



NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

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

The Trusted Expert and Internationally Recognized Leader
for all Postsecondary Student Transitions

(Common) Reading is Fundamental? Exploring Outcomes of Common Reading Programs

Dallin George Young (@DallinYoung)

National Resource Center for

The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition

Ellen Bara Stolzenberg

Higher Education Research Institute



Session Outline

- Background and purpose of common reading experiences
 - Definitions
 - Goals
 - Characteristics
 - Previous findings
- Outcomes of common reading experiences
- Discussion



COMMON READING EXPERIENCES: BACKGROUND

Common Reading Experience: What?

- Book chosen for all entering students (or a targeted group)
- Series of events to promote a common intellectual experience
- Faculty, staff & extended community participate
- Are academically oriented
- Promote reading, critical thinking, & discussion skills
- Focus on a theme generated from the selected work

High-Impact Educational Practices



First-Year Seminars and Experiences

Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars and other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members' own research.

Common Intellectual Experiences

The older idea of a "core" curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.

Learning Communities

The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with "big questions" that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link "liberal arts" and "professional courses"; others feature service learning.

Writing-Intensive Courses

These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice "across the curriculum" has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and, on some campuses, ethical inquiry.

Collaborative Assignments and Projects

Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research.

Undergraduate Research

Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students' early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

Diversity/Global Learning

Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore "difficult differences" such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

Service Learning, Community-Based Learning

In these programs, field-based "experiential learning" with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both *apply* what they are learning in real-world settings and *reflect* in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

Internships

Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

Capstone Courses and Projects

Whether they're called "senior capstones" or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of "best work," or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.



Association
of American
Colleges and
Universities



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



HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH INSTITUTE AT UCLA
home of the COOPERATIVE INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAM



Association
of American
Colleges and
Universities

First-Year Seminars and Experiences

Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members' own research.

Common Reading Experiences

Common Intellectual Experiences

The older idea of a "core" curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.



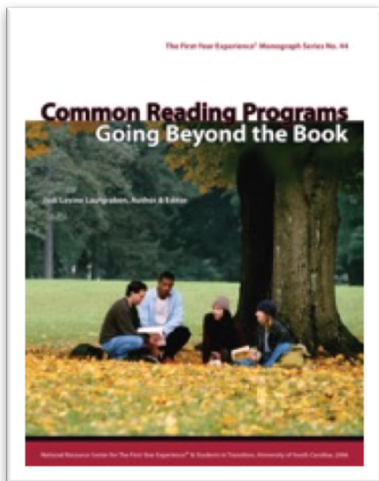
NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA



HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH INSTITUTE AT UCLA
home of the COOPERATIVE INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAM

“By intentionally creating this relationship between the curricular and co-curricular components of the common reading program, the gap between students’ in- and out-of-classroom learning is narrowed and learning is deepened.”

(Laufgraben, 2006, p. 73)



Goals of Common Reading Programs

- Most frequently named objectives of CREs:
 - Introduction and modeling of college academic content and intellectual rigor
 - Building community

(Ferguson, 2006; Laufgraben, 2006; Skipper, et al., 2010; Twinton, 2007).



Other Goals of Common Reading Programs

- Diversity and global learning
- Facilitating discourse across difference
- Advancing the understanding of interdisciplinarity
- Reading and reading comprehension

