NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

The Trusted Expert and Internationally Recognized Leader
for all Postsecondary Student Transitions

Conferences and Continuing Education | Research and Assessment | Publications

The Translation of Research to Practice for the First-Year Experience (FYE)

Jennifer R. Keup

Director, National Resource Center

May 20, 2015

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Conference Themes

First Year Experience in South Africa & globally

- Before the first year
- Existing FYE initiatives
- Understanding first year student transitions
- Understanding first year students and their experiences
- First year innovations
- General first year and transition issues
- First year students: connecting local and global perspectives

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Social Media

- Twitter
  - #SAFYE15
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Keynote Objectives

As the result of this keynote, participants will:

- Gain an current overview of the state of FYE research and FYE practice
- Understand the connection between research and practice in the FYE and students in transition field
- Hear examples of research-based practice and applied research
- Consider their role in advancing FYE research and practice as an integrated effort
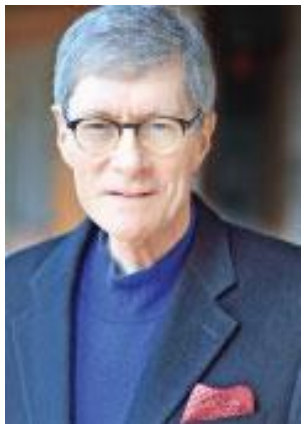
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Qualifications

FYE: A Working Definition

"**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*)

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FYE: <u>Expanding</u> the Working Definition

"**Students don't see progression as freshman, sophomore, junior, senior but see it as entering, persisting, and graduating.**"
(*Lane, 2014*)

THE STATE OF RESEARCH IN FYE

Definitions
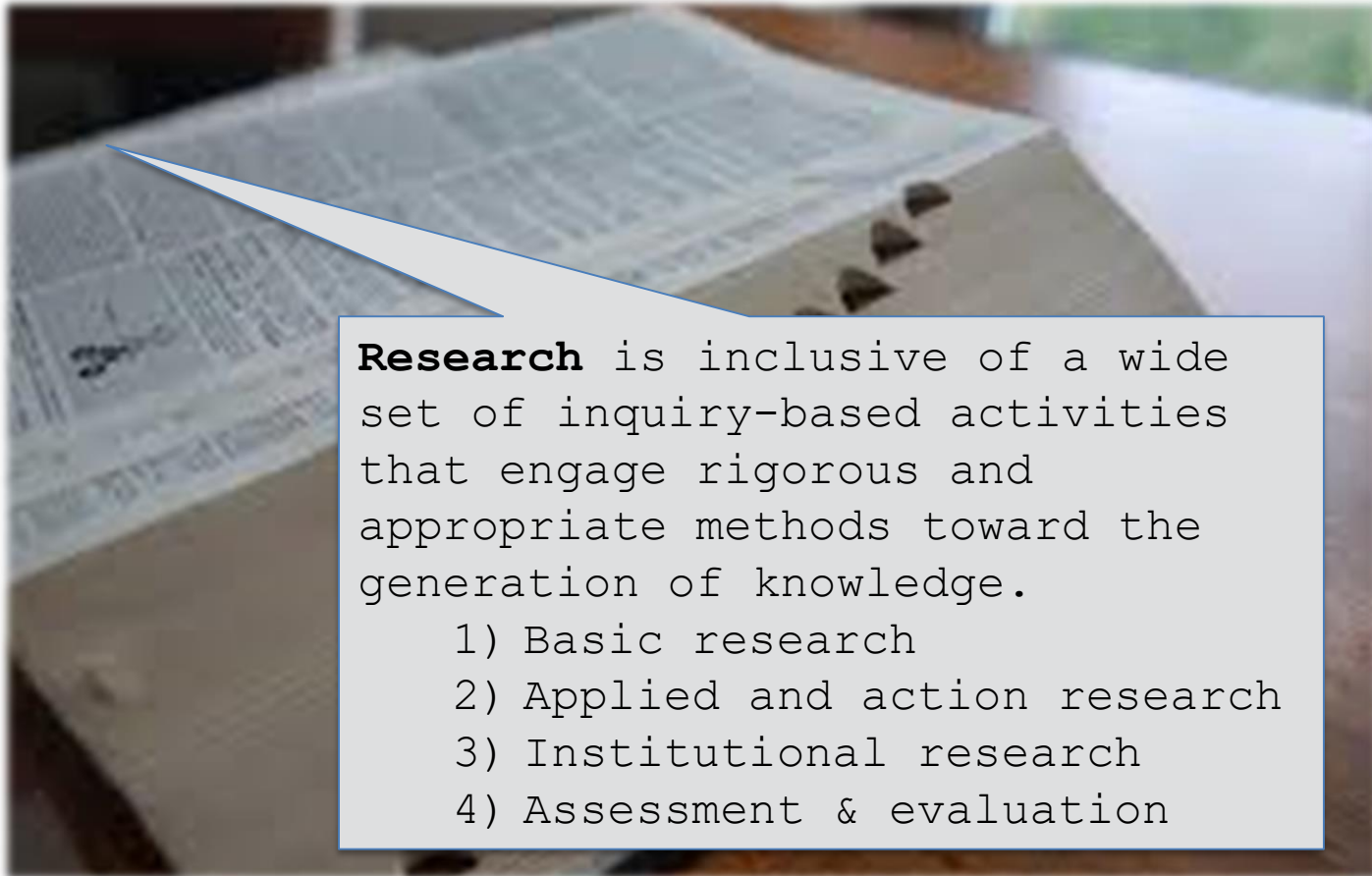
Research is inclusive of a wide set of inquiry-based activities that engage rigorous and appropriate methods toward the generation of knowledge.
1) Basic research
2) Applied and action research
3) Institutional research
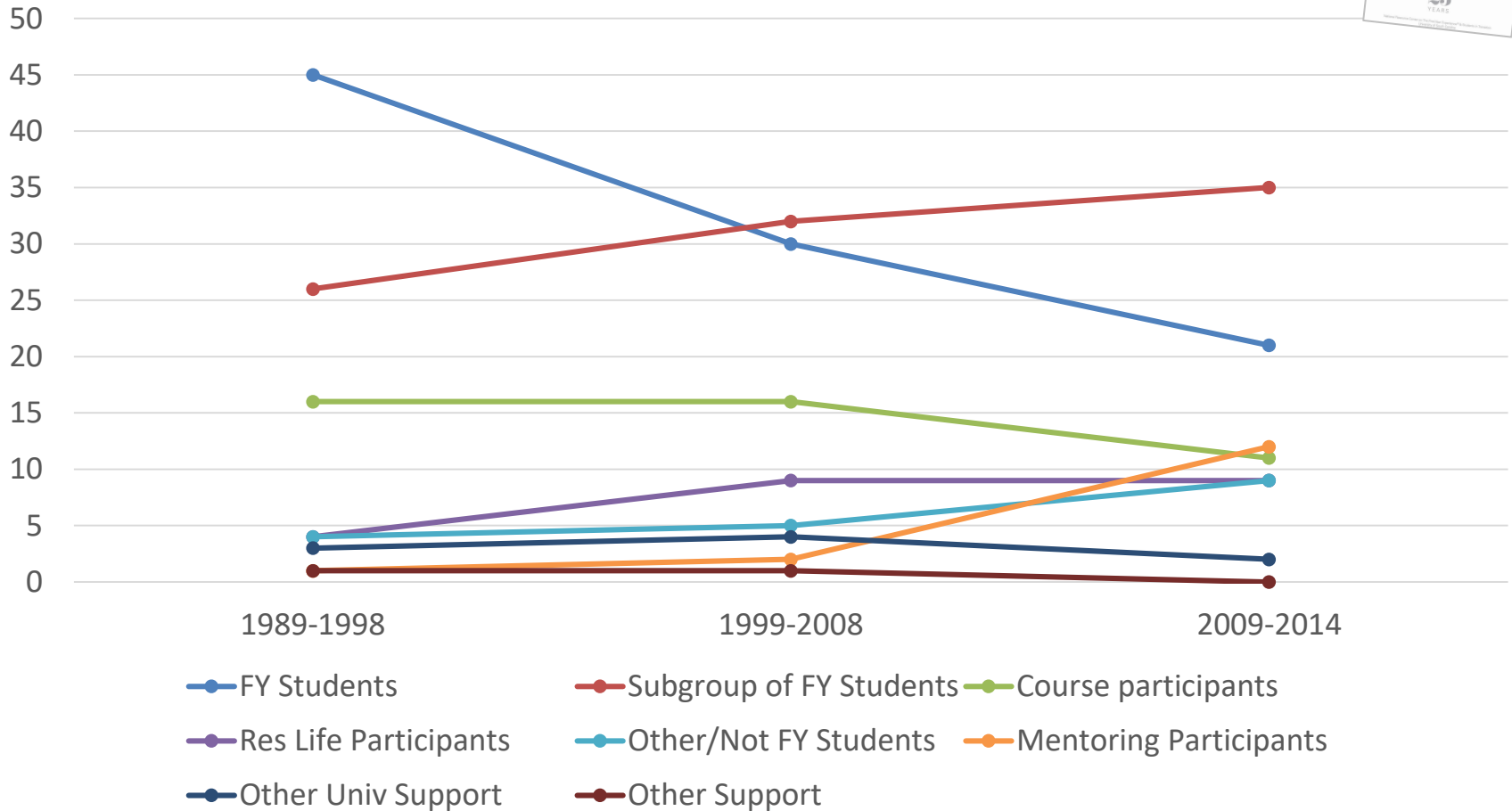4) Assessment & evaluation

