

High-Impact Programs on Student Persistence: Evidence from Institutional- Level Data

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Overview

- What are these high-impact practices?
- Data from three national, institutional-level surveys conducted by the NRC
 - Assessment and alignment
- My predictions for the “impactfulness” of high-impact practices on retention
 - (Based on *some* empirical evidence, of course)
- Where do we go from here?

High-Impact Educational Practices

First-year seminars/experiences

Common intellectual experiences

Learning communities

Writing-intensive courses

Collaborative assignments/projects

Undergraduate research

Diversity/global learning

Service/community-based learning

Internships

Capstone courses/projects



The Evidence

“High-impact” educational practices – identified by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Liberal Education and America’s Promise initiative – were specifically selected because of the significant impact associated with persistence and student development (see Brownell & Swaner, 2010; Kuh, 2008; Leskes & Miller, 2006).

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“High-impact practices...combine and concentrate other empirically validated pedagogical approaches into a single multidimensional activity....

At the same time, while promising, they are not a panacea.

Only when they are **implemented well** and **continually evaluated**...will we realize their considerable potential.”

George Kuh, 2010

2009 National Survey of First-Year Seminars

Methodology for 2009 administration

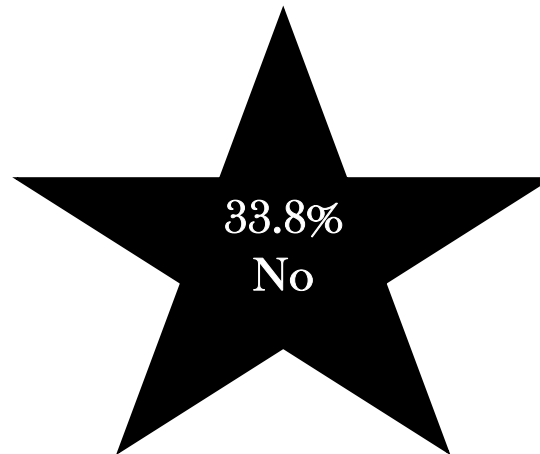
- Administration: Oct. 30 – Dec. 15, 2009
- Invitation sent to 3,225 institutions in 3 waves
- Access population v. survey population
- Incentive program
- 1,019 responses (32% response rate)

87.3% of 2009 respondents ($n = 890$) reported having a first-year seminar

	Percent of responding institutions with first-year seminars	National percentage
Institutional type		
Two-year	26.4	38.3
Four-year	73.6	61.7
Institutional affiliation		
Private	47.9	62.0
Public	52.1	38.0
First-year class size		
500 or less	34.3	49.1
501 - 1,000	23.6	22.4
1,001 - 2,000	19.9	12.9
2,001 - 3,000	8.3	6.0
3,001 - 4,000	6.1	3.0
4,001+	7.9	3.1



Has your first-year seminar been formally assessed or evaluated since Fall 2006?



9.8% don't know



Quantitative Assessment Strategies

Assessment	Percent
Student course evaluation	94.9%
Institutional data	75.3%
Survey instrument	75.3%
<i>Locally developed</i>	84.0%
<i>National survey</i>	52.4%

Qualitative Assessment Strategies

Assessment	Percent
Focus Groups	
Instructors	51.3%
Students	42.6%
Interviews	
Instructors	45.6%
Students	30.2%

Objective	Percentage
Develop academic skills	54.6
Develop a connection with the institution	50.2
Provide orientation to campus resources and services	47.6
Self-exploration/personal development	28.5
Create common first-year experience	23.3

Topic	Percentage
Campus resources	42.4
Study skills	39.8
Academic planning/advising	35.7
Critical thinking	34.8
Time management	27.6



Outcome	Percent
Persistence to sophomore year	73.7
Satisfaction with faculty	70.9
Satisfaction with institution	65.3
Grade-point average	58.0
Use of campus services	51.0
Connections with peers	49.3
Participation in campus activities	49.0
Out-of-class student/faculty interactions	47.1
Academic abilities	42.0
Persistence to graduation	38.4

2008 National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives

- Methodology for 2008 administration
 - Administration: Nov. 11 – Jan. 19, 2009
 - Invitation sent to 2,743 institutions
 - 315 responses
- 41.6% of 2008 respondents ($n = 131$) from provided second-to-third-year retention rates

2008 National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives

- Correlation between sophomore-year initiatives and second-to-third-year retention rates
- 66.7% of institutions with sophomore initiatives had second-to-third-year retention rates between 75% - 100%
 - 33.8% of institutions *without* sophomore initiatives had second-to-third-year retention rates between 75% - 100%

2008 National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives

Though correlation does not imply causation...

“Overall, institutions that develop and deliver sophomore-year success initiatives generally yield higher third-year return rates from their students, suggesting that such second-year programming is a worthy investment.”

- Keup, Gahagan, & Goodwin, 2010, p.26



2008 National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives

Assessment Practices

- 40% respondents indicated not assessing longstanding sophomore initiatives
- The majority of institutions were unable to report comprehensive assessment information about sophomore initiatives
- Those who performed assessment practices relied heavily on survey data and reported infrequent inclusion of faculty or administrators in the assessment process

2011 National Survey of Senior Capstone Experiences

- Methodology for 2011 administration
 - Administration: Jun. 29 – Sept. 5, 2011
 - Invitation sent to 3,516 institutions in 4 waves
 - Access population v. survey population
 - 325 responses (9% response rate)
- 97.1% of 2011 respondents ($n = 268$) from four-year institutions reported having a senior capstone experience

Assessment and Evaluation



Just over half of institutions (55.7%) report formally assessing or evaluating their senior capstone course or experience over the last three years.

