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for all Postsecondary Student Transitions

A Look at the Book: Research Evidence on Common Reading Programs

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Session Outline

- Background and purpose of common reading experiences
  - Definitions
  - Goals
  - Characteristics
- Empirical studies of common reading experiences
  - 2014 National Study of CRE Texts (pilot)
  - 2012-2013 National Survey of First-Year Seminars (qualitative and quantitative findings)
- Discussion

Catherine F. Andersen

COMMON READING EXPERIENCES:
AN INTRODUCTION

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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

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.

LEAP

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.

AAC&U Association of American Colleges and Universities

College Learning for the New Global Century

The LEAP Vision for Learning

High-Impact Educational Practices

Five High-Impact PRACTICES

Ensuring Quality & Taking High-Impact Practices to Scale

First-Year Seminars and Experiences

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Common Reading Experiences

Common Intellectual Experiences

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Common Reading Experience: Why?

- Orients new students to critical thinking & college level writing

- Provides a springboard for community conversation

- Establishes academic expectations before arrival

- Establishes a culture of readers

- Connecting to peers and faculty

- Connects to institution's mission and First-Year Experience (or other) goals

- Serves a cohesive point of entry for transfer students

(*Andersen, 2014; Laufgraben, 2006*)

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*)

"Kuh (2005) stressed the importance of offering ways for students to spend time with each other. Peers are essential to student learning and motivation." (*Laufgraben, 2006*)

Common Reading Experience: Why?

- Involving students in both in and out of class activities can impact **cognitive development**, including critical thinking (*Terenzini, et al., 1993*)

- Common reading supports two key theoretical principles of **student retention** and **learning**:

  - Social integration (*Tinto, 1975, l993*)

  - Active involvement (*Astin, 1985*)

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Common Reading Experiences: Characteristics

- Involve an assigned reading of one or more books or reading selections

- Are academically oriented

- Promote reading, critical thinking, and discussion skills

- Focus on a theme generated from the selected work

- Bring students, faculty, and staff together around a common intellectual activity

- Incorporate a range of activities around selected work

- Have shared program leadership among academic and student

(*Laufgraben, 2006*)

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Jennifer R. Keup

COMMON READING EXPERIENCES: 2014 NATIONAL STUDY OF TEXTS

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CRE: A Story in Headlines

- "GETTING STUDENTS INVOLVED FROM THE GET-GO: SUMMER READING PROGRAMS ACROSS THE COUNTRY" (*Fidler, 1997;* ABOUT CAMPUS)

- "Creating Common Ground: Common Reading and the First Year of College" (Ferguson, 2006; peerReview)

- "South Carolina Lawmakers Question Books on Gay Topics" (*Jaschik, February, 2014*; **Inside Higher Ed**)

- "S.C. House Keeps Financial Penalty for Gay-Themed Book" (*Jaschik, March, 2014*; **Inside Higher Ed**)

- "Colleges reject charge that freshman reading lists have political bias" (Gordon, September, 2014;   )
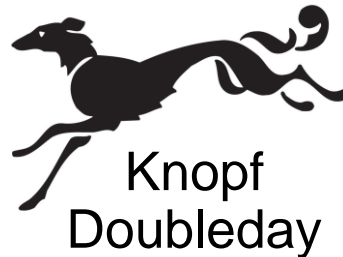
CRE Text Selection

- "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)

- Exploratory questions:
  - What are the **general characteristics** of the texts selected for common reading programs at institutions across the country?
  - What do national data tell us about the **content** of the texts selected for common reading programs?

CRE Text Selection-Data Source

- Informed by NAS "Beach Books" series
- <u>Institution</u> is the unit of analysis
- Book data provided by publisher
  - Title
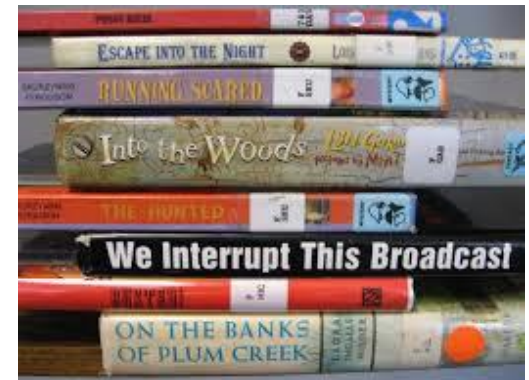 - Author
  - Publication year
  - List price
  - Format