25th Anniversary Issue of *Journal*

- Coded 248 articles across 24 years for:
  - WHO? Target population
  - WHAT? Topics covered
  - WHAT? Type of intervention
  - HOW? Type of research

WHO? Target Population

WHAT? Topics

- **Student characteristics**: "addressed student characteristics other than demographic qualities such as cognitive...and...noncognitive characteristics."

- **Outcomes**: "focused on effects associated with the first year of college."

- **Experiences & Interventions**: "what happened to students as the result of being in college, including in- and out-of-classroom experiences "
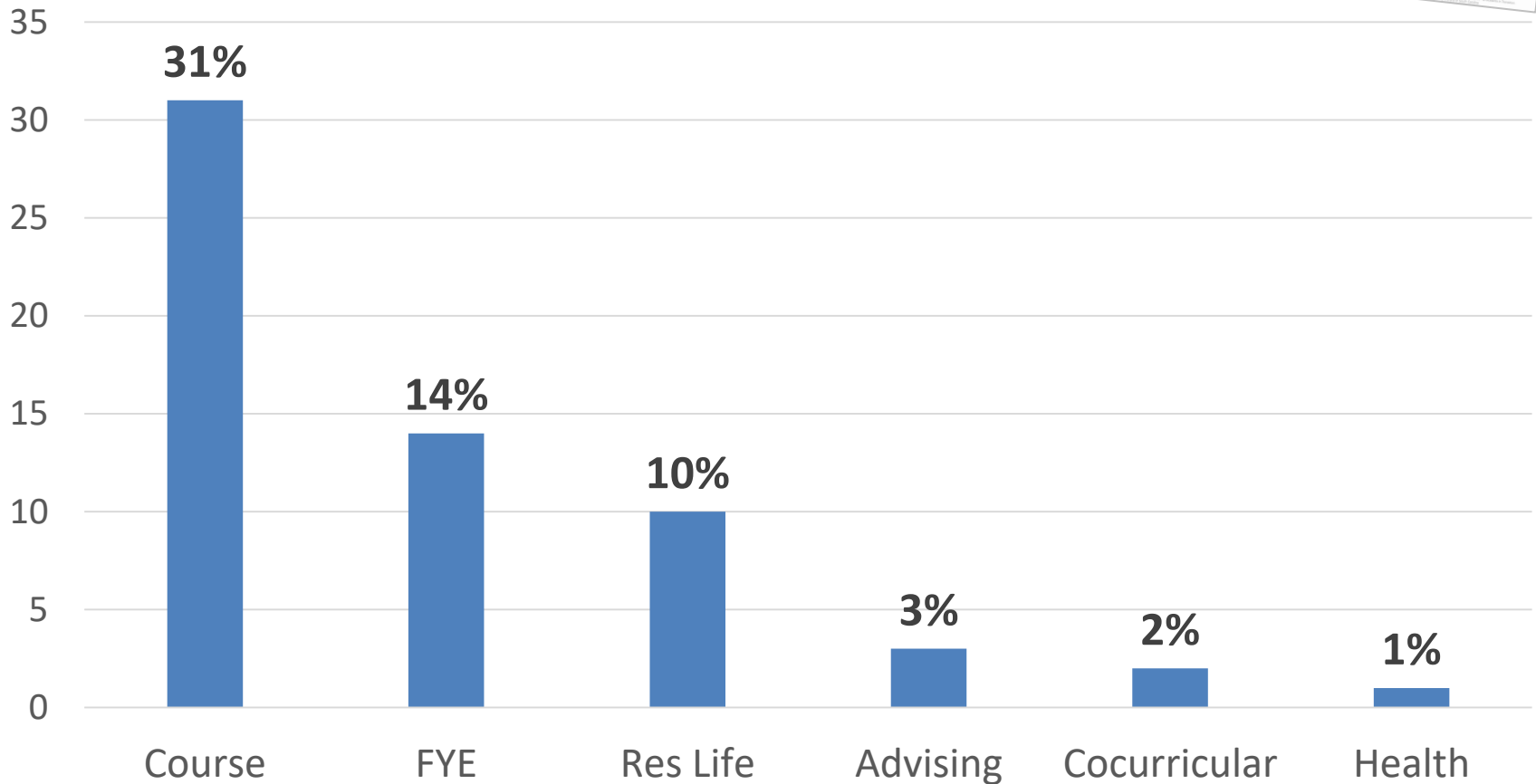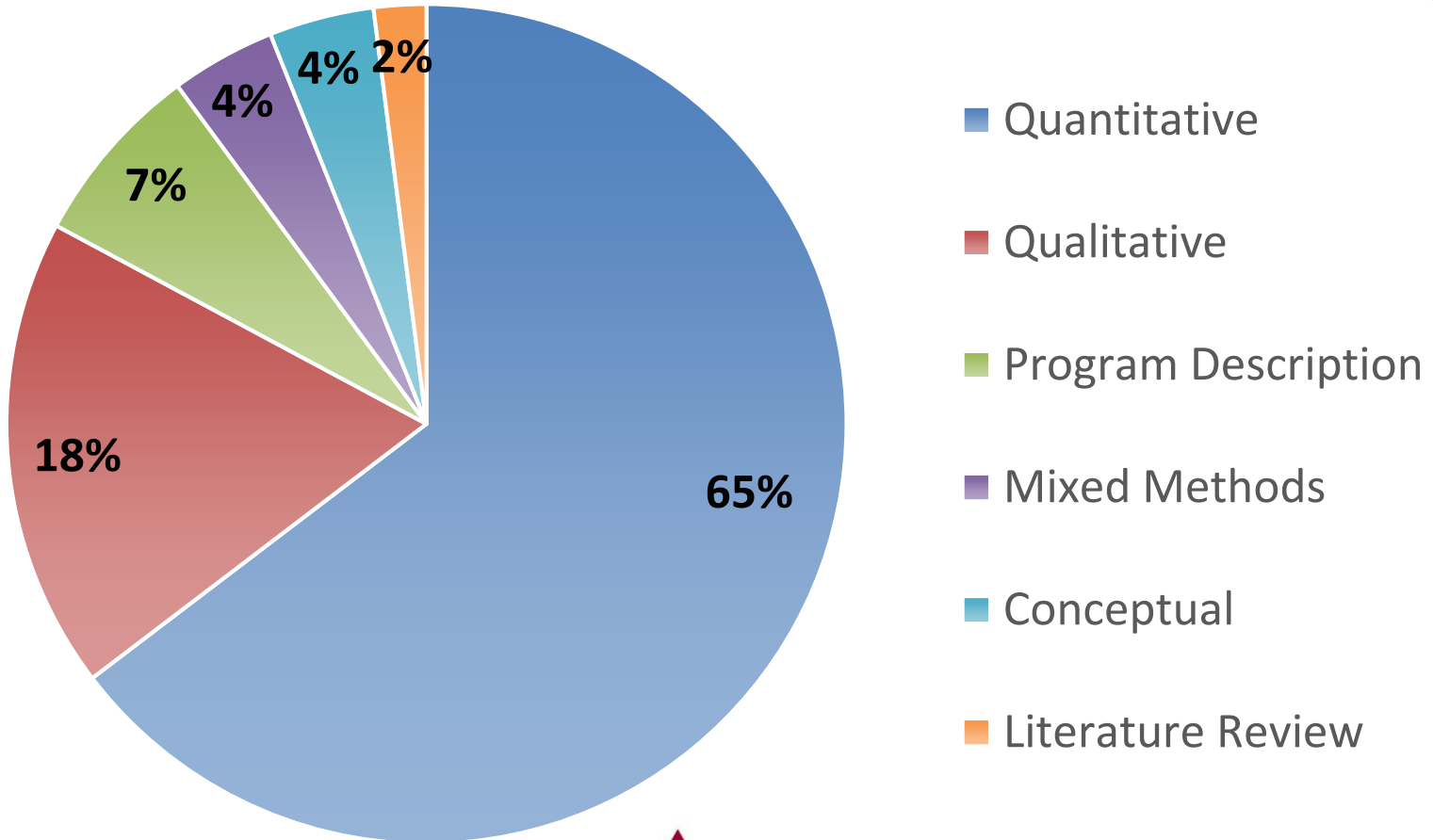
- **Other**

WHAT? Topics

- **EXPERIENCES & INTERVENTIONS (52%)**: "what happened to students as the result of being in college, including in- and out-of-classroom experiences"

- **Outcomes (27%)**: "focused on effects associated with the first year of college."

