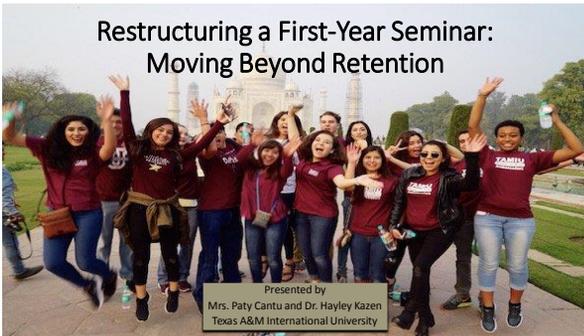


Restructuring a First-Year Seminar: Moving Beyond Retention



Getting to Know You

- At this time, please log on to <https://kahoot.it/>
- What is your role in your FYE program?
- Do you have a freshmen seminar?
- If so, how is it structured? 1 semester, weeks, ?
- Is it part of the core?



Getting to Know Us

- 93% Hispanic
- 58% Female
- 77% Low income
- 73% First-generation
- ACT 18; SAT 915
- 7,654 total enrollment F2016
- 23.4% Four year Graduation
- 76.2% Persistence First-time FR



- 1) develop integrated student learning experiences that advance critical thinking skills
- 2) plan a semester-long assignment that integrates HIPs and encourages critical thinking

What Do We Mean by Critical Thinking?

According to Scriven and Paul (1987), critical thinking is defined as:

The intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.

Source: Scriven, M., & Paul, R. (1987). Defining critical thinking. Retrieved January 27, 2015, from: <http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/defining-critical-thinking/706>; TAMU QEP

FYS History

Future Site
of
TEXAS A & M
INTERNATIONAL
UNIVERSITY

- 2001 GENU: first freshman seminar (1 semester); provisional admit
- 2005 GENU: required for *all* freshman (still 1 semester)
- 2007 UNIV 1101 and 1102: full year (2 contact hours/ 1 SCH); a graduation requirement, but not in the core
- 2013 UNIV 1101 and 1102: full year, but moved to core area option w/Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board approval
- 2016 UNIV 1402 (Signature Course): supplanted UNIV 1102

FYS Changes

- Comply with Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board requirements by producing artifacts for core curriculum assessments
- Comply with SACSCOC requirements by including *Quality Enhancement Plan student learning outcomes

FYS Changes: Assessments



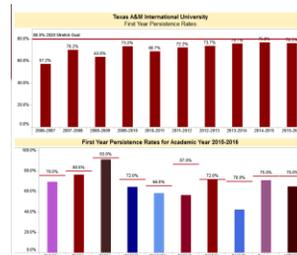
- **Critical Thinking Skills (CT)** - creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
- **Communication Skills (COM)** - effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication
- **Empirical and Quantitative Skills (EQS)** - manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions

FYS Changes: Assessments



- **Teamwork (TW)** - ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal
- **Social Responsibility (SR)** - intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities
- **Personal Responsibility (PR)** - ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making

Identity Crisis



Process



- What did we keep?
 - Common read
 - Some components of acclimating to college life such as required tutoring hours, peer mentoring, campus engagement events, and professor meetings
- What did we eliminate in the course?
 - Introduction to support services such as student counseling and health and career services
 - Academic skills such as reading, note-taking, test-preparation, test-taking skills and time management are now done in mentoring sessions.

Process continued



- What was the plan?
 - To develop and challenge our students' academic thinking by intentionally **integrating** high-impact practices.
- What are high-impact practices?
 - From Kuh:
 - widely tested teaching and active learning practices
 - shown to be beneficial for college students from many backgrounds
 - take different forms
 - contribute to students' cumulative learning



Process continued

- Collaborative learning = common read, spring board for UG research project
- Undergraduate research-generate research question from international issues in common read
 - Complete library unit and Softchalk
 - Generate a college-level research question
 - Identify and evaluate credible sources/using databases
 - Prepare an annotated bib
 - Incorporate research into a modified I-Search presentation
 - Create reflective essay with focus on social responsibility
- Diversity and global learning
- Service-Learning (SL)



Challenges for Students

- Completing considerably more work for a one credit hour course
- Adjusting to teamwork
- Having to do scholarly research without just “Googleing” it
- Formulating workable research questions
- Learning academic vocabulary/terminology
- Making time to complete service-learning projects



Challenges for Faculty

- Pacing
- Grading versus assessing
- Preparing new content each year (common read changes)
- Encouraging shift from plug and purge to process and produce
- Gap between expectations and skill level
- Creating engaging content to deliver challenging concepts
- Incorporating service-learning (SL), making time to find community-partners & coordinate SL projects



Benefits for Students

- Engaged

“... I liked the book and how we explored different topics illustrated within it... The book and the discussions were really good; it made me think of the struggle immigrants and those that want to migrate go through.”

“What I liked most about this course was learning more about Russia, as it brought awareness to what is going on outside of the United States.”

- Confident and competent

“Univ [FYS] made an impact on me because it taught me a lot about working together. It taught me that no matter who you are or what happens you can achieve anything you set your mind to.”

“I acquired many new skills such as: being able overcome a challenge, serving my community, having patience, and maintaining a positive attitude; all which will help me prepare for my future career as a nurse.”



Benefits for Students

- Motivated

“It [the service-learning project] opened my eyes to many things and has taught me life lessons, including many other skills...I believe it has changed my life entirely.”

“It truly helped me gain skills and knowledge that will help me in other classes and in the future.”

“It is important to inspire the youth, as well as any other individual, to reflect on their well-being, and motivate them to live a happier and fuller life. Due to this service, I now know that I want to become a pediatric nurse and continue to impact a child's life.”

FYE Outstanding Student Researchers Award



Benefits for Faculty and Institution

- Improved image/perception of class
- Helped support QEP
- Better prepared students for sophomore year and beyond by setting them on a trajectory of inquiry and analysis
- Encouraged professional development (e.g. value rubrics, assessment, CT)
- Inspired faculty to engage in curriculum development (Cueso, 2010)
- Served as a vehicle for gathering institutional data (Cueso, 2010)



References

Cuseo, J. (2010). The empirical case for the first-year seminar: Promoting positive student outcomes and campus-wide benefits. In *The first-year seminar: Research-based recommendations for course design, delivery, and assessment*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Kuh, G., & O'Donnell, K. (2013). *Ensuring quality and taking high-impact practices to scale*. Washington, DC: AAC&U.

Padgett, R.D., Keup, J. R., & Pascarella, E.T. (2013). The impact of first-year seminars on college students' life-long learning orientations. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 50(2), 133-151.

Please remember to submit your
evaluation on Guidebook!

<https://guidebook.com/g/fye18/>

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