Knopf Doubleday

HarperCollins

RANDOM HOUSE

macmillan

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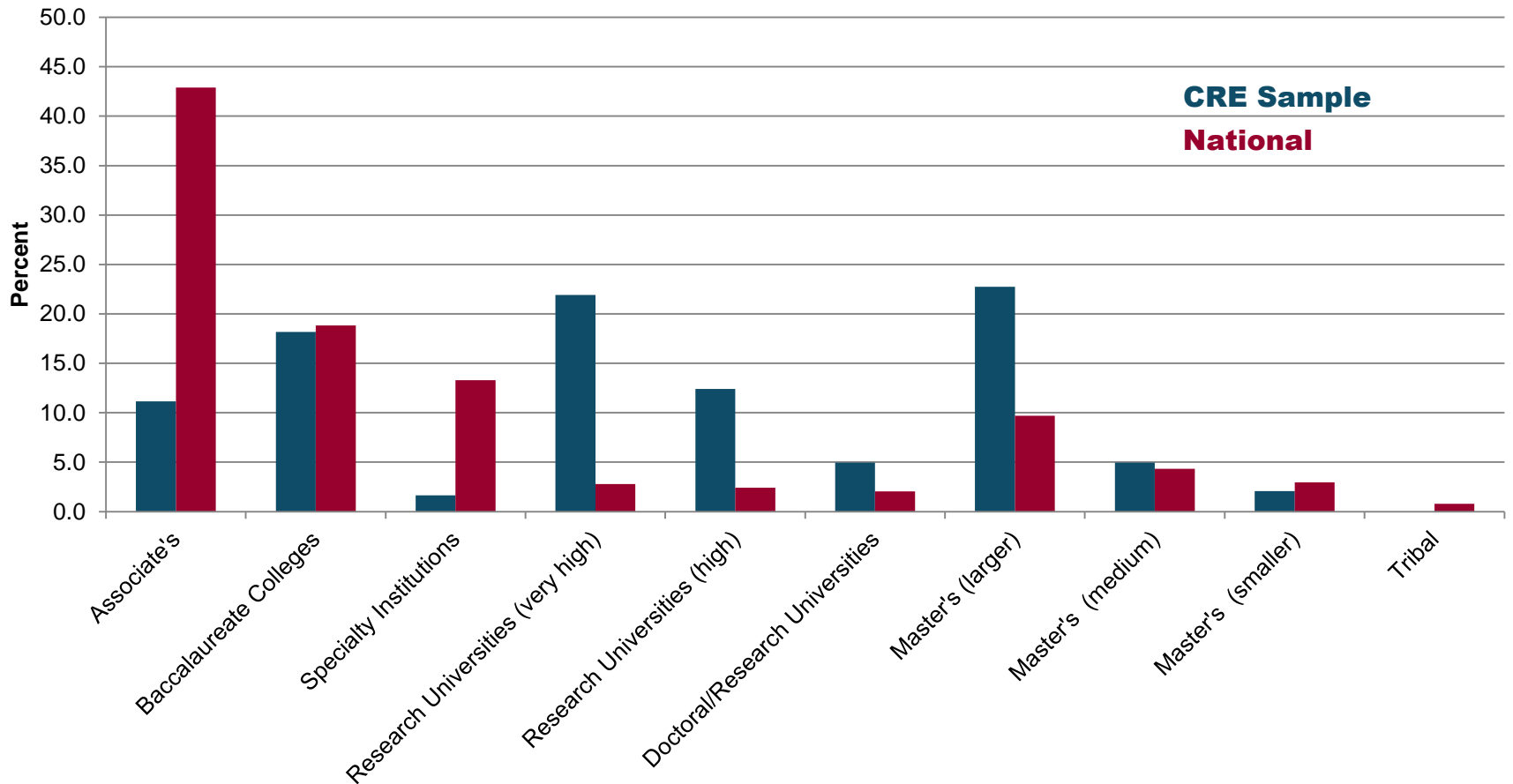
www.sc.edu/fye

CRE Text Selection-Methodology

- Institutional information from IPEDS
  - Control
  - Type (2-year/4-year; special serving)
  - Size
  - Selectivity
  - Carnegie classification
- Source for Subject/Genre/Scope
  - Library of Congress
  - Alibris
  - WorldCat
  - Amazon

Common Reading Experience: Text Selection

AUTHOR

TITLE

DATE DUE

BORROWER'S NAME

5	
6	Americanah
7	Persepolis
6	Garbology
	Other
9	Wes Moore
10	The Circle
	This I Believe

242

Total

THE LIBRARY STORE #43-0202

CRE – Institutional Sample

Carnegie Basic Classification

CRE – Institutional Sample

Institutional characteristic	National %	% of respondents to NSFYS (N=896)	% of respondents to NSFYS w/CRE (N=315)	% of CRE Sample (N=242)
Control				
Public	53.2	54.2	41.5	**63.1**
Private	46.8	45.8	58.5	**36.9**
Type				
Two-year	36.7	26.7	9.6	**8.3**
Four-year	63.3	73.3	90.4	**91.7**
Number of first-year students				
Less than 500 students	62.8	29.8	43.3	**21.9**
501-1,000 students	17.5	22.8	24.7	**15.7**
1,001-2,000 students	11.9	19.4	15.4	**26.0**
2,001-4,000 students	5.5	16.1	11.9	**21.1**
More than 4,001 students	2.4	12.0	4.8	**15.3**

CRE – Analysis and Coding

- Characteristics of the book
  - Price point
  - Format
  - Release date
  - Page count

