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Telling the "Story" of Common Reading Programs: Using National Data

Jennifer R. Keup (@JRKeup)
Dallin George Young (@DallinYoung)
Sara J. Frakes (@Sfrakes)
National Resource Center for
The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition

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Thursday, November 5, 2015

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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

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Sara J. Frakes

COMMON READING EXPERIENCES:
AN INTRODUCTION

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

- 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 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.

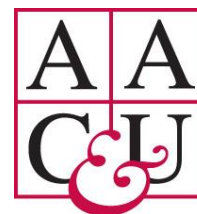### Service Learning, Community-Based Learning

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.

LEAP

Association of American Colleges and Universities

College Learning for the New Global Century

The LEAP Vision for Learning
OUTCOMES, PRACTICES, IMPACT, AND EMPLOYERS' VIEWS

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

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College Learning for the New Global Century

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Common Reading Experience: Why?

"A <u>common</u> 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*)
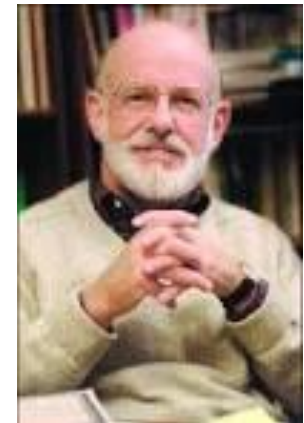
Why NOT a Common Reading

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*)

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
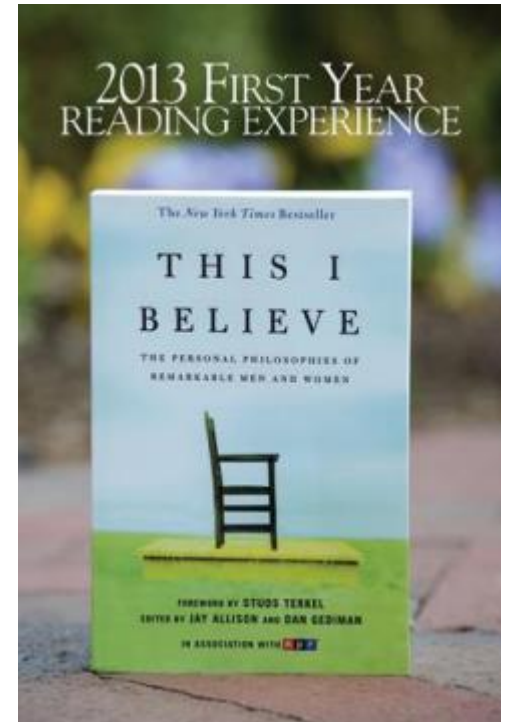
CRE in FYS: Institutional Characteristics

- 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: Big Question

"How are Common Reading Experiences intentionally connected to First-Year Seminars?"

CRE in FYS: Small Question

"In what ways are institutions with CREs connected to FYS different from those without?"

How We Will Answer Those Questions

- **Qualitative** analysis of open-ended responses to:

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

  (Big Question)

- **Quantitative** analysis will follow themes as framework to illuminate findings

  (Small Question)

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CRE in FYS

Goals and Purposes

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

Goals for FYS with CRE were ***more often*** about:

- **Making Connections and Building Community**
  - Create common first-year experience ***
  - Develop support networks or friendships *
- **Communicating Expectations and Learning**
  - Introduce the liberal arts ***
  - Develop writing skills *
  - Develop intercultural competence *

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

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CRE in FYS: Objectives

- Goals for FYS with CREs were ***less often*** focused on
  - Developing study skills ***
  - Campus resources and services ***

