Examining the National Picture of Assessment of First-Year Experience Programs

Dallin George Young
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National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition
Objectives

• To present recent evidence that describes prevalence, methods, outcomes, and important findings for how first-year programs are being assessed in the US.

• To present recent data about the connection and coordination of first-year programs.

• To engage in a conversation and dialogue around measuring and defining those institutional activities and how they can connect to demonstrated evidence of improved student outcomes.
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)
FYE: A Working Definition

“Because supporting first-year student success is a topic that is not easily localized or specific to one functional area, an effectual first-year experience (FYE) requires campus-wide coordination and cooperation.”

(Young & Keup, forthcoming).
“Excellent” FYE: A Working Definition

“Excellence [is] characterized by an approach to the first year that spans the curriculum and cocurriculum. This approach is central and systemic rather than appended or patched to the core institutional mission.”

(Barefoot et al., 2005)
“High-Impact” FYE: A Working Definition

“High-impact practices...combine and concentrate other empirically validated pedagogical approaches into a single multidimensional activity....

“Only when they are implemented well and continually evaluated...will we realize their considerable potential.”

(Kuh, 2008)
FYE: Common Definitional Elements

• Intentional
• Coordinated
• Assessed
National Resource Center
Surveys on the First-Year

• Since 1988, the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition has triennially conducted a national survey of the features of first-year seminars

• Has provided the most comprehensive national picture of the practice related to curricular interventions to support students in the first college year
Time for a Change

- Reconsidered survey to include focus on FYS and on multiple FYE programs
- Similar to efforts previously undertaken by JNGI
  - Sought their partnership in this enterprise
2017 National Survey of First-Year Experiences

• Administered from March-July 2017
• 3,977 institutions were invited to participate
  – 4 waves: CAO, CEO, CSAO, 2012-13 NSFYS participants,
  – JNGI Process participants
• 537 campuses responded (13.5% response rate)
• All respondents reported offering at least one FYE program
2017 NSFYE Overview

• General information about institutional attention to the first year
• First-year seminars
• Pre-term orientation
• First-year academic advising
• First-year learning communities
• Residential programs/initiatives
• Early-alert systems
• Common reading programs
Presentation of Findings

• Overall Attention to the First-Year
  – Objectives
  – Prevalence of First-Year Programs

• Assessment of First-Year Programs
  – How much?
  – How?
  – What? (Aligning with Objectives?)

• Coordination of First-Year Programs
  – Implications for assessment
INTENTION AND DIRECTION OF THE FIRST YEAR

2017 NSFYE Findings
### Institutional Objectives for the First Year: Most Frequent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Objective</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic success strategies</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic planning or major exploration</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>75.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of institution or campus resources and services</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>75.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection with the institution or campus</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to college-level academic expectations</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention or second-year return rates</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common first-year experience</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>61.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student-faculty interaction</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career exploration and/or preparation</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing skills</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Institutional Objectives for the First Year:
Less Frequent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Objective</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to a major, discipline, or career path</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical, critical-thinking, or problem-solving skills</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal exploration or development</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support networks</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural competence, diversity, or engaging w/ difference</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental education, remediation and/or review</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and wellness</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information literacy</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to the liberal arts</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral communication skills</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Institutional Objectives for the First Year: Least Frequent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Objective</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civic engagement</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative and applied learning</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline-specific knowledge</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project planning, teamwork, or management skills</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital literacy</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, please specify</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or professional school preparation</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our institution has not identified campuswide objectives specifically for the first year</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Institutional Objectives for the First Year

Public
1. Academic success strategies
2. Academic planning or major exploration
3. Knowledge of institution or campus resources and services
4. Connection with the institution or campus
5. Introduction to college-level academic expectations
6. Retention or second-year return rates
7. Career exploration and/or preparation
8. Student-faculty interaction
9. Common first-year experience
10. Introduction to a major, discipline, or career path

Private, Not-for-profit
1. Academic success strategies
2. Connection with the institution or campus
3. Knowledge of institution or campus resources and services
4. Common first-year experience
5. Academic planning or major exploration
6. Introduction to college-level academic expectations
7. Student-faculty interaction
8. Retention or second-year return rates
9. Writing skills
10. Social support networks (e.g., friendships)
Institutional Objectives for the First Year

Two-Year

1. Academic planning or major exploration
2. Academic success strategies
3. Knowledge of institution or campus resources and services
4. Connection with the institution or campus
5. Introduction to college-level academic expectations
6. Developmental education, remediation
7. Career exploration and/or preparation
8. Student-faculty interaction
9. Introduction to a major, discipline, or career
10. Common first-year experience

Four-Year

1. Academic success strategies
2. Connection with the institution or campus
3. Knowledge of institution or campus resources
4. Academic planning or major exploration
5. Introduction to college-level academic expectations
6. Retention or second-year return rates
7. Common first-year experience
8. Student-faculty interaction
9. Writing skills
10. Career exploration and/or preparation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Common FYE Programs/Initiatives</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-year academic advising (ADV)</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>80.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early alert systems (EA)</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>79.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-term orientation (OR)</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-year seminars (FYS)</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement testing (PT)</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer education (PE)</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>62.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student success center (SSC)</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>55.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental education (DEV)</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General education (GE)</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convocation (CNV)</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: n = 525.
### Less Common FYE Programs/Initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program/Initiative</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential programs (RES)</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning communities (LC)</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-year gateway courses (GATE)</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common reading (CR)</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer bridge (SB)</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership programs (LEAD)</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing-intensive coursework (WR)</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service-learning (SL)</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor by campus professionals (MT)</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential learning or learning beyond the classroom (EXP)</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: n = 525.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Least Common FYE Programs/Initiatives</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate research (UGR)</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study abroad (SA)</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (OTH)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: n = 525.
### Common FYE Programs

