High-Impact Educational Practices

Strategies for Achieving 21st Century Learning Outcomes

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March 29, 2011

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Purpose

To examine the structure and goals of high-impact activities on American college campuses and discuss their alignment with new century learning outcomes

• First-year seminars

• Sophomore-year initiatives

• Peer leadership experiences

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New Century Learning Outcomes

- Knowledge of human cultures & physical and natural world
- Intellectual and practical skills
- Personal and social responsibility
- Integrative learning

(AAC&U, 2007, *College Learning for the New Global Century*)

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High-Impact Educational Activities

- Time on task
- Quality of student effort
- Formal & informal interactions with faculty and peers
- Authentic learning tasks
- Exposure to diverse perspectives
- Frequent feedback

(Kuh, 2008, *High-Impact Educational Practices*)

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High-Impact Educational Activities

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- Common intellectual experiences
- Undergraduate research
- Thematic learning communities
- First-year seminars
- Capstone courses

- Writing/skills-intensive courses
- Internships
- Collaborative learning experiences
- Service/community-based learning

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National Survey of First-Year Seminars

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- Administered triennially since 1988
- Methodology for 2009 administration
  - Administration: Oct. 30 – Dec. 18, 2009
  - Invitation sent to 3,225 institutions in 3 waves:
    - Chief Academic Officer
    - Chief Executive Officer
    - Chief Student Affairs Officer
  - Incentive program
  - 1,028 usable responses (32% response rate)

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Participants

Respondents Offering a First-Year Seminar (*N* = 890)

Institution Type	Number	Percentage
Two-year	235	26.4
Four-year	655	73.6
Public	464	52.1
Private, not-for-profit	426	47.9

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Participants

Respondents Offering a First-Year Seminar (*N* = 890)

Size of First-Year Class	Number	Percentage
< 500	305	34.3
501 – 1,000	210	23.6
1,001 – 2,000	177	19.9
2,001 – 3,000	74	8.3
3,001 – 4,000	54	6.1
> 4,000	70	7.9

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What Is a First-Year Seminar?

A course designed to "assist students in their academic and social development and in their transition to college. A seminar, by definition, is a small discussion-based course in which students and their instructors exchange ideas and information. In most cases, there is a strong emphasis on creating community in the classroom." (Hunter & Linder, 2005, pp. 275-276).

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Types of Seminars Across All Institutions

	All Seminars	Primary Type
Extended orientation (EO)	61.7%	41.4%
Academic w/common content (ACC)	25.8%	16.1%
Academic w/variable content (AVC)	23.4%	15.4%
Basic study skills (BSS)	22.4%	4.9%
Pre-professional (PRE)	14.4%	3.7%
Hybrid	22.4%	15.3%
Other	2.5%	3.5%

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Primary Seminar by Institutional Type

	Two-Year	Four-Year	Public	Private
EO	52.0%	37.2%	49.9%	31.6%
ACC	14.8%	16.6%	13.6%	18.8%
AVC	2.7%	**19.9%**	9.4%	**21.9%**
Basic	13.0%	2.0%	7.8%	1.4%
Prof.	1.8%	4.4%	4.3%	3.1%
Hybrid	11.7%	16.6%	11.4&	19.5%
Other	4.0%	3.3%	3.6%	3.4%

$p < 0.01$

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Top 5 Seminar Goals

Most Important Course Goals	EO	ACC	AVC
Develop academic skills	45.5%	67.6%	**66.2%**
Develop a connection w/ institution	59.9%	45.3%	**39.9%**
Orient to campus resources	65.3%	38.1%	**13.5%**
Encourage self-exploration/ personal development	31.1%	38.1%	**12.8%**
Create common first-year experience	22.9%	30.9%	**24.8%**

$p < 0.01$

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Top Seminar Goals--AVC

Most Important Course Goals	EO	ACC	AVC
Develop academic skills	22.9%	67.6%	**66.2%**
Develop a connection w/ institution	59.9%	45.3%	**39.9%**
Increase student/faculty interaction	13.0%	13.7%	**39.9%**
Develop writing skills	3.1%	19.4%	**37.6%**
Create common first-year experience	22.9%	30.9%	**24.8%**

p < 0.01

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Top 5 Course Topics

Most Important Course Topics	EO	ACC	AVC
Campus resources	61.3%	31.7%	**13.5%**
Study skills	46.3%	40.3%	**15.0%**
Academic planning/advising	46.0%	29.5%	**17.3%**
Critical thinking	16.4%	51.8%	**77.4%**
Time management	37.3%	21.6%	**6.8%**

p < 0.01

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Top Course Topics--AVC

Most Important Course Topics	EO	ACC	AVC
Critical thinking	16.4%	51.8%	**77.4%**
Specific disciplinary topic	1.4%	9.4%	**52.6%**
Writing skills	5.1%	28.8%	**52.6%**

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Course Practices

Practice	EO	ACC	AVC
Service-learning	33.4%	41.0%	55.7%
Learning-community	39.5%	33.8%	32.1%
Writing-intensive			
Important goal	3.1%	19.4%	37.6%
Important topic	5.1%	28.8%	52.6%

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Service-Learning

- Service experience varies widely by section and is often tied to specific course theme.
- Service is of short duration, usually less than 10 hours, and is on many campuses a one-shot experience or service plunge.
- Hunger/homelessness and at-risk youth most common focal points for service.
- Reflection includes written papers, class discussions, and presentations.