*** p < .001

CRE in FYS

Goals and Purposes

Structural

CRE in FYS: Structural

- Events
  - Essay contests
  - Discussions
  - Lectures
- Text
  - Type
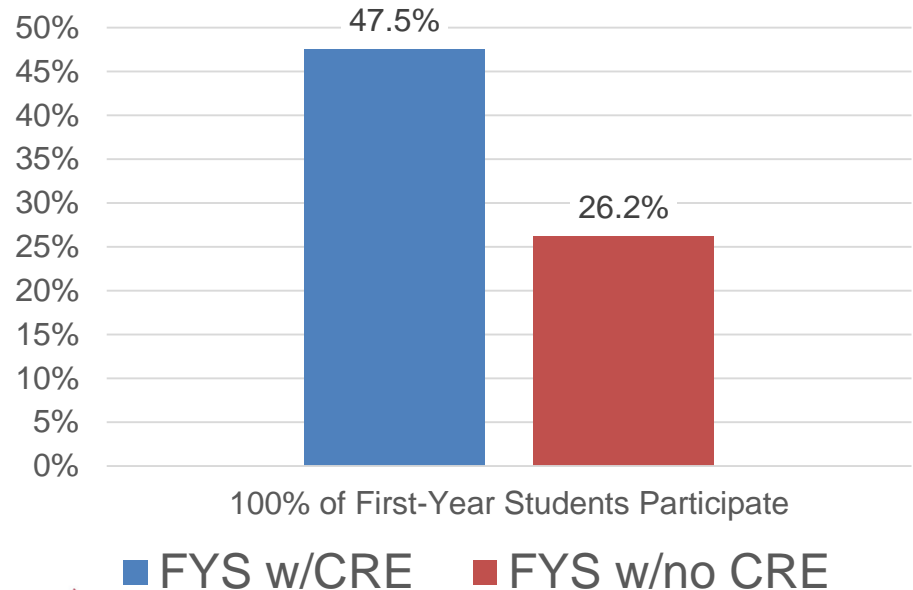 - Number
- Reach

CRE in FYS: Reach

More students participate in FYS at institutions with CRE

– Nearly half of institutions with CRE in FYS report that **all** first-year students participate in seminar

– 21.3% more than FYS with no CRE ***

*** p < .001

Student Participation in First-Year Seminar Based on Presence of Common Reading Program

47.5%

26.2%

100% of First-Year Students Participate

■ FYS w/CRE   ■ FYS w/no CRE

CRE in FYS

Goals and Purposes

Structural

Curricular

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CRE in FYS: Curricular

- Curriculum of FYS
  - Text – Required or supplemental in FYS
  - 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 reported the following course topics:

More Frequently

- Critical thinking ***
- Writing skills ***
- Global learning ***
- Diversity issues *