- **Student characteristics (21%)**: "addressed student characteristics other than demographic qualities such as cognitive...and...noncognitive characteristics."

WHAT? Type of Intervention

HOW? Type of Research

- Quantitative — 65%
- Qualitative — 18%
- Program Description — 7%
- Mixed Methods — 4%
- Conceptual — 4%
- Literature Review — 2%

HOW? Type of Research

Type of Assessment for FYS	%
Student course evaluation	86.9
Analysis of institutional data	71.2
Survey instrument	53.4
Direct assessment of student learning outcomes	52.9
Focus groups with instructors	35.4
Program review	33.3
Focus groups with students	30.6
Individual interviews with instructors	20.0
Individual interviews with students	12.4

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Directions for Future Research

1. Quality of data
2. Replicating findings
3. Expand the notion of diversity
4. Conditional effects
5. Systemic inquiry to higher education "myths"
6. Inquiry on previous ignored students & institutions
7. Information technology
8. Uncover the "why" of an intervention's impact
9. Life after college
10. Revisit research literature for future directions

How College Affects Students: Ten Directions for Future Research

Ernest T. Pascarella

The research literature on how college affects students is expanding at an exponential rate. This paper identifies and discusses ten directions for future research on college impact that have the potential to enhance the quality and importance of the evidence produced.

As a total body of evidence, research on college students is perhaps the single largest area of inquiry in the field of higher education. Over the past 50 years, thousands, perhaps even tens of thousands, of studies have been conducted with college student samples. Only a subset of this massive body of scholarship is actually concerned with estimating the net or unique impact of the postsecondary experience on students. This subset of studies is distinguishable from the larger body of research primarily by its specific concern with identifying causal linkages between various aspects of the postsecondary experience and different dimensions of student development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005).

Yet, even if one considers only the research on college impact on students, he or she confronts a huge and complex body of literature that is expanding at an accelerated rate. Based on the number of studies cited in the four most comprehensive reviews conducted to date (Bowen, 1977; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005), and allowing for some overlap, it would not be an exaggeration to estimate that somewhere between 6,000 and 7,000 studies of college impact have been conducted. This estimate may actually be conservative in that it is nearly impossible for any review of such a large body of evidence to be absolutely encyclopedic. Thus, an unknown, though hopefully small, percentage of the evidence is likely to have been missed in existing reviews. Furthermore, the volume of research produced for any given time period is increasing at a dramatic rate. For example, the pioneering review of Feldman and Newcomb, published in 1969, reviewed approximately 1,500 studies covering a 40-year period. This translates into an average of roughly 375 studies per decade. Pascarella and Terenzini's 1991 synthesis covered the 20 years of research after 1969 and reviewed about 2,600 studies—roughly 1,300 studies per decade; and the 2005 synthesis published by Pascarella and Terenzini reviewed approximately 2,400 studies produced primarily in a single decade, the 1990s.
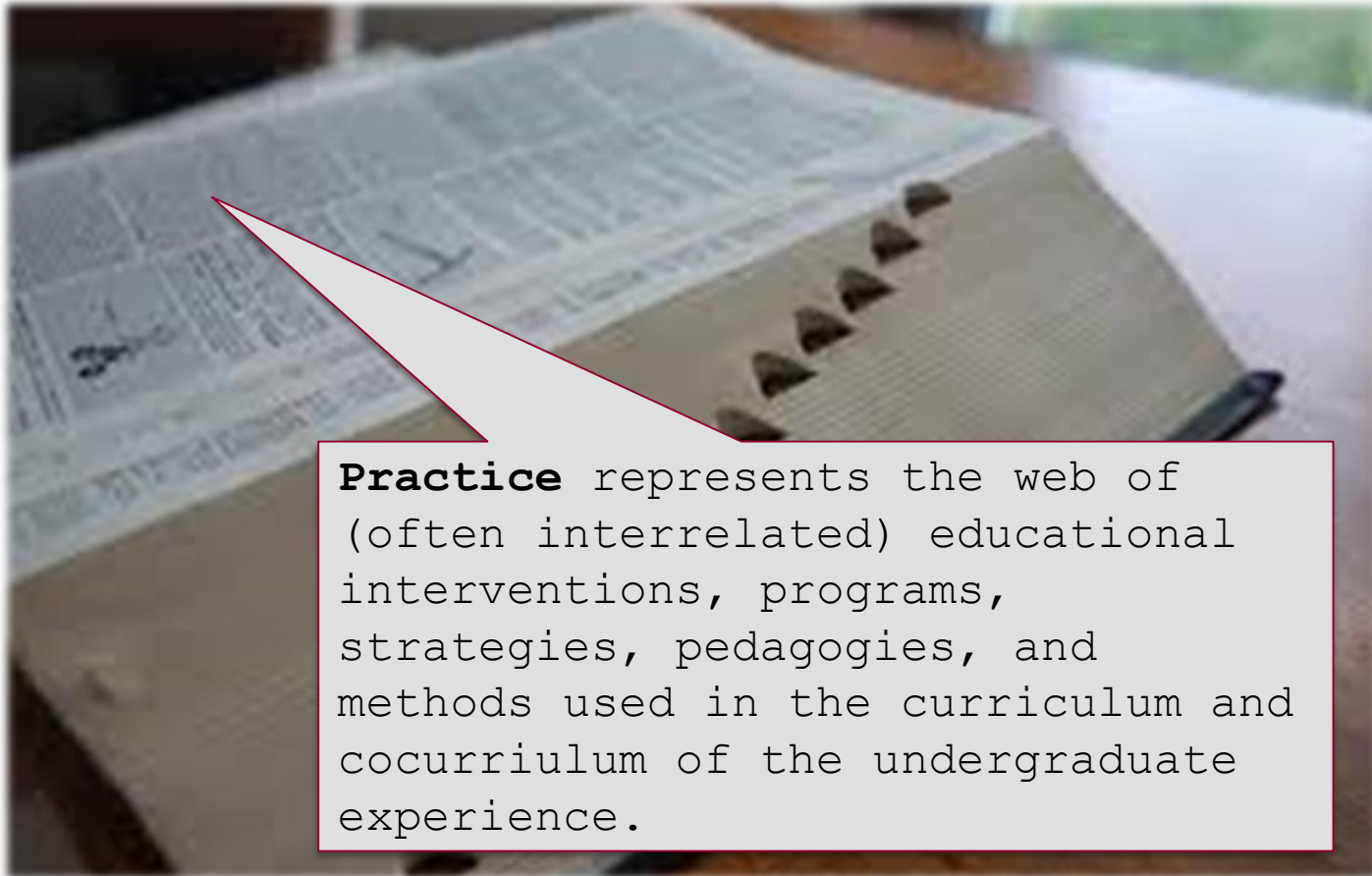
Should this current trend of a dramatically increasing volume of research continue, and there is no obvious reason to suspect that it will not, we can anticipate that an enormous number of studies of college impact, perhaps 5,000 to 10,000, may be produced in the next 20 years. In short, the next two decades may be a time of unprecedented advances in our understanding of how college affects students. In this paper, I discuss a number of recommendations and directions for future inquiry on college impact that I believe have the potential to enhance the quality and importance of the evidence produced. These recommendations and directions deal with both the

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508   *Journal of College Student Development*

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THE STATE OF FYE PRACTICE

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Definitions

Practice represents the web of (often interrelated) educational interventions, programs, strategies, pedagogies, and methods used in the curriculum and cocurriulum of the undergraduate experience.

