

# The First-Year Seminar as a Driver of High-Impact Practice

## Findings from a National Survey

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NODAC  
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# High-Impact Educational Activities

- Time on task
- Quality of student effort
- Formal & informal interactions with faculty and peers
- Authentic learning tasks
- Exposure to diverse perspectives
- Frequent feedback

(Kuh, 2008, *High-Impact Educational Practices*)

# High-Impact Educational Activities

Common intellectual experiences

Undergraduate research

Thematic learning communities

First-year seminars

Capstone courses

Writing/skills-intensive courses

Internships

Collaborative learning experiences

Service/community-based learning



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# New Century Learning Outcomes

- Knowledge of human cultures & physical and natural world
- Intellectual and practical skills
- Personal and social responsibility
- Integrative learning

(AAC&U, 2007, *College Learning for the New Global Century*)

# What Is a First-Year Seminar?

A course designed to “assist students in their academic and social development and in their transition to college. A seminar, by definition, is a small discussion-based course in which students and their instructors exchange ideas and information. In most cases, there is a strong emphasis on creating community in the classroom.” (Hunter & Linder, 2005, pp. 275-276).



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# National Survey of First-Year Seminars

- Methodology for 2013-2014 administration
  - Administration: October 31, 2012 – January 3, 2013
  - Invitation sent to 3,753 institutions in 4 waves:
    - Chief Academic Officer
    - Chief Executive Officer
    - Chief Student Affairs Officer
    - Institutional contacts from 2009 administration
  - 896 usable responses (23.9% response rate)

# Participants

<b>Institution type</b>	<b>All (<i>N</i> = 896)</b>	<b>With seminar (<i>N</i> = 804)</b>
Two-year	26.7%	25.6%
Four-year	73.3%	74.4%
Public	54.1%	54.4%
Private, not-for-profit	42.9%	42.8%
Private, for-profit	3.0%	2.7%



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# Participants

<b>Size of First-Year Class</b>	<b>All (<i>N</i> = 896)</b>	<b>With seminar (<i>N</i> = 804)</b>
< 500	29.8%	29.5%
501 – 1,000	22.8%	22.6%
1,001 – 1500	11.8%	11.9%
1,501 – 2,000	7.6%	7.5%
2,001 – 2,500	6.6%	6.8%
2,501 – 3,000	2.9%	2.9%
3,001 – 3,500	4.1%	4.5%
3,500 – 4,000	2.5%	2.2%
4,001 – 5,000	3.6%	3.7%
> 5,000	8.4%	8.3%



# Types of First-Year Seminars

- Extended orientation seminars
- Academic seminars with generally uniform content
- Academic seminars on various topics
- Professional or discipline-based seminars
- Basic study skills seminars
- Hybrid seminars