Learning Community Structures

- LC structures range from block scheduling with little to no course integration to highly integrated thematic course links.
- LCs frequently incorporate a residential component.

Writing Assignments/Activities

Assignment	EO (*n* = 14)	AUC (*n* = 34)	AVC (*n* = 59)
Research Papers	2	7	18
Formal Essays	0	9	20
Process Approach	1	5	21
Journals	2	5	11
Reaction/ Reflection Papers	7	4	7
Personal Writing	3	10	4
Informal Writing	2	5	8
Peer Review	0	2	10

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Outcomes Measured

Outcome	EO	ACC	AVC
Persistence to sophomore year	76.1%	73.6%	**70.2%**
Satisfaction with faculty	63.5%	79.2%	**89.5%**
Satisfaction with institution	63.5%	77.4%	**66.7%**
Grade-point average	57.9%	60.4%	**50.9%**
Use of campus services	60.4%	47.2%	**38.6%**
Connections with peers	47.2%	50.9%	**59.6%**
Participation in campus activities	50.9%	50.9%	**38.6%**
Out-of-class student/faculty interactions	45.3%	37.7%	**59.6%**
Academic abilities	34.6%	49.1%	**54.4%**
Persistence to graduation	39.6%	49.1%	**29.8%**

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QUESTIONS/RESPONSES?

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2008 National Survey on Sophomore-Year Initiatives

- **Purpose:** "to get a better understanding of sophomore-specific efforts" on campuses across the country
- **Administration period:** Nov.-Dec., 2008
- **Administration target:** chief student affairs officers
- **Total number of respondents:** 315 institutions

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Characteristics of Respondents

- Type
  - 2-year: 24%
  - 4-year: 76%
- Control
  - Private: 48%
  - Public: 52%
- Selectivity
  - Inclusive: 31%
  - Selective: 32%
  - More selective: 24%

- Enrollment:
  - ≤ 5,000 or less: 62%
  - 5,001-10,000: 16%
  - 10,001-15,000: 9%
  - 15,001-20,000: 4%
  - ≥ 20,000: 8%

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Respondents with Sophomore Initiatives

- 37% (n = 115) of respondents reported having a sophomore-year initiative
- Characteristics of respondents with sophomore initiatives
  - Much higher proportion of 4-year institutions
  - Generally representative across institutional size
  - Statistically significant skew toward:
    - Private institutions
    - More selective institutions

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Most Common
Sophomore Initiatives

Sophomore Initiative	Percent
Career planning	76.7
Leadership development	58.8
Academic advising	50.9
Online resources	43.2
Peer mentoring by sophomores	38.6
Residence life	38.2
Study abroad	35.7
Community service/Service-learning	32.5
Faculty/staff mentors	32.1

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Least Common
Sophomore Initiatives

Sophomore Initiative	Percent
Student government	31.8
Print publications	31.0
Undergraduate research	27.0
Cultural enrichment activities	25.0
Retreats	20.4
Opportunities to co-teach a class/TA	17.1
Financial aid	17.0
Peer mentoring for sophomores	16.7
Curricular learning communities	16.1
Credit-bearing course	14.7

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High-Impact Activities in the Sophomore Year

- Public institutions more likely to offer curricular learning communities than private institutions (26.7% vs. 9.1%)
- More selective institutions more likely than less selective institutions to offer undergraduate research (36.9% vs. 16.4%)
- Smaller institutions more likely than larger institutions to offer service experiences (-.19, $p \leq .05$)

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Most Common Longstanding Initiatives

Sophomore Initiative	Percent
Career planning	19.9
Academic advising	17.5
Leadership development	8.1
Online resources	8.1
Residence life	7.6

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Less Common Longstanding Initiatives

Sophomore Initiative	Percent
Credit-bearing course	5.2
Community service/service-learning	2.8
Undergraduate research	0.9
Curricular learning communities	0.9

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Learning Objectives of Longstanding Initiatives

- Academic planning
  - Declaring a major
  - Staying on track to graduate
- Career planning
  - Exploring opportunities for internships and practica
  - Gaining career skills

- Personal exploration and development
  - Discovering strengths
  - Developing purpose, autonomy, self-authorship
- Social connections & campus engagement

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Future Sophomore Initiatives

- 73% of respondents <u>with</u> current sophomore initiatives are considering or developing future sophomore initiatives
- 29% of respondents <u>without</u> current sophomore initiatives are considering or developing future sophomore initiatives
- Future initiatives most frequently reported:
  - Leadership development
  - Academic advising
  - Career planning
  - Class events

