the administration is to not only keep college afloat financially, but to continuously evaluate the ever-evolving needs of the student body and ensure that students are continuing to succeed academically. This careful evaluation would lead to student-dictated needs to be successful in higher education.

**Colleges as businesses.** Student retention is also essential for community colleges to stay in business, as student tuition funds the practice of higher education and maintaining the monetary stability of the institution. Retention becomes increasingly important in times of financial difficulty at the college or in the community, because community college survives on the tuition payments of their students (Fike & Fike, 2008; Jamelske, 2009). It should be noted that in times of greater unemployment, enrollment in institutions of higher education increases, as individuals who are unable to find work often go back to school to enhance their knowledge, abilities, and credentials in order to get re-hired or obtain a job in a new field (Barbu, 2014). Furthermore, the federal Higher Education Act at times uses graduation rates to evaluate institutional effectiveness (Fike & Fike, 2008).

Aside from the monetary and assessment perspective, retention is also important in terms of college students having a positive college experiences and having the necessary resources to reach their academic and career goals. Students are the main source of income for institutions of higher education and without income from the student body, services in turn cannot be provided to support the students in question. This includes the basics like faculty and staff instructing courses, to academic advising, counseling centers and other support offices. Due to the fact that

community colleges are accepting a wider variety of students with increasing needs, the need for funding these student support offices has increased. Recent literature suggests that colleges and universities across the board are operating with smaller budgets (Jamelske, 2009). With smaller budgets, these offices are less able to fund multiple staff persons, limiting the amount of students that are being reached and supported (Tinto, 2006). This excessive stress and strain on faculty, staff and administration has the ability to decrease the quality of services being provided. This could be detrimental to student success, which in turn could lead students to leave the institution for an array of reasons.

**Retention and wages earned.** Despite the impact that retention has on the higher education institution, retention also has the ability to “make or break” a student’s academic career and prospective job opportunities. In the job market, a student who has a Bachelor’s degree is more likely to have higher income per year compared to employed individuals with a high school diploma. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), “approximately 65% of young adults ages 25-34 who were in the labor force worked full time, year round (i.e. worked 35 or more hours per week, 50 or more weeks per year).” Furthermore, the number of young-adult workers employed year-round was higher for individuals who had higher levels of education. According to the Department of Education (2015), workers with a Bachelor’s degree averaged an \$11,000 increase in pay (\$48,500 versus \$37,500) compared to those with an Associate’s degree. Furthermore, those with a high school credential, which includes a General Educational Development, earned significantly less, with an annual income of \$30,000.

It is evident that the level of degree an individual pursues and/or obtains has a direct correlation to the amount of money that an individual can earn annually. If students are not

retained at the college, this can result in their lack of completion of a degree. From the perspective of an individual working in a support office, graduating and entering the workforce is the primary goal of the majority of students in higher education. It is primarily the role of the student to complete the work necessary to earn a degree or certificate, but it is essential for the college faculty, staff and administration to provide the necessary support for students to succeed in academically.

### **College Readiness**

**Concerns of community college students.** As a result of interviews conducted with currently enrolled community college students, individuals feel a strong sense of belonging and affiliation with their college when they believe their needs are being met (personal communication, 2015). Most students reported feeling uneasy coming to college for the first time and had to do a great deal of work on their own to feel comfortable as they pursued academic and career goals. One factor that was determined through personal interviews and in the literature is the desire for seamless transition from institution to institution (Lockword, Hunt, Mactlack & Kelley, 2013). Transition could be from high school to community college, as well as from college to college. The transition from the routine of daily work into higher education, as well as entering college for the first time can be life-changing and highly impactful. Due to this significant transition, college professionals should be highly sensitive and considerate when considering interventions and providing services to students. Based on the literature, students who are not retained traditionally do not complete their first semester of college (Windham, Rehfluss, Williams, Pugh & Tincher-Ladner, 2014). It is essential that students are supported from their first arrival on campus.

Due to the fact that a college degree has become essential in seeking excellent roles in the job market, community colleges are affordable resources for individuals interested in pursuing technical programs, individuals who are looking to gradually step from high school or the work force into a lower-caliber institution, or for students who are academically underprepared. Based on the change in trends, community colleges are not only admitting a wider array of students, but the students also have a wider variety of needs in order to be successful in higher education (Jamelske, 2009). Based on the literature, academic and social support is essential in the retention of students in all institutions of higher education. Furthermore, it is clear from the research that community college students enroll with lower levels of academic preparedness, familial and social support, non-cognitive factors like work ethic and determination (Porter & Polikoff, 2012).

Often times, placement testing is conducted with community college students to determine their level of academic preparedness, specifically in the fields of English and Math (Porter & Polikoff, 2012). Community colleges are often known for having an array of developmental or remedial courses in these two subjects. It should be noted that some institutions have these opportunities available for students, and that scores on placement tests are a main component of determining the potential success of college students. Placement test scores fail to account for factors such as non-traditional students, older students, individuals with developmental disabilities and those who come from families that are not supportive of the demand of college. Byrd and MacDonald (2005) noted that family factors often contribute to student readiness for college, both in a supportive and inhibiting manner. On one hand, family members can assist by helping with the student's responsibilities, such as housework and child care, so that the student can make time for studying and completing assignments. If a student is

faced with little support, or even backlash from family members, it can be difficult to balance the individual's personal responsibilities, both in and out of the classroom. A lack of support, whether it be financial or in terms of understanding and encouragement, could potentially lead to unsuccessful completion of courses. It is important to stress that these factors are not found in placement testing, and students should be made aware that academics are not the only category that determines and influences academic success.

**First year experience programs.** First-Year Experience (FYE) programs are vast and varying in their composition on college campuses. Each assessed program differs in its structure and focus, often being tailored to the needs of each campus population. Despite the focus of the literature on four-year institutions, community colleges are implementing retention practices, with focus on broad-scale intervention and education. Programs can consist of weekly seminars, on-campus learning communities, retreats or extended orientation sessions. They can be facilitated by an array of faculty, staff, administrators, and even students (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005).