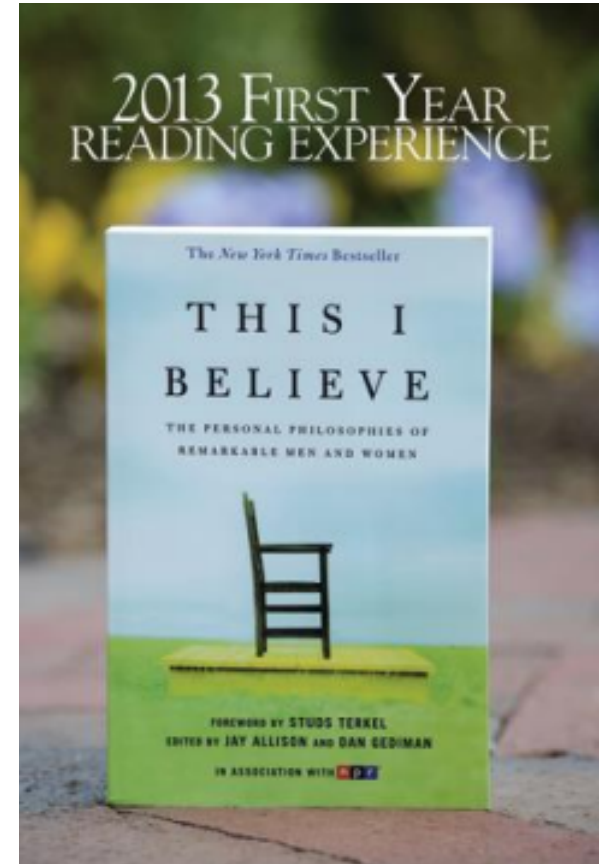
(Laufgraben, 2006; Sanger, Ramsey, & Merberg, 2008; Twinton, 2007)



CRE Text Selection

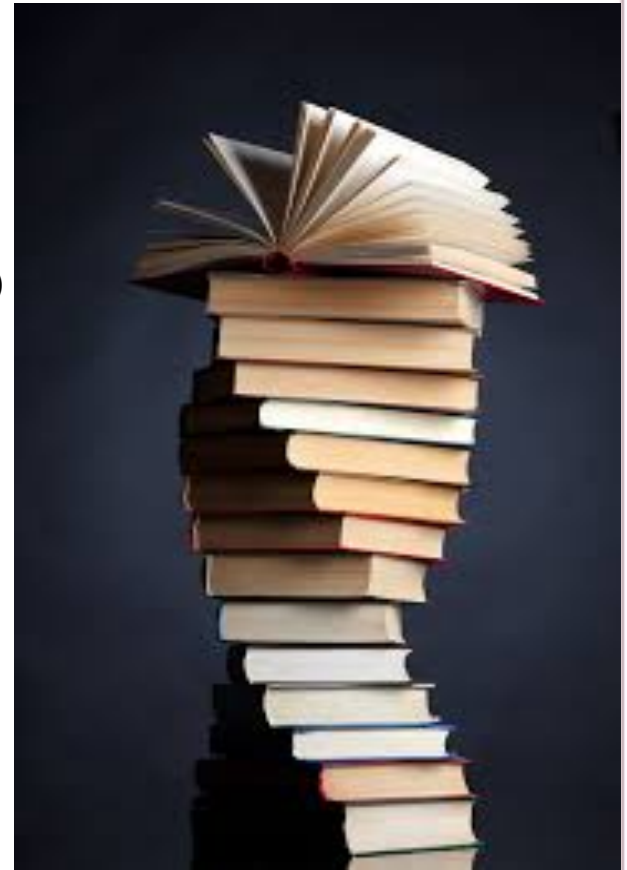
“The choice of a single book...can be a powerful signal to students (and to faculty members) about the college’s educational priorities. In many cases, the book that is chosen is the only reading that all members of a class or a college have in common.”

(Thorn, Wood, Plum, & Carter, 2013)



CRE in FYE? (Yeah You Know Me)

- CRE in Orientation programs:
 - 4-year: 43%, (Barefoot, Griffin, & Koch, 2012)
 - 2-year: 8% (Koch, Griffin, & Barefoot, 2014)
- CRE in First-Year Seminars:
 - 4-year: 46%
 - 2-year: 5% (Young & Hopp, 2014)

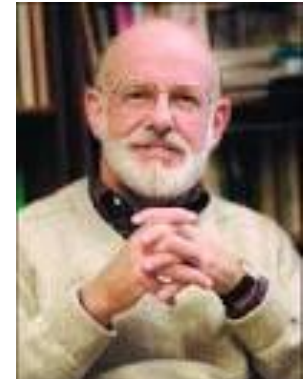


Common Reading Experience: Why?