# Types of Seminars Across All Institutions

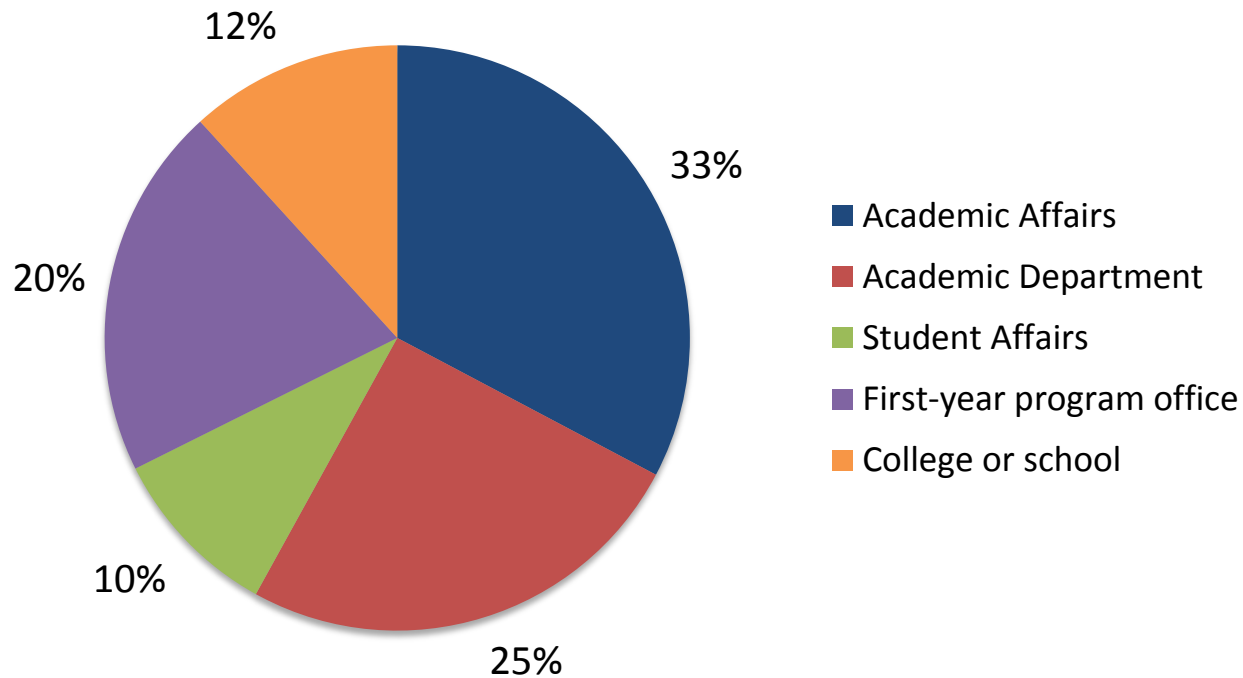
	<b>All Seminars (N = 788)</b>	<b>Primary Type (N = 786)</b>
<b>EO</b>	<b>60.4%</b>	<b>39.1%</b>
<b>AUC</b>	<b>29.4%</b>	<b>19.0%</b>
<b>AVC</b>	<b>28.7%</b>	<b>19.2%</b>
<b>Basic</b>	<b>22.6%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>
<b>Prof.</b>	<b>16.4%</b>	<b>3.8%</b>
<b>Hybrid</b>	<b>23.4%</b>	<b>14.1%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>

# Primary Seminar by Institutional Type

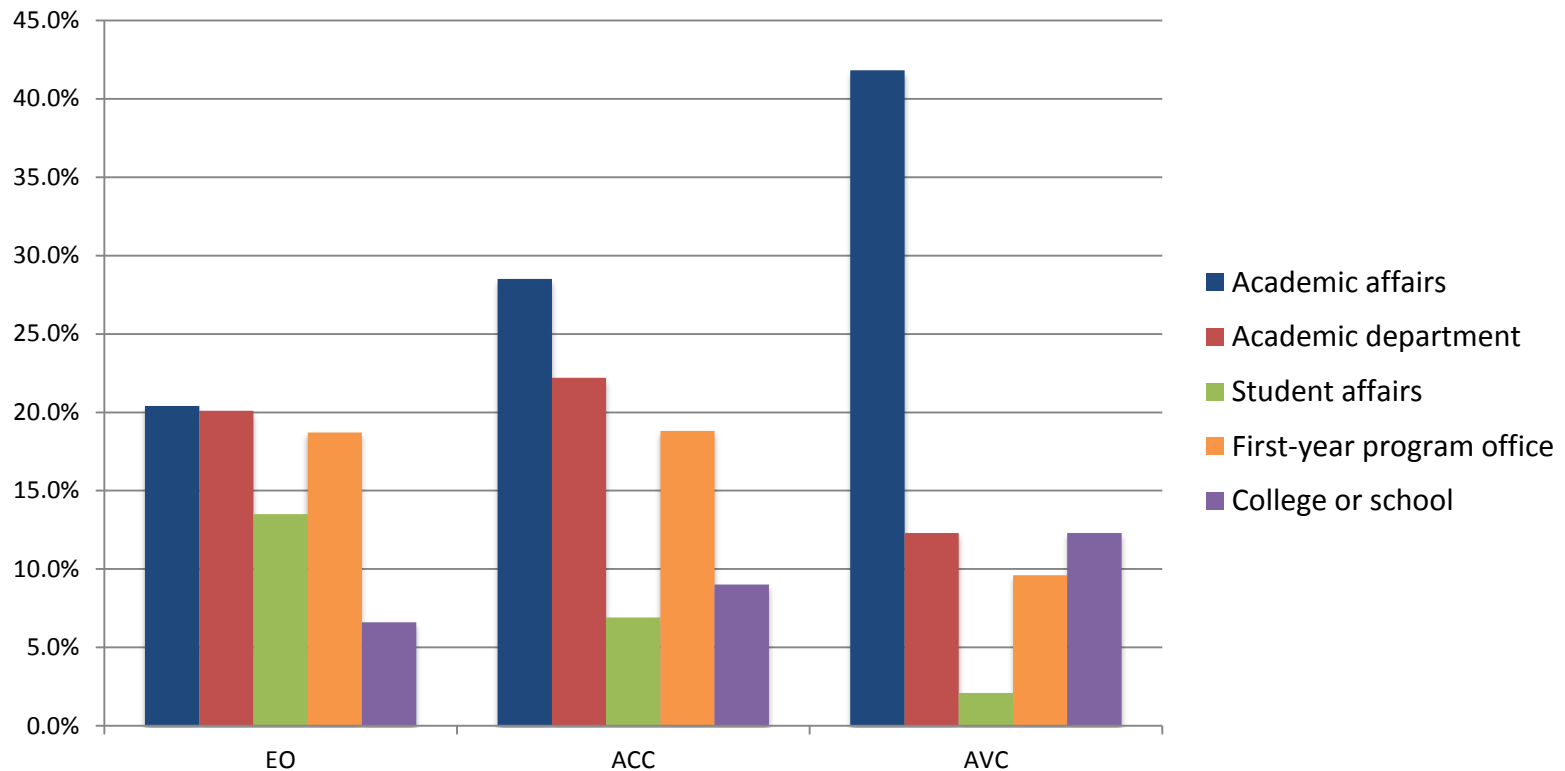
	Two-Year	Four-Year	Public	Private
<b>EO</b>	<b>54.0%</b>	34.0%	<b>47.4%</b>	29.2%
<b>AUC</b>	20.5%	18.4%	17.4%	20.8%
<b>AVC</b>	3.0%	<b>24.7%</b>	12.4%	<b>27.2%</b>
<b>Basic</b>	<b>11.5%</b>	1.4%	5.6%	1.9%
<b>Prof.</b>	2.0%	4.4%	5.4%	1.9%
<b>Hybrid</b>	8.5%	16.0%	11.3%	17.5%
<b>Other</b>	.5%	1.0%	0.5%	1.4%