Most FYE programs are multifaceted with goals including increasing student retention and persistence, improving their academic preparedness and encouraging students to form connections between their academics and future goals (Cornell and Mosley, 2006). A great deal of focus has been placed on the integration of new students into the campus and community, which helps to instill a sense of belonging at the campus and with support offices. In turn, students increase their opportunities for academic success and identity development (Bers & Younger, 2014).

It appears as though there is no "magical formula" for retention and that results of various studies are dependent on certain characteristics, including the characteristics of specific college

campuses and the demographics of its student body. There is even less information regarding successful retention, specifically FYE program success, in the community college setting. It has become evident that the community college population requires extra focus on academic and personal support, as this population tends to face more adversity on the path to graduation. Previous research indicates that FYE programs are most effective retention practices when coupled with developmental English courses at the community college level (Byrd & MacDonald; Cornell & Mosley, 2006). This study attempts to address the following question: What is the impact of First Year Experience program on student persistence and retention? As a result of this study, this researcher hopes to further add to the literature regarding these issues in community college.

This study is designed to assess one area of the institution's current retention practices, as well as provide feedback and recommendations to higher education administrators, student service professionals, faculty and staff regarding effective ways to provide resources for students to be successful. The following section will address the methods utilized by this researcher to examine retention and persistence rates for two cohorts compared to the general student body, demographic information and student recommendations for further enhancing first-year programming in the future.

### **Methods**

This study took place at an urban community college located in the northeastern United States with an enrollment of 12,107 students across three campuses. This study assessed individuals at one of the three campuses, specifically examining students at the campus located in the downtown area. All students are commuters, as there are no residence halls or other forms of housing affiliated with the institution. The student body is comprised of approximately 51%

female students and 49% male students, respectively. This study aimed to answer the following questions: first, what factors attribute to students remaining enrolled in community college, and second, does a First Year Experience program impact student retention and persistence rates. This researcher hypothesized that student enrollment in an FYE program would increase the likelihood of students to persist into the following semester and be retained to the following academic year. This researcher also hypothesized that factors including academic under-preparedness and lack of social support would lead to lower levels of student success.

### **Participants**

This researcher obtained a sample from the population of students enrolled in development reading comprehension courses. This study consisted of 125 FYE program participants. The data analyzed was taken from 58 students enrolled in spring 2015, and 67 students enrolled in fall 2015. Specifically, the researcher examined first-time first-semester students. This population consisted of students who had not been previously enrolled in any college coursework at the college or university level at the start of the intervention. This population was chosen in order to determine initial concerns of students who have no first-hand experience as a community college student. 89 participants were first-time first-semester students. 44 were male and 45 were female. Participants' ages ranged from 18-58 years old. 74 students were considered to be "traditional aged" students, being between the ages of 18 and 24. Of first-time students, 15 were over the traditional age.

**Eligibility.** Eligibility for inclusion in this study is based on student enrollment in the developmental reading comprehension courses. These developmental, or remedial courses, are comprised of students who do not meet college level reading requirements. This eligibility was determined by student scores on the ACCUPLACER computer-based placement test. All

students were required to take this test prior to the start of classes, unless students received a waiver based on high school English course grades of 85 or higher, a score of three or higher on an Advance Placement Exam, a critical reading SAT score greater than 500, or an English score of 18 or higher and Reading score of 21 or higher on the ACT Exam.

An English instructor at this institution collaborated with the FYE program facilitator to implement these workshops. As a result of this partnership, students enrolled in this instructor's courses were eligible for participation in the study. Three of the five courses offered by the English instructor received the intervention per semester. These courses were chosen by the availability of the individual facilitating the workshops.

There were two specific exclusion criteria for this study. First, students enrolled in developmental reading comprehension courses taught by other instructors did not receive the intervention, strictly based on the instructors' lack of willingness to host the FYE program concurrently with their courses. Second, students who had previously taken college courses were excluded from analysis. Although these students still participated in the study, these students had previously been exposed to college courses and the associated issues. This researcher assumed that these students could skew pre-assessment results, as there was the potential that they had experienced issues. As a result of these experiences, these students might indicate that they had no concerns as a result of resolving the problems they had already faced. This researcher wanted a more accurate representation of the concerns of first-time first-semester college students, in order to determine the necessary resources and areas of concern, so that the college can be prepared for future first-time students.

## **Procedures**

The data for this project was collected in the spring 2015 and fall 2015 semesters by the First Year Experience program facilitator. The facilitator requested that this researcher conduct an analysis of the information that had previously been gathered to examine retention and persistence rates, areas of student concern, and provide future recommendations for the program in terms of content and facilitation efforts.

**Institutional review board.** This researcher did not have to complete a formal Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedure. At the college where the research was conducted, studies pertaining to retention practices do not require IRB approval. An outline of the prospective research study was submitted to the IRB at the institution in question on November 29th, and, in turn, was granted exemption from the formal process on December 3rd. The researcher collaborated with the IRB and report office to generate a report regarding retention and persistence percentages. The request was initiated via e-mail, and the report was sent electronically to this researcher.

### **Instruments**

The First Year Experience program had several points of assessment. The instruments were created by the facilitator of the program to assess specific learning outcomes set forth in creation of the intervention. This researcher was not provided information regarding the process by which these instruments were created, but is aware that they were self-created by the developer of the First Year Experience program at the college where the intervention was conducted.

A pre-assessment, given on the first day of seminar (Appendix A), consisted of open-ended, yes-and-no, and check-box questions. The pre-assessment was designed to gather information regarding student class schedules, anticipated grades earned, whether or not students

felt academically prepared for the semester, if students had necessary textbooks, a planner, access to their college e-mail address, and if students were experiencing any transitional difficulties. Students were also asked to select as many areas of concern out of 18 potential topics they were experiencing at the time of assessment. Finally, the instrument asked students to indicate areas of interest outside of school, and each student's career goals.

