



Deadlines and Due Dates

In this fast-paced world, there are always tasks to be completed and deadlines to be met. These realities are a constant part of daily life. If one of the purposes of college is to prepare students for the demands of the workplace, then to what extent are institutions exposing students to the rigor of meeting deadlines and working within a world of perpetual due dates? Murray (2008) has argued that colleges are not effectively helping students with this real-world transition. Rather than creating policies and practices that challenge students to demonstrate personal responsibility, colleges tend to coddle them. This issue of *The Toolbox* examines the ways in which the development and enforcement of course deadlines can contribute to student growth and increased levels of responsibility.

Lifelong Companions: Deadlines and Excuses

Given human nature, it is likely that for every deadline that has ever been set, there has been at least one excuse (if not more) offered as to why it was unavoidably missed. Schwartz (1986) identified the top five categories of student excuses for the late submission of assignments: (a) death of a grandparent, (b) an accident involving a friend or relative, (c) automotive problems, (d) animal or pet trauma, and (e) the unfortunate results of crime victimization. The questions that arise for faculty when students use these excuses are

- Is the student really telling the truth?
- What is the published class policy on submission of late assignments?
- Should I make an exception?
- Am I willing to enforce the stated policy in spite of the presented excuse?

Lifelong Enemies: Deadlines and Procrastination

It is arguably a common human trait to stall the completion of assigned tasks in the shadow of a looming deadline. Zarick and Stonebreaker (2009) cite the example of the well-known annual deadline for the completion of federal income tax forms: April 15. Everyone knows that this deadline will arrive on the same date each year. Yet thousands wait until the evening of April 14 to complete that onerous task and then race to the post office just in the nick of time. According to Zarick and Stonebreaker, possible reasons for this prevailing pattern of procrastination include (a) uncertainty (i.e., not sure what is expected), (b) aversion (i.e., people are less likely to start something that they really do not want to do), (c) fear (i.e., of the consequences, the perceived inability to successfully complete the task), and (d) poor planning (i.e., time runs out in the midst of other demands). Waiting to complete a task that is not understood, disliked, feared, or unplanned often results in poor performance and negative consequences.



“I love deadlines. I like the whooshing sound they make as they fly by.

Douglas Adams, English writer and dramatist

He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else.

Benjamin Franklin, American statesman

If it weren't for the last minute, nothing would get done.”

Rita Mae Brown, American writer

Creating a Positive Learning Experience (With Deadlines Attached)

To successfully incorporate firm assignment deadlines into a course, the following factors should be considered:

- **Create a schedule for the semester that includes assignment deadlines.** If deadlines are to become a part of course expectations, the syllabus must include a detailed schedule of the dates, times, and topics for all planned learning experiences, including assignments.
- **Be specific about deadlines.** A syllabus-based articulation of deadlines should include the date, time, and manner of submission (e.g., through the course management system, via e-mail, at the beginning of a scheduled class).
- **Make clear the consequences for late or missing assignments.** Students should be made aware, in advance and in the syllabus, of the consequences for submitting assignments after the deadline (e.g., For each 24-hour period that an assignment is late, 25% of the available points will be deducted).
- **Refrain from adding assignments to the schedule.** A faculty behavior that often draws the greatest number of complaints from students is the unexpected addition of new assignments not listed on the syllabus. All work for the class should be clearly stated in the syllabus prior to the beginning of the semester.
- **Avoid changing the schedule over the course of the semester.** There are times when unexpected and disruptive events occur during a term (e.g., cancellations due to weather, faculty cancellations due to illness). To resolve any delays caused by these unforeseen occurrences, initiate a discussion with the class as to how things will proceed from that date forward to the end of the semester. Make sure to announce a clear and precise resolution of these matters as related to due dates.
- **Provide reminders of due dates for upcoming assignments.** To help keep students and the class as a whole on track, as a general practice, consider providing routine reminders for upcoming course-related events (e.g., Next week, we will be discussing... , Your blog entries should be entered by Friday at 5:00 p.m.).
- **Be consistent in administering deadline policies.** Consistency is the key when administering a deadline policy. Make every effort to apply the rules of deadlines in a manner that is fair, equitable, and reasonable. On occasion, there may be situations that require an exception (i.e., a documented illness); however, as a general rule, the policy should be maintained and enforced as written.
- **Periodically review deadline policies and the consequences.** Take time to routinely review the rules that are in place, whether they are working effectively, and the ways in which they can be communicated more clearly or administered more efficiently and fairly.

