

# The Impact of First-Year Seminars on Student Involvement and Engagement in Educational Good Practices

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# Overview

- Emerging evidence
- High impact practice v. good practice
- Methods and sample
- Findings
- What does this all mean?
  - Participant discussion



**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER**  
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

# High-Impact Educational Practices

Common intellectual experiences

First-year seminars/experiences

Learning communities

Writing-intensive courses

Collaborative assignments/projects

Undergraduate research

Diversity/global learning

Service/community-based learning

Internships

Capstone courses/projects



# The Evidence

First-year seminars have been around the longest, are the dominant high impact practice across campuses, and are the most studied...

Yet, the research is surprisingly limited:

- 1) Persistence
- 2) Graduation rates
- 3) Achievement/GPA
- 4) Interactions with faculty
- 5) Use of campus resources
- 6) Participation in campus activities
- 7) Time management

(Brownell & Swaner, 2010)

“All the evidence so far suggests that they (high impact practices) benefit all students. 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

# 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)



# Sample and Data Collection

## Student-Level

- 17 institutions that participated in the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNS)
  - 11 liberal arts colleges, 3 research universities, and 3 regional universities
- Initial data collection was conducted in early fall 2006  
( $n = 4,501$ ) – T1
- First-year follow-up data collection ( $n = 3,081$ ) was conducted in spring 2007 – T2
- Follow-up participant data was weighted up to each of institution's undergraduate population by sex, race, and ACT score (or COMPASS/SAT equivalent)



# Sample and Data Collection

## Institutional-Level

- National Survey of First-Year Seminars (out of the NRC)
- Methodology for 2006 administration
  - Administration: Nov. 18, 2006 – Jan. 9, 2007
  - Invitation sent to 2,646 institutions in 3 waves
  - Access population v. survey population
  - 968 responses (36.6% response rate)
- 84.8% of 2006 respondents ( $n = 821$ ) reported having a first-year seminar

# Sample and Data Collection

## Merged Surveys

- 9 institutions participated in the WNS (student-level) and NRC (institution-level)
  - 6 liberal arts colleges, 2 research universities, 1 regional university
- Seminar type: extended orientation (1), academic with uniform content (1), academic with various content (4), basic study skills (1), and hybrid (2)
- 1,140 students enrolled in a first-year seminar; 424 did not