Objective	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Critical thinking/analytical skills	113	42.2
Ability to conduct research	74	27.6
Career preparation	67	25.0
Professional development	63	23.5
Proficiency written communication	61	22.8

Topic	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Critical thinking/analytical skills	139	51.9
Discipline-specific topic	116	43.3
Conduct scholarly research	71	26.5
Writing skills	56	20.9
Teamwork/group work	45	16.8

Outcomes

Outcome	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Critical thinking	76	71.0
Written communication	48	44.9
Connection to the discipline(s)	41	38.3
Oral communication	30	28.0
Satisfaction with instructor	15	14.0
Satisfaction with institution	10	9.3

Shifting Gears a Little...



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My Predictions...

- I think we overemphasize the impact of *participation* in high-impact practices on retention and learning outcomes
 - It is what we are doing *within* the high-impact practices that is contributing to these outcomes
 - I do not think we are assessing – nationally and institutionally – the impact of these “good practices”
 - AAC&U made theoretical assumptions on the impact high-impact practices on 21st Century Learning Outcomes

The Emerging Evidence...

- High-impact practices have minor direct effects on student learning (Salisbury & Goodman, 2009)
- A more significant connection exists between “good practices” and student-learning outcomes (Goodman, Baxter Magolda, Seifert, & King, 2011)

Vetted Good Practices

- Exposure to effective teaching
- Teaching clarity and organization
- Quality of nonclassroom interactions with faculty
- Active learning
- Influential interactions with other students
- Cooperative learning
- Academic challenge
- High expectations
- Integrative learning/experiences
- Diversity experiences inside/outside the classroom

(see Chickering & Gamson, 1987, 1991; Pascarella, Cruce, Wolniak, & Blaich, 2004; Pascarella, Cruce, Umbach, Wolniak, Kuh, Carini, Hayek, Gonyea, & Zhao, 2006)



High-Impact Practices

Student participation in...

- Academic Learning Community
- Service Learning
- First-Year Seminar
- Undergraduate Research
- (Senior Capstone Experiences)



Significant **Total** Effects of High-Impact Practices among AAC&U Twenty-First-Century Liberal Arts Outcomes

	Need for Cognition		Positive Attitude Toward Literacy		Global Learning		Civic Learning		Leadership	
	First Year	Senior	First Year	Senior	First Year	Senior	First Year	Senior	First Year	Senior
First-Year Seminar			+	++	+		+			
Academic Learning Community		++			++					
Service Learning		+				++	++	++		++
Undergrad. Research		++		++	+		++		++	++
Senior Experience/Capstone		++		++		+				

+ $p < 0.01$, ++ $p < 0.001$

Significant Direct Effects of High-Impact Practices among AAC&U Twenty-First-Century Liberal Arts Outcomes

	Need for Cognition		Positive Attitude Toward Literacy		Global Learning		Civic Learning		Leadership	
	First Year	Senior	First Year	Senior	First Year	Senior	First Year	Senior	First Year	Senior
First-Year Seminar			+	++			+			
Academic Learning Community										
Service Learning								++		+
Undergrad. Research		++		++						
Senior Experience/Capstone										

+ $p < 0.01$, ++ $p < 0.001$

	Cognition		Literacy		Global		Civic		Leadership	
	FY	Senior	FY	Senior	FY	Senior	FY	Senior	FY	Senior
Good Practices (Indirect Effects)										
<i>Undergraduate Research - Effect Transmitted by:</i>										
Quality of Nonclassroom Interactions with Faculty									++	
Academic Challenge		++							+	+
Integrated Ideas, Information, and Experiences		++		+	+		++		+	++
Diversity Experiences		+		++	++		++		++	++

Tendency Toward “Engaging Pedagogy”

- A variety of teaching methods
- Meaningful discussion and homework
- Challenging assignments
- Productive use of class time
- Encouragement for students to speak in class and work together

Swing, R. L. (2002). *The impact of engaging pedagogy on first-year seminars* (Policy Center on the First Year of College Report). Retrieved from <http://www.sc.edu/fye/resources/assessment/essays/Swing-8.28.02.html>.



My Predictions...

- When we measure the “impactfulness” of high-impact practices, we may be overlooking students’ self-selection
 - Required v. non-required
 - Equally positive effects for all students?
 - First-generation students example

“High-impact practices...combine and concentrate other empirically validated pedagogical approaches into a single multidimensional activity....

At the same time, while promising, they are not a panacea.

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George Kuh, 2010

The Overall Challenges

- High-impact practices are *not* a one-size-fits-all model
 - They *must* be tailored to your specific institution
 - Example: Extended Orientation v. Academic first-year seminars
- As such, they must be assessed from an institutional (i.e., local) lens (with influence from national studies)

Where Do We Go From Here?

“Excuse me,” said Alice, “but how do I get out of here?”

“That depends a great deal on where you want to end up,” said the cat.

“I don’t care where I end up,” said Alice, “I just want out!”

“Well,” said the cat, “if it doesn’t matter where you end up; it doesn’t matter which road you take.”

- Alice in Wonderland

Where Do We Go From Here?

- There is no one “right” type of high-impact practice; pick and choose what is best for your institution
 - Connect to learning/program outcomes
- Connect high-impact practices to other educational initiatives and practices (soup)
 - Continue integrating good practices
- Assess the “good practices” within the “high-impact practices” to better understand retention patterns

Questions? Comments?

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