A midterm evaluation given at the start of week five (Appendix B) comprised of open-ended questions. These questions aimed to identify what components of the workshops students liked best, if there were areas the workshops could improve, and what could the instructor change in his or her facilitation efforts. This instrument was used to tailor workshops for the remainder of the students to meet the needs of the students participating in the FYE program.

A student satisfaction survey (Appendix C) utilized open-ended, check-box and Likert scale questions to assess students' overall experience with the workshops. Students were asked to indicate the campus at which they participated in the FYE program, would they recommend the workshops to other students and their reasoning for their selection. Students were also asked to indicate strengths of the program and what they thought could be done to improve the overall quality of the program. Finally, students were asked to assess their level of agreement on their abilities to be self-sufficient, identify issues regarding academic and personal concerns, and resolve any future barriers to success. This was administered to students on the last day of class.

A final essay (Appendix D) administered during the final meeting. This essay asked students to provide advice to incoming first-time students, while reflecting on topics that were covered during the First Year Experience workshops. The themes that emerged from these essays were used in comparison with the areas of concern that were indicated in the pre-assessment.

## **Measurements**

This researcher gathered general demographic information, including age, gender, and whether individuals were first-time first-semester students, from the campus database system and organized into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. This information was analyzed by counting frequencies and determining the percent of the total for each category. Persistence and retention for first-time first-semester students were also determined from this gathering of information. This researcher determined if students had enrolled in classes the semester following their involvement in the FYE program, an indicator of persistence. This researcher also assessed to see which students involved in the spring 2015 cohort had been retained to the fall 2016 semester. This researcher looked at the percent of the total number of students to determine these values.

Pre-assessment results were input to Campus Labs, an online descriptive statistical analysis software. This researcher analyzed nominal data by examining the percent of the total responses. Specifically, the researcher focused on questions pertaining to student self-reporting of preparedness, transitional difficulties and areas of concern for the coming semester.

The mid-term evaluation and student satisfaction were not included in this researcher's data analysis. This researcher chose to use the pre-assessment as a "pre-test" to reflect on the areas of concern and levels of preparedness of students. The final essays were used as the "post-test," where students indicated topics that believe would be of importance to incoming students. The general topics of advice that students indicated in the final essay were compared to the topics students indicated as concerning in the pre-assessment.

This researcher utilized cluster coding as the initial coding process of the final essays, assigning a code for every two lines. All codes were transferred to blank paper, where focused coding occurred and codes were grouped into concepts. Concepts were placed into one of five subcategories; two of which stood alone and became their own independent themes, while three

fell into a larger theme. This coding process was completed by hand, using paper, pen and colors to categorize concepts into subcategories and themes.

**Data management.** All instruments were administered as paper copies during the program. These completed instruments were given to this researcher for data analysis. Photocopies were made of the essays, so that originals would remain untouched. During the data analysis process, all originals were kept securely locked in a file cabinet on campus. The photocopies were kept in the same cabinet and were destroyed upon completion of data analysis. The Excel spreadsheet was locked and permanently deleted after analysis. Finally, the information input to Campus Labs, can only be accessed by this researcher and a member of the IRB, who acted as the project manager. This information was only accessible by having this researcher's username and password.

### **First Year Experience Program Outline**

The First Year Experience program is as a ten-week intervention facilitated with students in developmental reading comprehension courses. The individual facilitating the intervention is the Dean of Students, who is one of the individuals on campus responsible for developing, implementing and assessing retention practices. The FYE course objectives are as follows:

- Inform new students of college expectations;
- Provide entry level students with "College Knowledge";
- Acclimate students to the college environment;
- Supply students with information about potential degree options and career choice.
- Build student relationships with peers, faculty, and staff.
- Develop educational plans with every student.
- Help students to maximize their strengths and maximize self-efficacy.

- Expand student's knowledge base in financial literacy.
- Improve student's computer literacy skills.
- Increase collaboration between Academic and Student Affairs.
- Increase student persistence, retention, and graduation rates.

Students were introduced to the FYE program during the second week of classes, after the period to freely add and drop classes expired. The facilitator had students complete a pre-assessment to gather information regarding classes, feelings of academic readiness, and future goals, as initial indicators of students' sense of belonging and academic preparedness.

The interventions were given on a weekly basis, focusing on an array of topics:

- College expectations, overview of college services;
- Career planning and exploration, overview of degree and certificate programs;
- Financial literacy;
- Time management, goal setting, study skills and test taking strategies;
- Persistence and motivation;
- Identifying learning styles;
- Diversity, wellness, stress management and nutrition;
- Computer literacy;
- Group work, communication skill development, social media etiquette; and
- Leadership development

### **Results**

As previously indicated, retention refers to students who successfully complete one full academic year and remain enrolled to start a third semester (Arnold, 1999). With an overall

institutional retention rate of 54.5%, Table 1 results indicated that spring 2015 FYE students had lower retention rates than the general college population.

At the time of analysis, members of the fall 2015 cohort were enrolled in their second semester. Therefore, the researcher was only able to determine persistence rates, or the number of students who enrolled in classes the semester following their experience in the FYE program. This researcher acknowledged that students were more likely to persist from fall-to-spring than spring-to-fall. The institution did not provide average rates of persistence of their overall population. Therefore, no comparison could be completed to assess the impact of this program on persistence.

