Research, Trends, and Issues...Oh My!
What We Know About Institutional Practices and Priorities for the First-Year Experience

Jennifer R. Keup
@jrkeup  @nrcfyesit
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Session Outline

• Definitions and background
• 2017 National Survey of The First-Year Experience
• National trends and issues for the first-year experience
• National trends and issues for first-year seminars
• Reflection and takeaways
Qualifications
Section 1:

DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE (FYE)
WHAT? A Working Definition of FYE
"The first-year experience is not a single program or initiative, but rather an intentional combination of academic and co-curricular efforts within and across postsecondary institutions."

(Koch & Gardner, 2006)
FYE: A Constellation of Support

- Early Alert
- Prep for Transfer/Major
- Orientation & Induction
- First-Year Seminars
- Writing Intensive Courses
- Service Learning
- Learning Community

FYE: A Constellation of Support

www.sc.edu/fye
High-Impact Educational Practices

First-Year Seminars and Experiences
Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students’ intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members’ own research.

Common Intellectual Experiences
The older idea of a core curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.

Learning Communities
The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with “big questions” that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link “liberal arts” and “professional courses”; others feature service learning.

Writing-Intensive Courses
These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice “across the curriculum” has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and, on some campuses, ethical inquiry.

Collaborative Assignments and Projects
Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one’s own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research.

Undergraduate Research
Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students’ early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

Diversity/Global Learning
Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore “difficult differences” such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continue struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
In these programs, field-based “experiential” with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both apply what they are learning in real-world settings and reflect in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

Internships
Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

Capstone Courses and Projects
Whether they’re called “senior capstones” or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they’ve learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of “best work,” or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.
HIPs for CC Student Engagement

- Assessment & Placement
- Orientation
- Academic Goal Setting & Planning
- Timely Registration
- Accelerated or Fast-Track Developmental Ed
- First-Year Experience*
- Student Success Course*
- Learning Community
- Class Attendance
- Alert & Intervention
- Experiential Education Beyond the Classroom
- Tutoring
- Supplemental Instruction

National Resource Center
First-Year Experience & Students in Transition
University of South Carolina

www.sc.edu/fye
FYS as High-Impact Practice

First-Year Seminars and Experiences

“Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students’ intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members’ own research.”
Outcomes of FYE/FYS

“First-year and transition programs...should have a greater influence on setting the tone for what it means to be an educated individual and the responsibilities that come with gaining a postsecondary education.”

(Torres & LePeau, 2013)
Guidelines for Excellence in FYE

Young & Keup (2018) CAS First-Year Experience Cross-Functional Team Framework

- Is guided by goals related to institutional mission
- Includes more than one and preferably many elements of the curriculum and cocurriculum
- Focuses on the success of a large number of first-year students, including those from special populations
- Has strong administrative supporting leading to institutionalization, resource allocation, and sustainability
- Built on assessment activity leading to constant improvement
Section 2:

2017 NATIONAL SURVEY OF THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE (NSFYE)
Overview of the 2017 NSFYE: Content

• Adaptation of the National Survey of First-Year Seminars offered 9 times from 1988-2013
• Institution-/program-level survey
• Online instrument
  – General info about institutional attention to the first year
  – Extended modules on first-year seminars, pre-term orientation, and first-year academic advising
  – Other modules on first-year learning communities, residential programs/initiatives, early-alert systems, and common reading programs
Overview of the 2017 NSFYE: Sample

• 3,977 two- and four-year institutions across the United States were invited to participate
• 537 campuses responded (13% response rate)
  – Two-year institutions underrepresented
  – Public institutions overrepresented
  – Very small institutions (< 500 first-year students) seem to be underrepresented
• 525 institutions reported offering at least one FYE program
## Overview of the 2017 NSFYE: Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Characteristic</th>
<th>National Representation</th>
<th>NSFYE Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of institution</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four or more years</td>
<td>2,963</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 2 but less than 4 years</td>
<td>1,582</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control of institution</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>1,714</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private not-for-profit</td>
<td>1,743</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private for-profit</td>
<td>1,088</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First-year enrollment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 or less</td>
<td>2,962</td>
<td>66.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501-1,000</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>13.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1,001-2,000</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,0001-4,000</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,001 or more</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 3:

