

Sophomore Student Success:

Selected Findings from the 2008 National Survey on Sophomore-Year Initiatives

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Why All this Interest in Sophomores?

- Outgrowth of the focus on first-year students
- Recognition that second-year students have needs and face challenges
- Dearth of research and assessment on the second college year



Why All this Interest in Sophomores?

- Evidence that sophomores are at times the least satisfied of all students
- Increasing interest
 - conference programs
 - listserv activity
 - activity in professional organizations
 - publication sales



Defining 'Sophomore'

- More difficult to define than other points of student transition
- More ambiguity around beginning and ending



Defining 'Sophomore'

Time in college?

Credits earned?

Level of commitment and investment by student?

Certainty of academic major?



In your own mind have you
defined 'sophomore'?

Has your campus
developed a definition of
'sophomore'?



Sophomore 'Slump'



Characterized by
academic
disengagement and a
generalized
dissatisfaction with
one's college
experience.

--Freedman, 1956



Sophomore 'Slump'

Difficult to define because “there seems to be no one problem that can be identified...it seems unwise to lump all the problems of individual students together.”

-- Richmond and Lemons, 1985



Think, Pair, [Share]

What issues do you see among the sophomores on your campus?



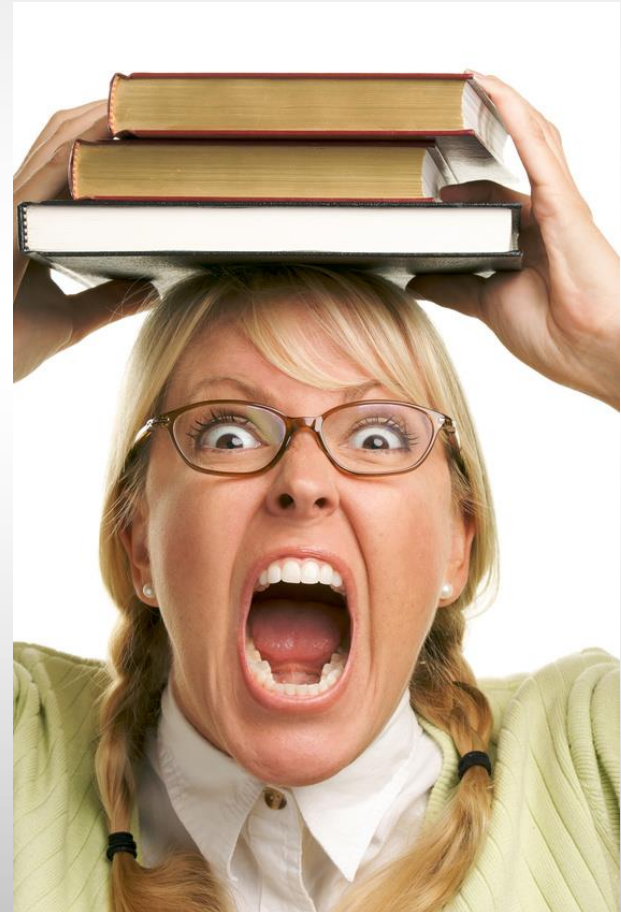
Issues in the Second Year

- Academic majors and academic self-efficacy
- The curriculum and academic progression
- Academic engagement



Issues in the Second Year

- Student satisfaction
- Social integration and involvement
- Student motivation
- Faculty contact



Issues in the Second Year



- Lifestyle decisions
- Financial issues



Issues in the Second Year



- Career Development
- Values
- Purpose



[Think, Pair], **Share**



Are there other issues that you see in your second year students?

Redefining 'Sophomore Slump'

A multi-dimensional phenomenon including one or more of the following:

- academic deficiencies
- academic disengagement
- dissatisfaction with the collegiate experience
- major and career indecision
- developmental confusion

--Kennedy & Upcraft, 2010



**So, what do we know about
institutional strategies for helping
sophomores succeed?**



2008 National Survey on Sophomore-Year Initiatives

- Purpose: “to get a better understanding of sophomore-specific efforts” on campuses across the country
 - Unit of observation was the institution
- Administration period: Nov.-Dec., 2008
- Administration target: chief student affairs officers
- Total number of respondents: 316 institutions



Characteristics of Respondents

- Institutional type: 24% 2-year; 76% 4-year
- Institutional affiliation: 48% private; 52% public
- Institutional enrollment:
 - 62%: 5,000 or less
 - 16%: 5,001-10,000
 - 9%: 10,001-15,000
 - 4%: 15,001-20,000
 - 8%: More than 20,000
- Institutional selectivity:
 - 31%: inclusive
 - 32%: selective
 - 24%: more selective



Respondents with Sophomore Initiatives

- 37% (n=115) of respondents reported having a sophomore-year initiative
- Characteristics of respondents with sophomore initiatives
 - Much higher proportion of 4-year institutions
 - Generally representative across institutional size
 - Statistically significant skew toward:
 - Private institutions
 - More selective institutions



