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2005 National Survey on Sophomore-Year Initiatives

In fall 2005, the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition conducted the National Survey on Sophomore-Year Initiatives. The purpose of this survey was to gain a more accurate view of sophomore-year initiatives at four-year institutions.

Chief Student Affairs Officers at regionally accredited four-year institutions were emailed an invitation to participate in the survey. A total of 1,139 institutions were invited to participate in the survey. A total of 382 institutions responded to the survey.

- » 1,139 survey invitations distributed
- » 382 surveys completed (33.5% response rate)
- » 128 institutions reporting at least one sophomore-year initiative

Types of Sophomore-Year Initiatives

The type of sophomore-year initiatives varied among the 128 sophomore-year initiatives reported. The five most commonly ranked initiatives for students in their sophomore-year were: career planning ($n = 89$, 74.2%), programs to assist with selection of major ($n = 79$, 65.3%), and class events ($n = 56$, 46.3%).

Institutions with Initiatives Specifically or Intentionally Geared Toward Sophomores

Initiative	Number	Percentage
Career Planning	89	74.2
Programs to assist with selection of major	79	65.3
Academic advising	75	31
Class events	56	46.3
Peer mentoring by sophomores	54	46.2
Student government	46	38.7
Residence life	40	33.6
Community service / service-learning	38	32.8
Faculty and staff mentors for sophomore students	37	1.4
Credit-bearing course	24	21.1
Opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class	24	20.7
Financial aid	23	19.3
Cultural enrichment	22	18.8
Curricular learning communities	20	17.7
Publications for sophomores	20	16.8
Peer mentoring for sophomores	18	15.4
Other initiatives	22	28.6

Note. n 's for each initiative ranged from 113 to 123 (of the 128 institutions with at least one initiative). Percentages reported are calculated from the n for each specific item.

“Over one-third (37.3%) of respondents are planning some type of future sophomore-year initiative.”

Institutional Type and Size

“Private schools were more likely to offer a sophomore year initiative than were public schools ($\chi^2 = 5.41, p = 0.019, 1 \text{ df}, N = 371$), the types of sophomore initiatives offered by responding institutions varied little between schools of different sizes or sources of institutional control,” (Tobolowsky and Cox, 2007, p.14).

A significant difference with regard to institutional type was private schools being more likely to have sophomore-class events ($n = 46, 60.5\%$ vs. $n = 10, 28.6\%$). Private schools were also more likely to have student government initiatives for sophomores ($n = 38, 49.4\%$ vs. $n = 8, 21.1\%$).

<i>Sophomore Initiatives by Institution Type</i>		
Sophomore-Specific Initiatives ($n = 371$)	Public ($n=153$)	Private ($n=218$)
Frequency	41	84
Percentage	26.8%	38.5%
Sophomore Class Events ($n = 111$)	Public ($n=35$)	Private ($n=76$)
Frequency	10	46
Percentage	28.6%	60.5%
Sophomore Student Government Initiatives ($n = 115$)	Public ($n=38$)	Private ($n=77$)
Frequency	8	38
Percentage	21.1%	49.4%

In terms of institution size, small (FTE < 5,000) schools ($n = 35, 47.3\%$) are more likely than larger schools ($n = 9, 25\%$) to have sophomore student government initiatives.

Assessment of Sophomore-Year Initiatives

“Of the responding institutions with sophomore initiatives, only 29.5% have assessed their efforts. When conducted, assessments of sophomore initiatives tended to involve the use of locally developed surveys (58.8%), focus groups (57.1%), and institutional data analysis (54.3%). Some institutions assessed their initiatives using multiple methods,” (Tobolowsky and Cox, 2007, p.22).

<i>Types of Assessment Conducted on Sophomores</i>		
Assessment Method	Frequency	Percentage
Locally developed survey ($n = 34$)	20	58.8
Analysis of institutional data ($n = 35$)	20	57.1
Focus groups ($n = 35$)	19	54.3
Individual interviews ($n = 34$)	10	29.4
Commercially available survey ($n = 33$)	5	15.2

Future Plans for Sophomore-Year Initiatives

Over one-third (37.3%) of respondents are planning some type of future sophomore-year initiative. Schools with existing sophomore-year initiatives were more likely to be planning future sophomore initiatives than those schools without initiatives.

More information on this survey can be found in **The First-Year Experience Monograph Series #47**.