The Trusted Expert and Internationally Recognized Leader
for all Postsecondary Student Transitions
National Research and Trends on The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition

Jennifer R. Keup
Director, National Resource Center
Overview

• Talk a bit about:
  – Definitional parameters
  – Background of FYE, SIT, & National Resource Center
  – National Research and Trends
  – Current challenges & looking ahead

• Data Sources from the National Resource Center
  – 2012-2013 National Survey of First-Year Seminars
  – 2011 National Survey of Senior Capstone Experiences
  – 2008 National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives
  – *Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*

• Other data (JNGI, AAC&U, CERI, & ACT)
Introduction

DEFINITIONS AND BACKGROUND
Let’s be sure to begin at the beginning...
Before we get too far down the path...

- When does “the first-year experience” begin?
- Our answer is complicated by the highly integrated nature of the educational system.
  - Early outreach
  - Community relationships
  - Transfer students (lateral, reverse, “swirling”)
  - Dual enrollment programs
  - Admissions
• What do we mean when we say “first-year experience”?
  – Comprehensive
  – Intentional
  – Integrated
  – Flexible
  – Systemic
  – Organizationally horizontal
  – Student centered
FYE: A Working Definition

“The first-year experience is not a single program or initiative, but rather an intentional combination of academic and co-curricular efforts within and across postsecondary institutions.”

(Koch & Gardner, 2006)
“Students in Transition?”

**Macro**
- High school to college (FYE)
- Sophomore year
- Transfer
- Senior-year/transition out of college into:
  - Careers
  - Graduate school

**Micro**
- Major change
- Study abroad/study away
- Shifts in interpersonal relationships

Stages of:
- Skill development
- Identity
FYE&SIT: Foundations and Beginnings

• Student activism and a riot at the University of South Carolina in Spring 1970
• University 101 was created by President Thomas Jones
• Strong social justice undertones
• Teach students to “love” the university
FYE&SIT: A History

1997: Senior Year Experience listserv (SYE-List) established

1999: Transfer Year Experience listserv (TYE-List) established
Center founder, John Gardner, retires and named Senior Fellow
Stuart Hunter becomes the second Director of the National Resource Center

1995: First National Conference on Students in Transition
Assisted Queensland University of Technology in launching Pacific Rim Conference on the First Year in Higher Education

1998: Center name changes to National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition

2000: First Year Assessment listserv (FYA-list) established

2001: Joint international conference held with Pacific Rim Conference on the First Year in Higher Education

2004: Sophomore Year listserv (SOPH-List) established

2006: 25th Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience

2003: Launch of an electronic newsletter, E-Source for College Transitions

2005: Establishment of Paul P. Fidler Research Grant
First National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives conducted
FYE&SIT: A History

2008: 2nd National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives conducted
Jennifer R. Keup becomes the third Director of the National Resource Center
National Resource Center receives 2008 ASHE Special Merit Award

2007: Annual First-Year Experience Conference
Undergraduate Student Fellowships established
Stuart Hunter named Executive Director of University 101 Programs and the National Resource Center

2009: Graduate Student Transitions listserv (GRAD-List) established
Helping Sophomores Succeed: Understanding and Improving the Second-Year Experience published with Jossey-Bass
Launch of The Toolbox, an online professional development newsletter

2010: Launch of online courses
National Award for Excellence in Teaching First-Year Seminars established
National Resource Center awarded a Spencer grant to study the impact of first-year seminars on student outcomes

2012: 25th International Conference on The First-Year Experience
Administration of the 9th National Survey of First-Year Seminars
Release of the five-volume book series, The First-Year Seminar: Designing, Implementing, and Assessing Courses to Support Student Learning and Success

2011: 30th Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience

2013: Administration of the 2nd National Survey of Peer Leaders
25th Volume of the Journal of the First-Year Experience & Student in Transition published

www.sc.edu/fye
National Resource Center: Mission

“Building upon its history of excellence as the founder and leader of the first-year experience movement, the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition serves education professionals by supporting and advancing efforts to improve student learning and transitions into and through higher education.”
National Resource Center: Core Commitments