- Principles for Good Practice (Chickering & Gamson, 1987)

- Effective Educational Practice (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2010)

- Vetted Good Practice (Swing, 2002; Pascarella, Cruce, Wolniak, & Blaich, 2004; Pascarella, Cruce, Umbach, Wolniak, Kuh, Carini, Hayet, Gonyea, & Zhao, 2006)

- High-Impact Practice (AAC&U, 2010; Brownell & Swaner, 2008; Kuh, 2010, Kuh, O'Donnell, & Reed, 2013)

- Criteria of FYE Excellence (Barefoot, Gardner, Cutright, Morris, Schroeder, Schwartz, Siegel, & Swing, 2005)
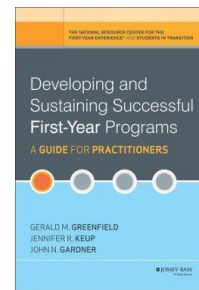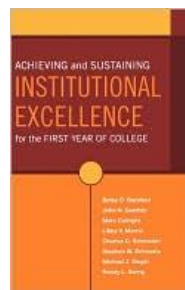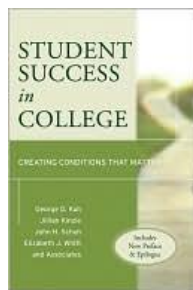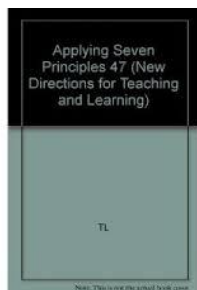
"High-Impact Practices…"

…are **curricular and cocurricular structures** that tend to draw upon high-quality pedagogies and practices **in pursuit of 21st century learning outcomes**; they are "teaching and learning practices that have been **widely tested and have been shown to be beneficial for college students..,[toward]** increase rates of retention and student engagement."

Kuh, 2008

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 continuing 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 learning" 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.

LEAP

Association of American Colleges and Universities

College Learning for the New Global Century

The LEAP Vision for Learning
OUTCOMES, PRACTICES, IMPACT, AND EMPLOYERS' VIEWS

High-Impact Educational Practices
WHAT THEY ARE, WHO HAS ACCESS TO THEM, AND WHY THEY MATTER

Five High-Impact PRACTICES

Ensuring Quality & Taking High-Impact Practices to Scale

High-Impact Educational Practices

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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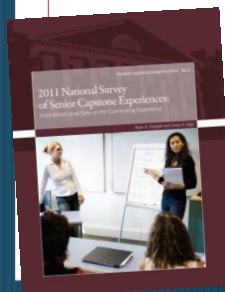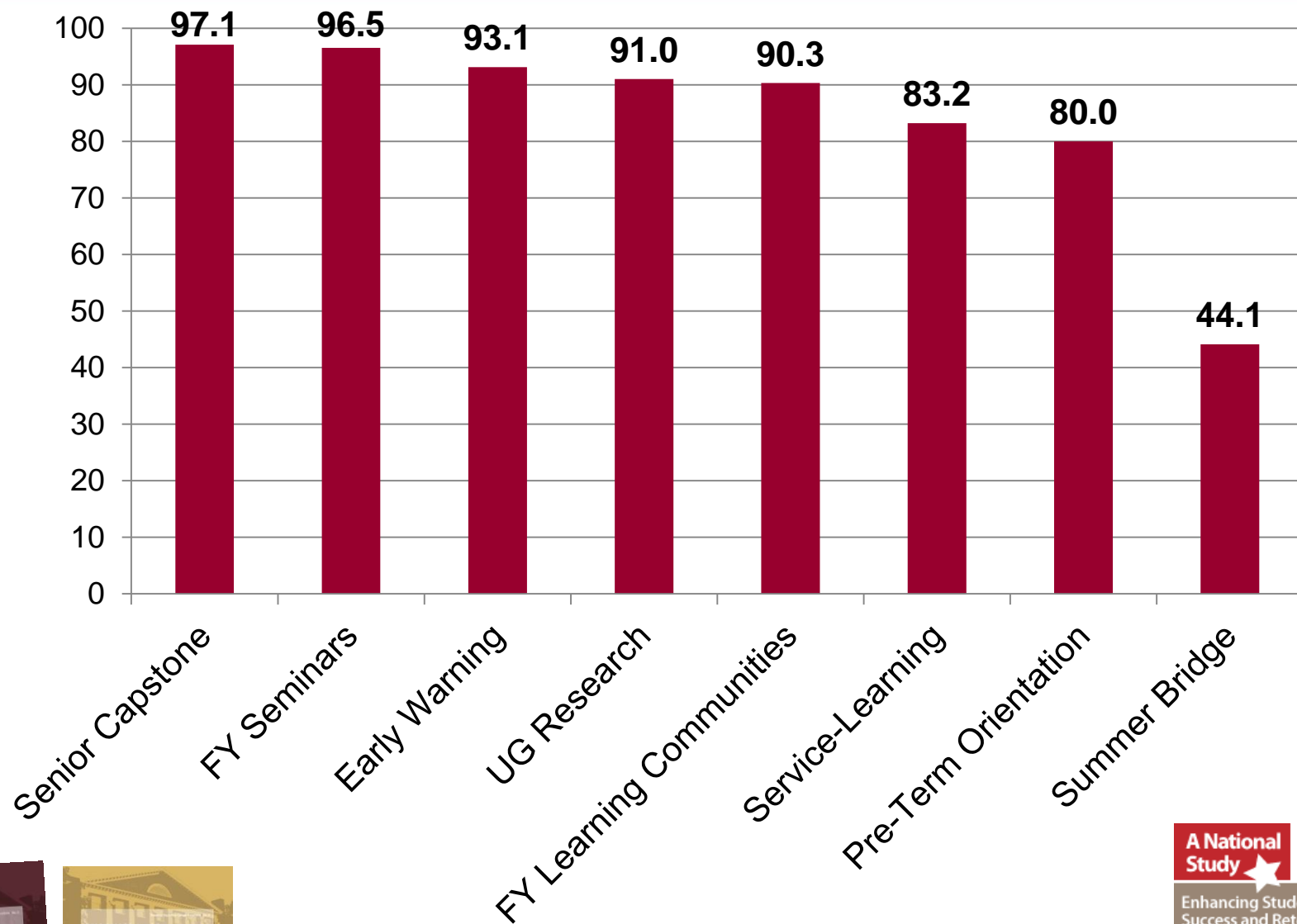
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LEAP