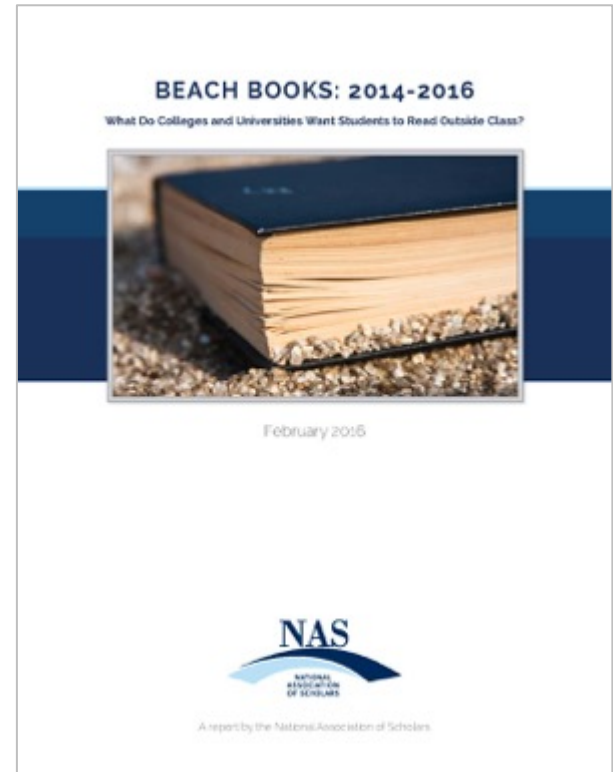
“A common reading may simulate, on a smaller scale, the advantages associated with a core curriculum by providing a “core” learning experience...” (Cuseo, FYE listserv 2004)

“Involving students in both in and out of class activities can impact cognitive development, including critical thinking.” (Terenzini, et al., 2006)



Why NOT a Common Reading

- Beach Books, National Association of Scholars (NAS)
- One of the few national studies of common reading selections is conducted biennially
- Conclusions assert that common reading text selections are:
 - Too homogeneous across institutions
 - Too recent
 - Too liberal in their thematic content and perspective
 - Generally lacking in intellectual and academic rigor
 - Rarely include classic literature



(Randall, 2016; Thorne, 2015;
Thorne, Wood, Plum, & Carter, 2013)

Why NOT a Common Reading

In 2013, Purdue University abruptly cut CRE over winter break to save \$75,000



**"Let me put it this way: no one produced any evidence it was having great success." "The common reading program is really being replaced by things that we think will be more valuable to incoming students."
(Daniels, 2014)**

Previous Research on CRE

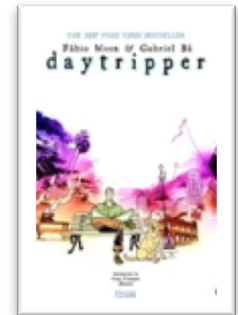
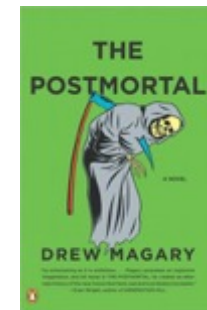
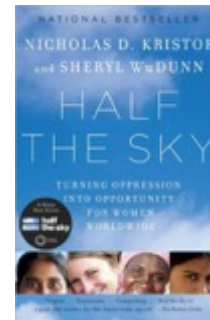
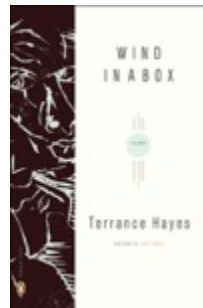
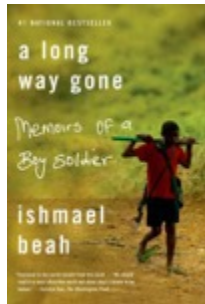
- CREs Positively Related to:
 - Development of first-year student community
 - Introduction of academic content to entering students;
 - Connections between curricular and cocurricular learning experiences
 - Exposure to new ideas, alternative perspectives, and diverse people
 - Information literacy
 - Critical thinking