Less Frequently

- 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

Pedagogical

Curricular

CRE in FYS: Pedagogical Approaches

- Assignments
- Reflection
- Assessment of Learning

- Connection with other HIPs
  - Service-learning
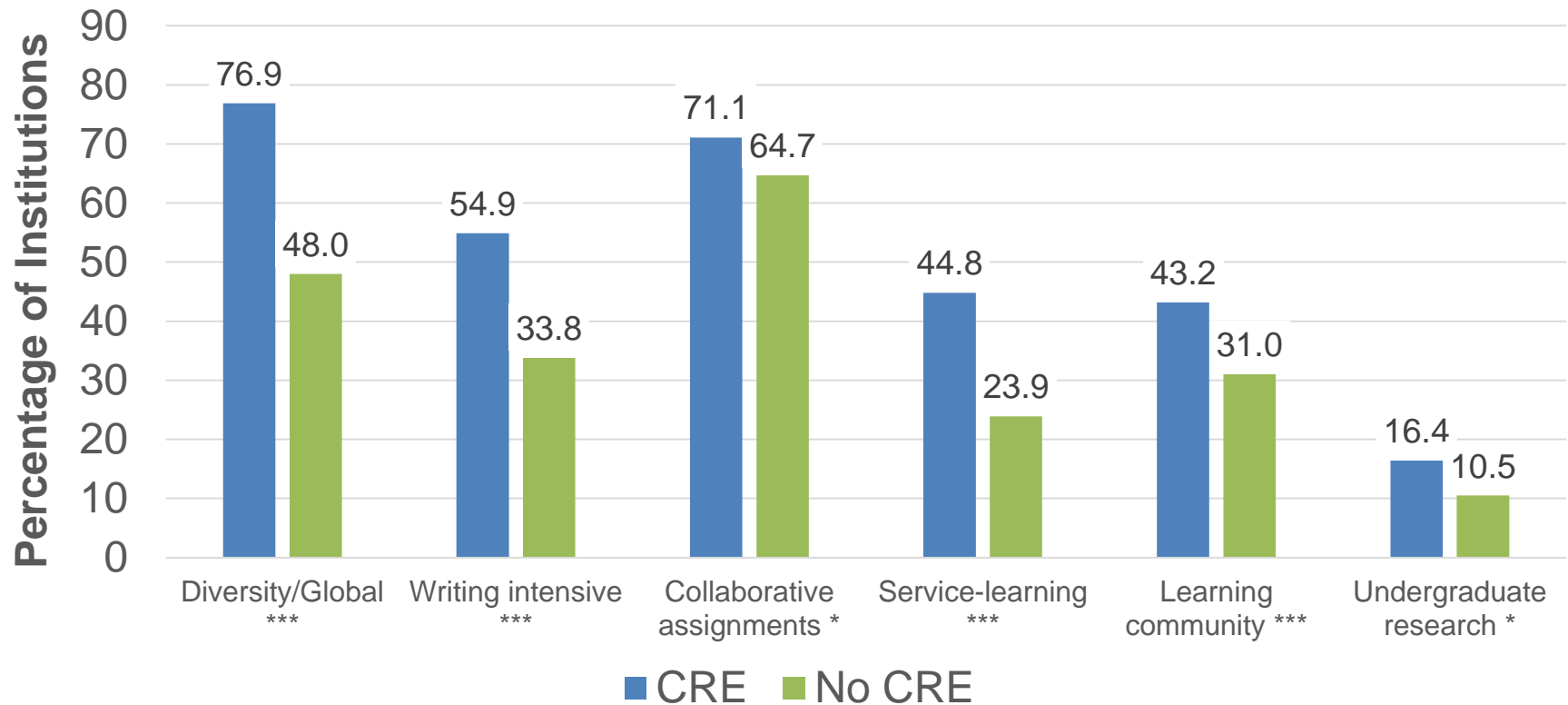 - Diversity
  - Collaborative assignments