**Table 1.** Student Persistence and Retention Rates

	Total students	First Time Students	Persistence	Retention
Spring Semester	57	30	18 (60%)	12 (40%)
Fall Semester	68	59	42 (71%)	n/a
Total	125	89	60	12

49 of first-time first semester students were between 18 and 24, while 11 were 25 or older. There were 31 students with a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or higher, 16 identifying as male and 15 identifying as female. 29 participants had a GPA of less than 2.0, 15 identifying as male and 14 identifying as female. Of the eligible first-time first-semester students, 12 students were retained. Six identified as male, six identified as female. Eight of these students had a GPA of 2.0 or higher, while four were under a 2.0.

### **Pre-assessment Results**

56 students completed the pre-assessment across both cohorts involved in the FYE program. The researcher chose to examine questions pertaining to academic preparedness, transitional issues and areas of concern. To see details about these questions, refer to Appendix

A. There were a total of five questions that the researcher viewed as being representative of these three topics.

Students were asked to indicate their feelings of academic preparedness entering into the first semester of college. Table \_\_\_\_\_ demonstrates that of the 56 students, 47 indicated a positive affirmation of feeling prepared for the academic component of college. Five students did not feel prepared, and five did not answer. There was no indication as to why these students felt unprepared academically.

**Table 2.** Students' Feelings of Academic Preparedness

Response	Percentage of Total Responses	<i>N</i>
Yes	90.38%	47
No	9.62%	5
No response	N/A	5

This researcher believed that the figures found in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 reflected student preparedness. Students having the appropriate supplies indicated that the student is aware of the necessary materials to be successful in college, including textbooks and a planner. Overall, two-thirds of students indicated having their textbooks prior to the start of the semester. The remaining students noted that the reasoning for not having textbooks was directly related to not having funding. Students acknowledged a lack of financial aid, or that their funds had not yet processed due to late registration for financial aid. The figures for students that had a planner were similar. However, there were no other options for students to indicate other methods of organization (e.g. online calendar, mobile organization apps).

**Table 3.1.** Students who have purchased textbooks from bookstore

Response	Percentage of Total Responses	<i>N</i>
Yes	66.67%	36
No	33.33%	18
No response	N/A	2

**Table 3.2.** Students Who Have a Planner

Response	Percentage of Total Responses	<i>N</i>
Yes	63.64%	35
No	36.36%	20
No response	N/A	1

Table 4 represents the number of students that identified having transitional difficulties.

The pre-assessment results reflected that the majority of students were not experiencing hardship at the start of the semester. There was a space on the assessment to indicate why students had been experiencing transitional difficulties, and no two answers reflected on the same issue. Students identified topics including course load concerns, not having appropriate materials, time management, classroom participation, and a lack of consideration from professors regarding personal needs. This variance in response should be noted, as it demonstrated that student issues vary greatly, not only in topic, but in what students considered to be transitional difficulties.

**Table 4.** Students Reporting Having Transitional Difficulties

Response	Percentage of Total Responses	<i>N</i>
Yes	10.91%	6
No	89.09%	49
No response	N/A	1

Although students expressed overall experiences of preparedness, Table 5 lists potential areas of concern that students selected from a list of topics. Students were asked to indicate as many potential barriers to success from a list of 18, which can also be found in Appendix A. Overall results indicated students were most concerned about hard skills relating to academic success. Non-academic skills and topics pertaining to interpersonal relationship with family or college personnel were selected less frequently. These responses

demonstrated that initial concerns for first-time students related to the change in the responsibilities related to the role of being a student.

**Table 5.** Student Reported Topics of Concern

Topic	Count	Respondent %	Response %
Study Skills	22	50.00%	16.67%
Time Management	19	43.18%	14.39%
Test Anxiety	15	34.09%	11.36%
Procrastination	12	27.27%	9.09%
Choosing a major	8	18.18%	6.06%
Motivation	8	18.18%	6.06%
Career decisions	7	15.91%	5.30%
Attendance in class	7	15.91%	5.30%
Reading	7	15.91%	5.30%
Comprehension	7	15.91%	5.30%
Transfer college	6	13.64%	4.55%
Transportation	5	11.36%	3.79%
Work too many hours	4	9.09%	3.03%
First generation college student	3	6.82%	2.27%
Goal setting	3	6.82%	2.27%
Professor problems	3	6.82%	2.27%
Homesickness	1	2.27%	0.76%
Transitioning to college	1	2.27%	0.76%
Roommate problems	1	2.27%	0.76%

### Qualitative Analysis

Three general themes emerged: transition to college, self-identity, and connection. Three subcategories were identified in the “transition to college” theme: coping with change, asking for help and academic skills. Insights from the student essays were shared in support of the themes.

**Transition to college.** Participants had been asked to provide advice to incoming students. Overall, students identified an array of topics, most of which resembled words of encouragement. Several categories emerged during the coding and analysis process, with three

that appeared to fit under the category of transition to college. One student stated that “being a new student can be a little nerve racking but after a few weeks things will start to get better.”

Another student acknowledged the difference between high school and college, indicating the change as “a very stressful experience.” She indicated that “doing tasks like applying for financial aid, student loans and other things a college student needs to be successful, may leave a person feeling overwhelmed.”

*Asking for help.* The most prevalent piece of advice that FYE students provided in their essays was the concept of asking for help. More specifically, students noted several different considerations regarding asking for help. Several students stated the importance of knowing who to ask for help and where to go for what concerns. One student indicated that she would “take advantage of all the resources provided.” Another student provided specific recommendations for situations she experienced: “Your academic advisor can help you figure out what you need for you major or if you’re transferring...if you are overwhelmed there is counseling that can help you out as well.”

One student in particular gave a detailed overview of asking for help, including where to go for what issue and highlighted the level of assistance he believed students received: “There are outstanding academic advisors trained to help you achieve goals. Regardless if you take classes at the city, north or south campus, there is always a student services department, willing to help...if you know what career path you’re interested in, talk to the department heads.” One final student was passionate and inspiring through his essay, as he discussed the struggle of overcoming adversity. “First of all, do not to be afraid to ask for help,” he stated. “Nobody is perfect; do not be scared to ask for help.” He provided this example: “if you do not like your

program or the courses you are in, ask to see an advisor, express what your problem is and you will be guided to the best option for you.”

