

# National Research and Trends on Curricular and Cocurricular Structures Supporting the Success of Second-Year College Students

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# Defining “Sophomores”

- More difficult to define than other transition points
- More ambiguity around the beginning and ending
  - Dual enrollment
  - Transfer
  - AP credit
- Does the definition include:
  - Time in college
  - Credits earned
  - Level of commitment and investment by student
  - Certainty of major

# WHY STUDY SOPHOMORES?



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# Why All this Interest in Sophomores?

- Outgrowth first-year experience movement
  - True model of student transition and success
- Recognition that second-year students have needs and face challenges
- Evidence that sophomores are at times the least satisfied of all students
- Emerging research and assessment on the second college year

# Why Study Sophomores?

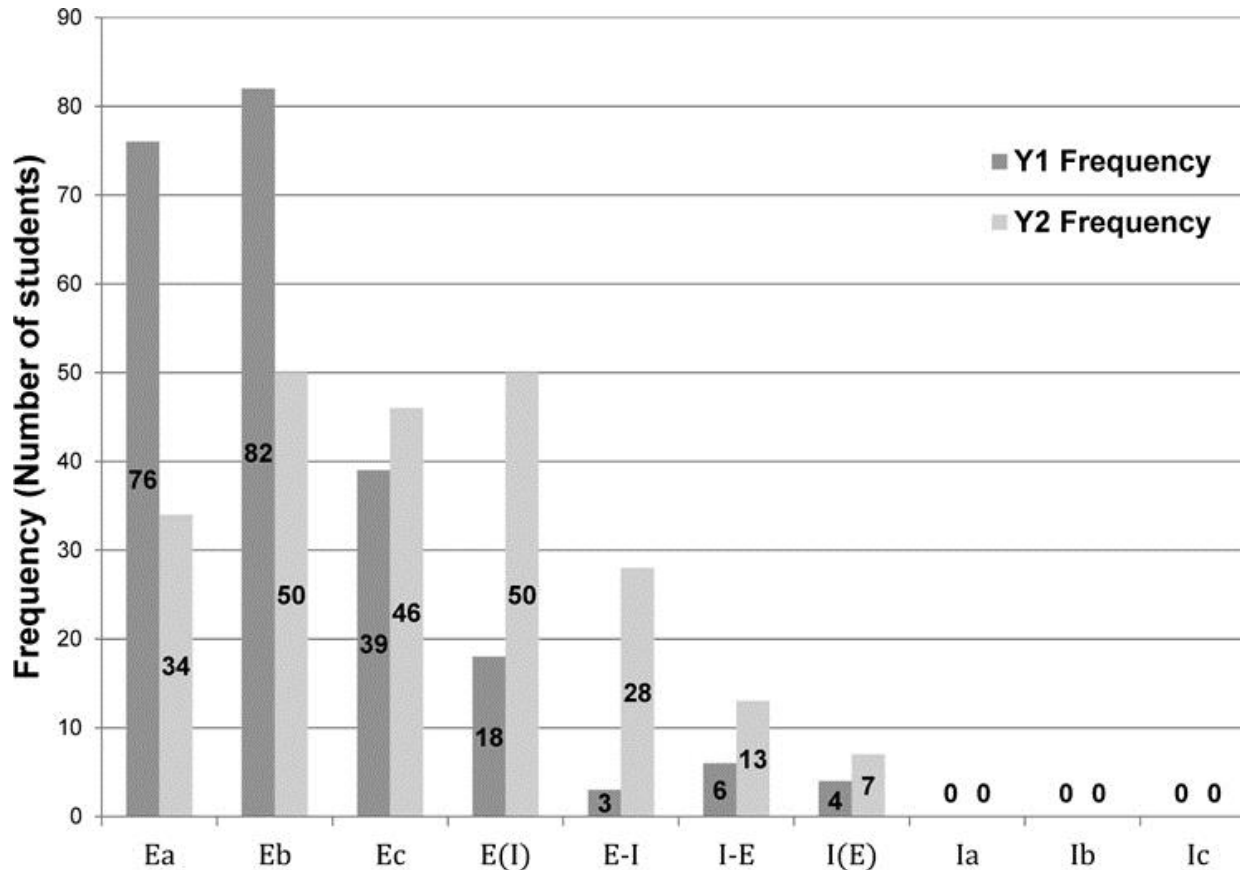
- Sophomore year has been characterized as:
  - Forgotten
  - Invisible
  - Disillusioned
  - Dispiriting
  - Academy's Middle Children
  - Slump
  - Full of inertia and confusion