• The importance of student transitions
• Connection between research and practice
• Inclusion
• Collaboration
• Lifelong learning
National Resource Center: Areas of Activity

- Conferences & Continuing Education
  - Conferences
  - Institutes
  - Online courses

- Publications
  - Scholarly practice books
  - *Journal of The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*
  - Research Reports
  - Guides
National Resource Center:

Areas of Activity

• Research, Grants, & Assessment
  – Clearinghouse
  – Original research
  – Grants

• Online resources
  – Listservs
  – Social media
  – Interactive databases
TODAY’S COLLEGE STUDENTS
What are words you would use to describe today’s college students?
The Millennials

Youth entitled
Spoiled
Young
Lucky
Selfish
Techsavvy
Lazy
Future
Learn
time
New
generation
Unemployment
Disrespectful
Children

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCES AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

www.sc.edu/fye
Beloit College Mindset

• “They are the sharing generation, having shown tendencies to share everything.”
• “Having a ‘chat’ has seldom involved talking.”
• “Thanks to Megan’s Law and Amber Alerts, parents have always had community support in keeping children safe.”
• “With GPS, they have never needed directions to get someplace, just an address.”
• “They have never really needed to go to their friend’s house so they could study together.”
• Their parents’ car CD player is so embarrassing.”
Legacy of “No Child Left Behind”

• Students arrive to HS with little instruction in subjects that aren’t tested

• “Most tests being used consist primarily or solely of multiple choice items.” Thus students arriving in HS lack “experience and knowledge about how to do the kinds of writing that are expected at higher levels of education.”

• Grading rubrics are often concerned with content and not argument, which “works against development of the kinds of writing that would be expected in a true college-level course.”
Not as Homogeneous as this Suggests

• Adult learners
• Veterans
• Transfers and “swirlers”
• Diversity along race, ethnicity, national origin, and first-language
• Working and financially needy students
• Physical, emotional, and learning ability levels
• Gender balance
• Academic preparation
• Others?
Food for Thought

• “Educators need to identify how their programs, policies, and pedagogies capitalize on the multiple perspectives that...college students bring with them—perspectives that contribute to the total campus environment.” (Keup, 2008)

• Balance between acknowledging the individual student and forging a community culture

• How to remain flexible for personality profile of the next generation
BOOK SERIES ON SPECIAL POPULATIONS

The National Resource Center is currently accepting proposals for book-length manuscripts examining the transition experiences of college student populations that have been historically underserved or given limited consideration in the design of higher education contexts. Each volume will explore the experiences of a specific population in depth and draw on the theoretical, research, and practice literature to critically examine some of the fundamental assumptions underlying student success initiatives in higher education with an eye toward reshaping campus culture, policies, and practices to support the learning and development of the population under study.
National Research & Trends

RETENTION AGENDA
National First-to-Second-Year Retention Rates at Four-Year Colleges

Completion rates for 2-year colleges
High (1989): 44.0%
Low (2010): 28.3%
And yet, we are still invested...

- The word “retention” was found 95 times in the program for the 32nd Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience
  - 59 times in the program for the 25th Annual International Conference on the First-Year Experience

- Metric that is required for reporting

- Goal to “increase the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60% by the year 2025” –Lumina Foundation

- Income and employment options are directly related to level of education
# Common Goal of Undergraduate Initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal of “improved retention/graduation rates”</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-year seminars</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early alert warning systems</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning communities</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge programs</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate research</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service-learning</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Retention was not the primary purpose for the renaissance of the first-year seminar and other student success initiatives for the first year.
Persistence

- Persistence: [verb] “to continue steadfastly or firmly in some state, purpose, course of action, or the like, especially in spite of opposition, remonstrance, etc.”

- Questions:
  - Should this be the primary goal?
  - Does this actually measure progress?
  - Does it actually limit the scope of our thinking and work with the FYE&SIT?
  - Does it have a “shelf-life”?
Beyond Retention: Theory

“While many [theories] have seen the role of first-year and transition programs as solely focused on retaining the student, these programs should have a greater influence on setting the tone for what it means to be an educated individual and the responsibilities that come with gaining a postsecondary education.”