One final cluster of students cited the importance of knowing requirements. Specifically, students indicated the importance of understanding requirements of their respective degree programs, financial aid processes, and the financial realities of attending college. One student succinctly explained the process of financial aid and the requirements for maintaining support: “[Having financial aid] gives you the opportunity to follow your dreams and get an education when you may not be able to afford it...students must have [minimum] six credits and must maintain satisfactory academic progress, which means that you must pass and have a 2.0 GPA by the second semester.” Students mentioned “completing your FAFSA on time in order to get money to pay for books” as a big deterrent for success and not “getting your check and not showing up to class because you eventually have to pay that money back” as some financial realities associated with community college.

*Academic skills.* Students stressed the importance of academics throughout their responses. Although academics were mentioned in every essay, students highlighted different approaches to handling academic responsibilities. The most common academic skill that students offered was being prepared. One student who focused his discussion on preparedness included ideas such as “being on time to class, having assignments completed to hand in...this can be the difference between pass or fail in classes.”

The next most prevalent topic related to academic success was the idea of managing time and responsibilities, and prioritization. Most students stressed the importance of time management and the potential impact on success. One student believed “time management is important for college because if you can’t you can fall behind.” He also stated that “studying can

vary depending on how much you work, but if you let work intervene with your studying time it will reflect on your grade.” Students also indicated the importance of coming to class. One student stated “there is so much information in one day in a classroom...however, if [missing class] becomes a habit it is very hard to catch up...which can and will affect your grade.”

A final topic that was mentioned by several students is the understanding of individual learning styles. “Learning preferences are very important...because they have nothing to do with skill ability or intelligence,” said one student. He continued by stating “by understanding your learning preference, you can improve the overall effectiveness of the time that you will spend studying.”

*Coping with change.* This final subcategory was vastly represented in some way throughout all essays. Coinciding with the first general theme of transition, students stressed finding ways to adapt to the changes they face upon entering college for the first time. Students identified the start of the first semester as difficult, overwhelming and hectic. One student stated, “I was so overwhelmed when I first started and did not know what to expect.” Another student said “everything was hectic when you start your first semester of college...don’t beat yourself down and take everything one step at a time.” A third opened his essay by stating he hoped his advice “would help to make the semester smoother and an enjoyable experience rather than a scary and lonely one.”

In order to cope with the transition, students recommended remaining optimistic and setting attainable goals as a way to balance and manage priorities. One student noted the importance of “keeping a positive attitude” and “not losing sight of your main focus of why you came to college.” Students also talked about persevering, with ten students using the phrase “don’t give up!” as their concluding pieces of advice.

**Self-Identity.** Many students mentioned the things they learned about themselves as a result of attending college for the first time. Some highlighted the importance of self-awareness relating to things like choosing a degree program or future career, understanding personal styles of learning, or recognizing sources of motivation. One student cited the FYE program as an excellent tool in self-discovery, as the workshops helped him “define his purpose in college.” Another student stated that “entering college allowed him the opportunity to challenge himself to become a doctor because he became open to change and new ideas.” A third student, whose essay focused on the idea of challenging stereotypes and forming realistic perceptions of life after high school recommended “re-evaluating their previous perceptions of college life” and “quickly understanding the realities of the college student lifestyle.” Finally students mentioned topics like self-care, self-confidence and optimism. Several students shared the phrase “have faith in yourself, your abilities and that you can achieve your goals.”

**Connections.** The final theme encompasses students’ perceptions of the importance of collaboration, communication and social support. The concept of communication relates to the subtheme of asking for help, but students often indicated communication as an important trait by itself. One student stated that “being the first one to communicate with someone has its plus sides because others may be shy...[but] getting out of your former shell is important in growing up.” One student stated that he believed developing his communication skills “made him a better leader, which boosted and enhanced his self-confidence.”

Collaboration was noted as being an important component of academic success, in terms of working on group projects and to study, while also being essential in self-development. One student stated that his time in the FYE program “helped him to understand that working together with different people with different ideas is a great way to better his way of thinking and change

the way he sees the world.” Students also noted that learning collaboration will also carry over to future jobs and other areas of life.

Social support was the final cluster of advice that emerged. Students stated that social support in terms of classmates, friends, and family are important, but also recommended having a teacher, faculty, staff or mentor to support them while in college. One student stated that “having peers in classes you take in case you miss a class and need to get notes, or someone to study with to share ideas is helpful.” Another student identified college as “a nice time to make new friends.” Furthermore, another student identified that the college holistically supports the needs of students by saying that “the college cares about their students and their personal well-being as well as their academic success.” Finally, a student identified the importance of the FYE program in “helping students network with faculty, staff and students to feel welcome, encouraged and as though each student can reach his or her goals.”

Overall, this researcher found the student responses to be insightful and well-discussed. It is evident that the students enrolled in this program had the ability to be open and transparent regarding their experiences during their first semester of college, and demonstrated a willingness to assist future students in the process of transitioning. The following section will expand on the findings of this study and discuss the relevance of the results to the research question, this researcher’s hypothesis, and the future implications for research and practice.

### **Discussion**

Examination of the results of this study aimed to evaluate the impact of enrollment in a First Year Experience program on student retention rates. The results of this study suggest that this program produced no significant effect on student retention and persistence rates. In comparison to the overall institutional retention rate at 54.5%, first-time first semester students in

the spring 2015 cohort were retained at a lower rate of 40%. These results indicated that students enrolled in the First Year Experience program were less likely to be retained to the spring 2016 semester in relation to the general college population. Ultimately, this demonstrated that student enrollment in the FYE program did not attribute to the success of students. However, this researcher cannot assume that enrollment in this program directly led to a decrease in the retention of these students. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no impact of student enrollment in an FYE program relating to student retention and persistence cannot be rejected. It is possible that the students who were retained spring-to-spring did so as a result of enrollment in this program, and without this intervention, these students may not have continued pursuing coursework. In order to develop a better understanding, further research would need to be conducted. Recommendations are included in the future implications section later on in this paper.

