

# **Sophomore Student Success:**

## **Selected Findings from the 2008 National Survey on Sophomore-Year Initiatives**

**2010 NASPA Annual Conference**

**March 9, 2010**

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# Why All this Interest in Sophomores?

- Outgrowth of the focus on first-year students
- Recognition that second-year students have needs and face challenges
- Dearth of research and assessment on the second college year



# Why All this Interest in Sophomores?

- Evidence that sophomores are at times the least satisfied of all students
- Increasing interest
  - conference programs
  - listserv activity
  - activity in professional organizations
  - publication sales



# Defining 'Sophomore'

- More difficult to define than other points of student transition
- More ambiguity around beginning and ending



# Defining 'Sophomore'

Time in college?

Credits earned?

Level of commitment and investment by student?

Certainty of academic major?



In your own mind have you  
defined 'sophomore'?

Has your campus  
developed a definition of  
'sophomore'?



# Sophomore 'Slump'



Characterized by  
academic  
disengagement and a  
generalized  
dissatisfaction with  
one's college  
experience.

--Freedman, 1956



# Sophomore 'Slump'

Difficult to define because “there seems to be no one problem that can be identified...it seems unwise to lump all the problems of individual students together.”

-- Richmond and Lemons, 1985



# Think, Pair, [Share]

What issues do you see among the sophomores on your campus?



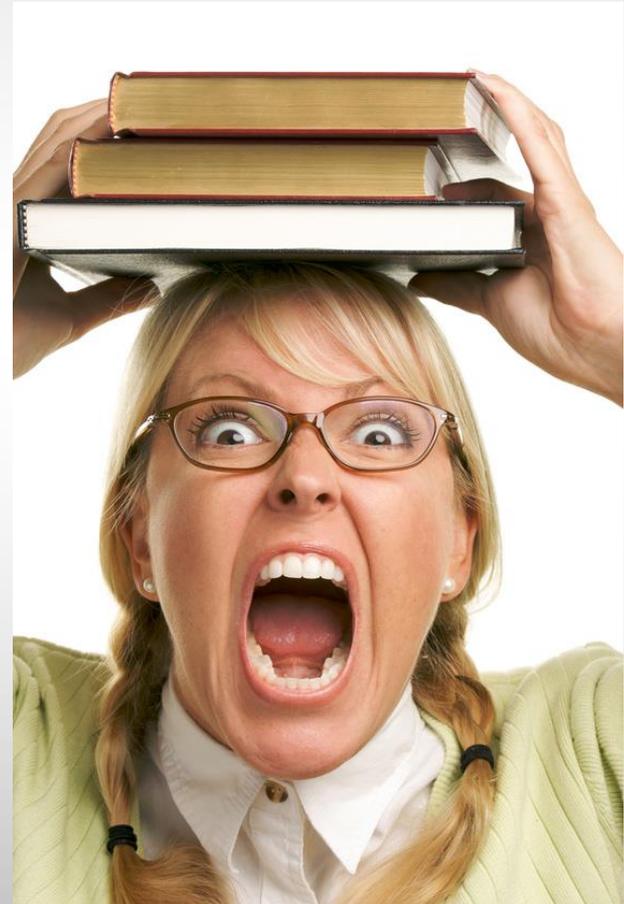
# Issues in the Second Year

- Academic majors and academic self-efficacy
- The curriculum and academic progression
- Academic engagement



# Issues in the Second Year

- Student satisfaction
- Social integration and involvement
- Student motivation
- Faculty contact



# Issues in the Second Year



- Lifestyle decisions
- Financial issues



# Issues in the Second Year



- Career Development
- Values
- Purpose



# [Think, Pair], **Share**



Are there other issues that you see in your second year students?

# Redefining 'Sophomore Slump'

A multi-dimensional phenomenon including one or more of the following:

- academic deficiencies
- academic disengagement
- dissatisfaction with the collegiate experience
- major and career indecision
- developmental confusion

--Kennedy & Upcraft, 2010



**So, what do we know about  
institutional strategies for helping  
sophomores succeed?**



# 2008 National Survey on Sophomore-Year Initiatives

- Purpose: “to get a better understanding of sophomore-specific efforts” on campuses across the country
  - Unit of observation was the institution
- Administration period: Nov.-Dec., 2008
- Administration target: chief student affairs officers
- Total number of respondents: 316 institutions