- Characteristics of content
  - Genre
  - Scope
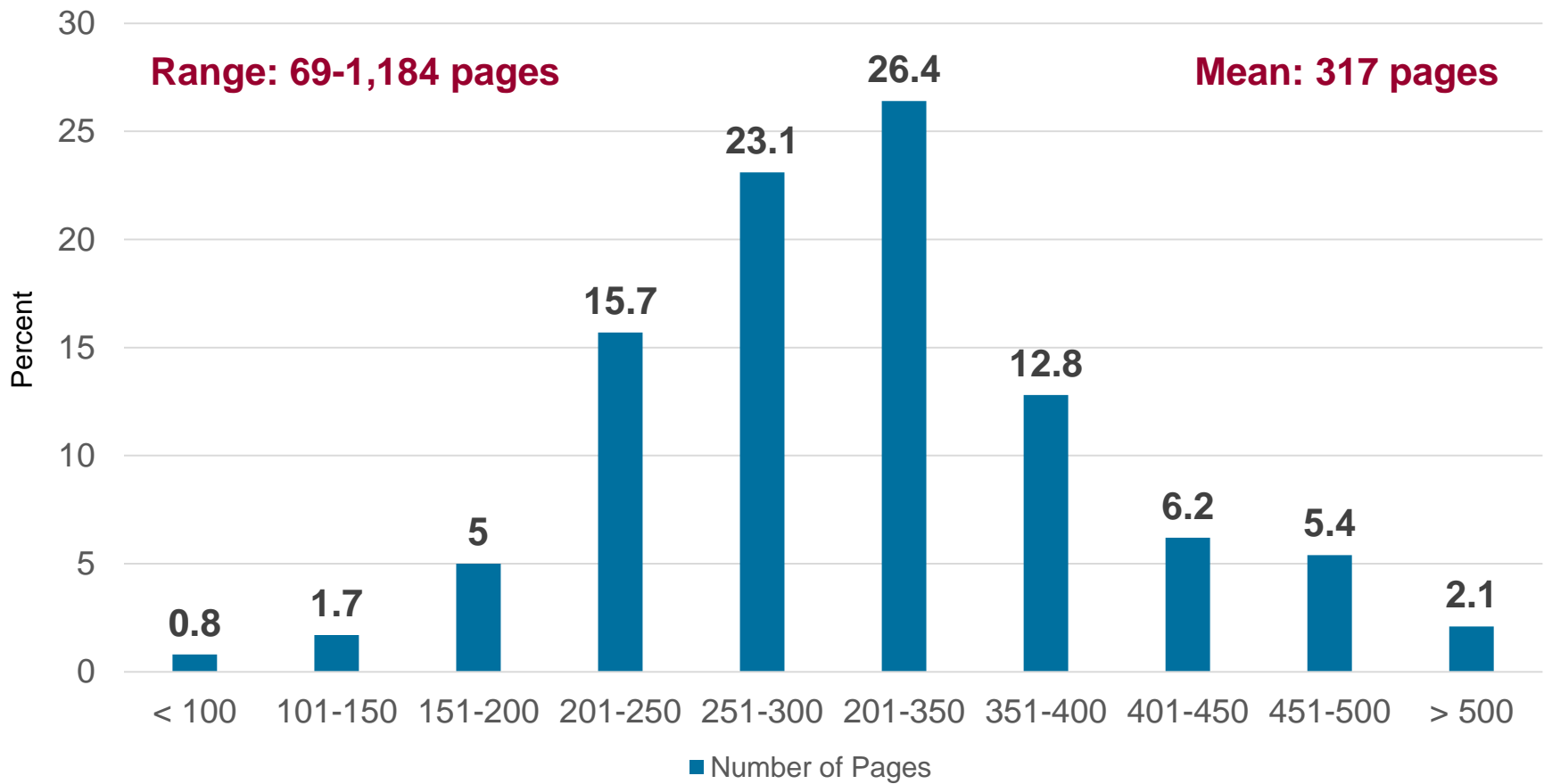 - Subject

CRE – Coding Example
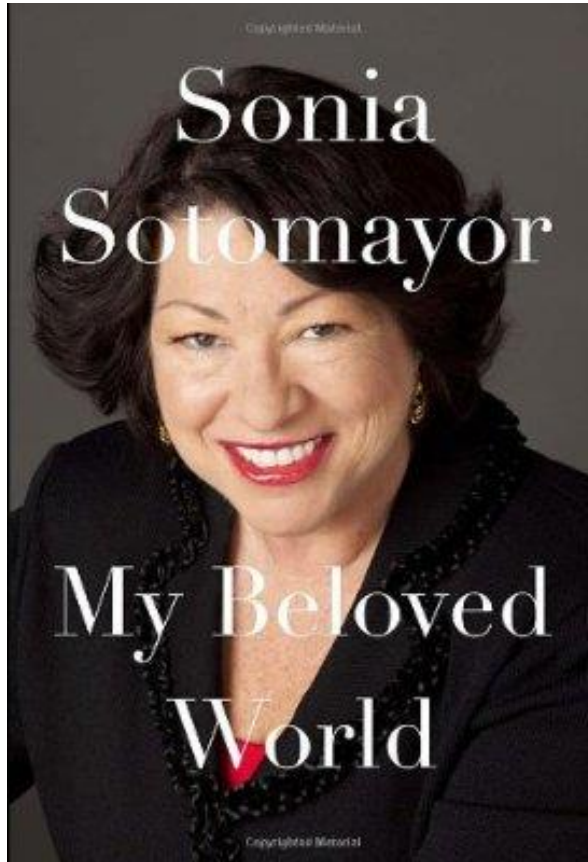
- Published in 2007
- 425 pages in paperback
- $16.95
- Nonfiction-Memoir/Biography/ Autobiography
- Set in the United States
- Subjects
  1. Politics/Government
 2. Race/Race Relations/Ethnic Studies
 3. Women/Gender

CRE - Trends

- Price point is generally consistent
  - Range: $12.95 – $29.99
  - Mean: $16.31

- 95% of selections were in paperback format
  - Hard back selections were not yet available in paperback

- Selections focused on new releases
  - Only 23 prior to 2000
  - Majority (55%) published from 2010-2013

CRE– Page Count

Range: 69-1,184 pages　　　　　　　　　**Mean: 317 pages**

Percent

30 · 25 · 20 · 15 · 10 · 5 · 0

< 100	101-150	151-200	201-250	251-300	201-350	351-400	401-450	451-500	> 500
0.8	1.7	5	15.7	23.1	26.4	12.8	6.2	5.4	2.1