*(Boyer Commission, 1998; Freedman, 1956; Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Pattengale & Schreiner, 2000; Tobolowsky, 2008)*

# Second Year as a Developmental Milestone

- Critical juncture for students developmentally
  - Academic development
  - Connection to institution and place in the community
  - Career development
  - Personal identity issues
  - Examination of life purpose
- Increased capacity to make progress on important college outcomes

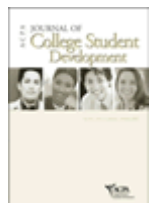
# Second Year as a Developmental Milestone



## Source of identity and meaning-making:

- Ea-External voice-unquestioning
- Eb-External voice-low tension
- Ec-External voice-high tension
- E(I)-External with awareness of internal
- E-I or I-E: Balanced
- I(E)-Internal with acknowledgement of external
- I(a-c): External

Baxter-Magolda, M.B., King, P.M., Taylor, K.B., & Wakefield, K.M. (2012). Decreasing authority dependence during the first year of college. *Journal of College Student Development*, 53(3), 481-435.



# Why Study Sophomores?

## Academic Issues

- Course of study/majors
- Academic self-efficacy
- Curriculum and academic progression
- Academic engagement
- Interaction with professors and instructional staff
- Career development

## Non-Academic Issues

- Satisfaction
- Motivation
- Social integration and involvement
- Financial issues
- Lifestyle decisions
- Redefining values
- Finding life purpose





A black and white photograph of a rural landscape. In the center, a large, leafless tree stands at the intersection of two dirt roads. The roads curve away from the tree towards the bottom left and bottom right. In the background, there are rolling hills and a smaller tree on the left. The sky is overcast. The overall mood is contemplative and open.

# Existential Questioning

What is the purpose of my life?

Why am I taking all these classes?

What should I major in?

What career should I choose?

# Practical Questioning

# Why Study Sophomores?

- Students face a paradox of expectations
  - Students are charged with taking a broad array of general education courses
  - Simultaneously being required to settle in to a specific educational track (Coburn & Treeger, 1997; Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Schreiner, 2004)
  - Courses in the lower division are taught by teaching assistants, thus sophomores do not have opportunity to interact with full-time faculty (Schreiner, Louis, & Nelson, 2012)
- This contributes to lack of motivation, disinterest in academics, & a desire to locate their “academic home” (Coburn & Treeger, 1997; Schreiner, 2004, 2010)

# Sophomore Year Matters

- Engagement
- Focus
- Sense of Direction
- Sense of Belonging
- Interactions with faculty
- Lead to increases in motivation, academic success, self-authorship and thriving



# Campus Response to Sophomores?

- Great attention given to the challenges of entering Higher Education (e.g. Clarke 1999, Tett 2000; Nutt et al 2005).
- Poor transition experiences for first-year students (e.g. Tett 2000; Nutt et al., 1989)
- A new first-year experience program has been implemented in the greatest transition year (e.g. Tett 1998, 1999), particularly non-traditional students (Tett, 2000)
- Efforts to plug leaks in the academic pipeline began with an attention to the first-year of college

**Not much. Invested in first-year students.**

# Campus Response to Sophomores?

**First-Year  
Students**



**Seniors**



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# Campus Response to Sophomores?

## First-Year

Orientation  
Common Reading Programs  
First-Year Seminars  
Student Engagement



## Senior Year

Capstone Experiences  
Job Fairs  
Professional Licensing  
Graduate and Professional School Applications