Make deadline policies a part of your teaching and your syllabi. And don't be late in getting that done!

References

- Murray, C. (2008). College daze. *Forbes*, 182(3), 32.
- Schwartz, M. (1986). An investigation of bad karma and its relationship to the grades of college students. *Journal of Polymorphous Perversity*, 3, 9-12.
- Zarick, L. M., & Stonebreaker, R. (2009). I'll do it tomorrow: The logic of procrastination. *College Teaching*, 57(4), 211-215.

18th National Conference on Students in Transition

October 8-10, 2011
St. Louis, Missouri



www.sc.edu/fye/sit

31st Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience®

FEBRUARY 17-21, 2012
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Call for Papers and Conference Announcement

Conference Highlights

- » Colleague clusters at luncheon
- » Featured Speakers:
Dewayne Matthews, Vice President for Policy and Strategy of the Lumina Foundation for Education
Charles Blauch, Director of the Center of Inquiry at Wabash College
- » Commercial and nonprofit exhibits
- » Focused dialogues to facilitate networking

Cohosted by:

Texas Higher Education
Coordinating Board
Trinity University
University of Texas at San Antonio

Proposal Deadline: October 17, 2011



NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND
STUDENTS IN TRANSITION
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

www.sc.edu/fye/annual

WHAT'S HAPPENING

at The National Resource Center

Conferences and Continuing Education

Online Courses

The National Resource Center offers online courses on topics of interest in higher education. The courses are designed to provide participants with the same content and opportunities for interaction with peers and with the instructor as traditional (i.e., classroom-based) learning environments while taking advantage of pedagogy and teaching techniques that are not possible or common in those settings. The courses have limited enrollment and use tools such as e-mail, threaded discussions/forums, listservs, and blogs. For more information, visit www.sc.edu/fye/oc.

Conferences and Institutes

18th National Conference on Students in Transition

October 8-10, 2011 | St. Louis, Missouri

Register by September 15, 2011, to receive early registration discount of up to \$255

This conference offers participants the opportunity to share with and learn from each other the latest trends, initiatives, best practices, ideas, research, and assessment strategies focused on supporting student success through the first college year and beyond. For more information on the conference, please visit www.sc.edu/fye/sit.

Institute on First-Year Student Success in the Community College

November 6-8, 2011 | Cincinnati, Ohio

The National Resource Center invites professionals involved in first-year initiatives in community colleges to participate in the Institute on First-Year Success in the Community College. This Institute will provide attendees the opportunity to discuss the current role of the community college in higher education and develop an action plan for creating or enhancing pathways for community college student success. Interactive sessions are designed with practical application in mind so that participants will be ready to implement strategic initiatives when they return to campus. For more information, please visit www.sc.edu/fye/sscc.

31st Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience

February 17-21, 2012 | San Antonio, Texas

Proposal Deadline: October 17, 2011

This annual conference is designed to provide educators from nearly every corner of higher education a comfortable, welcoming environment to share innovative ideas, programs, tools, and research critical to the first-year experience. Registration and proposal information is available at www.sc.edu/fye/annual.