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%

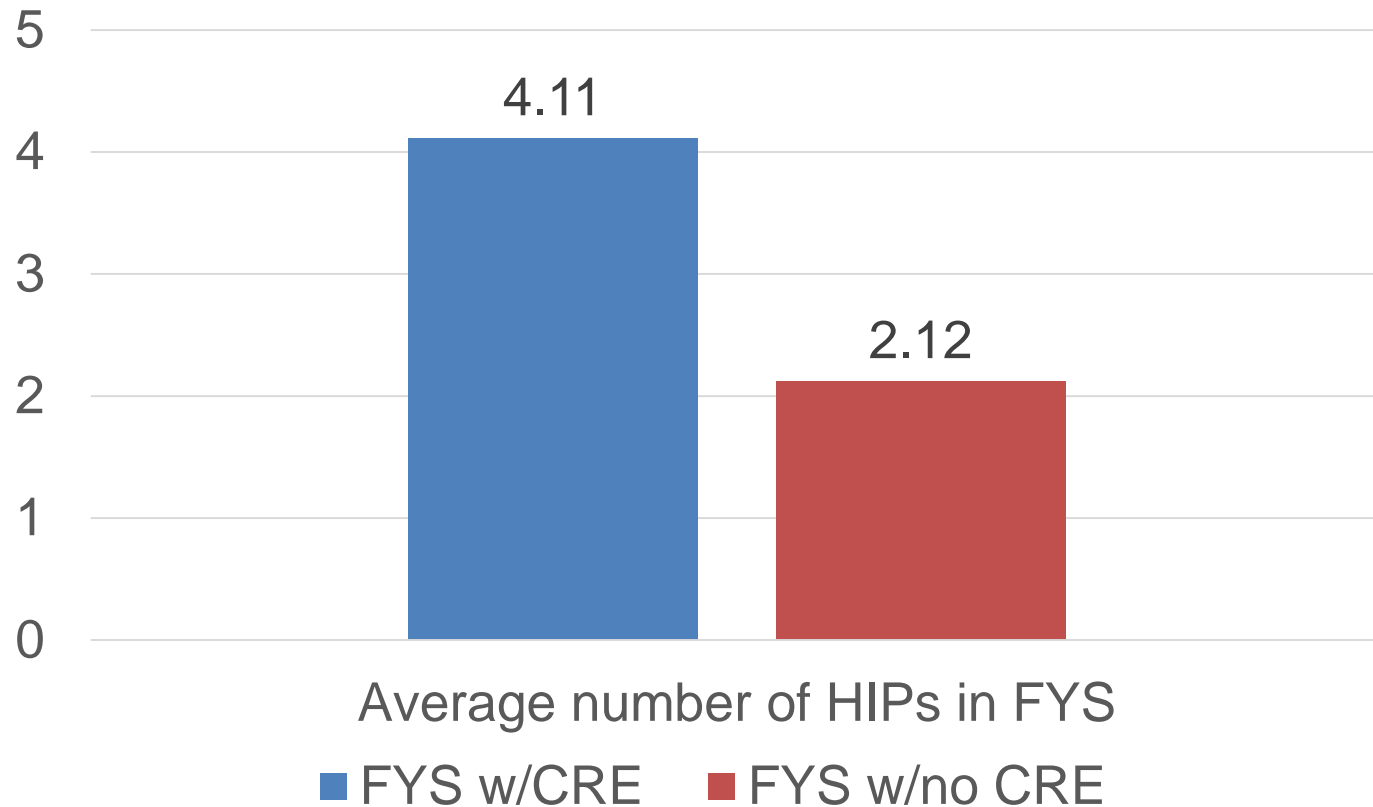- CRE had a strong presence even with institutions reporting they didn't have an FYS (32.2%)

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HIP to have a CRE in your FYS

HIPs in FYS by Connection of CRE

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

HIP to have a CRE in your FYS

5
4 — 4.11
3
2 — 2.12
1
0

Average number of HIPs in FYS

■ FYS w/CRE   ■ FYS w/no CRE

(*p* < .001)