# Characteristics of Respondents

- Institutional type: 24% 2-year; 76% 4-year
- Institutional affiliation: 48% private; 52% public
- Institutional enrollment:
  - 62%: 5,000 or less
  - 16%: 5,001-10,000
  - 9%: 10,001-15,000
  - 4%: 15,001-20,000
  - 8%: More than 20,000
- Institutional selectivity:
  - 31%: inclusive
  - 32%: selective
  - 24%: more selective



# 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



# Types of Sophomore Success Initiatives

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Academic advising  
Career planning  
Class events  
Community service/service learning  
Credit-bearing course  
Cultural enrichment activities  
Curricular learning communities  
Faculty/staff mentors  
Financial aid  
Leadership development

Online resources  
Opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class  
Peer mentoring by sophomores  
Peer mentoring for sophomores  
Print publications  
Residence life  
Retreats  
Student government  
Study abroad  
Undergraduate research

**Major**

# Most Common Sophomore Success Initiatives

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



# Least Common Sophomore Success Initiatives

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



# Marked “Don’t Know”

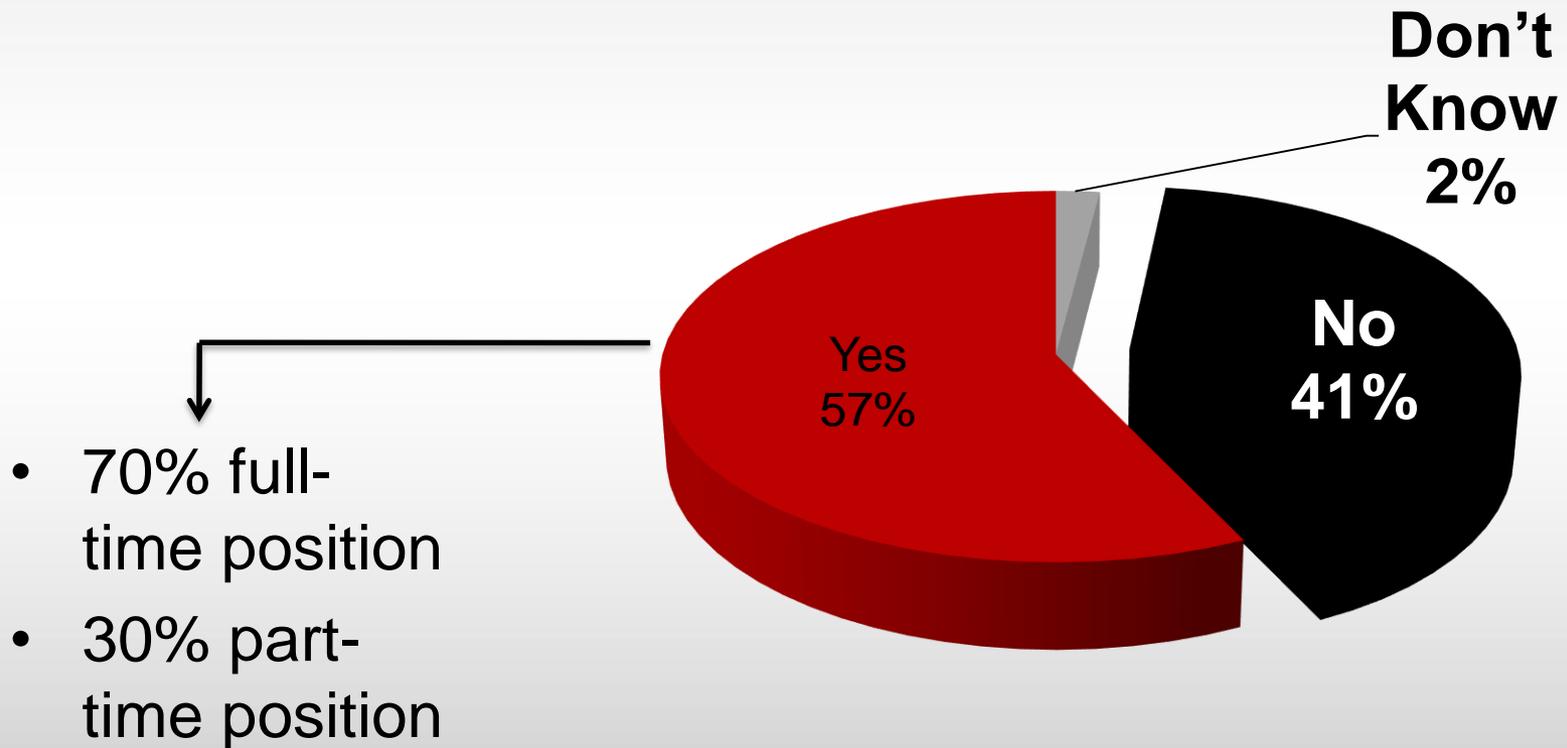


**Opportunity**

- 17.0%: Financial aid
- 12.6%: Undergraduate research
- 9.0%: Opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class
- 8.8%: Community service/service learning
- 8.0%: Study abroad
- 7.9%: Peer mentoring for sophomores
- 7.8%: Academic advising



