


Research Reports on College Transitions | No.1

# 2008 National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives:

Curricular and Cocurricular Structures Supporting  
the Success of Second-Year College Students

Jennifer R. Keup, Jimmie Gahagan, & Ryan N. Goodwin



 **National Resource Center for  
The First-Year Experience®  
& Students in Transition**  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

2010


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## Preface

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Seeing a publishing project come to fruition is always a pleasure, but this one is especially gratifying. This inaugural volume in the *Research Reports on College Transitions* series marks a new endeavor for the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. Throughout the 30-year history of the National Resource Center, we have striven to set our standards high and produce resources to meet the ever-evolving needs of educators in our network. We have attempted to be both responsive in meeting existing needs for information and resources as well as proactive in anticipating trends and desires of educators worldwide. The National Resource Center has long served as a catalyst and a convener of gatherings for educators who advocate improving student learning and transitions into and through higher education. The many exceptional faculty and staff in our international network are well aware of the critically important transition experience students face during their collegiate experience. The Center's research, publications, conferences, institutes, and resources facilitate the efforts of higher educators everywhere to advance the knowledge, information, and resources that make the learning experience a better one for students on campuses of all types.

This volume is an example of the proactive efforts of the National Resource Center staff in calling attention to a topic of emerging interest in higher education. It is also an example of the Center's continuing efforts to respond to perceived needs in the academy. The emergence of focused interest in second-year students began slightly more than a decade ago with a conference presentation delivered by Laurie Schreiner and Jerry Pattengale at a National Conference on Students in Transition sponsored by the National Resource Center. Response to the session was significant and prompted the National Resource Center staff to publish a monograph edited by Schreiner and Pattengale, create a listserv to facilitate continued dialogue among educators interested in this topic, develop and administer a national survey on practices in the sophomore year, and publish those results. In the intervening years, additional conference sessions have been solicited and scheduled; journal articles have been published; keynote speakers have been invited and institutes convened to focus on the second year; and in 2010, a book sponsored by the National Resource Center was published by Jossey-Bass. Interest in the second college year continues to increase today. The evidence that this interest has spread beyond the network and resources and events of the National Resource Center is apparent by the increasing number of sessions about second-year students on the programs at conferences of all types, by the number of graduate students who are focusing on the second year for thesis and dissertation research, and in the resulting expansion of this topic in the literature.

Concurrent with this increasing interest in the sophomore year, the National Resource Center's research activities are expanding. Three ongoing national surveys, in addition to the Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives, are currently housed at the National Resource Center: the National Survey on First-Year Seminars (triennial since 1987), the National Survey of Senior Seminars/Capstone Courses (the second administration is forthcoming), and the National Survey on Peer Leadership Programs (administered for the first time in 2009). The Center is continually seeking



to expand the scope of research on the student experience and related institutional initiatives by partnering with national organizations and research centers and by supporting individual scholars. For example, the National Resource Center has administered a competitive grant competition annually since 2005. The range of topics studied by Paul P. Fidler grant recipients includes the second college year, the transfer transition, and the experience of students in community colleges. The National Resource Center research staff also supports and advances research on student transitions by making data from previous survey administrations available for further study. Finally, we share the results of our research efforts through our publication series, articles published in peer-reviewed research journals, and presentations at a wide range of national scholarly and professional meetings.

This inaugural volume in the *Research Reports on College Transitions* introduces a new vehicle for reporting on the research conducted at the National Resource Center, through collaborations with other organizations and research centers, and by individuals where a comprehensive treatment of the findings is larger in scope than a traditional journal article. This first volume provides a detailed report on the current status of initiatives on campuses throughout the USA designed to enhance the second year of college. In addition to a presentation of research findings, the volume offers a review of the literature, which situates the current study in the context of the expanding interest in sophomore student development and highlights the kinds of initiatives designed to support sophomore success. The volume concludes with insights the researchers and authors have drawn from their work, with special attention to the implications for practice on campuses serving second-year students. Appendices offer additional details on the survey administration and research methodology.

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 education professionals by supporting and advancing efforts to improve student learning and transitions into and through higher education. We strive to serve as the trusted expert, internationally recognized leader, and clearinghouse for scholarship, policy, and best practice for all postsecondary student transitions. This new *Research Reports on College Transitions* series will further that mission. It is our hope that readers will find the format and the information in this volume to be of interest and value in their important work with second-year students.

Mary Stuart Hunter  
Associate Vice President and Executive Director  
National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition  
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## Executive Summary

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Over the last 10 years, many terms have been used to describe the experience of students in their second college year. Phrases such as the *sophomore slump*, *invisible students*, *the lost year*, *the forgotten year*, and *the academy's middle children* appear throughout the higher education literature. Do these titles accurately describe the experience of sophomore students? How are institutions responding to the needs of these students? In 2005, the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition administered a national survey of institutional initiatives and programs specifically designed to support second-year students. The results from the 382 institutions participating in that exploratory study provided a comprehensive national portrait of sophomore-year initiatives in higher education and offered “insight into specific efforts, the administration of these efforts, related assessment data, and plans for future initiatives” (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007a, p.13).

Since the administration of that instrument in 2005, the unique needs and experiences of sophomores have remained a part of the consciousness of higher educators and a topic in the ongoing national dialogue of student transition and success. As such, the National Resource Center conducted a second administration of the National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives in fall 2008 in order to capture information about current and evolving practices in the support of second-year students in higher education. This research brief provides a review of past and current literature regarding the sophomore-year experience and reports findings from this most recent survey administration.