$p < 0.001$

# Administrative Home of First-Year Seminar



# Administrative Home of First-Year Seminar



# Administration of Seminars

- 45% of institutions offer fewer than 20 sections of the seminar
- 42.5% of institutions require all first-year students to take the seminar
- A majority of seminars have classes enrolling 15 to 24 students—69.5%



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# Grading and Credit Hours

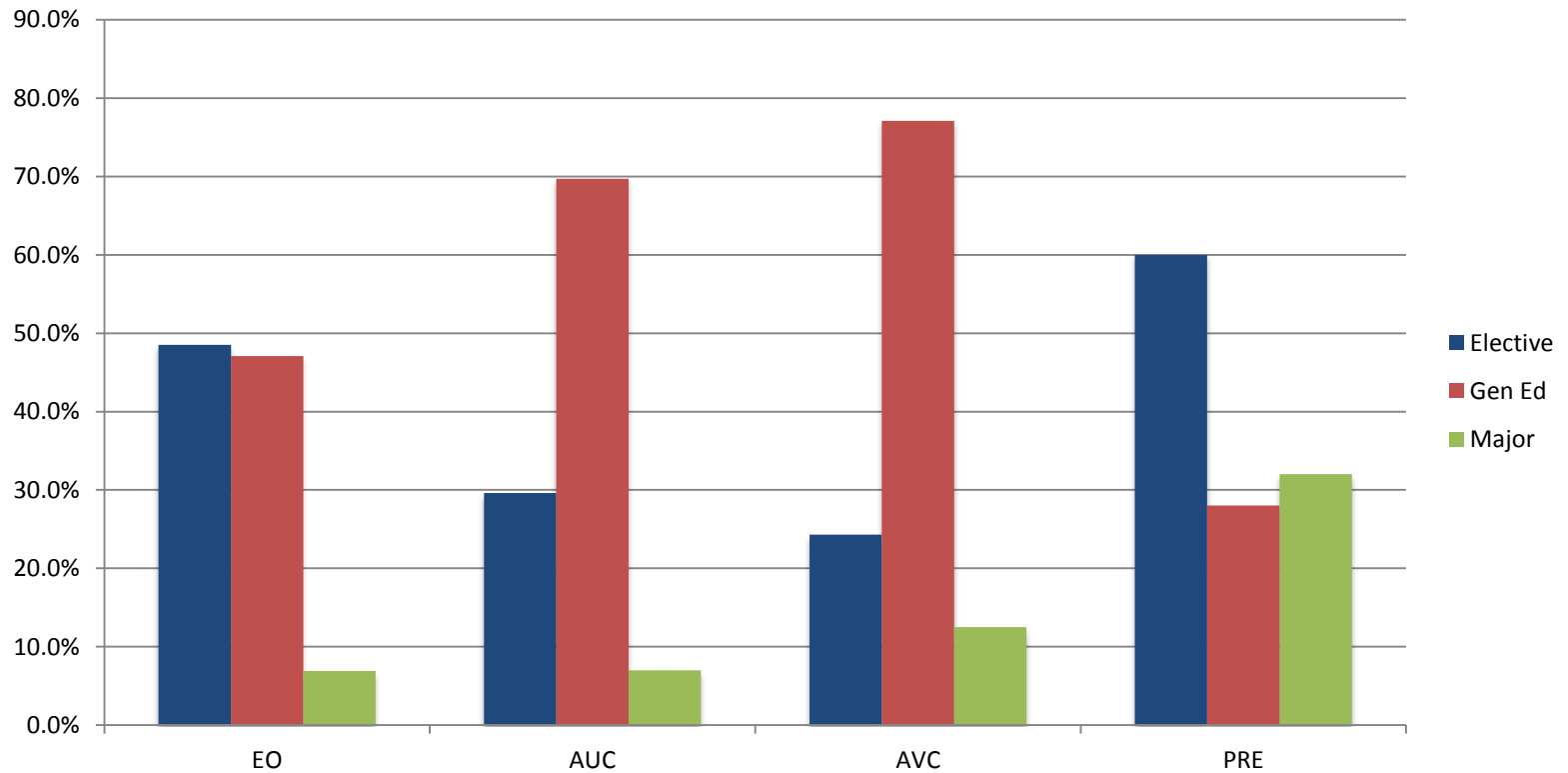
- Most seminars (85.2%) are letter graded
- More than 43% of seminars are offered for one credit hour; about 32% of seminars are offered for three credit hours



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# Application of Credit



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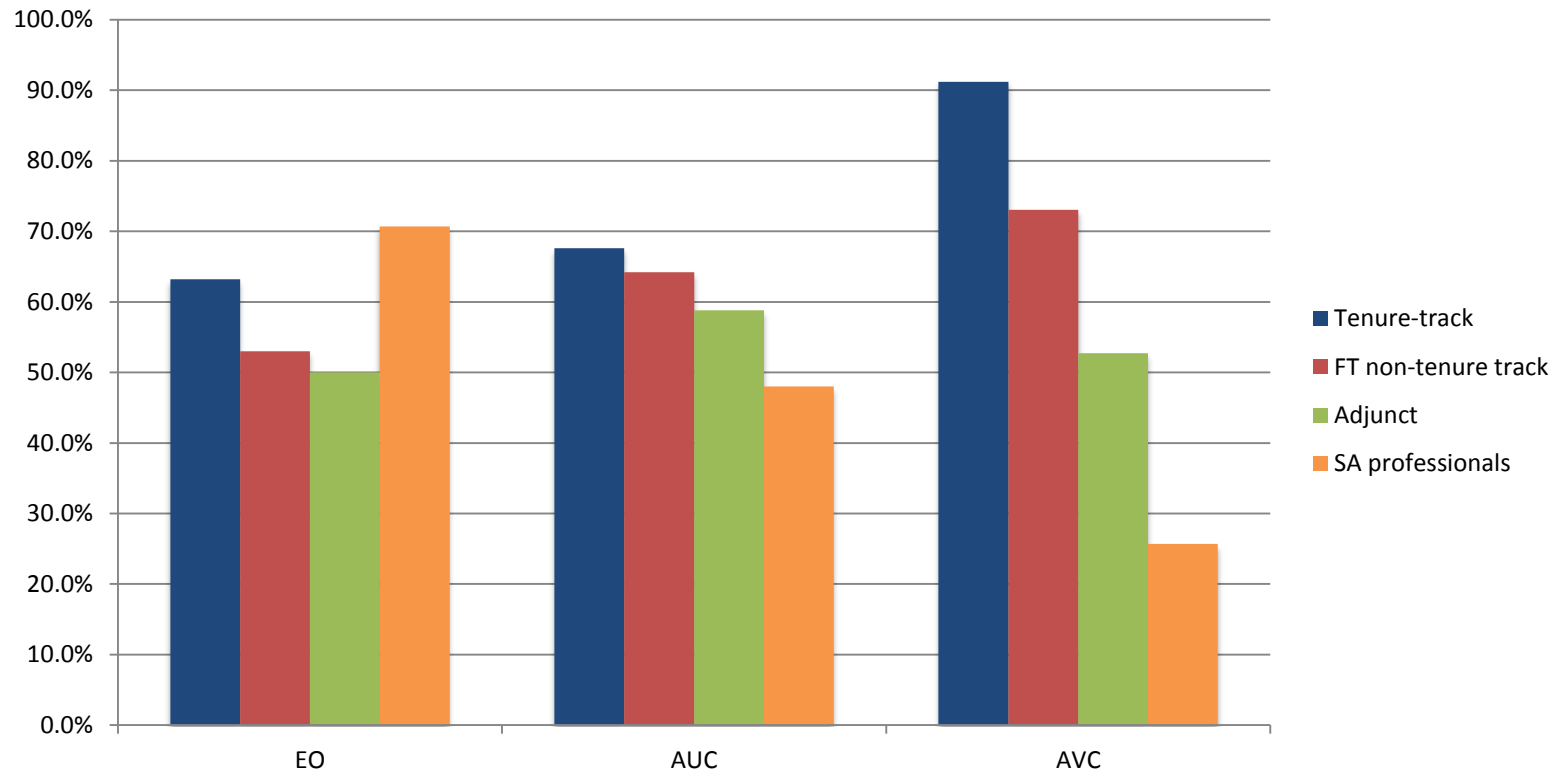
# Who Teaches the Seminar?

