



Hand-out

Easing the Transition to College Through Paired First Year Seminars

National Conference Students in Transition
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Virginia Wesleyan College
Norfolk, Virginia

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Outline



- Format of the First Year Experience program
- Structure of the program
 - A two + day orientation
 - Ten contact meetings, and
 - Five co-curricular events
- Hands-on Activities
- Evaluation of the program

A Little About Virginia Wesleyan College

- Population 1400
- Approximately 450 Freshmen
- Small four-year private liberal arts college
- Located in Norfolk and Virginia Beach
- Chartered in 1961

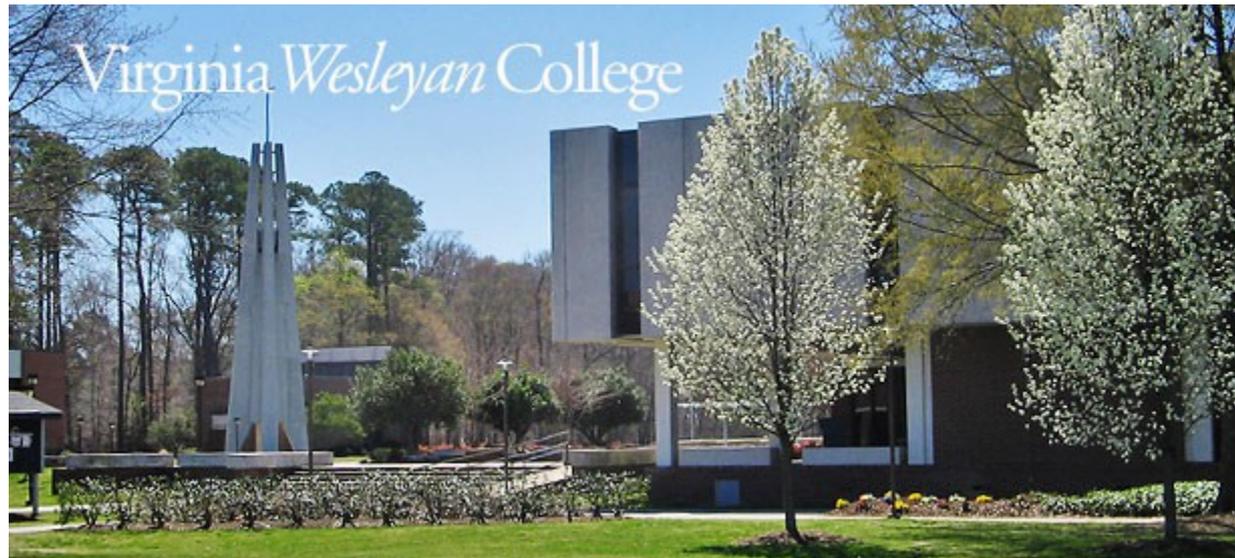


First Year Experience Program

The first year of college brings exciting challenges and terrific opportunities for self-transformation. Virginia Wesleyan has a special course to help first-year students make the transition to a first year



Format of the Virginia Wesleyan College First Year Experience Program



FYE Format

FYE 101 (1credit) First Year Experience

Course Description

- The course is designed to help students transition from high school to college and succeed both academically and socially in Virginia Wesleyan community.
- Led by a faculty mentor, a small group of students engage in activities that invite them to explore the three learning objectives.

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Learning Objectives

- 1. Students will explore the nature of liberal arts learning.**
- 2. Students will connect to the greater VWC community.**
- 3. Students will develop habits of self-governance and personal resourcefulness that lead to college success and helps with the transition from high school to college.**

Course Requirements

- All freshmen--and all transfer students with fewer than 12 semester hours must complete the one-credit course, FYE 101 First Year Experience.
- Students who do not pass the FYE 101 requirement have the option to repeat FYE 101 the following spring semester.