NATIONAL TRENDS & ISSUES FOR THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE
Campus-Wide Objectives for FYE

- Academic success strategies: 80.4%
- Academic planning/major exploration: 75.8%
- Knowledge of resources: 75.6%
- Connection with institution: 75.0%
- Intro to academic expectations: 69.8%
- Retention: 62.8%
- Common first-year experience: 61.6%
- Student-faculty interaction: 61.1%
- Career exploration/preparation: 56.8%
- Writing skills: 51.4%
Campus-wide Objectives for FYE

- Academic success strategies
- Academic planning/major exploration
- Knowledge of resources
- Connection with institution
- Intro to academic expectations
- Retention
- Common first-year experience
- Student-faculty interaction
- Career exploration/preparation
- Writing skills

4-year  2-year  All
127 2-year campuses surveyed, top eight answers on the board.

Name the most important objectives for a first-year experience program at two-year campuses.
- Acct planning/explore major [81]
- Acct success strategies [80]
- Know about campus resources [72]
- Connection with campus [69]
- Intro to college acct expectations [64]
- Dev ed/remediation/review [61]
- Career exploration/preparation [61]
- Student-faculty interaction [50]

• Integrative and applied learning [17]
• Introduction to the liberal arts [16]
• Discipline-specific knowledge [15]
• Civic engagement [14]
What can we do?
## Most Common FYE Initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FYE Initiative at 2-year Institutions</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-year academic advising (ADV)</td>
<td>78.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement testing (PT)</td>
<td>70.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental/remedial education (DEV)</td>
<td>68.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early alert systems (EA)</td>
<td>64.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-year seminars (FYS)</td>
<td>58.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-term orientation (OR)</td>
<td>58.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student success center (SSC)</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer education (PE)</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General education (GE)</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning communities (LC)</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Less Common FYE Initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FYE Initiative at 2-year Institutions</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-year gateway courses (GATE)</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer bridge (SB)</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring by campus professionals (MT)</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership programs (LEAD)</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service learning (SL)</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing-intensive coursework (WR)</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common reading (CR)</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential learning/learning beyond the classroom (EXP)</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convocation (CNV)</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential programs or initiatives (RES)</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which FYE programs are individual stars and which form a constellation?

Legend:
Lines represent correlations phi > .25
Colors of boxes represent percentage of institutions reporting FYE program offered.

- Dark Blue = > 70%
- Royal Blue = 50-69%
- Light Blue = 30-49%
- Gray = < 30%
Section 4:

NATIONAL TRENDS AND ISSUES FOR FIRST-YEAR SEMINARS
## Most Common FYE Initiatives

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<th>FYE Initiative at 2-Year Institutions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Learning communities (LC)</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Source: www.sc.edu/fye]
Access to First-Year Seminars (FYS)

• 73.5% of survey respondents offer FYS and 62.1% indicate that it is one of the primary programs by which first-year objectives are met
  – 58.5% of responding 2-year institutions offer FYS
  – 41.8% of responding 2-year institutions report that it is a primary program to meet FY objectives

• Minority of responding 2-year institutions indicate that it is required of all FY students

• Often required for targeted populations (e.g., dev ed, EOP, honors, international students)
Access to First-Year Seminars

58.5% of responding 2-year institutions offer first-year seminars

FYS Participation Rates

- 10% or less: 16%
- 11 - 20%: 11%
- 21 - 30%: 18%
- 31 - 40%: 7%
- 41 - 50%: 7%
- 51 - 60%: 6%
- 61 - 70%: 13%
- 71 - 80%: 4%
- 81 - 90%: 7%
- 91 - 100%: 11%
Access to First-Year Seminars