# Is someone in charge of Sophomore Success Initiatives?



# Innovations among Sophomore Success Initiatives

- Most frequently reported innovative sophomore initiatives are:
  - 14.2%: Academic advising
  - 13.2%: Residential life
  - 13.2%: Career planning
- Has the innovative initiative been assessed?
  - 31.9%: Yes
  - 47.4%: No
  - 20.7%: Don't know



**How do types of  
sophomore initiatives  
offered differ by  
institutional context?**



# Sophomore Initiatives by Institutional Affiliation

- 15 of specific sophomore initiatives were offered at statistically similar rates at both public and private institutions.
- 2 had percentages larger for public:
  - Financial aid (28.9% vs. 7.6%)
  - Curricular learning communities (26.7% vs. 9.1%)
- 3 had percentages larger for private:
  - Opportunities to co-teach/TA (22.7% vs. 9.1%)
  - Student government (39.4% vs. 20.9%)
  - Class events (62.1% vs. 33.3%)



# Sophomore Initiatives by Institutional Selectivity

- 13 were offered at statistically similar rates at “more selective” and “less selective” institutions.
- 5 had percentages larger for “more selective”:
  - Print publications (44.0% vs. 20.0%)
  - Class events (64.0% vs. 42.6%)
  - Online resources (55.1% vs. 34.5%)
  - Undergraduate research (36.9% vs. 16.4%)
  - Retreats (30.0% vs. 12.7%)
- 3 had percentages larger for “less selective”:
  - Cultural enrichment activities (32.7% vs. 16.3%)
  - Student government (26.8% vs. 6.3%)



# Sophomore Initiatives by Institutional Size

- 15 of specific sophomore initiatives did not yield statistically significant correlation coefficients
- 1 had a significant correlation for larger institutions:
  - Faculty/staff mentors (.19,  $p \leq .05$ )
- 4 had had a significant correlation for smaller institutions:
  - Peer mentoring for sophomores (-.30,  $p \leq .01$ )
  - Academic advising (-.23,  $p \leq .05$ )
  - Community service/Service learning (-.19,  $p \leq .05$ )
  - Career planning (-.19,  $p \leq .05$ )



**What are some of the  
challenges to launching,  
administering, &  
sustaining sophomore  
success initiatives?**



<b>Reason for no sophomore initiative</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Lack of funding	53.9
Limited time	38.2
Not an institutional priority	31.4
Lack of staff/faculty buy-in	27.7
Lack of expertise	18.8

Other (23.0%):

- Focus on first-year students
- Lack of staff
- High retention
- No leadership/authority
- Definitional challenge (i.e., what is a “sophomore”)



# Future Sophomore Initiatives

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



**What are the sophomore success initiatives under consideration or under development on your campus?**



# Retention and Sophomore Success Initiatives

<b><math>r=.37</math> (<math>p&lt;.001</math>)</b>	<b>% w/o SSI (n=154)</b>	<b>% with SSI (n=87)</b>
First-to-second year retention: less than 50%	13.6%	<b>4.6%</b>
First-to-second year retention: 51-75%	48.1%	<b>19.5%</b>
First-to-second year retention: 76-100%	38.3%	<b>75.9%</b>

<b><math>r=.34</math> (<math>p&lt;.001</math>)</b>	<b>% w/o SSI (n=77)</b>	<b>% with SSI (n=54)</b>
Second-third year retention: less than 50%	14.3%	<b>3.7%</b>
Second-third year retention: 51-75%	51.9%	<b>29.6%</b>
Second-third year retention: 76-100%	33.8%	<b>66.7%</b>



# Implications and Application

- What are your reactions to these survey findings?
- How do these findings about sophomore success initiatives compare to your lived experiences on your campus?
- How can you use this information for launching, developing, and administering sophomore success initiatives on your campus?
- Any other questions?



# Resources on Sophomore Student Success

Schreiner, L.A. & Pattengale, J. (Eds.) (2000). **Visible solutions for invisible students: Helping sophomores succeed** (Monograph No. 31). Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

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# Resources on Sophomores Student Success

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# THANK YOU!

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