Format of First Year Experience Program at Virginia Wesleyan College

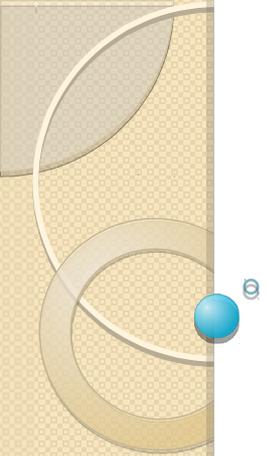
- 1 credit course (most sections are paired to a 4-hour content course)
 - Meets for 2 + days during orientation
 - Meeting 1 or 2 times per week for first 10 weeks of fall semester
- Includes participating in a minimum of 5 co-curricular activity events

Weight of Course Components

1. Active class participation, **20%**
2. Homework Assignments **20%+**
(assignment on the summer book; assignment on the development of a 4-year plan, leading to the preparation for spring advising; other class assignments)
3. Co-curricular attendance and reflection summaries **20%+**
4. Final Project that meets all three objectives **20%+**
(Faculty choose how to distribute final 20%)

FYE Format Pairings

- The goal is to pair 95% of FYE sections to content courses
 - Most FYE-paired sections are paired with courses taught by the same professor
 - Some FYE sections are paired with courses taught by a different professor
 - 5% of FYE sections are unpaired sections to aid in scheduling
 - During summer orientation (Scene I) freshmen meet with advisors and register for a paired FYE and content course.



Format Pairings Criteria

Each paired course should:

- Be a freshmen-level course.
- Have no prerequisites, except for placement for entry level courses, such as Span 111 and Math 104.
- Have a history of filling up quickly. The paired course will need a minimum of 12 students and maximum of 15 students.



Format Pairings Criteria

Additionally, each paired course should:

- Fulfill a college or general studies requirement such as **Eng 105, Foreign Language 111 level, L, Q** (Math 104), **A, H, S, T, V**
- Fulfill an entry level requirement for a major.
and/or
- Serve as an introductory survey course for a major (e.g., Introduction to Business -- while it isn't required for the major, it is an elective and gives a freshman a good overview of the field of study).

Pairing Logistics

- Freshmen enroll in an FYE and paired course during summer orientation.
- Paired courses have a designated letter in addition to the section number that corresponds to the FYE course.
- Partner sections reflect students who

Pairings Examples

FYE Prof	Paired Course	Paired Course Prof	FYE/Pair ed Course Cap (13-15)	Partner course cap	Total content course cap
Jones	Music 100	Wilson	15	0	15
Smith	Math 104	Smith	13	11	24

Why Pair FYE to Content Courses?

- Intentional space is saved for freshman in freshman-level general studies and major courses.
- Pairing offers the opportunity for students to bond by connecting with one another in two classes.
- This additional course offers the opportunity for students to see their FYE professor and advisor two additional hours each week.
- More contact time offers FYE Faculty/Advisors the opportunity to better get to know their FYE students and their academic status, as well as identify possible social problems.
- These benefits help ease the transition from high school to college, as student issues such as academic and social problems do not fall through the cracks.

Why Peer Advisors?

Peer Advisors are upper classmen who aid the FYE Professor by:

- Offering helpful advice on the transition to college
- Serving as mentors for freshmen
- Helping with instruction by leading group discussions in class
- Keeping roll and/or grading co-curricular reflections
- Meeting with freshmen outside of class to offer assistance and to observe any inconsistencies in academic behavior
- Having possibly taken the paired course before

Faculty Training

- FYE Faculty are required to attend three Spring planning workshops to prepare for Scene II and FYE.
 - Workshop 1- **Nuts and Bolts**: An overview of the course and course requirements.
 - Workshop II- **Syllabus Parts**: Sharing components to build your syllabus to address the course objectives and requirements (CCE inclusions, hands-on activities and final project.)
 - Workshop III- **Orientation and Summer Read Discussion**

Optional Faculty Training

- Two Hands-on workshops are held during the summer months
 - Hands-On Activities that address the FYE objectives
 - Syllabus-Building workshop

Five Co-curricular Events (CCEs) that Address the FYE Objectives



Objective 1: Exploring the nature of Liberal Arts

(1) Fall Convocation

(2) Choose one additional CCE from this category.

Examples: Lecture series, Center for Sacred Music series, Center for the Study of Religious Freedom Series, other related events located on VWC campus events calendar. See: <http://www.vwc.edu/news-a-events/campus-events/campus-events.php>



Objective 2: Connecting to the VWC community

(3) Choose one CCE from this category.

Examples: “ DiscoverYour Space” class project, community service event, club fair, art exhibits, campus debates, concerts, campus athletic events, class trip to a campus or off-campus event together (\$100 is available for



Objective 3: Self-governance, such as study skills

(4&5) Choose 2 CCEs from this category.