■ Number of Pages

CRE – Text Genre

- Nonfiction (163)
  - General (98)
  - Memoir/Biography/Autobiography (47)
  - Essays (18)
- Fiction (79)
  - General (62)
  - Graphic Novel (9)
  - Short Stories (7)
- Poetry (1)
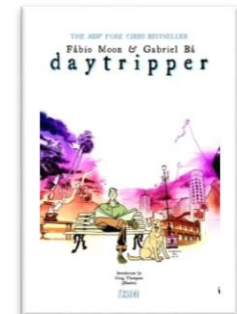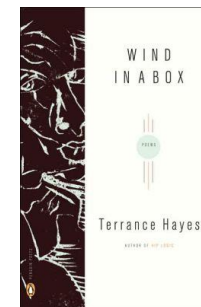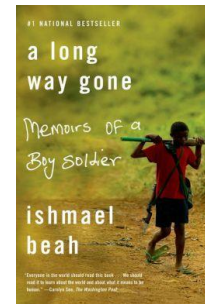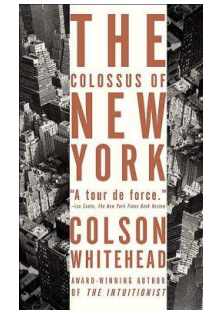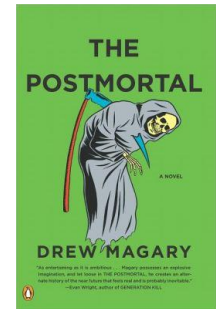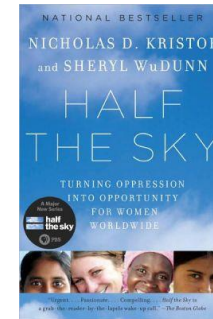
CRE – Scope

- **<u>United States</u>** (136)
- **<u>Foreign</u>**-set in one country outside the U.S. (37)
- **<u>International</u>**-setting is between more than one country (40)
- **<u>Global</u>**-inclusive or relevant to numerous countries (4)
- **<u>Not Indicated</u>** (25)

CRE - Subject

1. Cooking/Food
2. Crime & Punishment
3. Economics/Poverty
4. Education/Children/Youth
5. History
6. Immigration/Refugee
7. Medicine/Health
8. Politics/Government
9. Psychology/Self-Help
10. Queer/LGBT
11. Race/Race Relations/Ethnic Studies
12. Religion
13. Science/Environ-mentalism/Technology
14. Society/Sociology
15. War
16. Women/Gender

Over 60 had 2 subjects & 11 had 3 subjects

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CRE – Most Common Subjects

Subject	Subject Count
Science/Environmentalism/Technology	48
Women/Gender	38
History	38
Psychology/Self-Help	35
Race/Race Relations/Ethnic Studies	31
Medicine/Health	27
Society/Sociology	23
War	17