Although there is little research regarding national rates of student retention at community college, the National Center for Education Statistics (2015) provided some general information regarding country-wide rates. 60% of first-time, full time students at community colleges were retained from 2012 to 2013. This signified that, on an institutional level, the overall retention rate of students at the college where this specific study was conducted falls below the national average. It should also be noted that retention rates for the students involved in the intervention is even lower than the national average. Windam et al. (2014) indicated that 63.6% of students in their study were more likely to be retained when enrolled in a student success course. However, where previous studies examined retention efforts fall-to-fall, this researcher examined student retention rates of a spring-to-spring cohort. This study in question

cannot be compared to previously conducted interventions, based on the variance in semesters of analysis.

This researcher determined that student persistence was more likely to occur from fall-to-spring than spring-to-fall. 71% of students who began their studies in the fall persisted to the spring semester, where only 60% of students who started coursework in the spring were enrolled the following fall semester. It could be inferred that first-time student entrance to college is more successful in the fall than the spring semester. This could be as a result of the seamless transition from high school to college, where students have less time out of the classroom. Lower spring-to-fall rates could also be influenced by the longer break between semesters as a result of summer vacation. This could be combated by encouraging students who begin studies in the spring to utilize summer courses to stay on track.

#### Pre-assessment

Student responses to questions indicating levels of academic preparedness, transitional issues, and areas of concern indicated that the majority of individuals felt prepared for the coming semester. Porter and Polikoff (2015) acknowledge that definitions of preparedness and readiness greatly vary in the literature. In most cases, prior academic history, including test scores, grades and class rank, had been used for standardized assessment. At times, non-academic factors, including personality, social supports and other non-cognitive qualities were included in the determination of college readiness.

**Academic preparedness.** Research indicates that historically, academic preparedness was determined by students' freshmen year GPA. Based on this information, this researcher noted that measures of academic preparedness were determined only after students had already completed a full academic year. Although this measure of freshman year-end GPA indicates

which students were academically prepared, there are no measures that predicate what characteristics of first-time students indicate future academic success. This lack of predication does not benefit colleges in being able to determine the characteristics of students who will excel academically, and what barriers exist for students who are under-prepared. It should be noted that reasons for under-preparedness or academic success may vary based on the institution, student population or other factors. It is up each individual college to determine the needs of their student body and adequately prepare for and provide services based on these needs. This researcher views it to be essential for college administrators, faculty and staff to anticipate potential areas of difficulty for their first-time students, in order to determine what interventions or options for support should be highlighted for this population.

This researcher utilized pre-assessment results to determine areas of concern indicated by first-time students. As previously stated, 90% of students who completed the initial survey indicated that they felt prepared for the coming semester. Those students who identified as feeling unprepared were unable to specify why they did not feel prepared, or in which areas they felt unequipped with the skills to be successful. However, responses found in Table 5 demonstrate student areas of concern for the coming semester. This researcher understood that although students may not identify as feeling unprepared, they still had ideas about the potential struggles they may face during their first semester. Of the student-reported results, topics pertaining to academics were the most concerning. The top three selections included study skills, time management and test anxiety. This researcher acknowledged these topics may reflect society's perspective of the difficulties of college life, and hearing the experiences of their family members or peers. First-time students may find it difficult to anticipate topics of concern, aside

from factors that may prevent students from successfully completing courses to earn a degree, or struggles that others may have experienced.

**Transitional difficulties.** This researcher noted that one of the topics of least concern from Table 5 was “transitioning to college,” and that the majority of students did not report having any transitional difficulties. Fike and Fike (2008) highlighted that a successful transition to college is a key indicator of student success. This researcher found that students did not specifically identify the concept of transitional difficulties as impediments to academic success, but, as a result of qualitative analysis of student final essays, noted that students provided advice regarding dealing with the transition to being a college student.

Of the six students who reported having transitional difficulties, responses varied greatly. This finding reflects previous research of community college retention practices. Researchers recommend that institutions conduct analyses with students regarding their current needs, and develop interventions to meet the needs of the general student body (Fike & Fike, 2008). In the case of this current study, student responses indicated course load concerns, faculty interactions, classroom difficulties and personal issues as areas of concern. This researcher notes that this is a small sample of students reporting concerns, and there is not a clear definition of what constituted a transitional concern. However, the lack of definition led this researcher to believe that students were more likely to freely express their foremost areas of concern.

### **Qualitative Discussion**

This researcher determined that the forefront piece of advice provided by students in both cohorts through final essays focused on successfully transitioning to college life during the first semester of enrollment. First Year Experience programs at community colleges focus on more basic skills and transition to college, designed to fill skill gaps in their underprepared student

population (Bers & Younger, 2014). It is evident that although these topics are important and areas of concern for some students, there are other points of consideration for students that are much deeper than hard skills like note-taking and study practices. Past research identified successful assimilation as a key component to future student success, stating that students who experience a smooth academic and social transition to college will be more likely to complete their degrees (Mayo, 2013).

In the final essays, students outlined the steps it took for them to make the transition to being a college student. Although not out rightly expressed, students identified concerns related to a “fear of the unknown” as they reflected on their experiences during their first semester, and highlighted steps they took to make changes and seek necessary help. This researcher found this result to be notable because students may find it difficult to recognize future areas of concern when they have no way to anticipate areas where they may struggle. This researcher believed that although students can make predictions based on the experiences of others, there is no substitute for each’s individual’s experience of being a college student.