(Delmas & Harrell, 2015; Goldfine, Mixson-Brookshire, Hoerrner, & Morrissey, 2011; Laufgraben, 2006; Mallard, et al., 2008; Sanger, Ramsey, & Merberg, 2008)



Previous Research on CRE

- Other single institution studies suggest CREs:
 - Have the power to develop empathy and remove stigmas surrounding LGBT issues (Madden, 2015) and mental illness (Feeg, et al., 2014)
 - Achieve their goals and were a worthwhile experience overall to students, faculty, and staff (Mallard, et al., 2008)



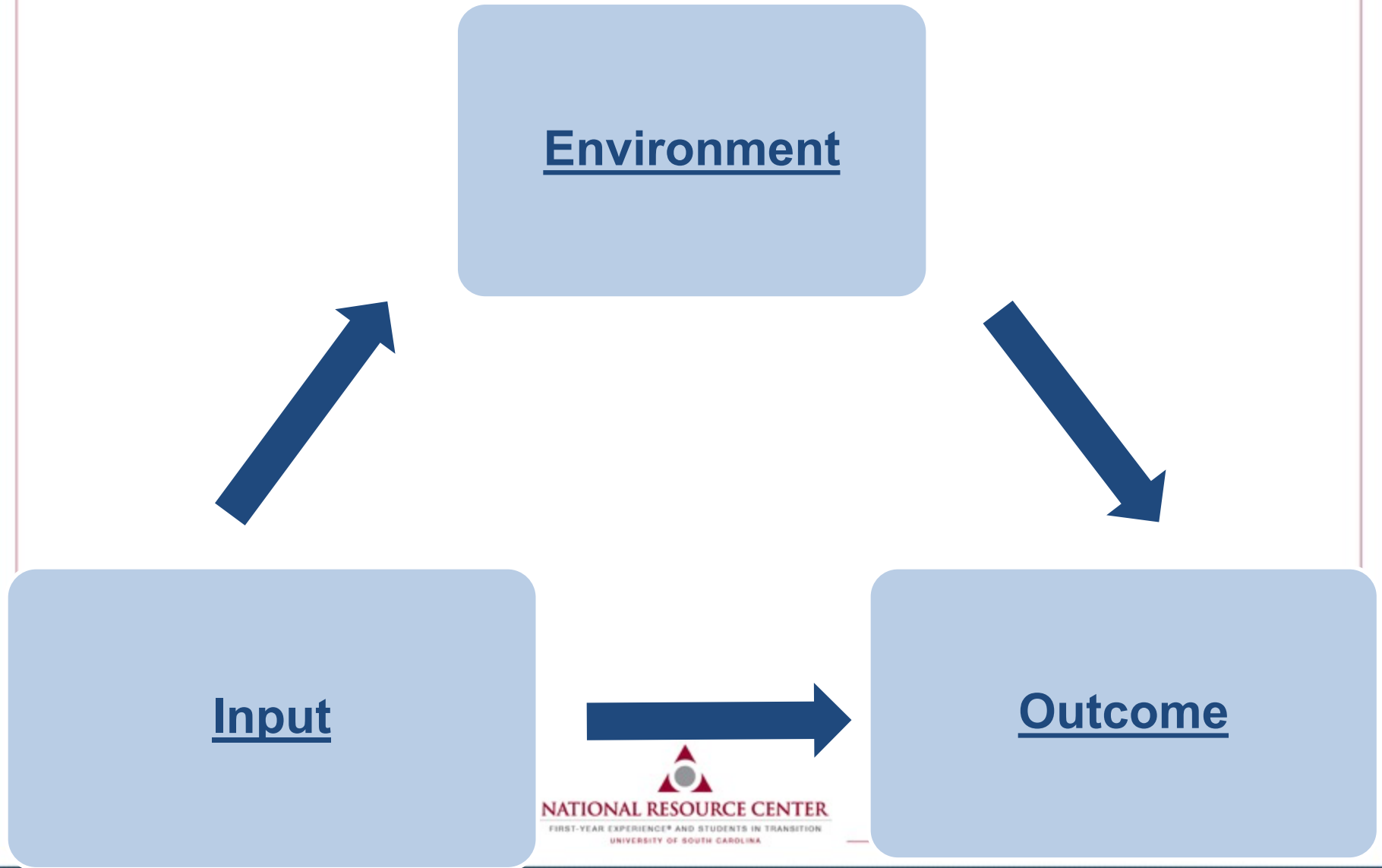
Previous Research on CRE

- Only two multi-institution studies of the impact of CREs on student learning outcomes:
- Twinton (2007)
 - CREs established community, forged commonality among new students, facilitated faculty-student interaction, and encouraged cross-campus collaboration
 - Based on a survey of faculty and staff opinions
- Soria (2015)
 - Participation in common reading programs are “significantly and positively associated with first-year students’ self-reported development in academic skills and multicultural appreciation and competence” (p. 29).
 - Sample of students at large, research-intensive institutions (SERU)



COMMON READING EXPERIENCES: OUTCOMES

Astin's I-E-O Model

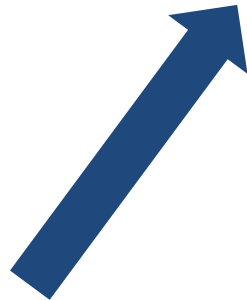


Astin's I-E-O Model

Environment

YFCY/DLE/CSS

(e.g., interactions with peers and faculty, academic enhancement experiences, co-curricular experiences)



Input

CIRP Freshman Survey

(e.g., academic performance in high school, financial concerns, expectations, degree aspirations, self-concept, demographics)