Types of Sophomore Success Initiatives

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Academic advising
Career planning
Class events
Community service/service learning
Credit-bearing course
Cultural enrichment activities
Curricular learning communities
Faculty/staff mentors
Financial aid
Leadership development

Online resources
Opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class
Peer mentoring by sophomores
Peer mentoring for sophomores
Print publications
Residence life
Retreats
Student government
Study abroad
Undergraduate research

Major

Most Common Sophomore Success Initiatives

Sophomore Initiative	Percent
Career planning	76.7
Leadership development	58.8
Academic advising	50.9
Online resources	43.2
Peer mentoring <u>by</u> sophomores	38.6
Residence life	38.2
Study abroad	35.7
Community service/Service learning	32.5
Faculty/staff mentors	32.1



Least Common Sophomore Success Initiatives

Sophomore Initiative	Percent
Student government	31.8
Print publications	31.0
Undergraduate research	27.0
Cultural enrichment activities	25.0
Retreats	20.4
Opportunities to co-teach a class/TA	17.1
Financial aid	17.0
Peer mentoring <u>for</u> sophomores	16.7
Curricular learning communities	16.1
Credit-bearing course	14.7



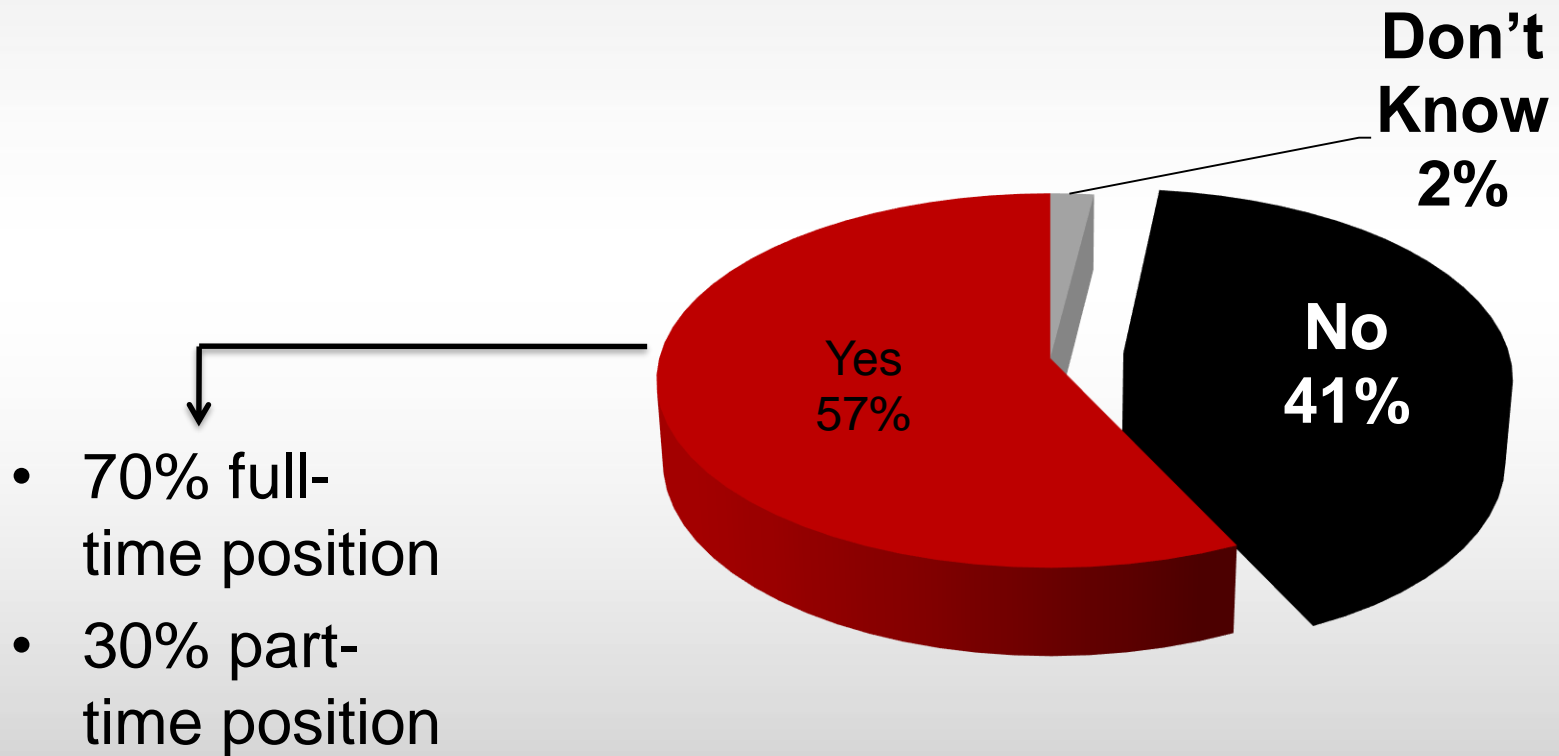
Marked “Don’t Know”



- 17.0%: Financial aid
- 12.6%: Undergraduate research
- 9.0%: Opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class
- 8.8%: Community service/service learning
- 8.0%: Study abroad
- 7.9%: Peer mentoring for sophomores
- 7.8%: Academic advising



Is someone in charge of Sophomore Success Initiatives?