Role	Percentage
Tenure track faculty	71.1
FT non-tenure track faculty	60.7
Adjunct faculty	51.9

# Who Teaches the Seminar?

Role	Percentage
Student affairs professionals	52.0
Other campus professionals	31.8
Graduate students	4.7
Undergraduate students	4.1

# Who Teaches the Seminar?



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# Role of Peers in the Seminar

<b>Role</b>	<b>EO</b>	<b>ACC</b>	<b>AVC</b>
Assist instructor, but do not teach	25.7%	29.1%	27.7%
Teach as part of a team	<b>18.6%</b>	5.4%	6.1%
Teach independently	2.0%	0.7%	2.7%
Other	12.2%	14.9	22.3%



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# Top 5 Seminar Goals

<b>Most Important Course Goals</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Develop a connection with the institution	44.9
Orientation to campus resources	37.8
Develop academic skills	36.3
Develop critical thinking skills	23.3
Create common first-year experience	21.6

# Seminar Goals by Course Type

Most Important Course Goals	EO	AUC	AVC
Develop a connection with the institution	<b>56.3%</b>	36.5%	31.3%
Orientation to campus resources	<b>58.3%</b>	27.0%	11.6%
Develop academic skills	34.6%	37.8%	32.0%
Develop critical thinking skills	7.8%	31.1%	<b>50.3%</b>
Create common first-year experience	19.7%	<b>35.8%</b>	17.7%

\* $p < 0.01$

# Top 5 Course Topics

<b>Most Important Course Topics</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Campus resources	35.7
Academic planning/advising	34.7
Critical thinking	32.6
Study skills	29.8
Campus engagement	27.7

# Course Topics by Seminar Type

Most Important Course Topics	EO	AUC	AVC
Campus resources	<b>56.3%</b>	23.6%	8.8%
Academic planning/advising	<b>47.1%</b>	35.1%	12.2%
Critical thinking	10.8%	45.9%	<b>63.3%</b>
Study skills	<b>39.3%</b>	24.3%	10.9%
Campus engagement	<b>32.9%</b>	27.7%	15.0%