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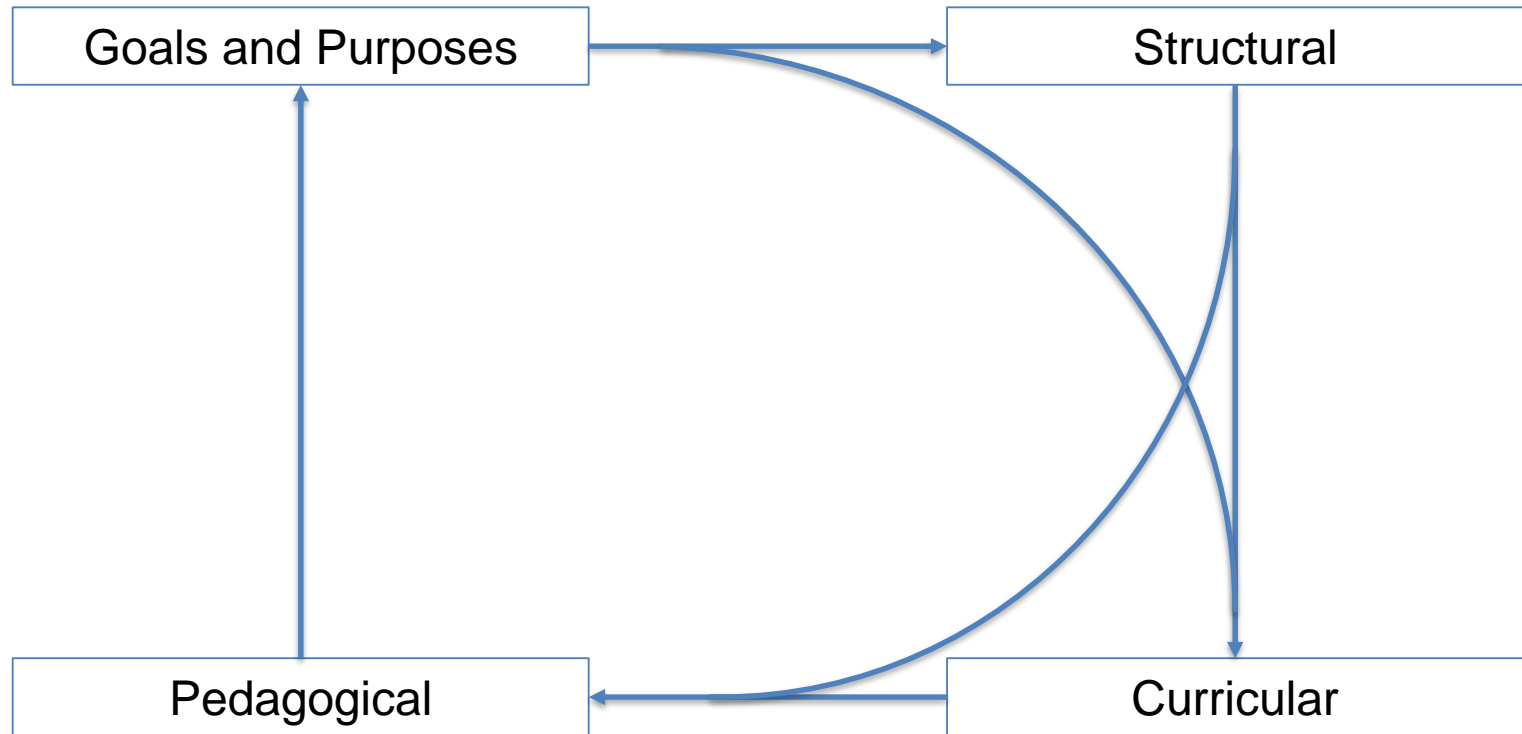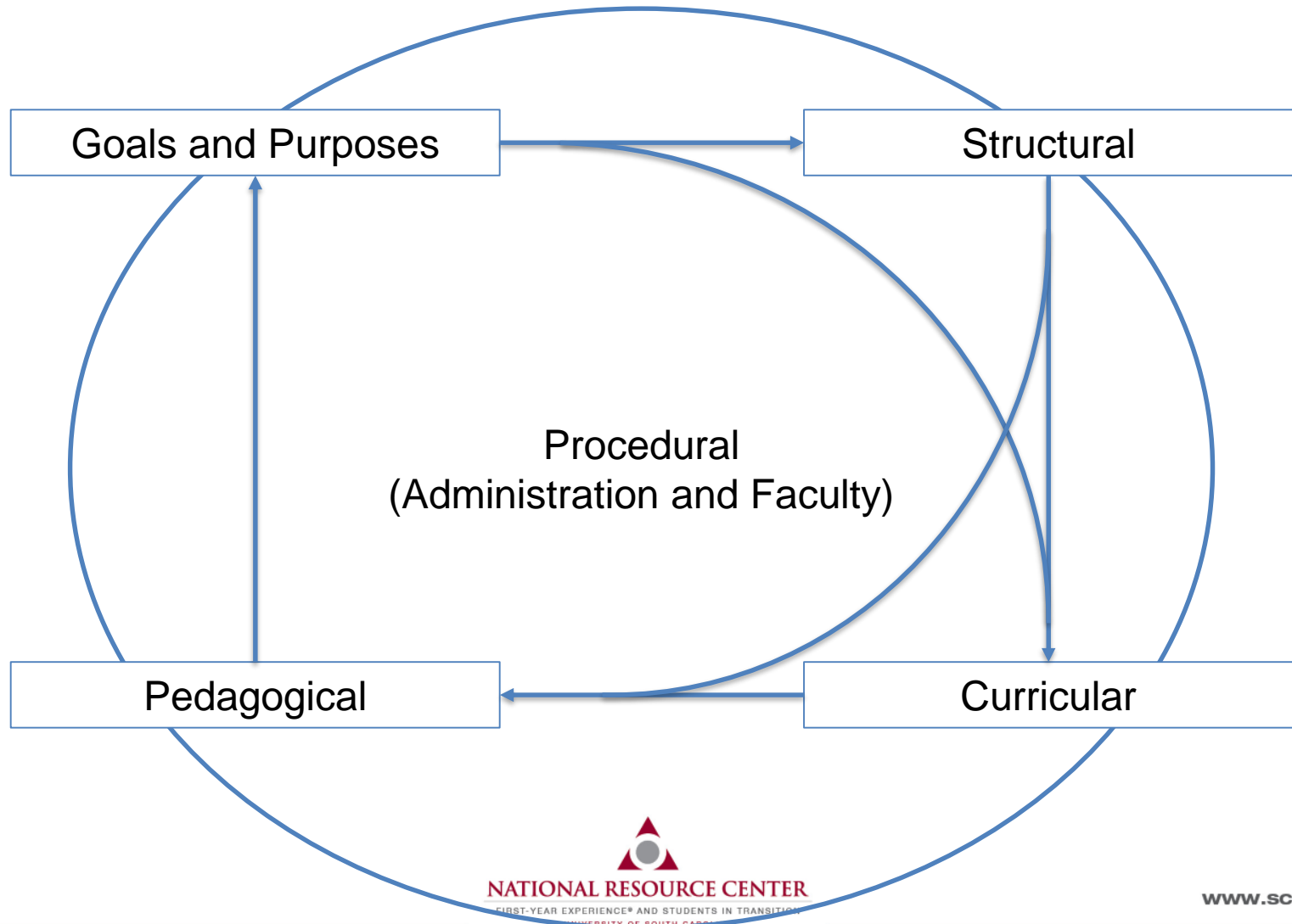
CRE in FYS