■ Subject Count
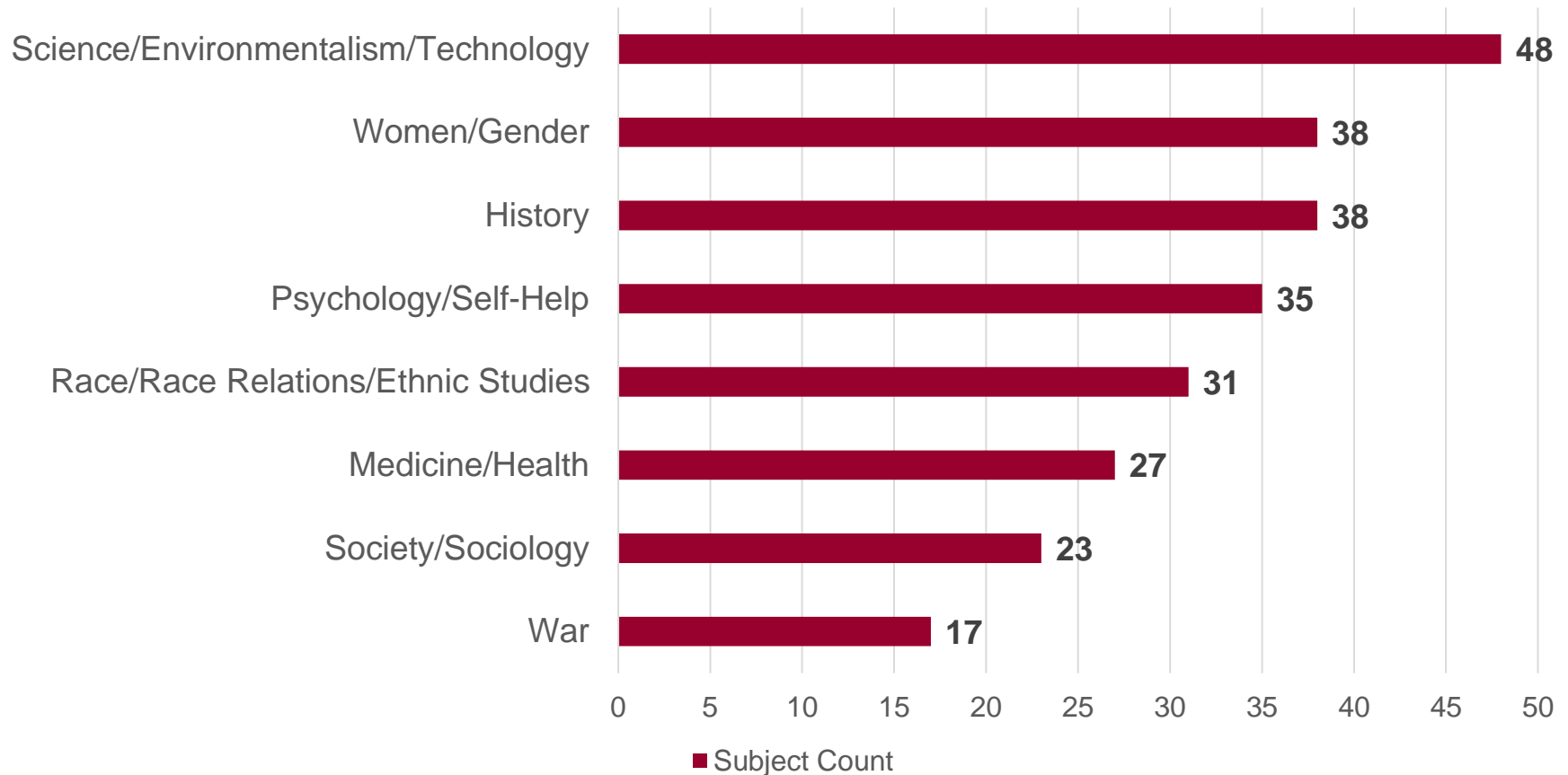
CRE – Less Common Subjects
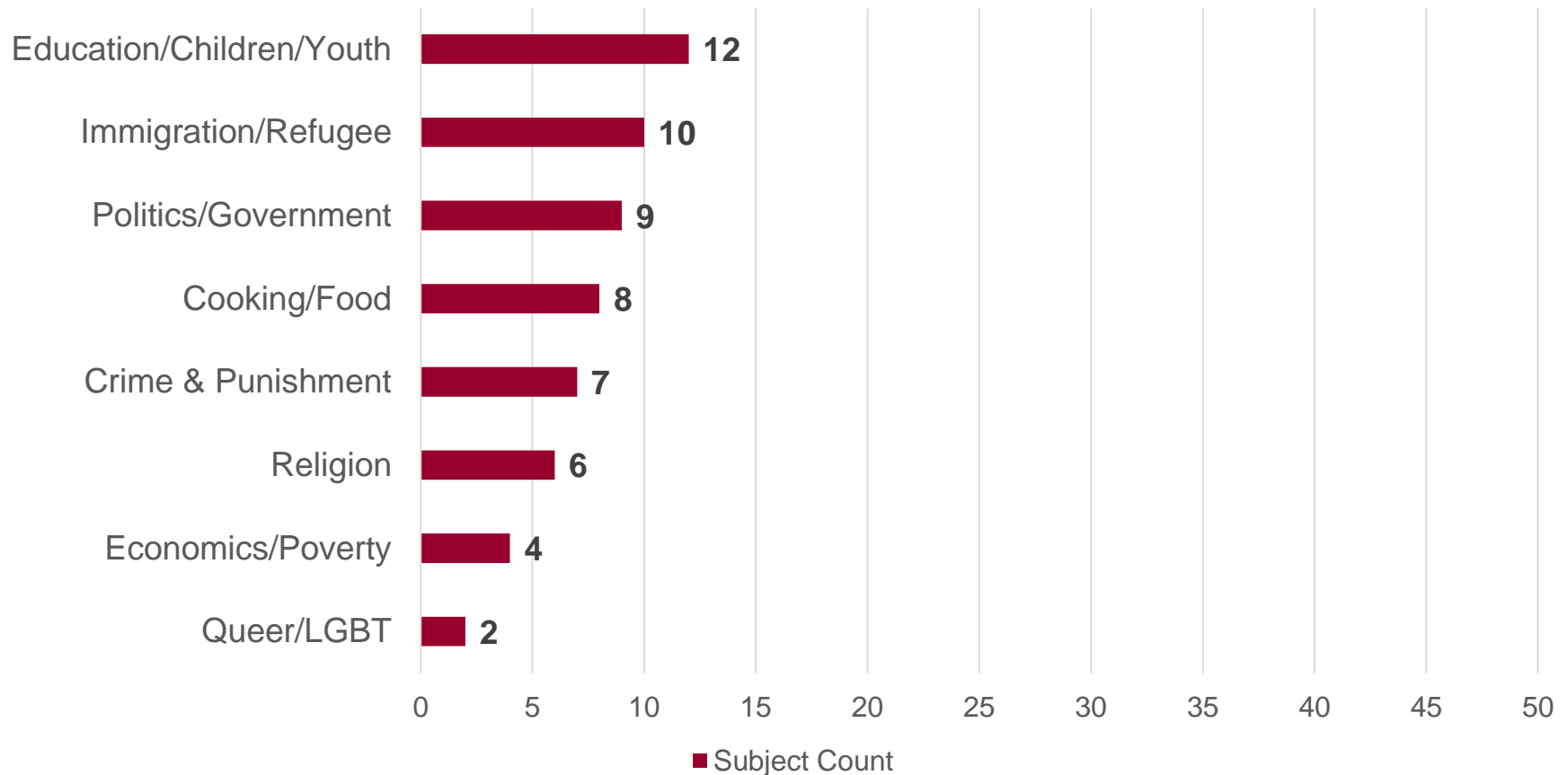
CRE – Past Criticisms

- "Perhaps the most comprehensive critiques of these programs have come from the National Association of Scholars (NAS), which…released reports castigating universities for choosing books that the association sees as **too liberal, too focused on issues of race and ethnicity (particularly African Americans), too easy, too recent, too similar to one another, and too far from the classics**." (*Inside Higher Ed, January, 2011*)

- "If this book were a magazine it would be wrapped in brown paper. We reviewed every book assigned in SC this year. **Many were provocative. This one was pornographic. Not a wise choice for a 18-year-olds at a taxpayer-supported college**." (*Oran Smith, director of the Palmetto Family Council to the Associated Press, 2014*)

Discussion Questions

- How do these new data and analyses hold up to past criticisms?

- What do the characteristics of the book and of the content suggest about the national trends re: common reading programs?