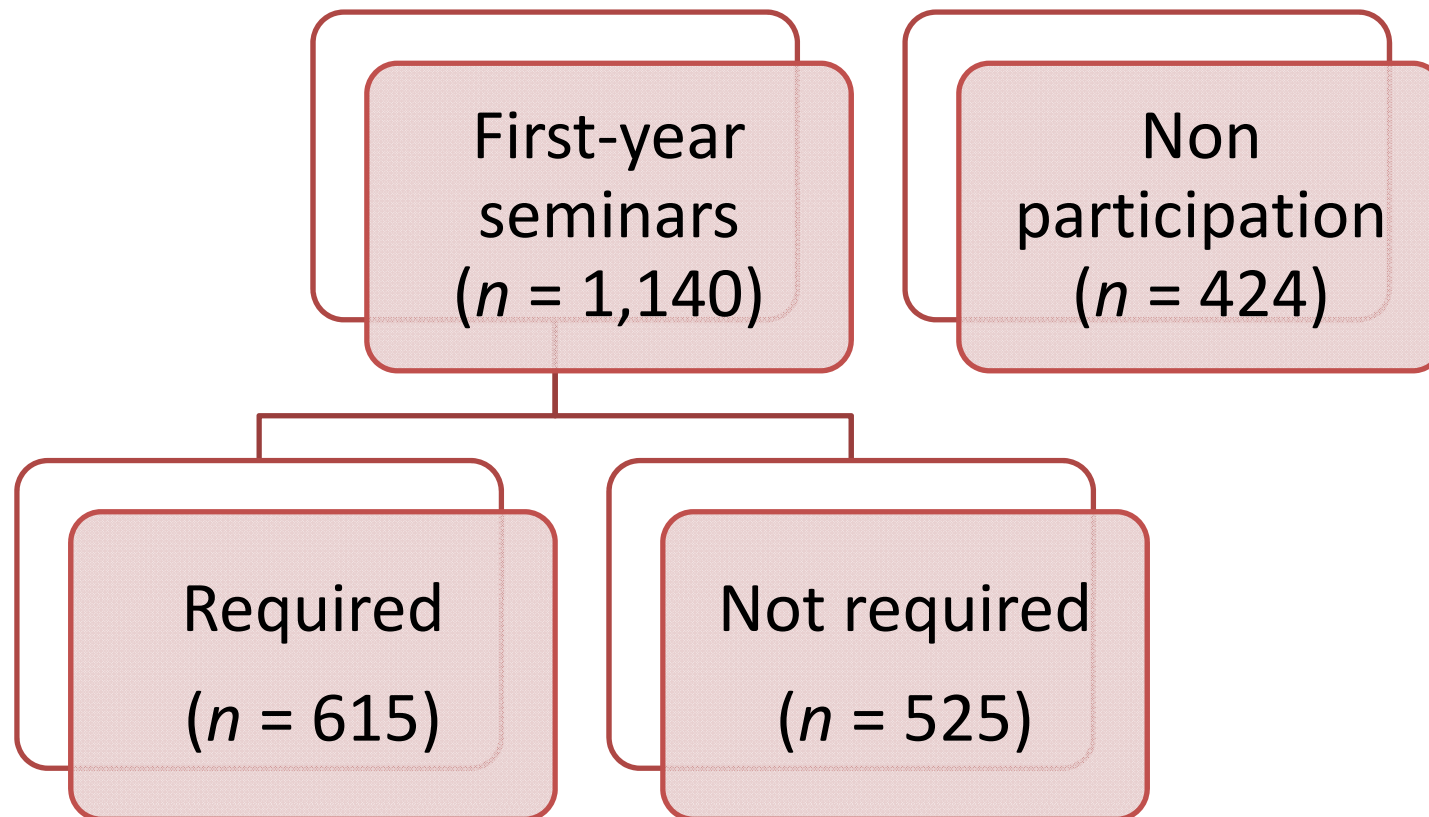
# Research Questions

- How does participation in first-year seminars impact students' involvement and engagement in educational good practices?
  - How does participation vary by requirement of seminar?
  - How does participation vary by seminar type?

# Vetted Good Practices

- Exposure to effective teaching
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- High expectations
- Integrative learning/experiences
- Diversity experiences inside/outside the classroom
- Study abroad
- Service Learning





## Students who participated in a FYS were more likely to...

Nonclassroom interactions w/ faculty	0.37
Interactions w/ faculty	0.32
Positive peer interactions	0.25
Integrative learning	0.24
Teaching clarity and organization	0.21
Academic challenge and effort	0.21
Interactions w/ student affairs staff	0.18
Diversity experiences	0.17
Cooperative learning	0.15
Co-curricular involvement	0.13
Study abroad	0.12
Service learning	0.12

First-year seminar v.  
non-participation

Students who participated in a FYS that was required were more likely to...

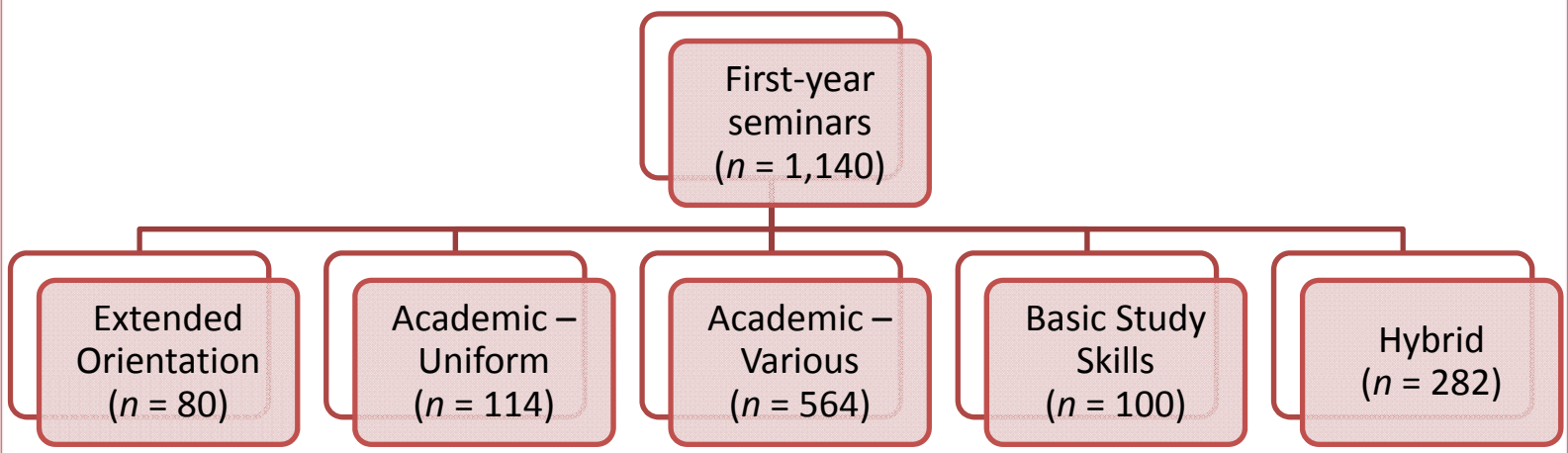
Nonclassroom interactions w/ faculty	0.46
Academic challenge and effort	0.28
Positive peer interactions	0.25
Interactions w/ faculty	0.24
Teaching clarity and organization	0.20
Co-curricular involvement	0.16
Service learning	0.14
Integrative learning	0.14
Interactions w/ student affairs staff	0.11
Cooperative learning	0.11
Study abroad	0.10
Diversity experiences	-0.06
	Required v. not required

# 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

(Tobolowsky and Associates, 2008)