Outcome

YFCY/DLE/CSS

(e.g., gains in habits of mind, social agency, civic awareness, pluralistic orientation; satisfaction; post-college plans)

Study Details

- 9,831 students who completed both the 2015 Freshman Survey and 2016 Your First College Year Survey
 - 32% (n=2,656) participated in a CRE
- Blocked Regression analyses testing the impact of CREs on a variety of outcomes after controlling for demographics, background characteristics, and other college experiences

Is there a Relationship between CRE Participation and...

- Institution contributed to...
 - Intellectual and Practical Skills
 - Critical Thinking Skills
- Sense of Belonging
- Academic Adjustment
- Faculty Interaction
- Habits of Mind
- Overall Satisfaction

Is there a Relationship between CRE Participation and...

- Institution contributed to...
 - Intellectual and Practical Skills
 - Critical Thinking Skills
- Sense of Belonging
- Academic Adjustment
- Faculty Interaction
- Habits of Mind
- Overall Satisfaction

	Intellectual and Practical Skills	Sense of Belonging	Faculty Interaction	Overall Satisfaction
Student Success Programs				
Academic support	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	+	<i>n.s.</i>
Undergraduate research	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	+	<i>n.s.</i>
Learning community	<i>n.s.</i>	+	<i>n.s.</i>	+
FYS - academic inquiry focus	<i>n.s.</i>	+	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
FYS - adjustment to college life focus	<i>n.s.</i>	+	+	<i>n.s.</i>
Common Reading Experience	+	+	+	+