- What conclusions can we draw from the frequency of genre, scope, and subject categories suggest about the goals and outcomes of common reading programs nationally?

- Which were findings you expected? Which findings surprised you?

Next Steps

- Broaden institutional sample

- Analyze data by institutional characteristics

- Replicate study to identify trends

- Incorporate student learning outcomes to identify impact of CRE
  - General impact
  - Impact by characteristics of book and content

Dallin George Young

COMMON READING EXPERIENCES:
2012-2013 NATIONAL SURVEY OF FIRST-YEAR SEMINARS

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NSFYS 2012-13 Methodology

- 3,753 institutions were invited to participate

  – 4 waves: CAO, CEO, CSAO, 2009 NSFYS

    participants

  – Administered from Nov. 2012-Jan. 2013

- 896 campuses responded (23.9% response rate)

- 804 (89.7% of sample) indicated that they had one

  or more FYS

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NSFYS 2012-13: Common Reading Experiences

- Which of the following high-impact educational practices are connected to the first-year seminar with the highest enrollment of students?

  – Common Reading Experience – First-year reading experience or summer reading program

- Please describe how sections of the first-year seminar incorporate the common reading experience

CRE in FYS: Institutional Characteristics

- Much more common at four-year institutions
  - Present in nearly half (45.8%) of FYS at four-year campuses
  - 31.3% more than two-year colleges ***
- Much more common at private institutions
  - Present in nearly half (48.0%) of private FYS
  - 18.3% more than publics ***

CRE in FYS: Institutional Characteristics

- Some variation by difference by size of first-year class and by type of FYS
- None of these differences were statistically significant

CRE in FYS

- "How are Common Reading Experiences intentionally connected to First-Year Seminars?"
  - Goals and Purposes
  - Structural
  - Curricular
  - Pedagogical Approaches
  - Procedural

CRE in FYS

- Goals and Purposes
- Structural
- Curricular
- Pedagogical Approaches
- Procedural

CRE in FYS: Goals and Purposes

- Community Building
- Inter-departmental Connection
- Communicating Expectations
- Shared Intellectual Experience
- Learning Objectives
  - Critical Thinking
  - Self-awareness
  - Diversity and Global Issues

CRE in FYS: Objectives

- First-year seminars connected to common reading programs more often reported the following course objectives:
  - Create common first-year experience ***
  - Introduce the liberal arts ***
  - Develop writing skills *
  - Develop support networks or friendships *
  - Develop intercultural competence *

* p < .05, *** p < .001

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CRE in FYS: Objectives

- First-year seminars connected to common reading programs less often reported the following course objectives:
  - Develop study skills ***
  - Provide orientation to campus resources and services ***

*** p < .001

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CRE in FYS

- Goals and Purposes
- Structural
- Curricular
- Pedagogical Approaches
- Procedural

CRE in FYS: Structural

- Events
  - Essay contests
  - Discussions
  - Lectures
- Text
  - Type
  - Number
  - Required/supplemental in FYS
- Reach

CRE in FYS: Reach

- FYS with CRE are more likely to report 100% of first-year students participate in FYS
  - Approximately half report that all first-year students participate in FYS
  - 21.6% more than FYS with no CRE ***
- FYS with CRE are more likely to require all first-year students to participate in FYS
  - Approximately half require participation in FYS
  - 18.5% more than FYS with no CRE ***

*** p < .001

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CRE in FYS

- Goals and Purposes
- Structural
- Curricular
- Pedagogical Approaches
- Procedural

CRE in FYS: Curricular

- ## Curriculum of FYS
  - Text
  - Themes

- ## Connection Across Curriculum
  - Learning Communities
  - Connecting intellectual activity for first year

"[Students] read about it in the reading class, write about it in the writing class, present on it in the first-year seminar."

CRE in FYS: Topics

- First-year seminars connected to common reading programs more often reported the following course topics:
  - Critical thinking ***
  - Writing skills ***
  - Global learning ***
  - Diversity issues *

$* \ p < .05, \ *** \ p < .001$

CRE in FYS: Topics

- First-year seminars connected to common reading programs less often reported the following course topics:
  - Study skills ***
  - Campus resources **
  - Time management **
  - College policies and procedures ***
  - Financial literacy *

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

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CRE in FYS

- Goals and Purposes
- Structural
- Curricular
- Pedagogical Approaches
- Procedural