58.5% of responding 2-year institutions offer first-year seminars

FYS Participation Rates

- 10% or less: 16%
- 11 - 20%: 7%
- 21 - 30%: 6%
- 31 - 40%: 13%
- 41 - 50%: 7%
- 51 - 60%: 4%
- 61 - 70%: 7%
- 71 - 80%: 11%
- 81 - 90%: 11%
- 91 - 100%: 18%
Access to First-Year Seminars

58.5% of responding 2-year institutions offer first-year seminars
Types of First-Year Seminars Offered

• Extended orientation
• Academic with variable content
• Academic with uniform content
• Pre-professional/discipline linked
• Basic study skills
• Hybrid or combination of types
• Other
### Types of First-Year Seminars Offered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminar</th>
<th>Distinct Types</th>
<th>Primary Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended orientation</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>47.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic/various topics</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic/uniform content</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preprofessional</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic study skills</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Distinct Types of FYS Offered

- **EXT OR**: 57.7% (2-year), 45.3% (4-year)
- **ACD-VAR**: 11.3% (2-year), 37.9% (4-year)
- **ACD-UNI**: 39.4% (2-year), 29.6% (4-year)
- **HYBRID**: 9.9% (2-year), 22.5% (4-year)
- **PRE-PROF**: 14.1% (2-year), 17.0% (4-year)
- **BSS**: 21.1% (2-year), 13.8% (4-year)
Primary Types of FYS Offered

- **EXT OR**: 36.6% (2-year), 26.7% (4-year)
- **ACD-VAR**: 4.2% (2-year), 26.4% (4-year)
- **ACD-UNI**: 31.0% (2-year), 22.5% (4-year)
- **HYBRID**: 11.3% (2-year), 16.1% (4-year)
- **PRE-PROF**: 4.2% (2-year), 3.2% (4-year)
- **BSS**: 8.5% (2-year), 1.6% (4-year)
First-Year Seminar Objectives

- **Introduction to academic expectations**: 24.6% (4-year) vs. 22.4% (2-year)
- **Academic planning/major exploration**: 18.0% (4-year) vs. 35.8% (2-year)
- **Connection with institution**: 34.4% (4-year) vs. 35.8% (2-year)
- **Knowledge of resources**: 27.2% (4-year) vs. 44.8% (2-year)
- **Academic success strategies**: 43.0% (4-year) vs. 71.6% (2-year)

Legend: 4-year, 2-year
FYS Characteristics at 2-Year Campuses

• Most often lasts for one term (70.2%)
• Credit hours
  – 41.8% carry 3 credits
  – 40.3% carry 1 credit
• Credit is most often applied as an elective (50.8%)
• Nearly all give letter grades (90.2%; 85.0% at 4-yr)
• More often incorporate online components (83.3%) and have online only sections (68.2%) than 4-year campuses
First-Year Seminar (FYS) Content

- **Critical thinking**: 20.9% (4-year), 29.8% (2-year)
- **Career exploration/preparation**: 11.1% (4-year), 25.4% (2-year)
- **Campus resources**: 29.5% (4-year), 37.3% (2-year)
- **Academic success resources**: 25.2% (4-year), 41.8% (2-year)
- **Academic planning/advising**: 25.6% (4-year), 46.3% (2-year)
- **Academic success strategies**: 48.2% (4-year), 62.7% (2-year)

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70
Percentage

4-year 2-year
First-Year Seminar Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2-year</th>
<th>4-year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty: Adjunct</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic advisors</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty: FT, non tenure-track</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>60.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student affairs professionals</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty: Tenure-track</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>73.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other campus professionals</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate students</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate students</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Pedagogical Approaches in the FYS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>4-year</th>
<th>2-year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Produce and revise writing</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore cultures, worldviews, etc.</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring class attendance</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration and teamwork</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>62.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting and planning</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>89.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data in the bar chart represents the percentage of students who report engaging in each activity. The chart distinguishes between 4-year and 2-year programs.
## Assessed Outcomes of FYS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes Measured at 2-year Institutions</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student satisfaction</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention or second-year return rates</td>
<td>47.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-faculty interaction</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection with the institution or campus</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical, critical thinking, or problem-solving skills</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing skills</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of institution or campus resources and services</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common first-year experience</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to college-level academic expectations</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic success strategies</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FAMILY FEUD