Examples: Learning Center Study Skills workshop, Career Services, Library Instruction, and Instructional Technology. (Faculty are encouraged to work with workshop leaders to fine tune their workshop so that their students are using the learned skills to complete a class assignment.)

This category is of particular importance in helping student manage the transition from high school to college.

Scene II Orientation Topics

Why do we require orientation for new freshmen?

- Orientation marks the beginning of the transition to college from high school
- The freshmen meet with their FYE professors and attend campus events together as part of their first contact hours of FYE.
- Orientation sets the academic tone for the semester.
- Students learn study skill habits that they will need to be successful college students.



Orientation Topics

Pre-orientation and

Day One



- Faculty meet for informational planning meeting with director
- Faculty meet with peer advisors
- Ice Breakers and Introduction to Course
- Opportunity for class schedule modifications

Orientation Topics

Day Two

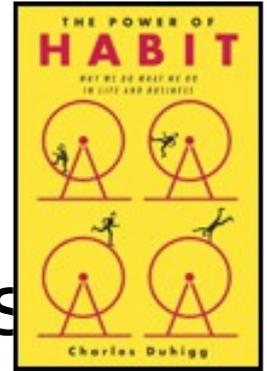
- Additional time for schedule revisions
- Course and orientation expectations
- Rotation group sections*
 - Getting Connected Online to VWC
 - Exploring the Library
 - Get Motivated!
 - Learning about Campus Life Resources

***ADDRESSES**

and Community Service
OBJECTIVE 3: DEVELOPING SELF-GOVERNANCE SKILLS

Orientation Topics

Day Two (continued)



- Preparing for Panel Discussion
- Faculty Panel Disciplinary Perspective Discussion on the Summer Read*
- Make it a Habit to Say Something! (sexual assault program)

***ADDRESSES**

OBJECTIVE 1: UNDERSTANDING THE LIBERAL ARTS

Orientation Topics

Day Three

- Book discussion and assignment with your section
- Preparing for the Honor Code Convocation*
- Honor Code Convocation*
- Discover Your Space *

***ADDRESSES**

OBJECTIVE 2: CONNECTING TO THE GREATER VWC COMMUNITY

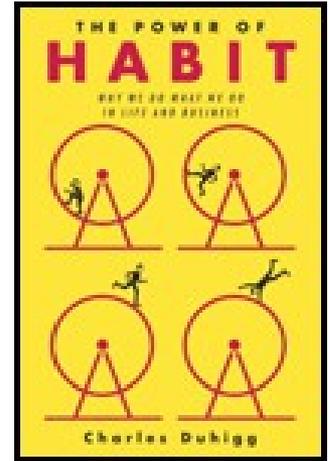
Discover Your Space



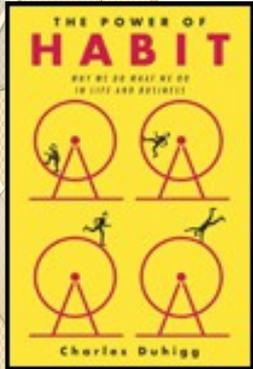
“Discover Your Space” led by peer advisors. *Students from each FYE section follow given clues to designated sites on campus, take a picture of the class at the locations and send them electronically to be shown during the Honor Convocation.*



Theme-based FYE



- The theme of the freshmen summer read is incorporated in both
 - Orientation, and
 - FYE content and co-curricular events.



Theme-based Events Examples

- **“Make a Habit: Say Something!”**
- **"Don't Buy a \$40,000 Cheeseburger: Establishing Good Financial Habits in College“**
- **Make it a Habit to Vote**
- **Lessons from VWC Grads: The Connection between Habit and Success**
- **Fall Convocation: "*Habits and the End of the Liberal Arts*"**

Hands-on activities that
address the learning
objectives of the course





The Hands-On Activities Address the FYE Learning Objectives

- 1. Students will explore the nature of liberal arts learning.**
- 2. Students will connect to the greater VWC community.**
- 3. Students will develop habits of self-governance and personal resourcefulness that lead to college success.**

Hands-On Activity - First Day - Ice Breaker

- **Coyotes and Roadrunners**

1) Have students count off by twos. One group is the coyotes; the other is the roadrunners.