CRE in FYS: Pedagogical Approaches

- Assignments
- Reflection
- Assessment of Learning
- Connection with other HIPs
  - Service-learning
  - Diversity
  - Collaborative assignments
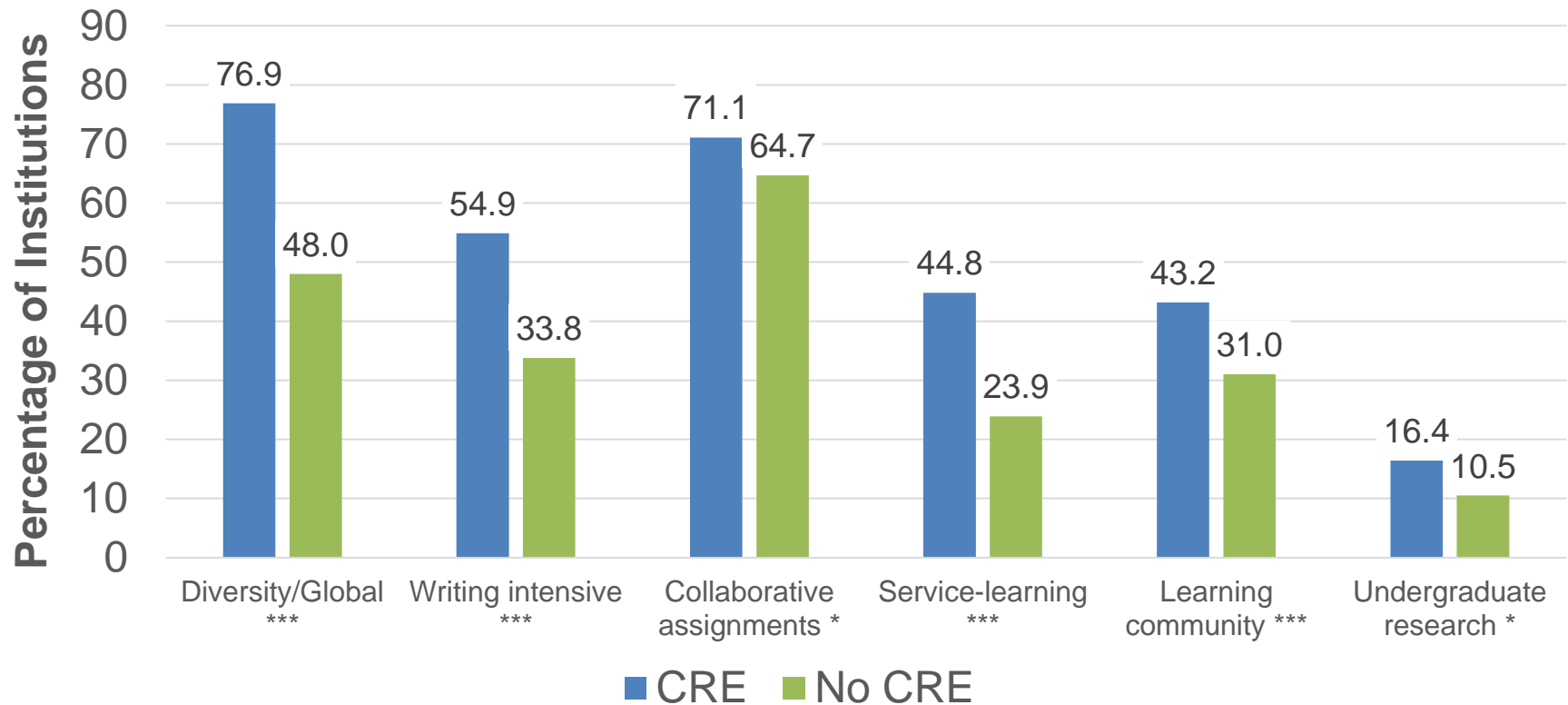 - (Learning Communities – Writing intensive course connected to FYS)

HIP to have a CRE in your FYS

- Connected to FYS at more institutions than any of the other "programmatic" HIPs
  - Common reading experience – 38.1%
  - Learning Communities – 36.8%
  - Service-Learning – 31.8%
  - Undergraduate Research – 12.8%
- Lower than HIP pedagogical approaches (Collaborative assignments, Diversity/global learning, Writing-intensive)

- CRE had a strong presence even with institutions reporting they didn't have an FYS (32.2%)

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HIP to have a CRE in your FYS

HIPs in FYS by Connection of CRE

Percentage of Institutions

	CRE	No CRE
Diversity/Global ***	76.9	48.0
Writing intensive ***	54.9	33.8
Collaborative assignments *	71.1	64.7
Service-learning ***	44.8	23.9
Learning community ***	43.2	31.0
Undergraduate research *	16.4	10.5

* p < .05, *** p < .001

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HIP to have a CRE in your FYS

- Average number of HIPs in FYS connected to CRE: 4.11

- Average number of HIPs in FYS not connected to CRE: 2.12

($p < .001$)

CRE in FYS

- Goals and Purposes
- Structural
- Curricular
- Pedagogical Approaches
- Procedural

CRE in FYS: Procedural

- Administration

- Faculty

CRE in FYS: Instructor

- Campuses that connect CRE to FYS more frequently report :
  - Greatly more tenure-track faculty ***
  - Slightly more full-time non-tenure-track faculty and other campus professionals *
  - Slightly more graduate students **

- Overall report a greater variety of types of instructors compared to campuses where CRE is not connected to FYS

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

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CRE in FYS: Administration

- FYS *with* CRE are more often administered by a first-year program office or the academic affairs central office

- FYS *without* CRE are more often administered by an academic department

($p > .01$)

CRE in FYS

- Goals and Purposes
- Structural
- Curricular
- Pedagogical Approaches
- Procedural

CRE in FYS: Outcomes

- FYS connected to CRE were more likely to assess the following outcomes:
  - Satisfaction with faculty ***
  - Writing ability ***
  - Participation in campus activities **
  - Student self-reports of course impact *
  - Student self-reports of improvement **
  - Involvement in service **
  - Understanding of institutional identity and culture **
  - Satisfaction with the seminar *
  - Information literacy *
  - Connections with peers *
  - Satisfaction with institution *

CRE in FYS

Goals and Purposes → Structural

Procedural
(Administration
and Faculty)