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QUESTIONS/RESPONSES

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2009 Peer Leadership Survey

- Purpose
  - o What are the characteristics of peer leadership programs in higher education?
  - o What are the perceived outcomes of this experience for the peer leaders?
- Administered in Spring, 2009 to 3,733 institutional reps asking them to forward to student peer leaders
- 1,972 survey respondents at 414 institutions

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Sample

- Skewed toward:
  - o Female students (74% of respondents were women)
  - o High academic performers (80% reported GPA $\geq$ 3.0)
  - o Students engaged in peer leadership
- Adequate representation by:
  - o Race/ethnicity
  - o Class standing
  - o In-state vs. out-of-state students
  - o Residential vs. commuter students
- Not nationally representative but comprehensive
- First national portrait of peer leader experiences

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Results: Peer Leadership

- 90% of respondents report being peer leaders
- 44% of respondents report holding more than one peer leader position "currently"
- 8% hold four or more peer leader positions "currently"
- Held several peer leader positions throughout their college career (Mean = 2.67)
- 98% would recommend being a peer leader to other students

Most Common Sponsors of Peer Leadership Experiences

Campus-Based Organization	Percent
Academic	58.6
Orientation	31.6
Residence Halls	29.6
Community Service	25.2
Other	14.8
Student Government	11.6

Titles for Academic Peer Leader Roles

- First-year seminar peer leader
- Tutor
- Academic mentor
- Peer advisor
- Teaching assistant

Self-Rated Change in Skills

Skill	% Reporting "Stronger" or "Much Stronger"
Interpersonal communication	93.8
Organization	80.7
Time management	79.5
Presentation	79.2
Written communication	60.7
Academic	51.2

Self-Rated Impact on Undergraduate Experience

Experience	% "Increased"
Knowledge of campus resources	91.1
Meaningful interaction with peers	89.1
Meaningful interaction with staff	85.6
Meaningful interaction with faculty	82.8
Feeling of belonging at institution	80.7
Understanding of diverse people	78.5
Interaction with diverse people	78.1
Desire to persist at institution	70.7

Impact on Academic Performance

1. Improved intellectual and practical skills
2. Personal and social responsibility
3. Integrative learning

Impact on Academic Performance

2. Personal and social responsibility
   - Increased focus and/or motivation to perform well (i.e., serve as a role model)
   - Increased feelings of personal responsibility
   - Greater appreciation for institution/ education
3. Integrative learning

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Intellectual and Practical Skills

- Time management and organizational skills
- General academic skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Public speaking skills
- Leadership skills

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Intellectual and Practical Skills

"The responsibilities of peer leadership helped me to learn more about organization, time management, as well as teamwork, and cooperation. All of these skills have transferred to my studies as well."

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Intellectual and Practical Skills

"I feel as though it has allowed me to maintain my skills in writing. Sometimes, you go through a semester in which you sharpen some skills and lose others. For writing, by consistently brushing up on my grammar and analysis by reviewing students' work, I can ensure that I won't forget these skills when they are needed at a later point."

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Personal and Social Responsibility

- Increased focus and/or motivation to perform well (i.e., serve as a role model)
- Increased feelings of personal responsibility
- Greater appreciation for institution/ education

Personal and Social Responsibility

"Because of my leadership experience, I finally figured out what I want to do with my life after I graduate. I am much more motivated now than I was when I was a freshman to complete my courses with decent grades. I am very motivated to learn the content of my courses as opposed to just getting a grade."

Personal and Social Responsibility

"It reinforces how important an education is. I am motivated and re-energized when I meet with and help students with academic and personal issues. "

Personal and Social Responsibility

"Because I am a leader/mentor, I will be looked at by other students as a role model. I can't tell my students/residents to study hard and do well in school when I'm not doing the same. Being a student leader has motivated me to do better and push my self harder than I would were I not a student leader."

Integrative Learning

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"As a biology major, tutoring in chemistry and biology courses keeps the information fresh in my head. As I take higher level courses that require me to remember basic concepts, I already know them thoroughly and I am able to grasp new concepts better."

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Integrative Learning

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"Many of the activities I participate in can relate to my studies and add to my curriculum. I am also pursuing something I am passionate about, so many of my leadership roles support the importance of education in my life. I volunteer for non-profits fighting against illiteracy and I am a teaching assistant for a first-year class. This bolsters my interest in learning and promoting education. "

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Negative Impact on Integrative Learning?

"Commitments with my peer leader positions have interfered with the amount of free time that I have to study for exams, complete assignments, and become further involved with my coursework."

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QUESTIONS/RESPONSES

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Implications
First-Year Seminars

- Offer more inquiry-based academic seminars, especially to at-risk or underserved populations
- Use the seminar as a site for integration and analysis
- Where service is incorporated, make it an integral part of the course

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Implications
Sophomore-Year Initiatives

- Investigate undergraduate research, inquiry-based seminars, and service experiences as high-impact activities that can respond to the common objectives of the second college year
  - Major selection
  - Career planning and decision making
  - Connection to/engagement with the campus

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Implications
Peer Leadership

- Recognize peer leadership as potential high-impact activity for students in the middle years
- Reframe peer leader positions to maximize learning outcomes without placing an undue burden on students

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Questions?

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