This researcher sees that there were more specific areas of concern for the students enrolled in this program. It should be noted that these concerns are not strictly related to academic success, in terms of study skills and time management, as were indicated as potential barriers to success in the pre-assessment, but included factors that were not directly related to academics. Students were insightful in identifying the importance of self-awareness in making decisions and persevering through adversity, and acknowledging both the strength and importance of having relationships and connections with faculty, staff, students, peers, family and friends throughout enrollment.

Students expressed encouragement and shared personal experiences of trial and error to reassure perspective students that success is possible, despite the obstacles they may face as they enter college for the first time. The FYE students, in a sense, provided support and resources to incoming students, which they expressed as wishing they had when they first entered college. These results not only indicated the ability these students had to be introspective and critically think about their individual experiences in order to provide feedback to incoming students, but highlighted the importance of being connected to other members of the institution. These social connections are inclusive of peer-to-peer relationships, establishing mentors or support staff as resources, and working to develop a feeling of belonging at the college. This researcher found that this feedback is equally as important for college administration, faculty and support staff, because the topics of self-identity and establishing connections may not be a primary focus when educating perspective students about the trials and tribulations of entering college for the first time.

**Financial literacy.** This researcher also found the concept of financial literacy and understanding the financial commitment of entering into college to be of top priority. Along with being a frequently identified piece of advice in student essays, Table 2 of the results section demonstrated that one third of students were not prepared and equipped with textbooks at the start of the semester, due to a lack of funding or delay in receiving financial assistance. Although this researcher recognizes that the responsibility lies with the students, it is recommended that students be informed and educated at an earlier time. The difficulty with the community college population is that often time students sign up for classes a couple of days before the semester begins, for a multitude of reasons. This researcher understands the restrictions, but hopes that financial obligations become more common knowledge for prospective students in the future.

Overall, this researcher finds it essential for any faculty, staff, instructor or administrators to be aware of these concerns and work to help students in any way possible.

### **Limitations**

There were several limitations in this study. It should be known that this study was conducted at one of three campuses of this community college, selected because of the willingness of one developmental reading comprehension instructor to participate with the FYE program instructor and host the seminars co-currently with her regularly scheduled courses. This poses as a limitation because there are differences in demographics (e.g., race, age, socioeconomic status) across the three campuses. Degree program should also be considered in selecting participants for future students. Students in different programs of study may have different strengths and areas for growth when it comes to academics, leading to these individuals potentially having different initial concerns about college life. In order to strengthen this study, developmental courses should be included from all three campuses and with an array of faculty members.

This is also not representative of all students enrolled in developmental courses, as this was not facilitated with the other subjects with a developmental option, such as writing or mathematics. Students who specifically require reading remediation may be less likely to persist and be retained than students enrolled in mathematics or writing. To enrich this study further, more disciplines should have an FYE program integrated with introductory coursework. The number of faculty instructors should be increased, as having one faculty member who was specifically invested in integrating this FYE program may have contributed to the results of study. She may have included her own recommendations and additions to the program from her

personal perspective. Results may differ if the developmental instructors are not involved in the FYE facilitation, and do not reiterate or encourage the ideas that are expressed in the program.

To determine the true success of this course, future studies should incorporate the use of a control or comparison cohort, where students do not participate in this course, but are compared to the experimental group for persistence and retention rates. This researcher also did not identify other retention practices that were currently instated at the college, and this study could have benefitted from comparing the results of student enrollment in the FYE program to other retention efforts, to determine the most effective retention strategy utilized at the college.

Although attendance was mandatory for students, not every student attended and participated in each workshop or seminar. Therefore, it is possible that students did not receive all information that was presented during each of the workshops. This is not reflected in any of the evaluation tools utilized to assess student progress, so certain students may not have had some information that other students received, and were unable to convey that information in their final essays. It is recommended that future studies find ways to ensure that students receive all information presented throughout the course of the program, including having printed materials for each topic for students.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Future studies should utilize random sampling and include all campuses involved with the institution implementing the First Year Experience program to increase generalizability. This would require more collaboration between FYE facilitators and potential instructors of developmental courses. FYE facilitators could also explore the possibility of conducting a random sample of the entire student population to examine if the FYE program would be effective for the entire college population compared to student enrolled in developmental

coursework. Finally, this researcher recommends exploring the possibility of having peers or former First Year Experience students co-facilitate the seminar. Based on the results of the qualitative analysis, it may be beneficial for incoming students to have a student-mentor as a resource or person of support. The idea of having someone that first-time first-semester students feel they can relate to may influence the success of students participating in the FYE program, where these mentors can first-hand relate their experiences to the new students.

Furthermore, this study would benefit from a longitudinal analysis of retention and persistence rates of students enrolled in developmental coursework from previous years, to compare to the cohorts included in this study. This could determine if the implementation of this FYE program had an increase in student persistence and retention in comparison to previous years with this population. To further enrich the study, students' degree attainment rates could be included. This information would not only examine the impact of an FYE program on persistence and retention, but would indicate if the program increased the likelihood of students graduating compared to the general population.

Based on the results of this study, this researcher recommends that FYE program facilitators work to further develop a curriculum that can be taught by any faculty, staff, administrator or student on campus. The current curriculum is easy to follow and covers basic hard skills pertaining to academic success and understanding college policies, but requires the use of technology for most seminars. More interactive workshops and collaborative activities could be developed to meet the needs of the student body. This researcher believes that identity development and social connection components of college success should not only be included, but be discussed at a deeper level, as a result of the themes found in student essays. Highlighting the importance of these processes may help students assimilate to college life sooner and

smoother so that students can recognize the importance of the process of self-awareness and the impact it has on current and future success, both academically and on a personal level.

### **Implications for College Counselors**

As a college counseling professional, this researcher acknowledges the strengths that individuals in this role have, and how we can utilize these strengths to further enhance student success. The concept of student success is measured differently, with administrators having a different interpretation of student success than students. Ultimately, we as counselors must be self-aware and operate based on our theories of helping our clients – or students – walk through times of struggle and stress. College is a time of transition for students, and it is our role to help support students through the change.