(Torres & LePeau, 2013)
Beyond Retention: Methods

“Student persistence, or retention to the sophomore year, and academic achievement...are common measures [and] are of great importance as metrics for student success [but] learning outcomes desirable for all college students, such as written and oral communication, information literacy, problem solving, civic engagement, and intercultural and global understanding are also worthy of study.”

(Kinzie, 2013)
Beyond Retention: Practice

“The almost singular focus on retention and graduation rates as...student success is inadequate, [there must be] a revised definition grounded in student learning outcomes.”

“Definitions of student success must include not only retention and graduation rates, but also a wide range of student learning and developmental outcomes.”

(Reason & Gansemer-Topf, 2013)
National Research and Trends

STUDENT OUTCOMES
“Excuse me,” said Alice, “how do I get out of here?”

“That depends a great deal on where you want to end up” said the cat.

“I don’t care where I end up,” said Alice, “I just want out!”

“Well,” said the cat, “if it doesn’t matter where you end up, it doesn’t matter which road you take.”

Carroll, 1865
21st Century: Learning Outcomes

- Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world
- Intellectual and practical skills
- Personal and social responsibility
- Integrative learning
Metacompetencies for Employability

• Build & sustain working professional relationships
• Analyze, evaluate, and interpret data from various sources
• Engage in continuous learning
• Oral communication and persuasion
• Project planning and management

Gardner, 2009
Metacompentencies for Employability

- Ability to create new knowledge
- Understand the impact of company practices in a global setting
- Build a successful team
- Coach, mentor, & develop others
- Initiative

Gardner, 2010
Domains for FYE Outcomes

• Retention
• Academic skills/experiences
• Campus connection
• Interpersonal skills
• Personal development
• Civic engagement/democratic citizenship
• Employability
Examples of FYE Outcomes

• Retention
  – Persistence to the second year
  – Graduation rates

• Academic skills/experiences
  – Analytical & critical thinking skills
  – Development of educational career goals
  – Declaring a major
  – Knowledge integration & application
  – Academic engagement
  – Academic achievement
  – Cognitive complexity
  – Study skills
  – Introduction to a discipline

• Campus connection
  – Knowledge of university requirements
  – Ability to identify, seek, & use organizational resources
  – Connection to campus community
  – Understanding history & traditions
  – Involvement in cocurricular activities
  – Satisfaction with student experience

• Interpersonal skills
  – Conflict resolution
  – Written & oral communication skills
  – Development of a social support network
  – Multicultural competence
Examples of FYE Outcomes

• Personal development
  – Time management
  – Identity exploration & development
  – Values clarification
  – Practical competence
  – Life management skills
  – Physical health
  – Emotional wellness
  – Moral and ethical development
  – Leadership skills

• Civic engagement/democratic citizenship
  – Participation in service
  – Engagement in philanthropy
  – Political awareness/engagement
  – Political activism/social advocacy
  – Community involvement

• Employability
  – Analyzing a problem from various sources
  – Innovation and creation of new knowledge
  – Providing direction through interpersonal persuasion
  – Ability to integrate ideas and information
  – Applying knowledge to a real-world setting
  – Ability to coach and mentor others
  – Project planning and management
  – Engage in continuous learning
  – Desireability as a candidate
  – Initiative
  – Ethical decision-making
  – Professionalism
  – Ability to build a team

• Others?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives for First-Year Seminars</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop a connection with the institution</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide orientation to campus resources &amp; services</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop academic skills</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop critical thinking skills</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create common first-year experience</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop study skills</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-exploration or personal development</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop support network or friendships</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve second-year return rates</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase student-faculty interaction</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop writing skills</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives for Senior Capstones</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking/analytical skills</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to conduct research</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career preparation</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency written communication</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to perform independently</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation of the discipline</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency oral communication</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>