$p < 0.01$



# HIPs and First-Year Seminars

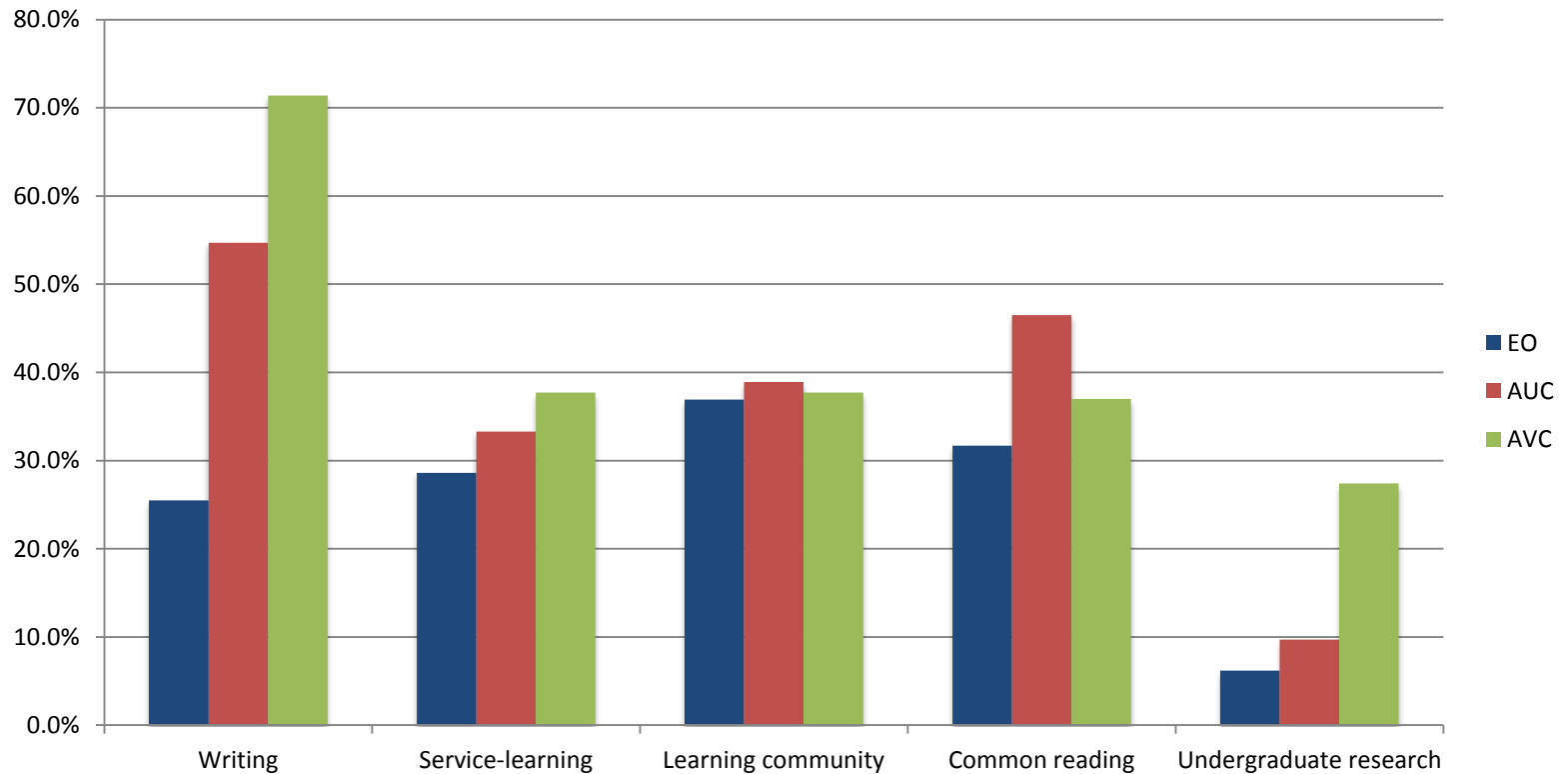
High-Impact Practice	Percentage
Produce and revise various forms of writing	42.5%
Collaboration and teamwork	67.2%
Explore cultures, life experiences, and world	58.5%
Service-learning	31.8%
Learning community	36.8%
Common reading experience	38.1%
Undergraduate research	12.8%



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# HIPs by Seminar Type



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# Role of Writing

- Developing writing skills as course goal (11.6%)
  - 38.8% of academic variable content seminars
  - 13.5% of academic uniform content seminars
- Writing skills as a course topic (17.3%)
  - 49.0% of academic variable content seminars
  - 23.6% of academic uniform content seminars

# Seminar as Writing-Intensive Course?

- Evidence of writing pedagogy
- Writing as a mode of learning and/or reflection
- Types of assignments



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# Service-Learning

Reflection Technique	Percentage
Class discussion	77.3
Portfolio	20.2
Student presentations	50.5
Writing exercise (i.e., essay, journal)	77.3