## Students who participated in an EO FYS were more likely to

Interactions w/ faculty	0.87
Interactions w/ student affairs staff	0.71
Integrative learning	0.68
Nonclassroom interactions w/ faculty	0.65
Diversity experiences	0.48
Academic challenge and effort	0.39
Cooperative learning	0.36
Service learning	0.33
Teaching clarity and organization	0.29
Positive peer interactions	0.18
Study abroad	-0.05
Co-curricular involvement	-0.30



Extended Orientation  
v. non-participation

## Students who participated in a UC FYS were more likely to

Integrative learning	0.62
Diversity experiences	0.59
Nonclassroom interactions w/ faculty	0.54
Academic challenge and effort	0.50
Teaching clarity and organization	0.46
Interactions w/ faculty	0.33
Positive peer interactions	0.28
Study abroad	0.26
Interactions w/ student affairs staff	0.09
Service learning	-0.13
Co-curricular involvement	-0.17
Cooperative learning	-0.25

Academic – Uniform  
v. non-participation

## Students who participated in a VC FYS were more likely to

Nonclassroom interactions w/ faculty	0.14
Positive peer interactions	0.14
Cooperative learning	0.13
Teaching clarity and organization	0.12
Study abroad	0.09
Interactions w/ faculty	0.07
Integrative learning	0.07
Co-curricular involvement	0.07
Diversity experiences	0.07
Service learning	0.05
Academic challenge and effort	0.04
Interactions w/ student affairs staff	0.00

Academic – Various  
v. non-participation

## Students who participated in a BSS FYC were more likely to

Interactions w/ faculty	0.18
Co-curricular involvement	0.13
Interactions w/ student affairs staff	0.12
Positive peer interactions	0.08
Academic challenge and effort	0.06
Nonclassroom interactions w/ faculty	0.03
Integrative learning	0.02
Service learning	0.01
Study abroad	-0.01
Teaching clarity and organization	-0.05
Diversity experiences	-0.15
Cooperative learning	-0.16

Basic Study Skills v.  
non-participation

## Students who participated in a Hyb FYS were more likely to

Nonclassroom interactions w/ faculty	0.53
Interactions w/ faculty	0.43
Co-curricular involvement	0.38
Positive peer interactions	0.31
Academic challenge and effort	0.29
Interactions w/ student affairs staff	0.28
Cooperative learning	0.27
Service learning	0.24
Teaching clarity and organization	0.20
Integrative learning	0.20
Study abroad	0.14
Diversity experiences	0.13



Hybrid v. non-  
participation

So why should we care about  
“good practices” within the  
first-year seminar?



# First-Year Seminars

*Standardized Total and Direct Effects of First-Year Seminars, First-Year Experiences, and Good Practices on Need for Cognition using the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (n = 5,251)*

Variables	Total	SE	Direct	SE
<b>Participated in First-Year Seminar</b>	<b>0.08**</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.03</b>
<i>Good Practices</i>				
Frequency of Interactions with Faculty			-0.03	0.02
Degree of Positive Peer Interactions			-0.01	0.02
Integrated Ideas, Information, and Experiences			0.13***	0.02
Academic Challenge			0.05**	0.02
Diversity Experiences			0.04	0.02

Padgett, R. D., Keup, J. R., & Pascarella, E. T. (2010, November). *The impact of first-year seminars on college students' need for cognition*. Paper presented at the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Indianapolis, IN

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$





## First-Year Seminars cont.

*Standardized Indirect Effects on Need for Cognition of First-Year Seminars using the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (n = 5,251)*

<u>Effect Mediated Through</u>	<u>Estimated Indirect Effect</u>
Integrated Ideas, Information, and Experiences	0.025*** (0.006)
Academic Challenge and Effort	0.008* (0.004)

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Standard errors are in parentheses.

# 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>.



Students who participated in a FYS were more likely to perceive faculty as having greater levels of...

Support	0.37
Feedback	0.31
Classroom Challenge/Expectations	0.29
Clarity	0.24
Organization	0.14

First-year seminar v.  
non-participation

# Teaching Behaviors

*Standardized Effects of Teaching Behaviors on Need for Cognition and Positive Attitude Toward Literacy using the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (n = 6,028)*

Variables <sup>a</sup>	<i>Need for Cognition</i>		<i>Positive Attitude Toward Literacy</i>	
	<i>General Effects</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>General Effects</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>
Organization	0.04*	0.02	0.03	0.02
Clarity	0.04*	0.02	0.07***	0.02
Classroom Challenge/Expectations	0.05**	0.02	0.08***	0.02
Support	-0.04	0.02	-0.02	0.02
Prompt Feedback	0.04*	0.02	0.05**	0.02

Loes, C. N., Saichaie, K., Padgett, R. D., & Pascarella, E. T. (2010, November). *The effects of teacher behaviors on orientations towards learning*. Paper presented at the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Indianapolis, IN.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

## Your Experiences

- Do these findings surprise you?
- What is/is not working within your seminar?
- Would you like to share any innovative pedagogical or programmatic initiatives?
- Other thoughts?

# Questions? Comments?

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