2) Ask students to come up with a list of questions they would like to ask one another.



3) Pair a coyote and one roadrunner pair

4) Answer the questions you have selected.

5) Have the students rotate so that everyone

6) A coyote moves, and then a roadrunner.

5) Get together at the end and debrief.
Adapted from On Course I workshop, led by Skip Downing, Maryland, May 24-27, 2012.

<http://oncourseworkshop.com/On-Campus-%20Faculty-%20Development.htm>

Coyotes and Roadrunners

TASS Icebreaker

- Where did you go to dinner last night?
- What city/country would you most like to visit? Why?
- What was the last movie you went to see in the theater? What did you think of it?



Hands-On Activity - Addressing Objective 1:
Students will explore the nature of liberal arts learning.

- At Virginia Wesleyan College, students complete several activities on the history and nature of the liberal arts during the fall semester.
- As mentioned, during the two and a half day orientation, freshmen learn about the meaning of the Liberal Arts by activities related to the Freshmen Summer Read, including the multi-disciplinary perspective faculty panel discussion on the summer read.

Hands-On Activity - Addressing Objective **2**:
Students will connect to the greater VWC community.

FYE 101 Exploring the Honor Code through Role Playing (Hand-out attached.)

Description: Students will explore the VWC Honor code.

- Students play the roles of the professor, students accused of violating the Honor Code, and Honor council representatives.
- Students next break into groups (VIOLATIONS, RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, and PENALTIES) and use the Honor Code booklet as a guide to determine guilt and possible penalties

Hands-On Activity - Addressing Objective 3: Students will develop habits of self-governance and personal resourcefulness that lead to college success.

Inspirational Videos

- Floating Football Pitch



- Procrastination



- Pep Talk





Hands-On Activity - Addressing Objective 3: Students will develop habits of self-governance and personal resourcefulness that lead to college success.

Activity 1: Getting Organized (Hand-outs attached.)

This form helps students think about what daily tasks they need to complete a specific course and allows them to keep track of when and how often these tasks need to be done.

It also reminds students that the course fits into their long-term goals and dreams in life, so they can see how important it is to complete the tasks they have listed.

Finally, this form helps students think about the challenges that keep them from achieving their goals in this course, and the kind of work they will need to do if they want to be successful.

[Tracking Form for Eng 105, attached](#)

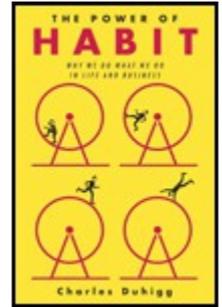
[Tracking Form for Math 104, attached](#)

Adapted from On Course I workshop, led by Skip Downing, Maryland, May 24-27, 2012.

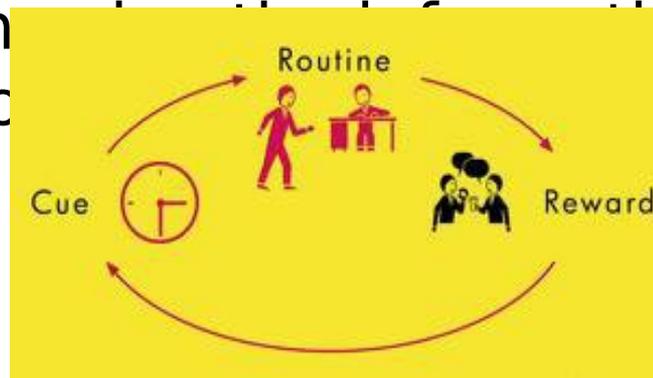
<http://oncourseworkshop.com/On-Campus%20Faculty%20Development.htm>

Hands-On Activity - Addressing Objective 3: Students will develop habits of self-governance and personal resourcefulness that lead to college success.

- **Activity 2: Power of Habit**



- Students work in groups to investigate the meaning of habit, good habits and habits that might get in the way of a student's success.
- Next, students pick a habit they'd like to create or a habit they'd like to change and build a plan. This activity is based on a definition shared in Duhigg's book.



Hands-On Activity - Addressing Objective 3: Students will develop habits of self-governance and personal resourcefulness that lead to college success.

Activity 3: FYE 101 Time Management Group Work Activity (*Follows class attendance at Time Management CCE.*)

- 1) In groups, discuss possible items under each

When to Study...	Where to study...	With whom to study...	How to study...