Pedagogical ← Curricular
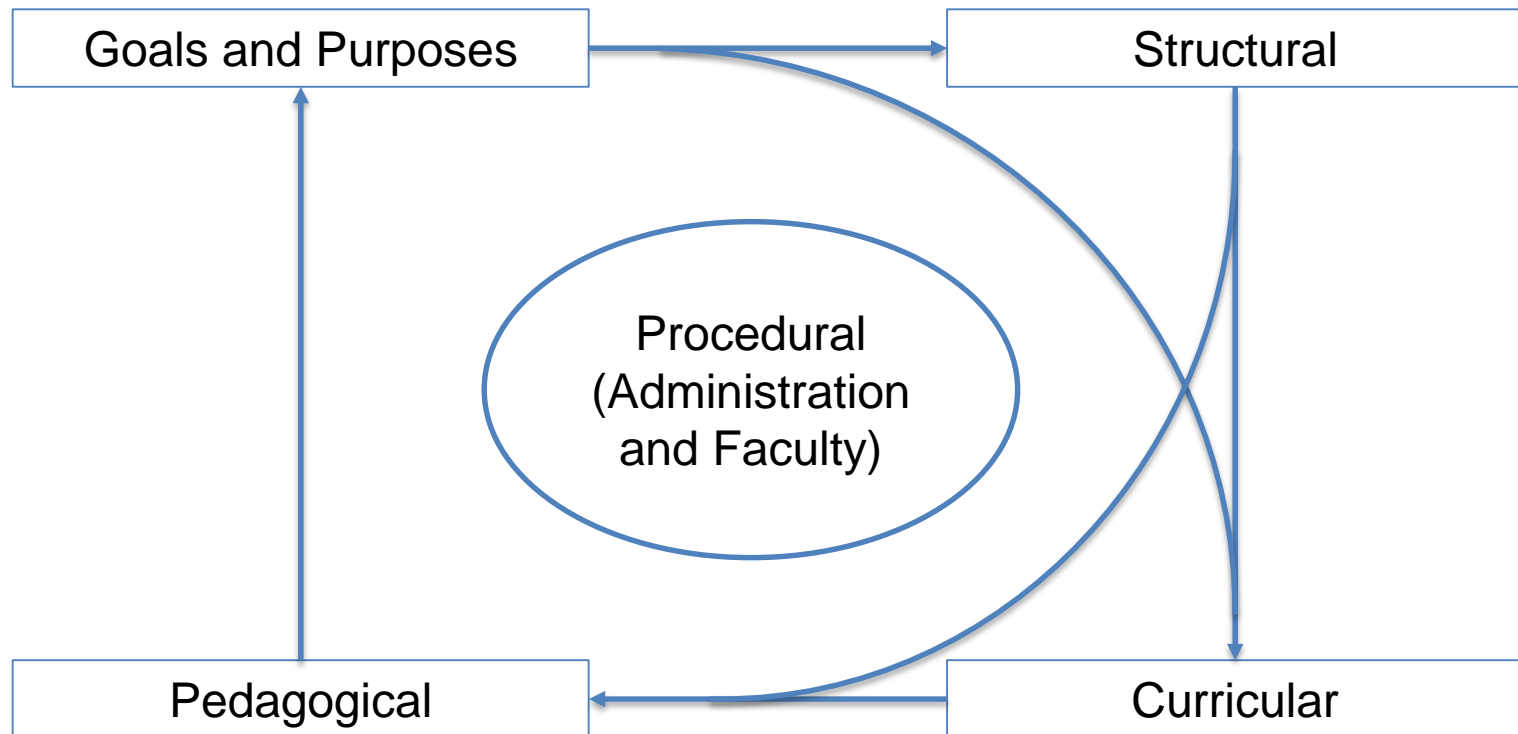
Catherine F. Andersen

COMMON READING EXPERIENCES: CLOSING DISCUSSION

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Why NOT a Common Reading?

- Not faculty driven

- Taught in first-year seminar and writing classes by adjuncts – no flexibility

- Too costly

- Everyone wants a different book- university relations, campus life, faculty

- Often controversial (SC campuses; IHE article)

- Connection with outcomes

Why NOT a Common Reading

In 2014, 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*)
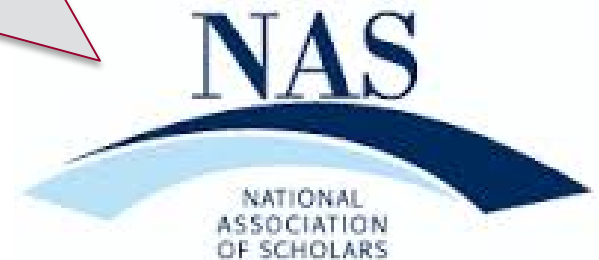
Why Common Reading?

"But, such programs have value; less than a study of literature, they're a tool to boost students' critical thinking and social skills during the transition to campus."
(*Inside Higher Ed, 2012*)

Why Common Reading?

- Can be a campus win for everyone but
  - Must tie to **shared** goals
  - Must be assessed
  - Must justify ROI
  - Must involve key stakeholders
  - Must share results
  - Must be willing to change

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How do we go beyond the book to create an ongoing and engaging academic initiative for students?

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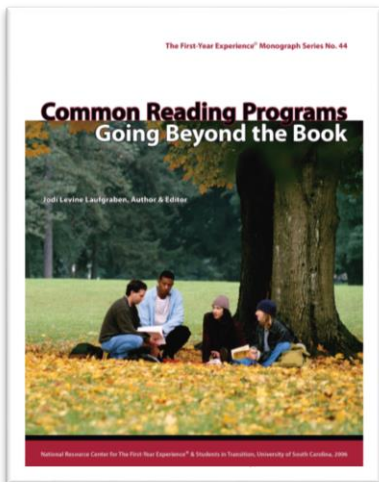UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Successful CRE programs…

- Facilitate student learning

- Build partnerships across campus

- Create sustained initiatives

- Embed the experience in campus culture

- Align program goals with curricular and co-curricular strategies

More Information Available

2012-2013 National Survey of First-Year Seminars: Exploring High-Impact Practices in the First College Year by Dallin George Young and Jessica M. Hopp

Common Reading Programs: Going Beyond the Book edited by Jodi Levine Laufgraben

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