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

CRE in FYS: Procedural

- Administration

- Faculty

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CRE in FYS: Instructor

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

- 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

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***

($p > .01$)

Dallin George Young

COMMON READING EXPERIENCES: CLOSING DISCUSSION

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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

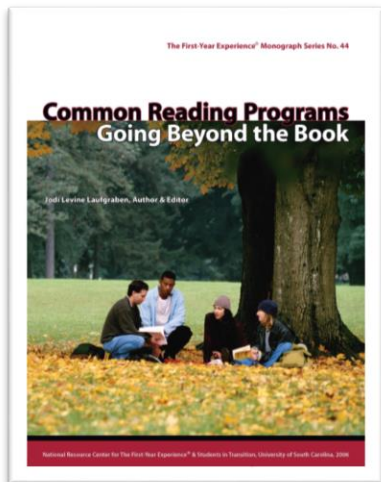# How do we go beyond the book to create an ongoing and engaging academic initiative for students?

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"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*)

Common Reading Programs
Going Beyond the Book

The First-Year Experience® Monograph Series No. 44

Jodi Levine Laufgraben, Author & Editor

National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience® & Students in Transition, University of South Carolina, 2006

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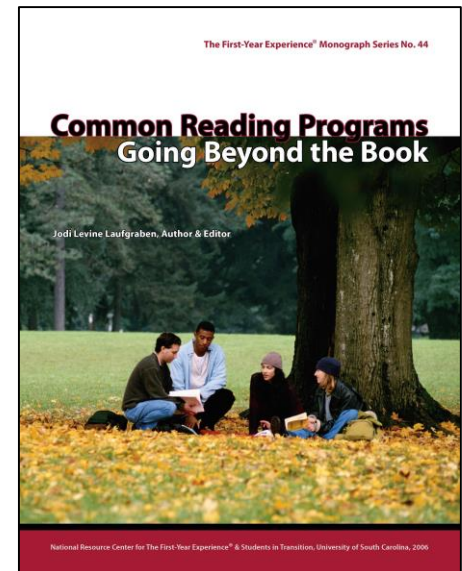UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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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

Available now
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