Innovations among Sophomore Success Initiatives

- Most frequently reported innovative sophomore initiatives are:
 - 14.2%: Academic advising
 - 13.2%: Residential life
 - 13.2%: Career planning
- Has the innovative initiative been assessed?
 - 31.9%: Yes
 - 47.4%: No
 - 20.7%: Don't know



**How do types of
sophomore initiatives
offered differ by
institutional context?**



Sophomore Initiatives by Institutional Affiliation

- 15 of specific sophomore initiatives were offered at statistically similar rates at both public and private institutions.
- 2 had percentages larger for public:
 - Financial aid (28.9% vs. 7.6%)
 - Curricular learning communities (26.7% vs. 9.1%)
- 3 had percentages larger for private:
 - Opportunities to co-teach/TA (22.7% vs. 9.1%)
 - Student government (39.4% vs. 20.9%)
 - Class events (62.1% vs. 33.3%)



Sophomore Initiatives by Institutional Selectivity

- 13 were offered at statistically similar rates at “more selective” and “less selective” institutions.
- 5 had percentages larger for “more selective”:
 - Print publications (44.0% vs. 20.0%)
 - Class events (64.0% vs. 42.6%)
 - Online resources (55.1% vs. 34.5%)
 - Undergraduate research (36.9% vs. 16.4%)
 - Retreats (30.0% vs. 12.7%)
- 3 had percentages larger for “less selective”:
 - Cultural enrichment activities (32.7% vs. 16.3%)
 - Student government (26.8% vs. 6.3%)



Sophomore Initiatives by Institutional Size

- 15 of specific sophomore initiatives did not yield statistically significant correlation coefficients
- 1 had a significant correlation for larger institutions:
 - Faculty/staff mentors (.19, $p \leq .05$)
- 4 had had a significant correlation for smaller institutions:
 - Peer mentoring for sophomores (-.30, $p \leq .01$)
 - Academic advising (-.23, $p \leq .05$)
 - Community service/Service learning (-.19, $p \leq .05$)
 - Career planning (-.19, $p \leq .05$)



**What are some of the
challenges to launching,
administering, &
sustaining sophomore
success initiatives?**



Reason for no sophomore initiative	Percent
Lack of funding	53.9
Limited time	38.2
Not an institutional priority	31.4
Lack of staff/faculty buy-in	27.7
Lack of expertise	18.8

Other (23.0%):

- Focus on first-year students
- Lack of staff
- High retention
- No leadership/authority
- Definitional challenge (i.e., what is a “sophomore”)



Future Sophomore Initiatives

- 73% of respondents with current sophomore initiatives are considering or developing future sophomore initiatives
- 29% of respondents without current sophomore initiatives are considering or developing future sophomore initiatives
- Future initiatives most frequently reported:
 - Leadership development
 - Academic advising
 - Career planning
 - Class events



What are the sophomore success initiatives under consideration or under development on your campus?



Retention and Sophomore Success Initiatives

$r=.37$ ($p<.001$)	% w/o SSI (n=154)	% with SSI (n=87)
First-to-second year retention: less than 50%	13.6%	4.6%
First-to-second year retention: 51-75%	48.1%	19.5%
First-to-second year retention: 76-100%	38.3%	75.9%

$r=.34$ ($p<.001$)	% w/o SSI (n=77)	% with SSI (n=54)
Second-third year retention: less than 50%	14.3%	3.7%
Second-third year retention: 51-75%	51.9%	29.6%
Second-third year retention: 76-100%	33.8%	66.7%



Implications and Application

- What are your reactions to these survey findings?
- How do these findings about sophomore success initiatives compare to your lived experiences on your campus?
- How can you use this information for launching, developing, and administering sophomore success initiatives on your campus?
- Any other questions?



Resources on Sophomore Student Success

Schreiner, L.A. & Pattengale, J. (Eds.) (2000). **Visible solutions for invisible students: Helping sophomores succeed** (Monograph No. 31). Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

Tobolowsky, B.F. & Cox, B.E. (2007). **Shedding light on sophomores: An exploration of the second college year** (Monograph No. 47). Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition.



Resources on Sophomores Student Success

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THANK YOU!

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