- 2) In your groups, discuss what keeps you from getting your studying done thus far.

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Hands-On Activity - Linking FYE to Paired Course

Linked FYE to Math 104 Algebra and Its Applications

- Students completed a word problem in FYE related to their “Community Service” project of purchasing and planting tulips on campus. The problem was on Systems of Linear Equations, which is



topic covered in their course.

To plant our tulip and daffodil bulbs, we have room for 80 bulbs. If the daffodils are \$.75 per bulb and the tulips are \$.50 per bulb, how many of each can we purchase if our budget is \$50. #

Hands-On Activity - Linking FYE to Paired Course

Linked FYE to Introduction to American Studies

The FYE class paired with Introduction to American Studies conducted research into the original inhabitants of the land on which Virginia Wesleyan was built.

We discovered it belonged to the Chesapeake Indians, who were wiped out by Powhatan before the arrival of the British in 1607.

We learned about history, their lifestyle and their legacy in their region.

Our goal was to honor them through a project on our campus space, but we were unable to get permission for the improvement we had in mind.

However, the class did learn that our space once belonged to someone else and that it was really important to remember and respect that fact.

They also learned to embrace the space the way the Chesepian people might have.

FYE Final Assignment that Addresses all Three Goals: (Liberal Arts, Connecting to VWC, Learning Self-Governance Skills)

Major/Career Case Study, Presentation and Fact Sheet (See hand-out attached.)

Goals:

- To discover more about your intended major and the resources available at Virginia Wesleyan College to help undecided students choose a major.
- To discover more about your intended career and the resources available at Virginia Wesleyan College and on-line to help undecided students choose a career.
- To pull together concepts you have learned through-out the semester.

Evaluation of the FYE Program



Student Course Evaluation 2012

Students from 30 of the 37 sections (up from 14 sections for 2011) responded to the Live Text survey. Additionally, the number of respondents increased from 95 (for 2011) to 200 (for 2012).



Student Course Evaluation Summary

- More than 90% of the students who responded found that having their FYE professor **teach both** their FYE course and their paired course was helpful to them as students.
- Additionally, 90+% of students in paired classes found that having **the same** students in both the FYE and paired enriched their experience.
- Additionally, 92% of respondents felt that it was valuable to have their FYE class taught by the **person serving as their academic advisor.**

Student Course Evaluation

Positive Aspects of FYE

Student comments related to the positive components of FYE included:

- Advising
- CCEs
- Forming new relationships
- Getting to connect with the VWC campus
- Individual professor
- The pairings
- Peer advisors
- Embrace Your Space (2012)
- Getting help transitioning to college

Positive Aspects of FYE: Comments

- “I developed a closer relationship with other students, including those I live with and my peer advisors.”
- “I felt closer to my classmates because we had two classes together instead of just one.”
- I also enjoyed the CCEs that I attended and found them to be inspirational.”
- “I learned a lot about course selection and choosing a major from my professor/advisor.”
- “I liked getting involved in campus life and learning about what campus resources were available.”

Course Evaluation

Summary on **Co-curricular events**

- Student comments on CCEs were positive overall.
- The two favorite workshops seemed to be the library workshop and time management workshop.
- Students also found the Career Services workshop and the "getting organized" workshop to be helpful.
- In response, we re-organized workshops for fall 2013 and asked faculty to talk with workshop leaders regarding the content they would like covered for their section. Additionally, each section is attending one Time Management workshop

Course Evaluation Student and Faculty responses for **Change**

- Have study skills CCEs more relevant.
 - More activities on team building outside of class and during class.
 - More hands-on activities.
- In response, we are encouraging FYE faculty to consider providing hands-on activities.

Freshmen Retention First semester Results

FALL 2009

- Retention rate for Fall 2009 to Spring 2010:
90%
- Fall 2009 GPA: 2.0

FALL 2011

- Retention rate for Fall 2011 to Spring 2012:
91%
- Fall 2011 GPA: 2.63

Fall 2010

- Retention rate for Fall 2010 to Spring 2011:
86%
- Fall 10 GPA:1.88

FALL 2012

- Retention rate for Fall 2012 to Spring 2013:
91%
- Fall 2012 GPA: - 2.72

Questions?