	Intellectual and Practical Skills	Sense of Belonging	Faculty Interaction	Overall Satisfaction
Institutional characteristics				
Control (Private)	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	+	<i>n.s.</i>
Selectivity	+	<i>n.s.</i>	-	<i>n.s.</i>
Demographics				
Students of color	<i>n.s.</i>	-	-	-
Sex (Female)	<i>n.s.</i>	+	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
First-generation status	<i>n.s.</i>	-	-	<i>n.s.</i>
Income	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	-	<i>n.s.</i>
Background characteristics				
First-choice institution	<i>n.s.</i>	+	+	+
HS GPA	+	+	+	+
Need special tutoring or remedial work in reading	<i>n.s.</i>	-	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Need special tutoring or remedial work in mathematics	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	+	<i>n.s.</i>
Ultimate degree objective	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	+	<i>n.s.</i>

	Intellectual and Practical Skills	Sense of Belonging	Faculty Interaction	Overall Satisfaction
Experiences with Faculty				
Faculty empower me to learn here	+	+	+	+
Faculty encouraged questions and discussions	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	+	+
Faculty express stereotypes	<i>n.s.</i>	-	+	+
Faculty provided feedback	+	+	+	+

	Intellectual and Practical Skills	Sense of Belonging	Faculty Interaction	Overall Satisfaction
Academic Engagement				
Made a presentation in class	+	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Discussed course with students outside of class	+	+	+	<i>n.s.</i>
Worked with classmates on group projects	+	+	+	+
Felt that courses inspired you to think in new ways	+	+	+	+
Exposure to diverse opinions, cultures, and values	+	+	<i>n.s.</i>	+
Contributions were valued	+	+	<i>n.s.</i>	+
Contributed to class discussions	<i>n.s.</i>	+	+	+
Current GPA	+	<i>n.s.</i>	+	+
Academic Disengagement	-	-	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Undecided about a major	<i>n.s.</i>	-	<i>n.s.</i>	-

	Intellectual and Practical Skills	Sense of Belonging	Faculty Interaction	Overall Satisfaction
Physiological and Affective				
Felt Isolated from campus life	-	-	-	-
Felt depressed	-	-	<i>n.s.</i>	-
Felt lonely or homesick	<i>n.s.</i>	-	<i>n.s.</i>	-
Felt unsafe on campus	-	-	+	-
Felt worried about health	-	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Felt overwhelmed	+	+	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Job responsibilities interfered with schoolwork	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	+	-
Family responsibilities interfered with schoolwork	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	+	<i>n.s.</i>
Felt family support	<i>n.s.</i>	+	-	<i>n.s.</i>

CRE Not a Predictor of:

- Habits of mind
- Inst. contribution to critical thinking skills
- Academic adjustment



COMMON READING EXPERIENCES: CLOSING DISCUSSION

Conclusions

- Results from study population a mixed bag:
 - CRE Significant and positive predictor of:
 - Sense of belonging
 - Faculty interaction
 - Satisfaction
 - Intellectual and practical skills
 - Connects with previous multi-institution research NET of other covariates
 - Non-significant predictor of:
 - Habits of mind
 - Critical thinking skills
 - Academic adjustment
 - Does not match previous research (single- or multi-institution studies)

Conclusions

- Reframing results
 - CRE a reasonable pathway to meet institutional goals related to:
 - Sense of belonging
 - Faculty interaction
 - Satisfaction
 - Intellectual and practical skills

Conclusions

- Reframing results
 - How can CREs be recast to improve outcomes related to:
 - Habits of mind
 - Critical thinking skills
 - Academic adjustment
 - What are structural elements that can make that possible?

Conclusions

- Ideas for Future Research
 - Peer effects?
 - More advantageous for certain subgroups?
 - Does the book itself matter?

Discussion

- What are the goals and objectives for CREs on your campus?
- What are the structures that have been set up to achieve them?
- How do educators facilitate/encumber the achievement of those goals?
- Any other topic you would like to discuss...

Shameless Plug

- 2017 National Survey of The First-Year Experience
- Launches on Feb. 21
- For more information, see page 81 of the conference program

Thank You!

Contact us:

dallin.young@sc.edu

stolzenberg@gseis.ucla.edu