Acd planning/explore major [81]
Acd success strategies [80]
Know about campus resources [72]
Connection with campus [69]
Intro to college acad expectations [64]
Dev ed/remediation/review [61]
Career exploration/preparation [61]
Student-faculty interaction [50]

- Integrative and applied learning [17]
- Introduction to the liberal arts [16]
- Discipline-specific knowledge [15]
- Civic engagement [14]
FYS Return on Investment at 2-Year Campuses

- 36.3% High
- 39.4% Unable to judge
- 15.2% Medium
- 9.1% Low

www.sc.edu/fye
Guidelines for Excellence in FYE

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- Clearly stated objectives for FYE and FYS
- More than just about retention
- Statistically and practically significant differences by institutional type (i.e., 2-year/4-year)
- Transfer and career prep
Guidelines for Excellence in FYE

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• Built on assessment activity leading to constant improvement

• Many different FYE initiatives
• Array of FYS types (EXT OR & ACD-UC)
• Curricular, co-curricular, and business services
• How do these compare to the 4-year sector for transfer students?
Guidelines for Excellence in FYE

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• Is guided by goals related to institutional mission
• Includes more than one and preferably many elements of the curriculum and cocurriculum
• **Focuses on the success of a large number of first-year students, including those from special populations**
• Has strong administrative supporting leading to institutionalization, resource allocation, and sustainability
• Built on assessment activity leading to constant improvement
• Access rates for FYS are lower than ideal
• Are students being targeted the “right” targets?

[Image of CAS Professional Standards Framework]
Guidelines for Excellence in FYE

- Is guided by goals related to institutional mission
- Includes more than one and preferably many elements of the curriculum and cocurriculum
- Focuses on the success of a large number of first-year students, including those from special populations
- Has strong administrative supporting leading to institutionalization, resource allocation, and sustainability
- Built on assessment activity leading to constant improvement
Guidelines for Excellence in FYE

Young & Keup (2018) CAS First-Year Experience Cross-Functional Team Framework

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• FYS assessment activity is happening
• Some alignment with objectives for FYS but also a lot of transactional measures
• What can we do with these data to improve FYE and the seminar?
QUESTIONS, CONCLUDING
THOUGHTS & TAKEAWAYS

Thought is action in rehearsal.
Sigmund Freud
Reflections and Action Items for FYE

• What are three things you will **take away** from today’s presentation?

• What are three things you are going to **start doing** as the result of today’s presentation?

• What are three things you are going to **improve** as the result of today’s presentation?

• What are three things you are going to **stop doing** as the result of today’s presentation?
“Excuse me,” said Alice, “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.”

Carroll, 1865
Questions & Comments

Jennifer R. Keup
keupj@mailbox.sc.edu
www.sc.edu/fye
@jrkeup
FYE Objectives at 2-Year Campuses
FYE Objectives at 2-Year Campuses

1. Academic planning/major exploration (81.1%)
2. Academic success strategies (79.5%)
3. Knowledge of resources (71.7%)
4. Connection with institution (68.5%)
5. Introduction to academic expectations (63.8%)
6. Developmental education/remediation (61.4%)
7. Career exploration/preparation (60.6%)
8. Student-faculty interaction (49.6%)
9. Introduction to a major, discipline or career (48.0%)
10. Common first-year experience (44.9%)
Criteria for FYE Excellence

• “Evidence of an intentional, comprehensive approach to [improvement]...that is appropriate to an institution’s type and mission.”

• “Evidence of assessment of the various initiatives that constitute this approach.”

• “Broad impact on significant numbers of...students, including, but not limited to special student subpopulations.”

• “Strong administrative support for...initiatives, evidence of institutionalization, and durability over time.”

• “Involvement of a wide range of faculty, student affairs professionals, academic administrators, and other constituent groups.”