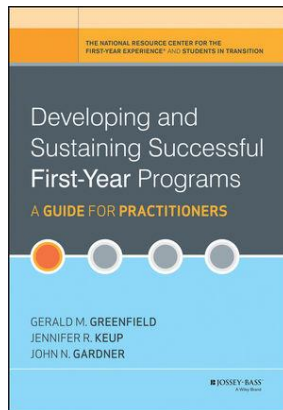
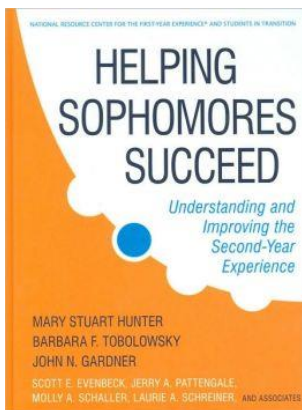
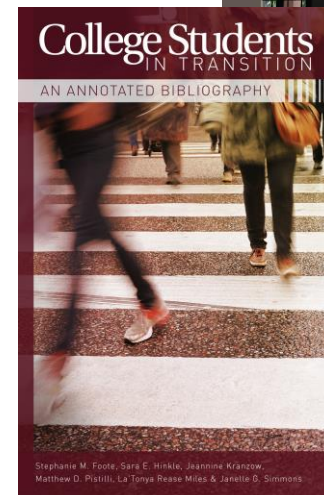
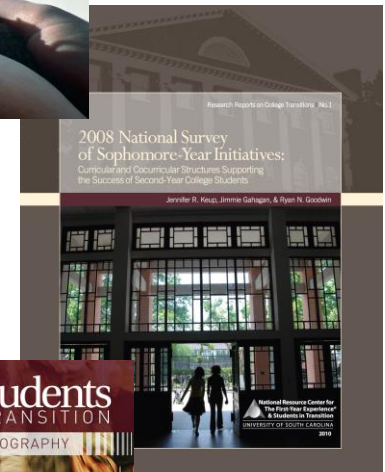
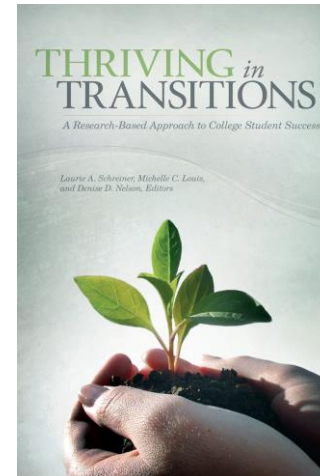
## Junior Year

Internships  
Study Abroad  
Peer Leadership



**Sophomore Student**  
***(Unmotivationus Middlechildibus)***

# NATIONAL SURVEY OF SOPHOMORE-YEAR INITIATIVES





# National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives

- Purpose: “to get a better understanding of sophomore-specific efforts” on campuses across the country (*Keup, Gahagan, & Goodwin, 2010*)
- Third administration of the survey – previously in 2005 and 2008.
- Institution-level online survey designed to identify practices, programs, and characteristics of sophomore-specific initiatives

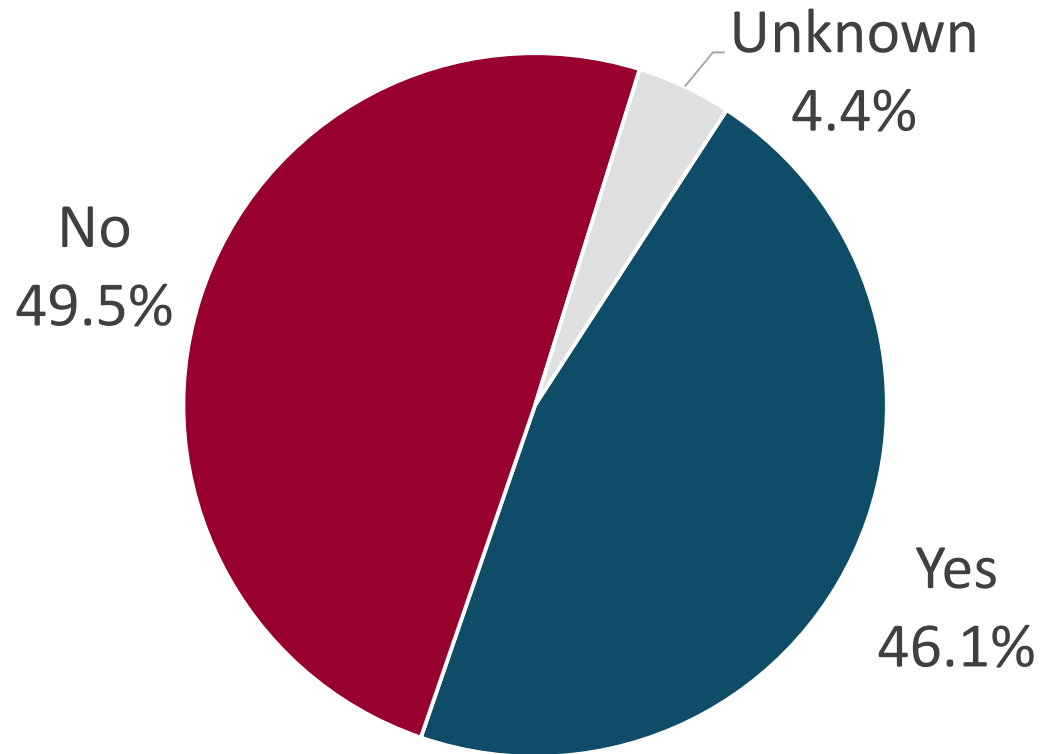
# National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives

- Previous findings:
  - Most cited institutional efforts included career planning, major selection, academic advising, and class events
  - Objectives of sophomore-year initiatives included creating community, faculty-student interaction, social and academic engagement, and encouraging major and career exploration
  - Sophomore initiatives were relatively new programs on campuses and many campuses were still considering starting one

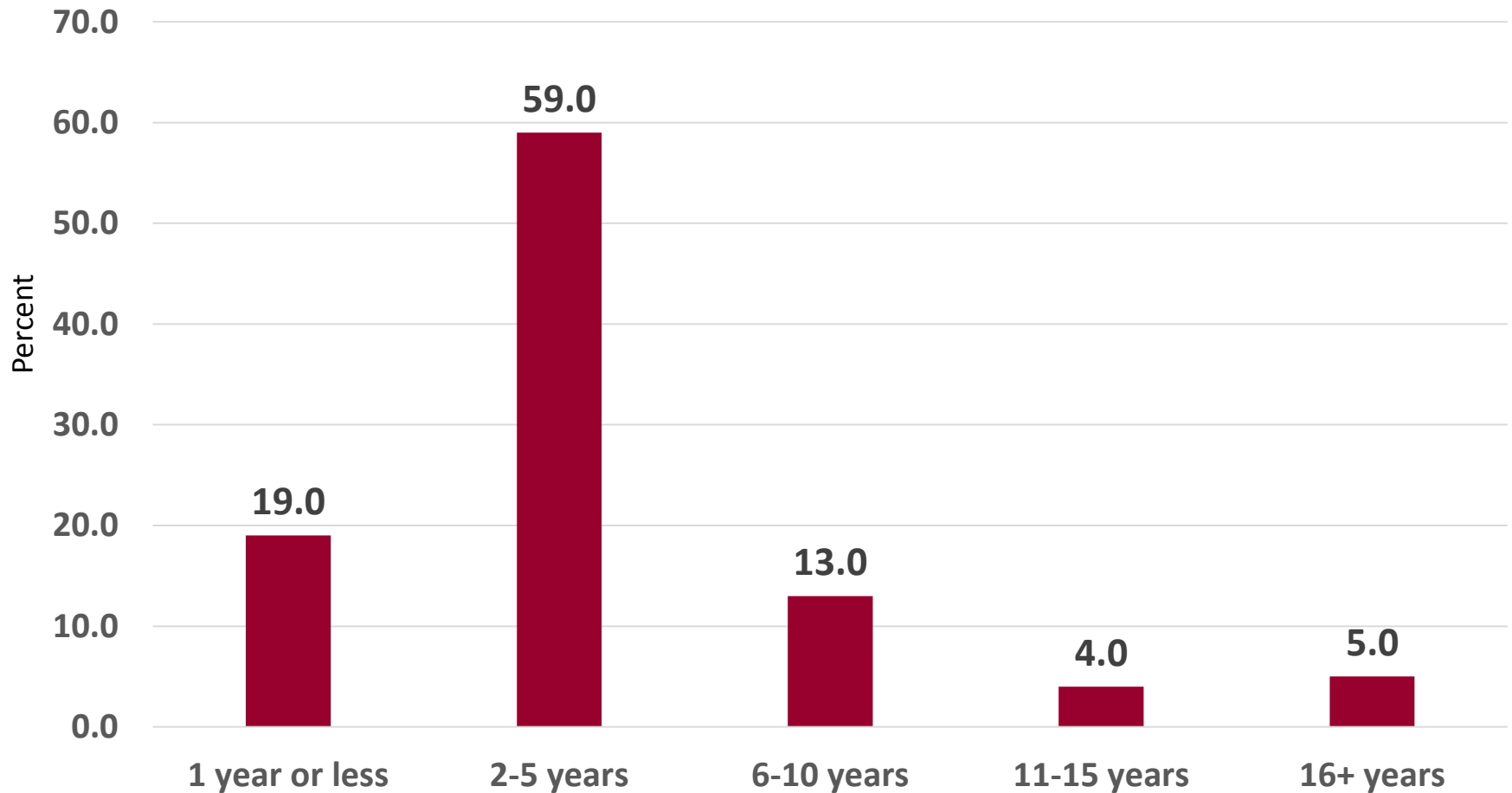
# 2014 National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives

- Administration period: March-June, 2014
- Administration target: Institutional representatives that could respond on programmatic interventions
- Total number of respondents: 778 institutions
  - 21% response rate
  - 46% (n = 349) reported having a sophomore-year initiative

# Institution Offers Sophomore Initiative



# Duration of Sophomore Initiative



# Institutional Attention to Sophomores

Campus-wide effort	Percent
<b>None</b>	<b>41.6</b>
<b>Retention study</b>	<b>40.7</b>
Institutional assessment	28.0
Strategic planning	25.8
Program self-study	15.8
Participation in a national survey	17.7
Accreditation	10.4
Grant-funded project	9.1
Other	6.3



# Institutional Attention to Sophomores

Top 10 Objectives for Sophomore Success Initiative	Percent
<b>Improve retention</b>	<b>62.1</b>
<b>Career exploration</b>	<b>53.5</b>
Career preparation (< 2-year)	45.4
Academic assistance	45.1
Selection of a major (< 4-year)	44.9
Leadership opportunities	43.5
Student engagement	43.1
Connection with the institution (< 4-year; < Private)	34.5
Academic skills	31.7
<b>Graduation rates (&lt; 2-year; &lt; Public)</b>	<b>31.7</b>



# Types of Sophomore Success Initiatives

- Academic advising
- Academic coaching or mentoring
- Back-to-school events
- Career exploration
- Career planning
- Class events
- Common reading experience
- Course-specific support for high-risk classes
- Credit-bearing course
- Cultural enrichment activities
- Early alert systems
- Faculty/staff mentors
- Financial aid
- Internships
- Leadership development
- Learning communities
- Major exploration & selection
- Online communication
- Opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class
- Outdoor or wilderness adventure
- Peer mentoring by sophomores
- Peer mentoring for sophomores
- Print publications
- Residence life
  - Sophomore live on-campus requirement
  - Soph-specific living-learning community
  - Soph-specific residential curriculum
- Retreats
- Service-learning/community service
- Student government
- Study abroad
- Summer newsletters/communication
- Undergraduate research



# Common Sophomore Success Initiatives

Sophomore Initiative	Percent
Academic advising	57.6
Career exploration	52.7
Career planning	48.7
Early alert systems	42.7
Leadership development	40.3
Major exploration and selection	33.1
Academic coaching or mentoring	30.3
Peer mentoring by sophomores	29.1
Class events	28.2
Internships	26.8



# Less Common Soph Success Initiatives

- **20-25% of institutions reporting**: faculty/staff mentors, study abroad, residence life-sophomore required to live on-campus, online communication, student government
- **10-20% reporting**: undergraduate research, cultural enrichment activities, residence life-soph-specific living-learning communities, course-specific support, financial aid, learning communities, peer mentors for sophomores, credit-bearing course
- **5-10% reporting**: co-teach or assist in teaching a course, retreats, residence life-soph-specific residential curriculum, print publications, summer newsletters/communication, common reading experience
- **<5% reporting**: outdoor/wilderness adventure, summer bridge programs

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# Initiatives More Frequently Offered by Institution Type:



## Two-Year

- Internships
- Financial Aid



## Four-Year

- Major Exploration



## Public

- Academic Advising
- Internships

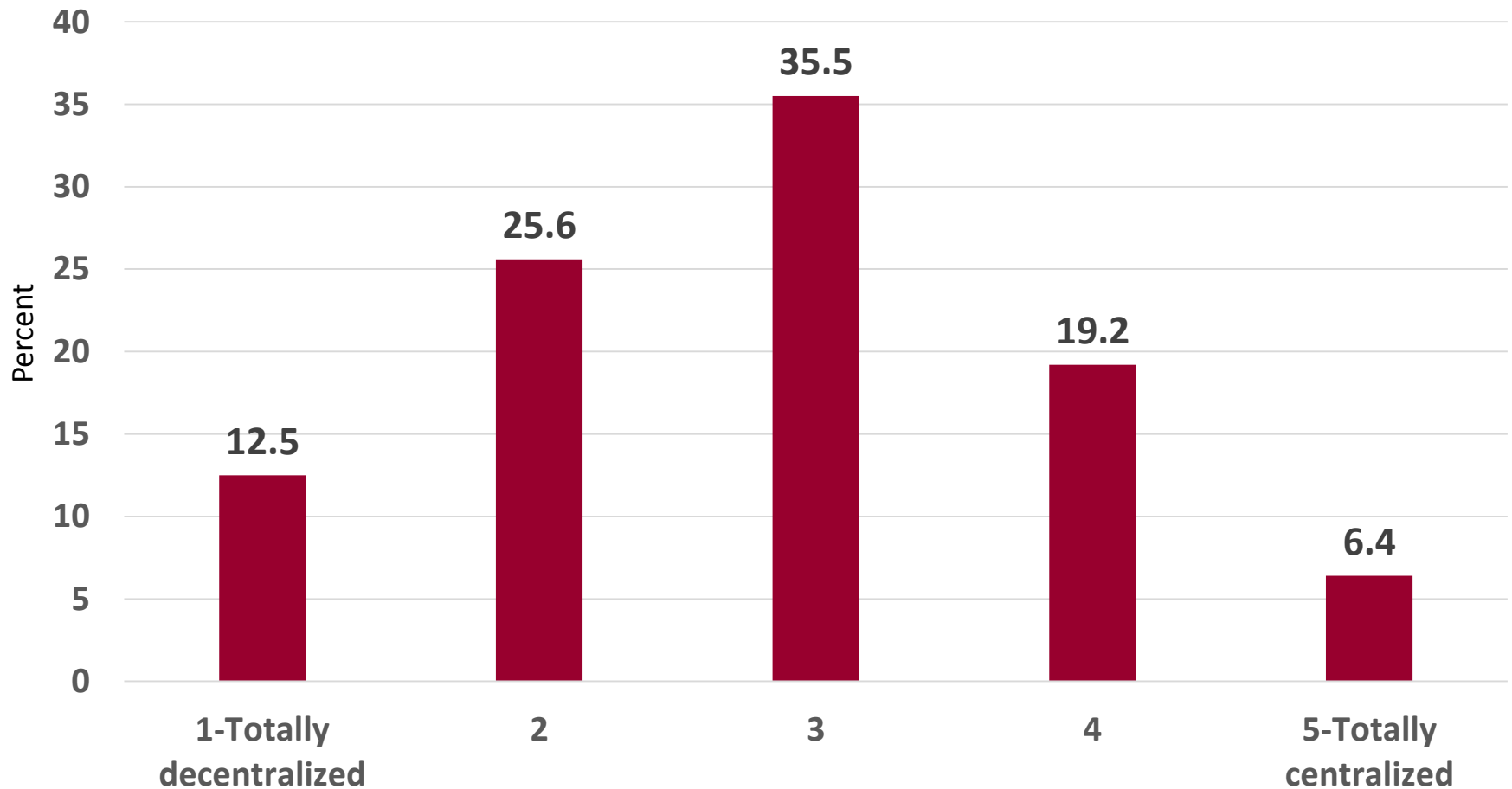


## Private

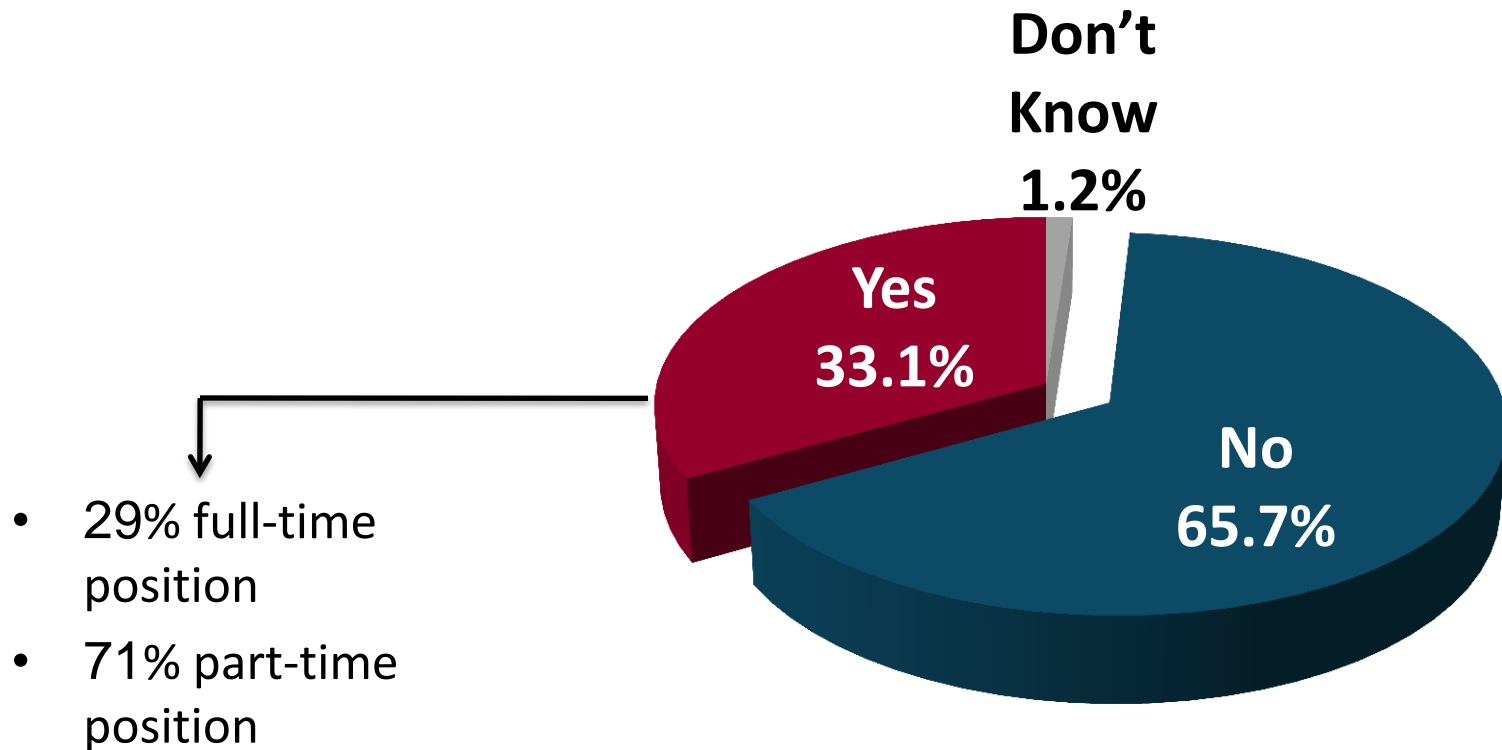
- Leadership Development
- Class Events
- Live-on Requirement



# Coordination of Sophomore Initiative



# Leadership of Sophomore Initiative



# Challenges

Reason for no sophomore initiative	Percent
Other*	41.7
Limited time	35.4
Not an institutional priority	35.1
Lack of funding	34.1
Lack of staff/faculty buy-in	18.5
Lack of expertise	12.2

\*Other (2008):

- Definitional challenge (i.e., what is a “sophomore”)
- Focus on first-year students
- Lack of staff
- High retention
- No leadership/authority

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## Other (2008):

- Definitional challenge (i.e., what is a “sophomore”)
- Focus on first-year students
- Lack of staff
- High retention
- No leadership/authority