Save the Dates

Institute on First-Year Seminar Leadership

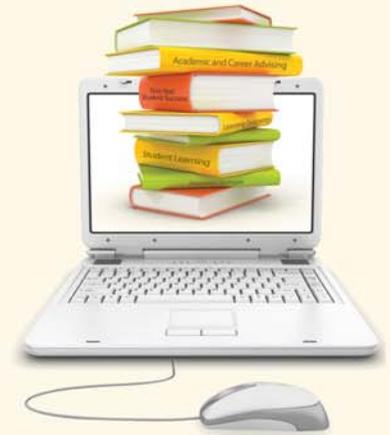
April 15-17, 2012 | Columbia, South Carolina (University of South Carolina campus)

25th International Conference on The First-Year Experience

July 16-19, 2012 | Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Online Courses

on The First-Year Experience®
and Students in Transition



October 3-November 4, 2011 Developing and Sustaining Effective Peer Education Programs

Instructor: Jennifer Latino, Director of First-Year Experience at Campbell University

April 2-May 4, 2012 Instructor Training and Development: Critical Foundations for First-Year Seminar Programs

Instructor: Mary Stuart Hunter, Associate Vice President for U101 Programs and the National Resource Center at the University of South Carolina

May 14-June 15, 2012 Transfer Student Success

Instructor: Mark Allen Poisel, Associate Provost for Student Success at Pace University

July 8-August 9, 2012 Developing and Constructing Valid Survey Instruments

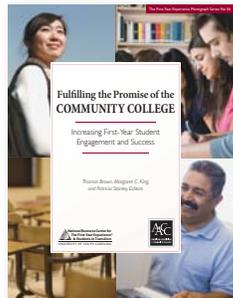
Instructor: Ryan D. Padgett, National Resource Center Assistant Director of Research, Grants, and Assessment at the University of South Carolina

Courses are limited to the first 25 registrants.

Register at www.sc.edu/fye/oc

Publications

The National Resource Center is pleased to announce the release of three new publications:



Monograph No. 56

Fulfilling the Promise of the Community College: Increasing First-Year Student Engagement and Success

Thomas Brown, Margaret C. King, and Patricia Stanley, Editors
A joint publication with the American Association of Community Colleges

Fulfilling the Promise of the Community College is one of the first volumes to take a comprehensive look at the first-year experience in the community college, examining the unique characteristics of

these institutions and the students they serve, barriers to success, and strategies for ensuring that students achieve their higher education goals. Authors describe successful adaptations of faculty development initiatives, first-year seminars, common reading programs, academic and career advising, learning communities, and STEM initiatives in the community college setting. To learn more or order a copy, visit www.sc.edu/fye/publications.

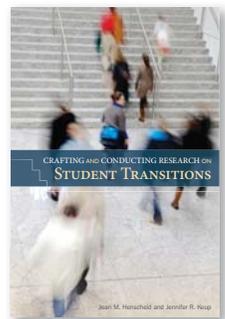


The First-Year Seminar: Designing, Implementing, and Assessing Courses to Support Student Learning and Success, Volume I: Designing and Administering the Course

Jennifer R. Keup and Joni Webb Petschauer

This five-volume series is designed to assist educators who are interested in launching a first-year seminar or revamping an existing program. Volume I opens by defining common seminar configurations, goals, and course topics, drawing on national studies and institutional research reports. It offers guidance in selecting a seminar

model, addresses strategies for launching and administering the seminar, and describes successfully managing change within the course. Broadly conceived, this first volume in the five-volume series lays the ground work for more in-depth coverage to follow. To learn more or order a copy, visit www.sc.edu/fye/publications.



Crafting and Conducting Research on Student Transitions

Jean M. Hensheid and Jennifer R. Keup

Designed for students and educational professionals researching students' movement into and through higher education, *Crafting and Conducting Research on Student Transitions* is a concise resource, describing both qualitative and quantitative methods. The authors walk readers through the process of selecting a topic, designing a study, and disseminating the research results on explorations of the college student experience from the first college year to beyond

graduation. To learn more or order a copy, visit www.sc.edu/fye/publications.