The facilitation of the FYE program may allow counseling professionals to work with students in a non-traditional and potentially less-stigmatized manner. This researcher has found that counseling skills can be utilized in the classroom to foster relationships and encourage personal, emotional and behavioral growth. Although students may still be hesitant to ask for help, several participants in this program identified the Student Support Services Center as a resource for seeking assistance. This researcher assumes that college students are in a period of time where it becomes essential to ask for help. These students may not have ever had options for support in previous settings, whether in high school or the workplace. However, the quantity of students who highlighted the importance of asking for help indicates a shift in acknowledging when issues are evident and that having support, regardless of the issue, is beneficial to future success. Having the dual role of counselor and teacher could potentially lead students to feel more comfortable asking for help, as it is commonplace in the classroom to ask for assistance. There is also potential for students to seek assistance outside of the class, if they feel inclined.

It should be dually noted that we as counselors do have a responsibility to the needs of our employers. This study shines light on the fact that research, program evaluation and assessment are often required of those employed in higher education, and it is our role, as employees of the institution, to be conscientious of the needs of our student population. There may be times where we will be required to develop programming to enhance student success, satisfaction and sense of belonging, and even add to the college's retention practices.

After examining the impact of this First Year Experience program, it is evident that our skill set as counselors can be beneficial in helping students as they transition to college. Active listening, unconditional positive regard, psychoeducation advocacy efforts can assist students in feeling understood and accepted as they begin this new phase of life. Providing continual support, whether in classes or in any role we may find ourselves holding, will consistently benefit our students. With upward mobility in the higher education setting comes more responsibility in terms of enrollment management and other college initiatives, but we must remember to remain student-focused. Continuous evaluation and tailoring of services will be necessary in adapting our efforts to meet the ever-evolving needs of our campuses and student populations.

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Appendix A

First Year Experience Pre-Assessment

ACADEMIC INFORMATION AND CONCERNS			
Today's Date	Month / Day / Year	Office Use Only:	
Name	Last	First	MI
Student ID		Semester	
FIRST SEMESTER COURSE INFORMATION SECTION			
List the courses that you are currently enrolled in:		Circle your goal grade for each	
		A	B C D F
		A	B C D F
		A	B C D F
		A	B C D F
		A	B C D F
Please answer the following questions:			
Of the above courses, which one are you the <b>most</b> concerned with?			
Which one are you the <b>least</b> concerned with?			
Do you feel academically prepared for the semester ahead?			
Have you been to the bookstore and purchased textbooks that you are required to have for your classes? Yes / No (Circle One) If no, why not?			
Do you have a planner for your class assignments and important due dates? Yes / No (Circle One)			
Are you aware that you have an <u>insert college</u> Email address? Yes / No (Circle One)			
Have you activated your student Email address? Yes / No (Circle One)			
Your Email address will be your main mode of communication from Instructors, administrative departments; such as Admissions, Financial Aid, Registrar and Bursar so it is important that you <b>activate and use your assigned college name Email</b> .			

Have you been experiencing any transitional difficulties (scheduling, course load, assignment due dates, participation in class, etc., since you began college? Yes / No (Circle One)

If yes, what?

**Please answer the following questions:**

Aside from your coursework, what other activities (sports, clubs, social activities, family responsibilities, job, etc.) occupy your time?


What are your career goals?


Please check off any of the following topics that you are concerned about for the upcoming semester.

- |                          |                   |                          |                                  |
|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Homesickness      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Study Skills                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Transportation    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Transitioning to College         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Roommate problems | <input type="checkbox"/> | Professor Problems               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Motivation        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Attendance in Class              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Procrastination   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Career Decisions                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Time Management   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Goal Setting                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Test Anxiety      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Reading Comprehension            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Transfer College  | <input type="checkbox"/> | First Generation College Student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Choosing a major  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Work too many hours              |

Do you have any other concerns or questions at this point in time that you would like to address?


Appendix B

<b>FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE MID TERM EVALUATION</b>			
<b>Today's Date</b>	Month / Date / Year		
<b>Name</b>	Last:	First	MI
<b>PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:</b>			
<b>What I like best about the workshops are:</b>			
<b>The part of the workshops that could use improvement are:</b>			
<b>If I could suggest one thing to <u>insert instructor name</u> to improve the instruction in this workshop, it would be:</b>			



Appendix C

FYE Seminar Satisfaction Survey

Your time is valuable and we appreciate your assistance by completing this survey. Your response will be used to help assess the quality of the FYE seminar and to further improve the seminar for future students.

1. At what campus did you attend the FYE seminar?

- North
- South
- City

2. What would you say are the seminar's major strengths or best features?

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3. What could be done to improve the overall quality of the seminar?

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4. Would you recommend this seminar to other students?

- Definitely
- Probably
- Not sure
- Probably not

Why/Why not?

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5. Are there any faculty members who have significantly impacted your insert college name experience in a positive way?  **Yes** (Please explain how they impacted your \_\_\_ experience)

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**No**

6. Did you feel that the seminar’s length was:

- Too long
- Just right
- Not long enough

7. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

**As a result of taking this seminar . . .**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel more self-sufficient.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am able to articulate my personal and academic goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can explain why college is important for my future plans.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know how and when to connect with campus resources (Academic Skills Center, Student Support Service Centers).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have strategies to prioritize tasks in order of importance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am able to identify potential barriers in my life that could interfere with my success, along with a plan to counteract it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding the course itself:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The seminar encouraged me to express my thoughts and feelings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The course provided me with accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

information about  
what I need to  
succeed.

The course allowed  
me the opportunity to  
participate in  
classroom  
discussions and  
entertain differing  
points of view.