College Learning for the New Global Century

The LEAP Vision for Learning

High-Impact Educational Practices

Five High-Impact PRACTICES

Ensuring Quality & Taking High-Impact Practices to Scale

HIPs in Combination

High-Impact Practice in the FYS	%
Collaborative assignments & projects	**67.2**
Diversity/Global learning	**58.8**
Writing-intensive	**42.5**
Common reading experience	**38.1**
Learning community	**36.8**
Service-learning	**31.8**
Undergraduate research	**12.8**
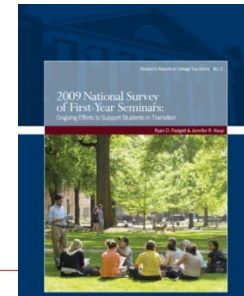
Number of HIPs Offered in the FYS
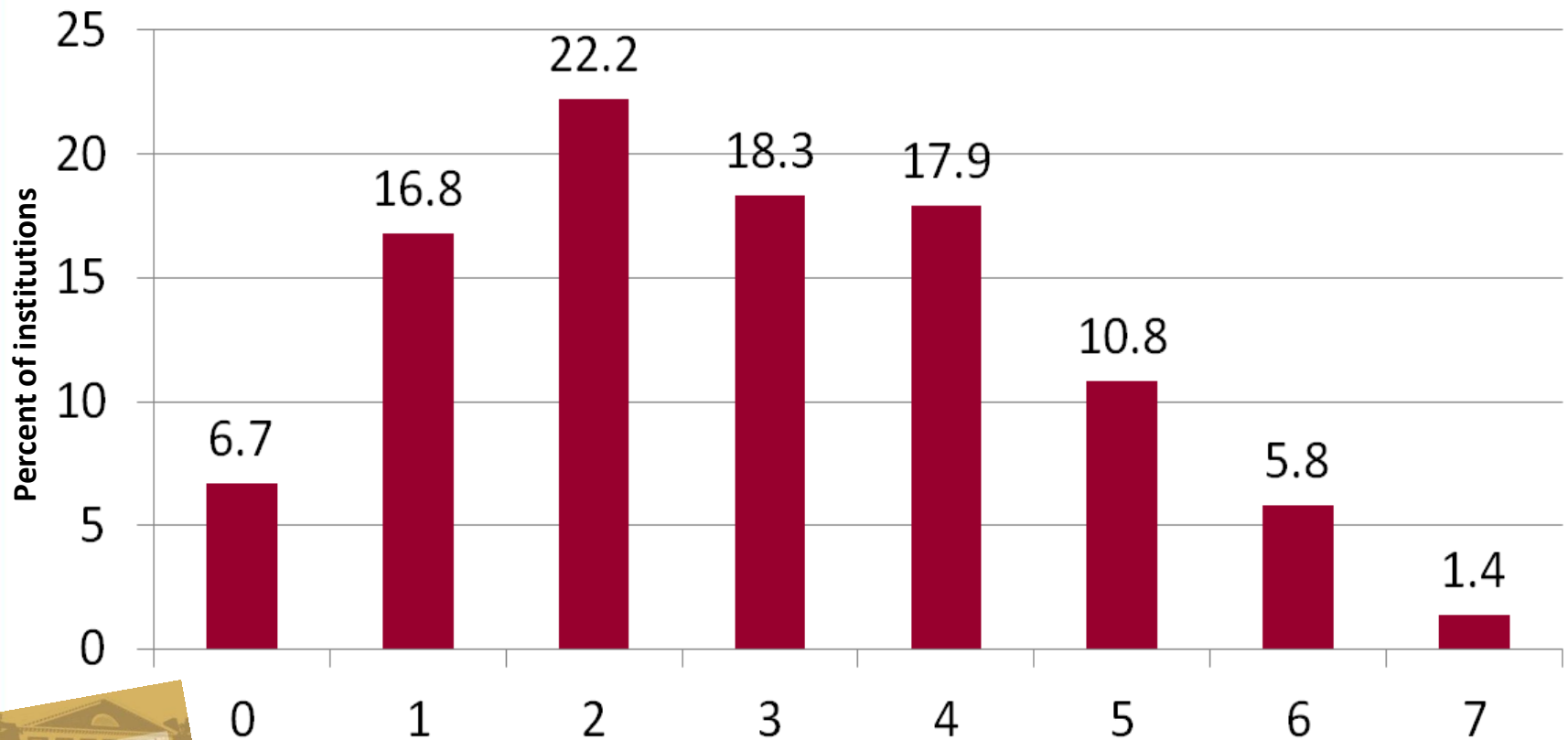
Characteristics of HIPs

- Creates an investment of time and energy
- Includes interaction with faculty and peers about substantive matters
- Real-world applications
- High expectations
- Includes frequent feedback
- Exposure to diverse perspectives
- Demands reflection and integrated learning
- Accountability

"So, today when I am asked, what one thing can we do to enhance student engagement and increase student success? I now have an answer: make it possible for every student to participate in **at least two high-impact activities** during his or her undergraduate program, **one in the first year**, and one taken later." (*Kuh, 2008*)

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Future Directions for Practice

- Attend to issues of quality

- Broaden reach

- Identify potential and emergent HIPs

- Effective "bundling" an sequence of HIPs

- Advance equity

- Greater impact on historically underserved students

- May be able to "compensate for shortcomings in academic preparation"

- Have the potential to shape campus culture

Research: a wide set of inquiry-based activities that engage rigorous methods toward the generation of knowledge.

Applied Research and Scholarly Practice

Practice: educational interventions, programs, strategies, pedagogies, and methods used in the undergraduate experience.

LINKING FYE RESEARCH & PRACTICE

Core Commitments

Student Transitions: Student transitions, such as the first year of college, sophomore year, transfer experience, degree completion, and new graduate student experience, are critical junctures in the educational pipeline and unique opportunities for postsecondary student learning and development. We strive to set a standard of excellence for supporting student transitions and facilitating educational success for a diversity of students in the 21st century.

Connection Between Research and Practice: We believe that good practice in higher education must rely upon a foundation of high-quality research. Conversely, good research draws from and informs practices in our field. As such, the work of the National Resource Center advances and supports both scholarly practice and applied research.

Inclusion: We strive to create a supportive and professional environment where a diversity of viewpoints are recognized and considered in the ongoing dialogue on student transitions. One of the greatest strengths of the first-year experience and students in transition movement is its ability to cut across traditional boundaries in higher education and involve professionals from multiple sectors of education, institutional roles, and disciplinary perspectives as well as from a variety of personal backgrounds, institutional environments, and educational experiences.

Collaboration: Partnership and collaboration draw from the interdisciplinary nature of higher education, communicate an ongoing commitment to inclusion, and, ultimately, enhance the success of our efforts to support student transitions. The National Resource Center models effective collaboration and aims to create intentional and integrative connections between colleagues, units, organizations, systems, educational sectors, regions, and countries in support of student transition and success.

Lifelong Learning: We believe that all educators continue to be lifelong learners. We support a climate of intellectual curiosity and provide the tools and media to pursue professional development and an ongoing process of inquiry, exploration, and discovery.

Mission Statement

Building upon its history of excellence as the founder and leader of the first-year experience movement, the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition serves edu... profession... ... an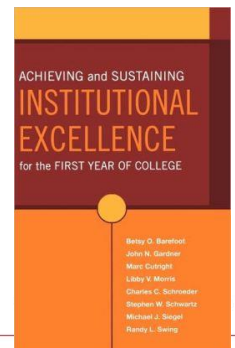d transi... through higher education. We achieve this mission by providing opportunities for the exchange of practical and scholarly information as well as the discussion of trends and issues in our field through the convening of conferences, institutes, workshops, and online learning opportunities; publishing books, research reports, a peer-reviewed journal, electronic newsletters, and guides; generating, supporting, and disseminating research and scholarship; hosting visiting scholars; and maintaining several online channels for resource sharing and communication, including a dynamic website, listservs, and social media outlets.

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Criteria for FYE "Excellence"

- "**Evidence of** an intentional, comprehensive approach to **improving the first year** 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 first-year students**, including, but not limited to special student subpopulations."

- "Strong administrative support for first-year initiatives, **evidence of institutionalization, and durability over time**."

- "Involvement of a wide range of faculty, student affairs professionals, academic administrators, and other constituent groups."

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ACHIEVING and SUSTAINING
INSTITUTIONAL
EXCELLENCE
for the FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE

Betsy O. Barefoot
John N. Gardner
Marc Cutright
Libby V. Morris
Charles C. Schroeder
Stephen W. Schwartz
Michael J. Siegel
Randy L. Swing

And yet…..

- "There are several topics in higher education that have generated large amounts of information intended to improve practice. **This does not mean that the information generated has been used**, however." (Ewell, 2010)

- "Most colleges and universities were using multiple measures to determine student learning., [*but*] relatively **few schools were…using the information in any material way to intentionally modify policy and practice**" (Blaich & Wise, 2011)

- "**Data lust turns to data dust**" (Troxel, 2009)

Decision-Making "Strategies"

How are decisions about first-year experience programs, practice, pedagogy, and policy made on your campus?

Decision-Making "Strategies"

