

Western Michigan University

Kalamazoo, MI

Start Right...Finish Strong:
Equipping First-Year Students for Success
through FYE Programs

Adrienne Fraaza and Dr. Toni Woolfork-Barnes

First-Year Experience Programs at WMU

- New Student Orientation
Started 1967
- Fall Welcome
Started 1999
- First-Year Experience 2100
Started 2005

Common to all FYE Programs

- Staff committed to student success
- Advisory committees
- Campus-wide collaboration
- Create significant leadership development opportunities for students
- Data driven
- Utilize best practices

A brief history of FYE at WMU...

In 2003, WMU began exploring the concept of developing and instituting a First-Year Seminar course to support and assist freshman students during their critical first-year. The first FYE 2100 seminar sections were offered during Fall 2005. In an effort to create a seamless transition for freshman students, Western Michigan University established the First-Year Experience Programs Department in April 2005. Prior to the creation of the department, the New Student Orientation Program was housed as part of the Admissions department, and Fall Welcome (formerly known as Bronco Days) was a part of the Division of Student Affairs. The creation of the FYE department has served to reinforce to new students and families that WMU is committed to both the academic and personal success of all of our students beginning from the start of their college career at WMU.



FYE Mission Statement

The intention of the First-Year Experience Programs is to prepare first-year students for academic and social success and familiarize them with Western Michigan University's collegiate culture.

FYE Programs strive to:

- Assist in the development of a strong academic foundation culminating with graduation from WMU.
- Provide the tools necessary for first-year students to achieve personal and academic success during their matriculation at WMU and beyond.
- Foster social connections of first year students and their peers.
- Help students to find a balance in their lives between personal goals and social responsibility.
- Celebrate the uniqueness of all individuals, and help them to discover their full potential for success.

Orientation

Begins students' formal transition into the university with a focus on both the academic and social aspect of WMU.

- Two-day program
- Fourteen sessions
- Student orientation program
- Parent orientation program
- Faculty/staff reception
- Academic advising
- Student affairs-related programming
- Professional cabaret show highlighting transitional issues
- “Final Freshmen” – one last orientation session in August, during Fall Welcome week, for students who missed June Orientation

Orientation: Evaluation Findings

At the conclusion of their two-day Orientation experience, students are required to take a brief online survey about their time at New Student Orientation. The FYE staff uses this data to make improvements and implement a program of excellence.

Number of Students Who Attended New Student Orientation (NSO) by Year

2005	2006	2007	2008	% increase since 2006
NA	3,457	3,360	3,655	5.5%

Below are findings from the 2008 surveys:

- 91% of students strongly agree orientation was a worthwhile experience
- 93% of students rated orientation student leader performance as excellent
- 96% of students rated the theatrical performance as excellent
- 90% of parents stated that NSO met their expectations
- 85% of parents stated that parent orientation met their expectations

What students are saying about Orientation...

"When I had to come here I wasn't looking forward to it, but once I got here, I was so glad I came. This orientation solidified for me that this is where I am supposed to be. I now feel so comfortable here and I am looking forward to this becoming my new home."

"After Orientation I feel better prepared to start college in the fall."

"Everyone has been so helpful and informational. Western has a great welcome and orientation team."

"I was really nervous about coming to Western in the fall, but now after Orientation I am really looking forward to it."

"Can I do it again next year?"

"Keep doing what you're doing! It is a great program and I can't wait to start school in the fall!"

Fall Welcome

Continues students' entrée into WMU with a heightened focus on addressing the adjustment and transitional stage experience during freshman year.

Created in 1999, Fall Welcome began as a three-day social program to help students acclimate to the University. Still touted as an acclimation program, Fall Welcome has achieved a successful balance of social and academic activities.

- Four-day transition program
- Convocation program
- Comprehensive academic and social programming
- Facilitating connections with student leaders, faculty, and staff
- Support building of community and friendships
- Over 3,100 students registered for Fall Welcome in 2008

Fall Welcome continues to evolve to meet the needs of first-year students.