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<td>• Pre-term orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Placement testing</td>
<td>• First-year seminars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Developmental or remedial education</td>
<td>• Convocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student success center</td>
<td>• Placement testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning communities</td>
<td>• Residential programs or initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• General education</td>
<td>• General education</td>
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<td>• Peer education</td>
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www.sc.edu/fye
Common FYE Programs

Two-Year
- First-year academic advising
- Placement testing
- Developmental or remedial education
- Early alert systems
- First-year seminars
- Pre-term orientation
- Student success center
- Peer education
- General education
- Learning communities

Four-Year
- Early alert systems
- First-year academic advising
- Pre-term orientation
- First-year seminars
- Peer education
- Convocation
- Placement testing
- Residential programs or initiatives
- General education
- Student success center
2017 NSFYE Findings

ASSESSMENT OF FIRST-YEAR PROGRAMS
Recent Assessment of First-Year Program?

CR = Common reading
EA = Early alert systems
FYA = First-year advising
FYS = First-year seminars
LC = Learning communities
OR = Orientation
RES = Residential programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Institutions</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>EA</th>
<th>FYA</th>
<th>FYS</th>
<th>LC</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>RES</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>62.6%</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't know</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
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Assessment Formats - Differences

- Analysis of institutional data
- Direct assessment of learning outcomes
- Student course evaluation
- Survey instrument

Legend:
- First-Year Seminar
- Orientation
- First-Year Advising
Assessment Formats - Similarities

- Focus groups with instructors
- Focus groups with students
- Individual interviews with instructors
- Individual interviews with students
- Program review

Comparison:
- First-Year Seminar
- Orientation
- First-Year Advising
Assessed Outcomes – Selected Programs

- Student satisfaction
- Social support networks
- Retention or second-year return rates
- Knowledge of institution/campus
- Intro to academic expectations
- Intro to a major/discipline/career path
- Connection with the institution
- Academic success strategies
- Academic planning/major exploration

Bar chart showing percentages of Advising, Orientation, and First-Year Seminar for each outcome.
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<tr>
<td>Writing skills</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Return on Investment?

Percentage of Institutions

FD:
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

First-Year Program
FYS  OR  ADV  LC  RES  EA  CR

7 - High
6
5
4 - Medium
3
2
1 - Low

ADV = First-year advising
EA = Early alert systems
OR = Orientation
FYS = First-year seminars
RES = Residential programs
LC = Learning communities
CR = Common reading
2017 NSFYE Findings

COORDINATION OF FIRST-YEAR PROGRAMS

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

www.sc.edu/fye
Coordination of FYE Programs

“Α true first-year experience includes more than just one ‘star’ program and, instead, represents a constellation of support programs.”

(Greenfield, Keup, & Gardner, 2013)
A Constellation of FYE Programs

First-year academic advising (ADV)
Early alert systems (EA)
Pre-term orientation (OR)
First-year seminars (FYS)
Placement testing (PT)
Peer education (PE)
Student success center (SSC)
Developmental education (DEV)
General education (GE)
Convocation (CNV)
Residential programs (RES)
Learning communities (LC)
First-year gateway courses (GATE)
Common reading (CR)
Summer bridge (SB)
Leadership programs (LEAD)
Writing-intensive coursework (WR)
Service-learning (SL)
Mentor by campus professionals (MT)
Experiential learning or learning beyond the classroom (EXP)
Undergraduate research (UGR)
Study abroad (SA)

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%
Coordination of FYE Programs

How Coordinated are first-year programs on your campus?

- 1 - Totally decentralized
- 2
- 3 - 13.9%
- 4 - 24.3%
- 5 - 22.9%
- 6 - 15.5%
- 7 - Totally centralized
- 7 - 13.7%

- 2.3%
- 7.4%
- 10%
- 15%
- 20%
- 25%
- 30%
# Coordination of FYE Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does your institution have any of the following formal organizational structures to coordinate the first-year experience?</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-year program office</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-functional first-year team (e.g., team inclusive of curriculum and co-curriculum)</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-year program committee, task force, or advisory board</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other campuswide FYE coordination</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-year curriculum committee</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Charge from CAS to the National Resource Center

Develop standards and guidelines for a Cross-Functional Framework outlining “an approach for addressing emerging, evolving, and on-going issues or topics from a multi- and interdisciplinary perspective through teams of higher education professionals from different fields or functional areas” for the development, delivery, and assessment of a high-quality first-year experience.
The Organizational Approach

- Introduction
- **Why?** The Charge & Operating Principles
- **Who?** Team Organization and Leadership
- **How?** Strategy, Approach, and Process
- **What?** Practices, Initiatives, and Strategies
- **With whom?** Internal & External Communications
- **So what?** Assessment
Cross-Functional FYE Assessment

- Assessment Planning
- Identifying Existing Data
  - “Individuals and teams equate assessment with data gathering effort without paying attention to the manifold sources of data that are currently available.”
- Data Collection
- Interpreting & Reporting Effectiveness of Outcomes
- Interpreting & Reporting Effectiveness of Cross-Functional Team
- Effecting Change Based on Assessment Results
Questions and Conclusion
Thank You!

Dallin George Young

YOUNGDAL@mailbox.sc.edu