- Organizational tradition
- Gut feeling
- Administrative edict
- Higher education fashion
- Follow the leaders/competitors
- **Empirical evidence**
- **Theory**
- **Scholarly research**
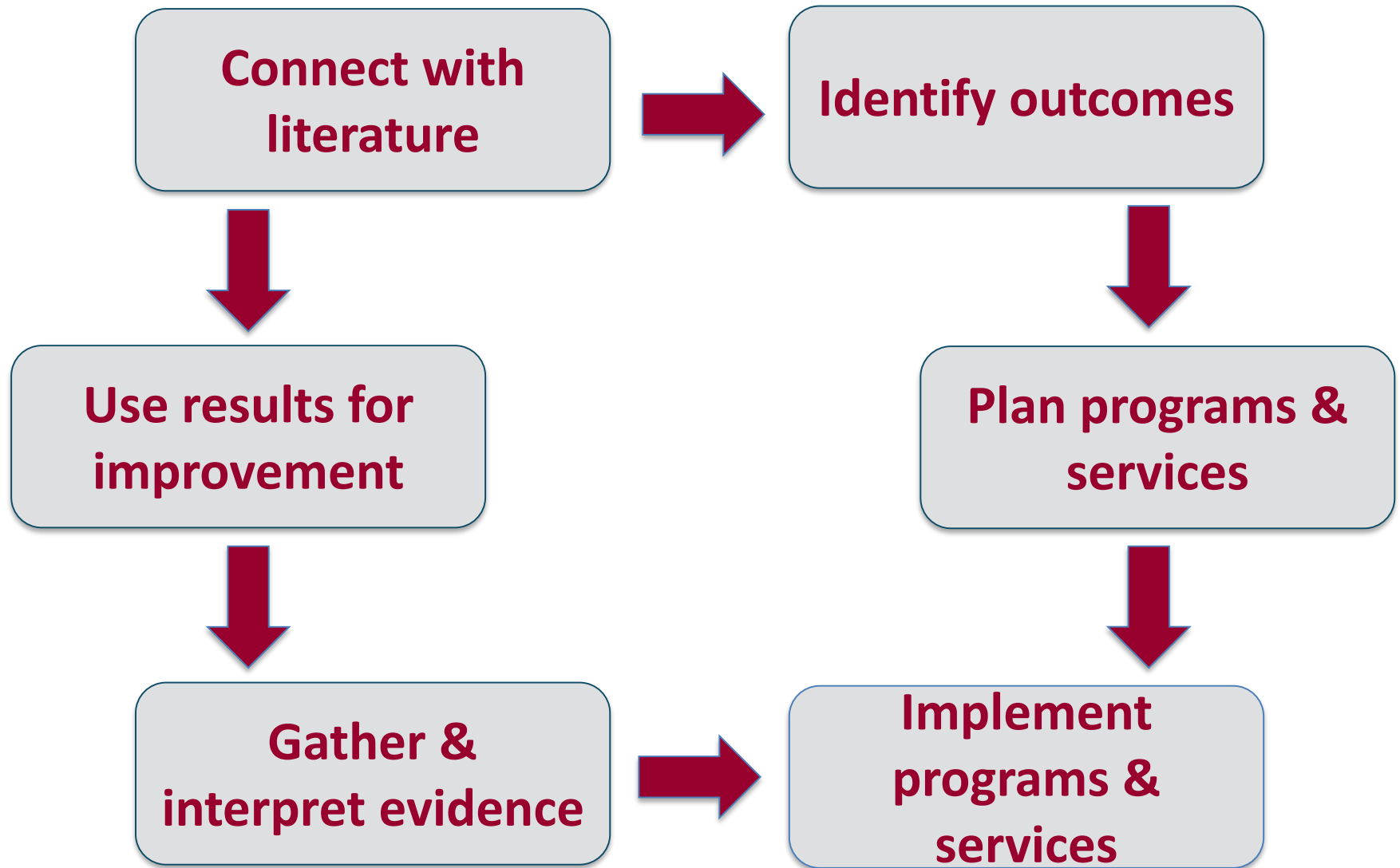
(*Banta, Jones, & Black, 2009; Friedman, 2012; Maki, 2004; Schuh, 2009; Swing, 2001*)

"**When functioning optimally, research informs practice and practice informs research. To take things further, we do not believe in a bifurcation of research and practice. The liminal space where research and practice intersect is the place where innovation and improvement occur.**"
(Koch, Foote, Hinkle, Keup, & Pistilli, 2008)
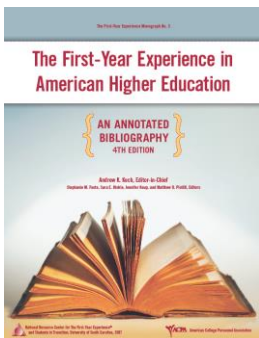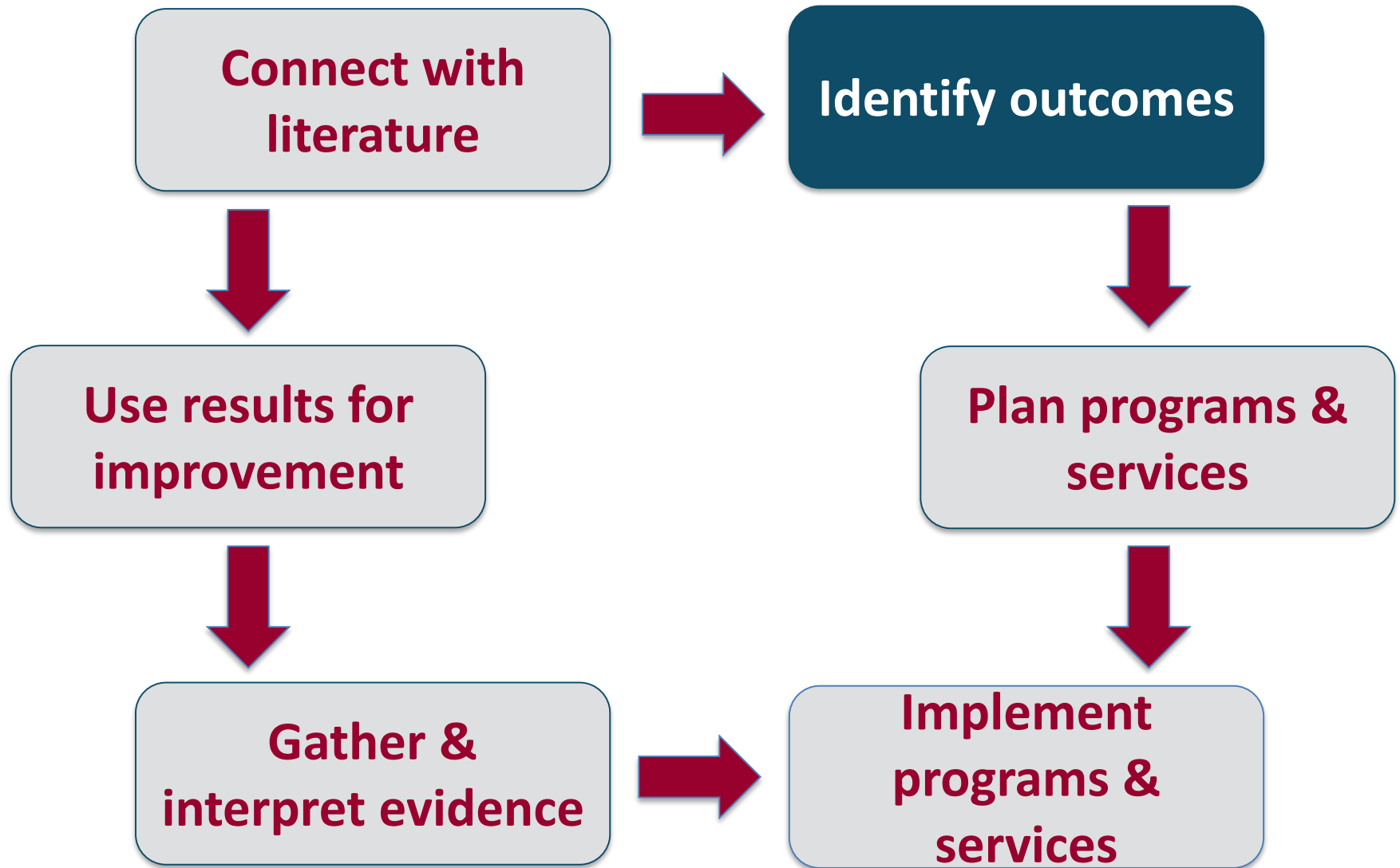
(*Banta, Jones, & Black, 2009; Friedman, 2012; Maki, 2004; Schuh, 2009; Swing, 2001*)

Common Goal of Undergraduate Initiatives

Goal of "improved retention/graduation rates"	Percent
First-year seminars	89
Early alert warning systems	89
Learning communities	83
Orientation	82
Bridge programs	75
Undergraduate research	49
Service-learning	31

A National Study
Enhancing Student Success and Retention
Throughout Undergraduate Education

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

www.sc.edu/fye

Domains for FYE Outcomes

- Retention
- Academic skills/experiences
- Campus connection
- Interpersonal skills
- Personal development
- Employability
- Civic engagement/democratic citizenship

Examples of FYE Outcomes

- **Retention**
  - Persistence to the 2nd year
  - Graduation rates
- **Academic skills/experiences**
  - Analytical & critical thinking skills
  - Development of educational career goals
  - Declaring a major
  - Knowledge integration & application
  - Academic engagement
  - Academic achievement
  - Cognitive complexity
  - Study skills
  - Introduction to a discipline

- **Campus connection**
  - Knowledge of university requirements
  - Ability to identify, seek, & use organizational resources
  - Connection to campus community
  - Understanding history & traditions
  - Involvement in cocurricular activities
  - Satisfaction with student experience
- **Interpersonal skills**
  - Conflict resolution
  - Written & oral communication
  - Development of a social support network
  - Multicultural competence

Examples of FYE Outcomes

- **Personal development**
  – Time management
  – Identity exploration & development
  – Values clarification
  – Practical competence
  – Life management skills
  – Physical health
  – Emotional wellness
  – Moral and ethical development
  – Leadership skills