New components introduced since 2005:

- Two-day move-in
- Electronic swipe-in process to track attendance
- Pizza with the Profs
- Buster's Moonlight Stampede:
3k fun run
- Transfer Express (programming designed specifically for new transfer students)
- Academic Interest Session
- Time management and financial management presentations

Fall Welcome: Evaluation Findings

At the end of the week students completed an evaluation consisting of both qualitative and quantitative information. As participation in Fall Welcome increases, it is worth mentioning that the number of evaluations returned at the end of the 2008 program increased by 85% from the 2007 program.

From the final evaluations the following information was gleaned:

- 81% of students indicated they would go through Fall Welcome again (an increase of 68% from 2007)
- 88% agreed their Fall Welcome move-in day went smoothly
- 85% agreed that Fall Welcome met or exceeded their expectations
- 90% of students would recommend Fall Welcome other new first-year students

Number of Students *Registered* for Fall Welcome by Year

2005	2006	2007	2008	% increase since 2005
2,362	2,816	2,821	3,186	35%

Approximate Number of Students Who *Attended* Fall Welcome by Year

2005	2006	2007	2008	% increase since 2005
2,000	2,400	2,600	2,900	45%

What students are saying about Fall Welcome...

"I had a good time. I met new people and feel like I have a better feel for the campus."

"I loved the experience and I feel like a Bronco."

"It was helpful and a well put together program that is good for all incoming freshmen."

"Really helped with the transition from home to college."

First-Year Experience 2100

The two-credit hour, 16 week seminar comprehensively builds upon NSO and FW, yet there is an enhanced focus on providing a balance between the academic and social aspect of college, both important in assisting students to be successful.

- Fifty-nine sections offered in Fall 2008
- Over 1,300 students registered
- Partnered with University Curriculum, Lee Honors College, Seita Scholars, and Kalamazoo Promise
- Text: Keys to Effective Learning, Developing Powerful Habits of Mind
- Hosted author (Sharon Draper) of one of the Common Read books (Battle of Jericho)
- Key components of Seminar: Common Read, Common Research Experience, Co-curricular programming related to diversity, health & wellness, community service, fine arts
- Professional development for faculty and student leaders

Since its inception in 2005, First-Year Experience 2100 has developed tremendously, each year incorporating a new aspect into the course, equipping students for success their first semester.

Number of Students Registered for First-Year Experience 2100 by Year

2005	2006	2007	2008	% increase since 2005
525	1,042	1,053	1,300+	148%

Number of Students Retained by Year

	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Students in Seminar	NA	76.19%	72.19%
Students not in Seminar	NA	74.58%	73.96%

First-Year Experience 2100: Evaluation Findings

■ Evaluation Findings for 2006

Course improved/increased/included:

(based upon a seven-point scale, with seven as highest)

- Study strategies 3.94
- Academic & cognitive skills 3.55
- Critical thinking 4.06
- Connections with faculty 4.32
- Connections with peers 4.83
- Out-of-class engagement 3.97
- Knowledge of campus policies 4.41
- Knowledge of academic services 4.53
- Managing time & priorities 4.22
- Knowledge of wellness 4.12
- Sense of belonging & acceptance 5.45
- Usefulness of readings 3.72
- Satisfaction w/College/Univ. 5.41
- Engaging pedagogy 4.32
- **Overall course effectiveness 4.09**

■ Evaluation Findings for 2007

Course improved/increased/included:

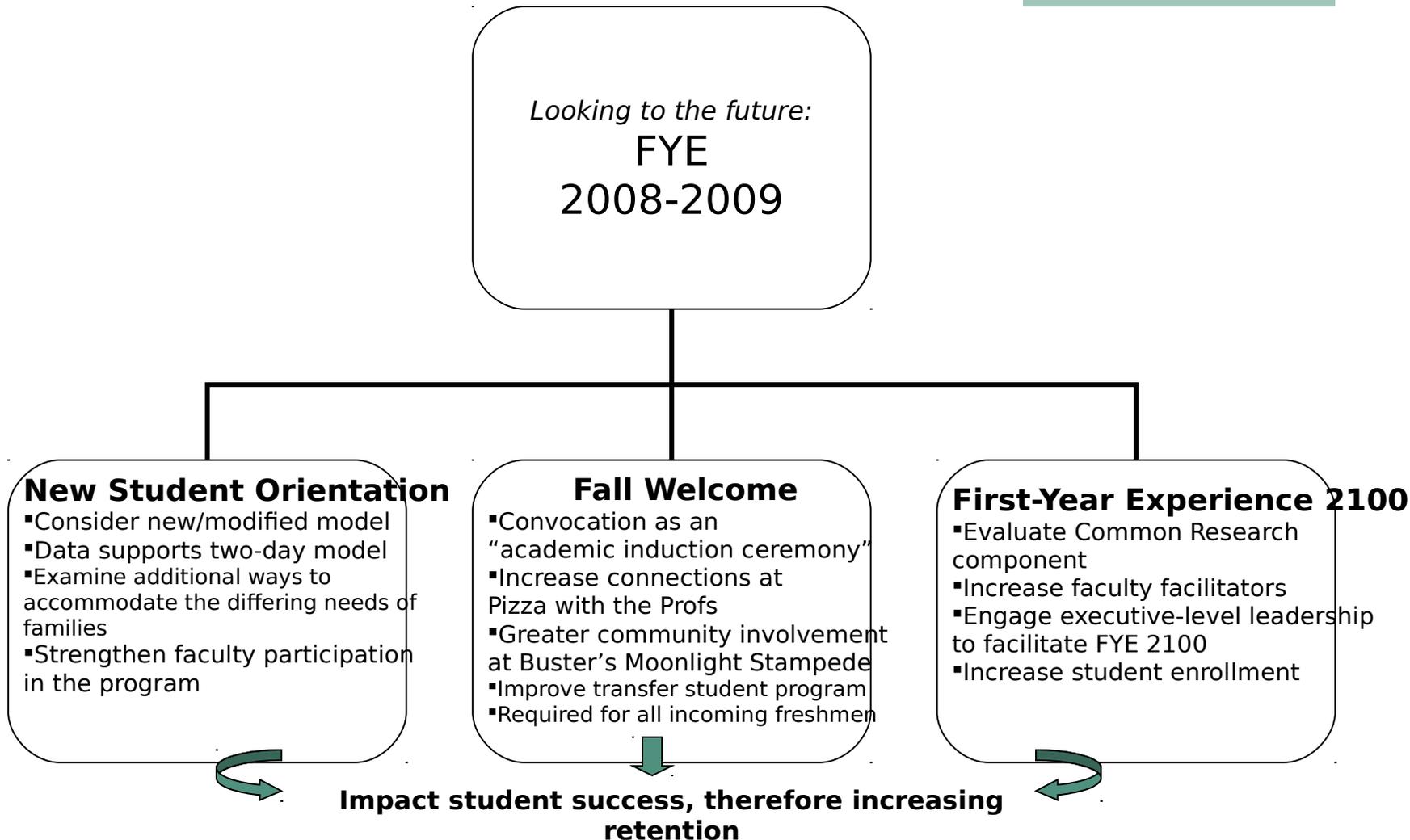
(based upon a seven-point scale, with seven as highest)

- Study strategies 4.32
- Academic & cognitive skills 3.81
- Critical thinking 4.36
- Connections with faculty 4.51
- Connections with peers 4.84
- Out-of-class engagement 4.81
- Knowledge of campus policies 4.74
- Knowledge of academic services 5.12
- Managing time & priorities 4.53
- Knowledge of wellness 4.36
- Sense of belonging & acceptance 5.53
- Usefulness of readings 4.04
- Satisfaction w/College/Univ. 5.47
- Engage pedagogy 4.55
- **Overall course effectiveness 4.38**

Retention at a Glance

get retention data from Univ. Curr., look at students who are involved, etc.

Continuous improvement...



Contact us...

Dr. Toni Woolfork-Barnes, Director, FYE

- toni.woolfork-barnes@wmich.edu

Steve Booher, Orientation Coordinator

- steve.booher@wmich.edu

Adrienne Fraaza, Fall Welcome Coordinator

- adrienne.fraaza@wmich.edu

Maleeka Love, First-Year Experience 2100 Coordinator

- maleeka.love@wmich.edu