A biannual publication from the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience® and Students in Transition

E-Source for College Transitions is a complimentary biannual electronic newsletter published by the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

Its primary purpose is to provide practical strategies for supporting student learning and success. Articles on a variety of topics related to student transitions are welcome, including those focusing on:

- > Strategies for addressing the first-year, sophomore, senior, and transfer transitions at different types of institutions
- > Innovative teaching strategies and programs addressing the needs of special student populations
- > Strategies for assessing student learning experiences, programs, or courses
- > Descriptions of institutional initiatives with demonstrated results
- > Descriptions of new and relevant print and online resources



Visit www.sc.edu/fye/esource to sign up for content alerts or view archived issues.

NRC Exhibits and Presentations

Like many of you, the staff of the National Resource Center plan to be actively involved in the fall conference circuit. We are pleased to share the following upcoming opportunities to hear about the results of research studies conducted by the Center, learn about best practices, and to meet NRC staff members.

The Effects of High-Impact Practices Across Twenty-First Century Learning

Outcomes. Plenary session by Ryan D. Padgett, NRC assistant director of research, grants, and assessment; at the 2011 Midwest First-Year Experience Conference in Elgin, Illinois; September 30, 2011.

The Impact of First-Year Seminars on Student Involvement and Engagement in Educational Good Practices. Educational session by Ryan D. Padgett, NRC assistant director of research, grants, and assessment; at the 2011 Midwest First-Year Experience Conference in Elgin, Illinois; September 30, 2011.

First-Year and Student Transition Resources in an Academic Advising Setting. Presentation by Mary Stuart Hunter, NRC executive director and Rico Reed, NRC assistant director for administration and resource development; at the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) Conference; Tuesday, October 4, 2011, at 11:15 a.m. in Room #711.

Emerging Evidence From the 2011 National Survey of Senior Capstone Experiences. Presentation by Ryan D. Padgett, NRC assistant director of research, grants, and assessment; at the 18th National Conference on Students in Transition in St. Louis, Missouri; October 8-10, 2011.

High-Impact Programs on Student Persistence: Evidence From Institutional-Level Data Collected by the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. Presentation by Ryan D. Padgett, NRC assistant director of research, grants, and assessment; at the 2011 National Symposium on Student Retention in Charleston, South Carolina; October 31-November 2, 2011.

Applying the Principles of High-Impact Practices to Orientation and Transition Programs. A roundtable discussion facilitated by Tracy L. Skipper, NRC assistant director for publications; at the 2011 National Orientation Directors Association Conference (NODAC) in New Orleans, Louisiana; November 1, 2011, 9:15-10:15 a.m.

Award Nominations

Excellence in Teaching First-Year Seminars Award

The National Resource Center and McGraw-Hill Higher Education will present the second annual Excellence in Teaching First-Year Seminars Award to one exceptional teacher at the Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience in San Antonio, Texas, in February, 2012. The award recipient will receive an Excellence in Teaching First-Year Seminars plaque, a cash award, and travel expenses (maximum of \$750) to attend the 2012 Annual Conference.

College deans or chief academic officers are encouraged to nominate one instructor from their institution who has achieved great success in teaching first-year seminars and who inspires students to succeed. Nominations are being accepted until October 3, 2011. For more information and to submit a nomination for the Excellence in Teaching First-Year Seminars Award, please visit www.mhhe.com/firstyearaward.

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The National Resource Center is on Facebook. Visit www.facebook.com/fyesit to be directed to our Facebook page. Like us and receive access to a network of educators committed to student college success.

The National Resource Center is on Twitter.

Visit www.twitter.com/nrcfyesit to follow @NRCFYESIT and become even more connected with the ongoing work of the Center.

The Toolbox

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The Toolbox is an online professional development newsletter offering innovative learner-centered strategies for empowering college students to achieve greater success. The newsletter is published six times a year by the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.

The online subscription is free. To register for newsletter alerts and access back issues, please visit www.sc.edu/fye/toolbox.

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