# Primary Sophomore Success Initiatives

Sophomore Initiative	Percent
<b>Academic advising</b>	<b>45.7</b>
Live-on requirement	8.2
Early alert	4.7
Other	4.1
Credit bearing course	3.8
Academic coaching	3.2
Class events	2.9
Sophomore living-learning community	2.9
Career exploration	2.3
Major exploration	2.1



# Primary Initiatives More Frequently Offered by Type:



## Two-Year

- Early Alert
- Internships



## Four-Year

- Live-on Requirement



## Public

- Service-Learning
- Early Alert



## Private

- Live-on Requirement



# Primary Sophomore-Year Initiative: Categories

- Academic Advising
- Residential Initiatives
- Major and Career-Focused Initiatives
- High-Impact Practices
- Academic Support
- Curriculum or Course-Based
- Communication to Sophomores
- Campus-Based Events
- Away-from-Campus Events
- Transition-Focused Initiatives
- Financial Aid & Scholarships
- Leadership Development
- Comprehensive Sophomore-Year
- Early Alert



# Primary Sophomore-Year Initiative: Categories

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- Comprehensive Sophomore-Year
- Early Alert



# Required to Participate in Primary Sophomore-Year Initiative?

100% of sophomores required to participate:

- Academic Advising - 60%
- High-Impact Practices - 26%

No sophomores required to participate:

- Major and Career-focused - 73%
- High-Impact Practices - 30%



# Most Important Objectives for Primary Initiative: **Academic Advising**



- Academic Assistance
- Retention
- Selection of a Major
- Graduation
- Student-Faculty Interaction





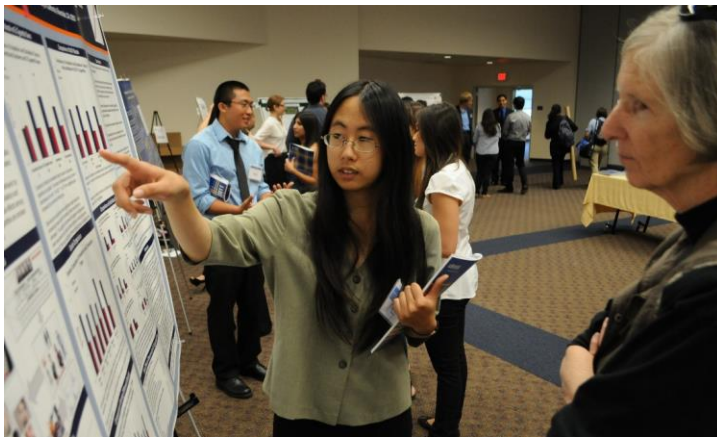
# Most Important Objectives for Primary Initiative: Residential Initiatives



- Connection with Institution
- Student Engagement
- Retention
- Support Network
- Self-Exploration



# Most Important Objectives for Primary Initiative: **High-Impact Practices**



- Student Engagement
- Intercultural Competence
- Civic Responsibility
- Leadership Opportunities
- Career Preparation and Exploration
- Critical-thinking Skills





# Most Important Objectives for Primary Initiative: Major/Career-Focused



- Career Exploration
- Career Preparation
- Selection of a Major
- Retention
- Graduation



# “High-Impact Practices...”

...are **curricular and cocurricular structures** that tend to draw upon high-quality pedagogies and practices **in pursuit of 21st century learning outcomes**; they are “teaching and learning practices that have been **widely tested and have been shown to be beneficial for college students**..,[toward] increase rates of retention and student engagement.”

*Kuh, 2008*



# High-Impact Educational Practices



## 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 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.



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# HIPs and Adaptability

**“[HIP] key conditions can be adapted and incorporated into any teaching and learning situation inside or outside the classroom to promote higher levels of student performance. There are doubtless other high-impact activities...in which large number of students participate.”**

*Kuh in Brownell & Swaner, 2010*



# Characteristics of HIPs

- Creates an investment of time and energy
- Includes interaction with faculty and peers about substantive matters
- Real-world applications
- High expectations
- Includes frequent feedback
- Exposure to diverse perspectives
- Demands reflection and integrated learning
- Accountability





# High-Impact Educational Practices



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# Questions & Comments

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