- **Civic engagement/democratic citizenship**
  – Participation in service
  – Engagement in philanthropy
  – Political awareness/engagement
  – Political activism/social advocacy
  – Community involvement

- **Employability**
  – Analyzing a problem from various sources
  – Innovation and creation of new knowledge
  – Providing direction through interpersonal persuasion
  – Ability to integrate ideas and information
  – Applying knowledge to a real-world setting
  – Ability to coach and mentor others
  – Project planning and management
  – Engage in continuous learning
  – Desireability as a candidate
  – Initiative
  – Ethical decision-making
  – Professionalism
  – Ability to build a team

- **Others?**

Objective	Percentage
Develop a connection with the institution	44.9
Provide orientation to campus resources & services	37.8
Develop academic skills	36.3
Develop critical thinking skills	23.3
Create common first-year experience	21.6
Develop study skills	20.0
Self-exploration or personal development	17.0
Develop support network or friendships	14.5
Improve second-year return rates	14.5
Increase student-faculty interaction	12.4
Develop writing skills	11.6

Characteristics of Outcomes

- Focuses on product rather than process
- Must be <u>MEASURABLE</u>
- Detailed and specific
- Include action verbs
- Appropriate
- Manageable
- Meaningful
- Balance achievable with aspirational
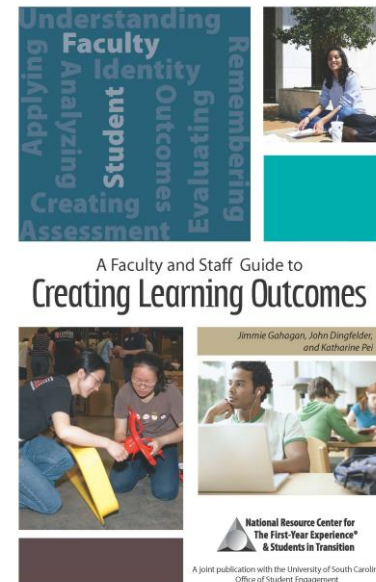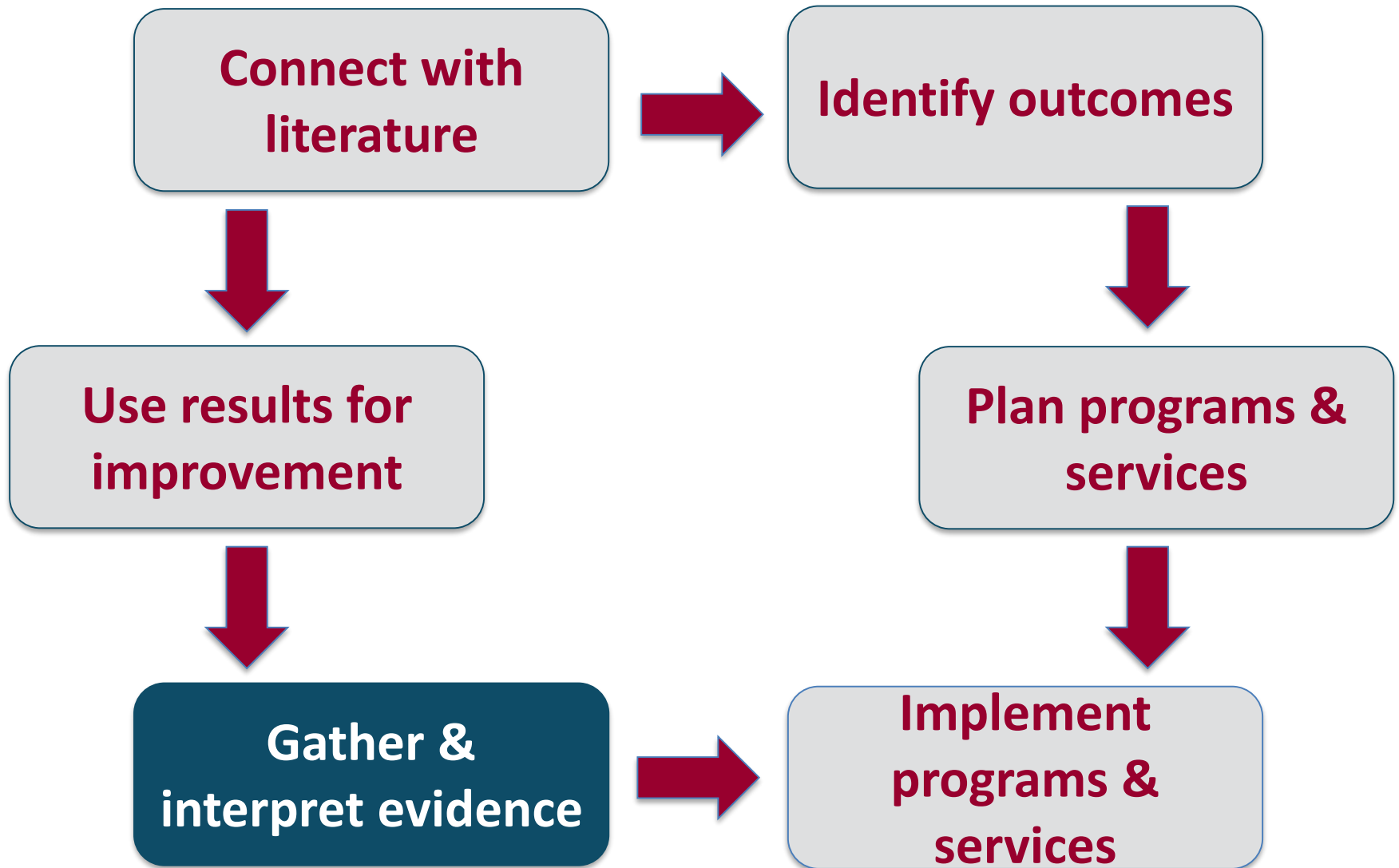
A Faculty and Staff Guide to
Creating Learning Outcomes

Jimmie Gahagan, John Dingfelder, and Katharine Pei

National Resource Center for
The First-Year Experience®
& Students in Transition

A joint publication with the University of South Carolina
Office of Student Engagement

(*Banta, Jones, & Black, 2009; Friedman, 2012; Maki, 2004; Schuh, 2009; Swing, 2001*)

What is the effect of engagement with services, programs, facilities, courses, faculty, and staff on first-year student learning, development, transition, and success?

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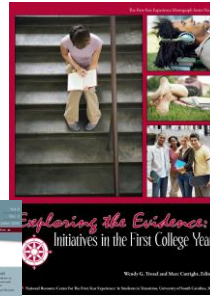UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
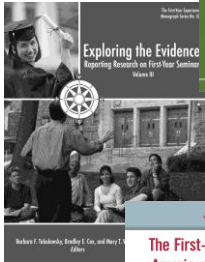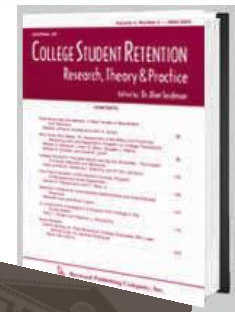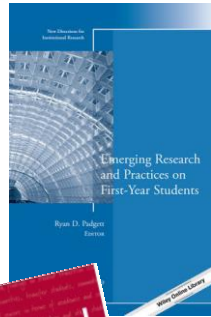
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Resources to Support Gathering & Interpreting FYE Evidence

- Data audit and access (NCHEMS, 2003)

- Methodology (Henscheid & Keup, 2011)

- Types of measures (Keup & Kilgo, 2014)

- Models and conceptual frameworks (Astin, 1991, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Skipper, 2005)

- National surveys vs. locally-grown instruments (Ory, 1994)

