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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sophomore Initiative</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career planning</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership development</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic advising</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online resources</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer mentoring by sophomores</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence life</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study abroad</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service/Service learning</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/staff mentors</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Least Common Sophomore Success Initiatives

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

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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?

- 70% full-time position
- 30% part-time position

- Don’t Know 2%
- Yes 57%
- No 41%
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

14% “Other”
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<.05)

• 4 had a significant correlation for smaller institutions:
  – Peer mentoring for sophomores (-.30, p<.01)
  – Academic advising (-.23, p<.05)
  – Community service/Service learning (-.19, p<.05)
  – Career planning (-.19, p<.05)
What are some of the challenges to launching, administering, & sustaining sophomore success initiatives?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for no sophomore initiative</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of funding</td>
<td>53.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited time</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not an institutional priority</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of staff/faculty buy-in</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of expertise</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other (23.0%):  
- Focus on first-year students  
- Lack of staff  
- High retention  
- No leadership/authority  
- Definitional challenge (i.e., what is a “sophomore”)

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www.sc.edu/fye
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

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\begin{array}{|l|c|c|}
\hline
 & \% w/o SSI (n=154) & \% with SSI (n=87) \\
\hline
r=0.37 (p<0.001) & & \\
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\% \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{|l|c|c|}
\hline
 & \% w/o SSI (n=77) & \% with SSI (n=54) \\
\hline
r=0.34 (p<0.001) & & \\
Second-third year retention: less than 50\% & 14.3\% & 3.7\% \\
Second-third year retention: 51-75\% & 51.9\% & 29.6\% \\
Second-third year retention: 76-100\% & 33.8\% & 66.7\% \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]
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


Resources on Sophomores 
Student Success


References


THANK YOU!

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