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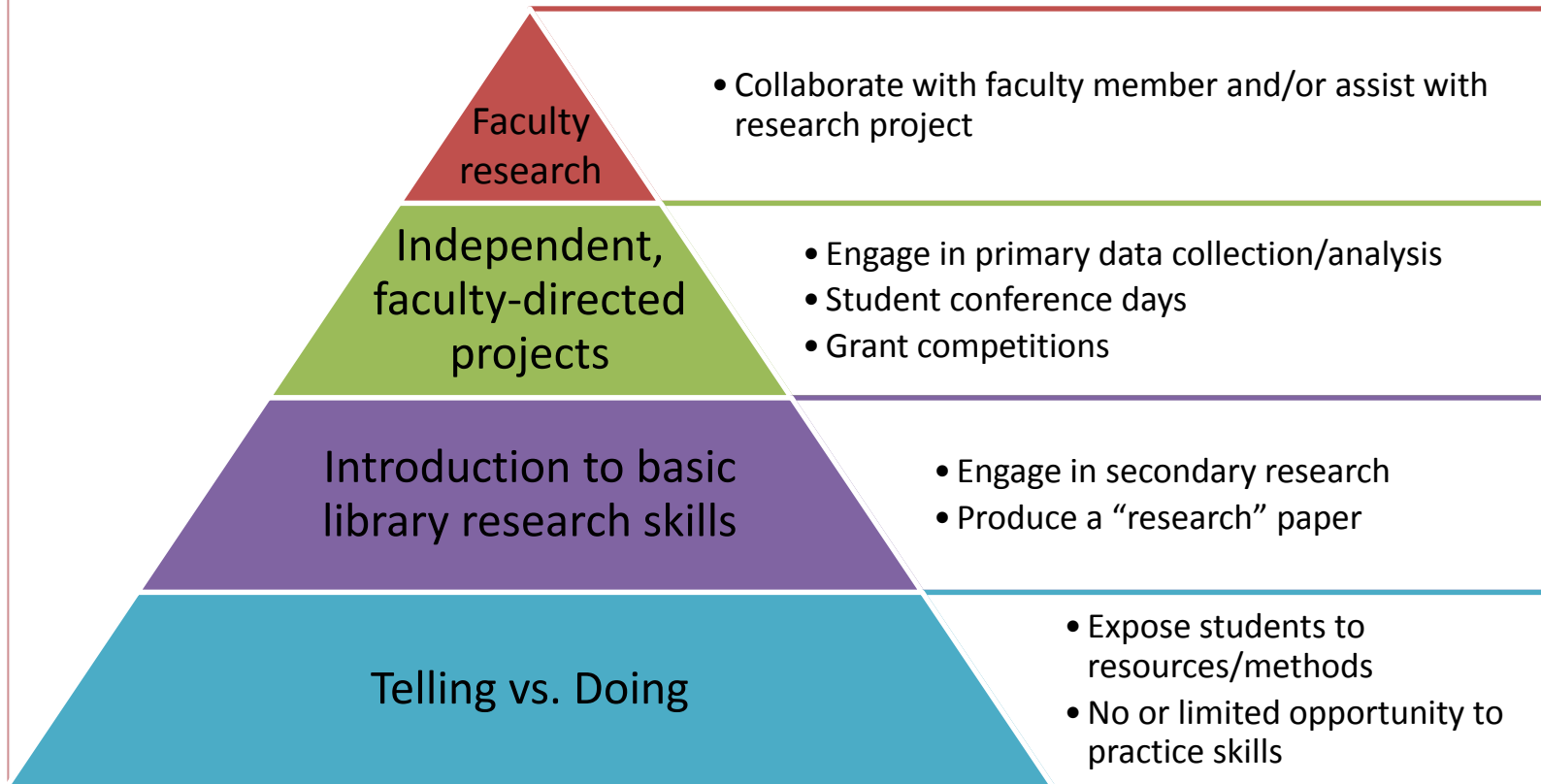
# Service-Learning

- Voluntary across all sections or required only for selected sections
- Connected to campus/community service days
  - New Student Orientation
- Good Practices
  - Student-planned and directed
  - Connected to course theme or topic
  - Pre-service training/orientation

# Learning Communities

LC Characteristic	Percentage
Co-enrollment in some but not all classes	73.8
Co-enrollment in all classes	9.1
Intentional coordination of content	34.5
Thematically linked content	25.8
Common set of experiences outside the seminar	33.5
Residential component	30.5

# Undergraduate Research



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