(*Banta, Jones, & Black, 2009; Friedman, 2012; Maki, 2004; Schuh, 2009; Swing, 2001*)

exCHANGE
a virtual meeting place about college transitions
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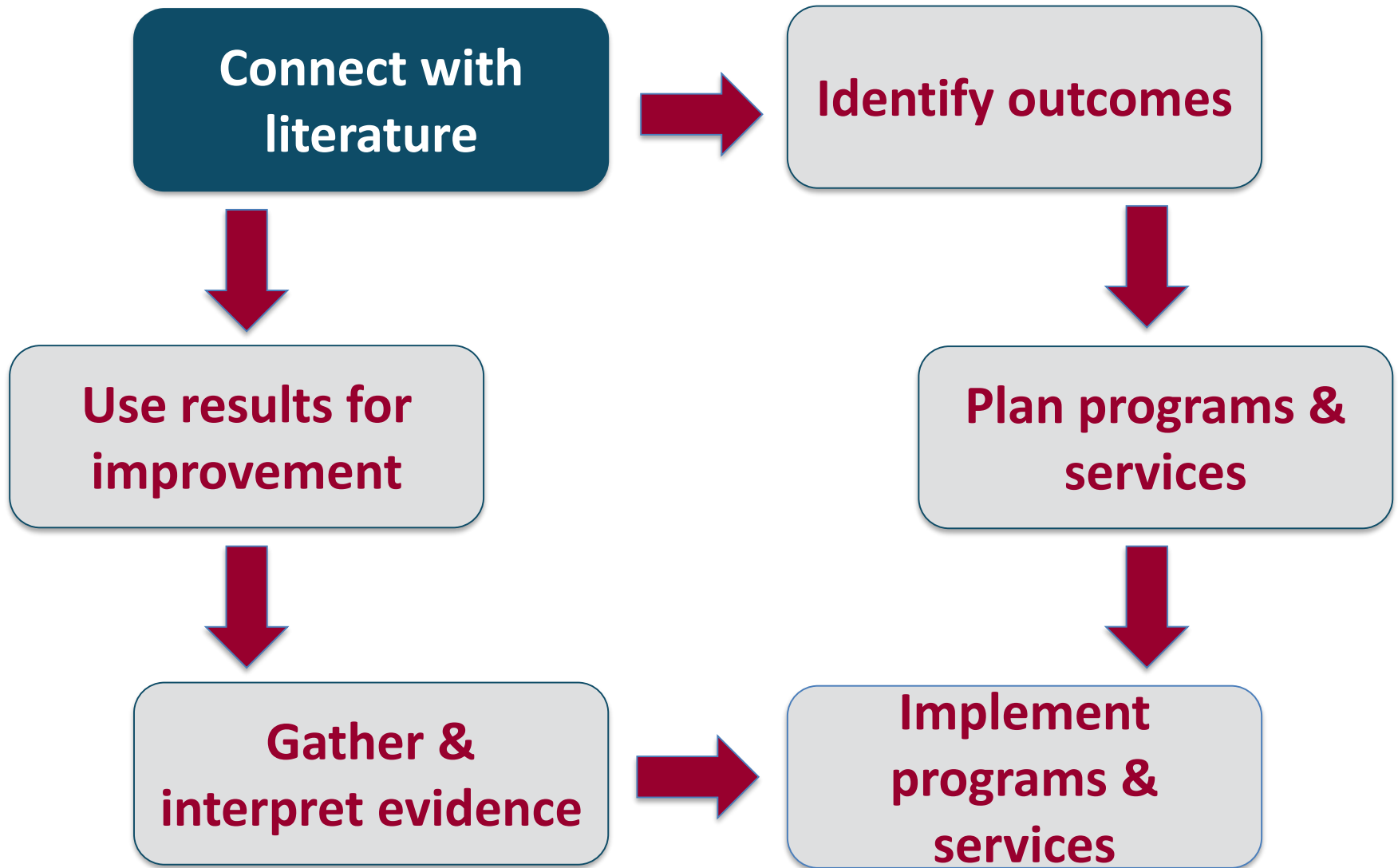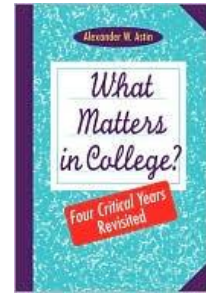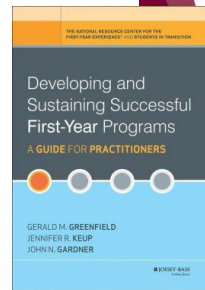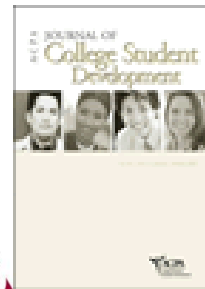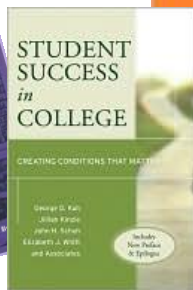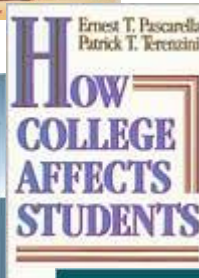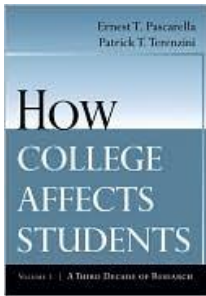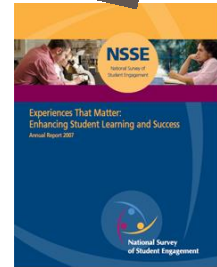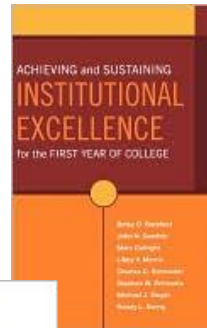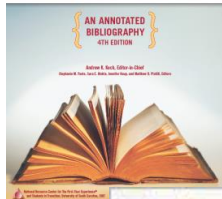
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Institutional Example: Indiana U

- Large and decentralized
- Public state university
- Selective
- Research-oriented
- Bachelors, Master's, Doctoral degrees
- Complex governance
- Small enrollment declines

Institutional Example: Indiana U

- Efforts to create interventions that focus on...
  1. the achievement of optimal levels of new student recruitment and enrollment,
  2. To improve students' transition to college, and
  3. To strengthen the first-year college experience..
- Toward the goal of enhancing student success in a large public flagship university
- **Multi-million dollar grant from the Lilly Endowment $$$**

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"Critics of higher education research often assert that scholarship in the field of higher education is too theoretical, too narrow, and fails to inform practical problems confronted by public and institutional policymakers. We, however, do not subscribe to these assertions. [*Our*] **efforts have been systematically guided by theoretical leads and empirical findings found in higher education literature and informed by ongoing institutional research**."
(*Hossler, Kuh, & Olsen, 2001*)

Institutional Example: Indiana U

- How to cultivate an "ethos of collaboration" to "blur the boundaries" during the process in a complex, decentralized environment?

  - Use higher education literature drawn from organizational theory and institutional effectiveness work

- No one organizational change model, strategic planning approach or bureaucratic process fit…

  - Extracted elements of multiple models from many disciplines (e.g., systems theory, garbage model, etc.)

Institutional Example: Indiana U

- How to provide a foundation for strategic initiatives and decisions for recruitment?
  - Reviewed existing scholarship & best practices on transition initiatives & student success ("expertise")
  - Sought documentation of effective institutions
  - Inventory current campus activities
  - Tap into literature on enrollment decisions and role of financial aid on matriculation and persistence
  - Conduct institutional study of the influence of campus-based financial aid on enrolment decisions

Institutional Example: Indiana U

- How to be ahead of the curve in recruitment strategies?
  - Use social science methods and geodemographic database analysis
- Absence of higher education literature on outreach and marketing?
  - Use business literature base on marketing impact
- How do we know that these new techniques are working?
  - Assessment/evaluation of strategies by campus IR

"Our efforts to improve undergraduate education were characterized by an emerging campus ethos marked by **a commitment to student success guided by principles of good practice distilled rom the higher education literature and research**. The Indiana story is instructive because of the way we intentionally used higher education literature to guide substantive elements of our interventions and the processes" to move them forward.
(*Hossler, Kuh, & Olsen, 2001*)

Research-to-practice requires:

- A healthy critique of theories and models
- Understanding of current student characteristics, FYE needs, and institutional practices
- Safe space to innovate
- Reinterpretation of definitions
- Comprehensive approach to measuring outcomes
- Rigorous methods
- Discussion across disciplines
- Effective means to quickly communicate results

Why Use Research in FYE Practice?

- Identify what has worked
- Transparency
- Bypass politics
- Define more complex outcomes
- Create a common vocabulary
- Foresee upcoming trends
- Identify new questions
- Survival
- Greater understanding
- Prioritize initiatives

- Quality assurance
- Ideas for new initiatives or models
- Continuous improvement
- Resource stewardship and affordability
- Strategic planning and decision making
- Inform institutional, system, or national policy
- To contribute to the field
- **Launch a movement**

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What can I do?

- Be a knowledgeable consumer of research

- Become a reflective practitioner

- Support and engage in the scholarship of practice

- Propose ideas

- Participate in feedback loops

- Engage in the conversation (research incubators)

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Questions & Comments

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