More specifically, this research brief opens with a review of the literature examining the specific issues that sophomores face and the reasons why there has been an increased interest among universities for this student population. The literature review also touches on a range of initiatives that seem well positioned to support second-year student learning and engagement. The next section reports the findings of the 2008 National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives, including the kinds of initiatives offered in the second year, the longevity of those initiatives, the goals of sophomore initiatives, and assessment related to them. Among the key findings:

### General Characteristics

- ◇ Approximately one third of respondents to the 2008 National Survey indicated that their institution offered at least one initiative “specifically or intentionally geared toward sophomore students,” which is consistent with the proportion of institutional representatives answering this question on the 2005 survey.
- ◇ Sophomore initiatives are still relatively new: The average history of a longstanding sophomore success initiative was just over six years.

- ◇ Most often, student affairs was the administrative unit overseeing longstanding sophomore-year initiatives. This structure was followed in frequency by reports of collaborative oversight by academic and student affairs.
- ◇ The most commonly cited reasons for not having a sophomore-year initiative were limited funding and lack of time.

### **Purposes and Desired Outcomes**

- ◇ Retention, satisfaction, and engagement were the most often cited reasons for establishing a longstanding sophomore success initiative while specific skill development (e.g., critical thinking, diversity, communication skills) were the least likely reasons for developing such programs.

### **Types of Sophomore Success Initiatives**

- ◇ The most frequently cited sophomore success initiatives—career planning, leadership development, academic advising, and class events—were also noted as the second-year success programs with the longest history on campuses as well as the ones that were typically the focus of innovative efforts. As such, these four initiatives represent the foundation of most sophomore-year experience programs.
- ◇ Academic sophomore initiatives, such as study abroad, community service/service-learning, and undergraduate research programs, were comparatively underutilized. Sophomore initiatives that are intimately connected to the classroom, including opportunities to co-teach a class, curricular learning communities, and credit-bearing courses, were especially under-represented in second-year programming.
- ◇ A small but significant proportion of respondents (approximately 8-9%) were unsure whether study abroad, peer mentoring for sophomores, academic advising, opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class, and community service/service-learning opportunities were offered for second-year students on their campuses. Respondents were especially unsure about whether their institutions offered two specific types of sophomore success initiatives: undergraduate research and financial aid (between 10 and 20%). These data suggest that campuses may need to do more to inform faculty, staff, and administrators about the opportunities available for sophomores on campus.

### **Institutional Differences**

- ◇ Sophomore-year initiatives were offered at a slightly higher rate at private colleges and universities and at more selective institutions.
- ◇ Five sophomore success initiatives yielded statistically significant findings by institutional affiliation. Public institutions in the sample offered financial aid programs and curricular learning communities more frequently than private colleges and universities. Conversely, private institutions provided sophomores opportunities to co-teach, roles in student government, and class events more often than their public counterparts.
- ◇ More selective institutions were more likely to provide print publications, class events, online resources, research opportunities, and retreats while less selective colleges and universities hosted cultural enrichment activities and provided financial aid for their sophomores more frequently.

- ◇ Use of faculty/staff mentors for sophomores were more frequent at large institutions, and smaller institutions were more likely to offer career planning, community service/service learning opportunities, and academic advising to their sophomore students.

### **Assessment Practices**

- ◇ More than 40% of respondents indicated that they did not assess longstanding sophomore success initiatives, illustrating a significant area of vulnerability for the sustainability of these programs.
- ◇ Most institutions were unable to report comprehensive assessment information about sophomore success initiatives suggesting that assessment information is nonexistent, generally unavailable, or in progress.
- ◇ Those institutions that did provide data on assessment practices reported a heavy reliance upon survey data, underutilization of qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, and infrequent inclusion of faculty or administrators in the assessment plan.

### **Future Sophomore Initiatives**

- ◇ A large proportion of institutions with current sophomore initiatives were also considering or developing new success programs for second-year students. Just over one quarter of institutions without such programming were considering or actively developing sophomore success initiatives.

The final section considers implications for practice as institutions develop initiatives to support second-year students.

This research brief provides current data on the most commonly offered initiatives and services for sophomore students along with information about how such programs are administered. As such, the data help paint a broad picture of the national movement to support the success of second-year students. However, there are limitations to the interpretation and generalizability of this information. As Barefoot (2002), who conducted a similar study of academic practices in the first college year, noted, the findings merely suggest what is common practice on college campuses; “the findings do not necessarily identify ‘best practice’” (para. 2). Nevertheless, understanding the reasons why universities create second-year programs and the types of initiatives offered can provide a useful guide for those seeking to create similar practices at their own institutions or refine existing programs. Thus, this information represents an important resource to researchers and campus leaders dedicated to the enhancement of the sophomore-year experience.



## The Sophomore-Year Experience: A Review of the Literature

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Educators have been focusing on the second year of college since the 1930s when Woodworth (1938) characterized the sophomore year as

an exploratory period, a year in which the student seeks to acquaint himself with new fields of interest. Sometimes this period proves to be an exceedingly stimulating, fruitful experience. Often, however, the impact of several totally different subjects gives the student a sense that knowledge is made up of fragments which have little or no connection with each other; as to their having any possible bearing on his own philosophy of life, that is unthought of by the Sophomore. (p. 89)

Woodworth goes on to describe several important decisions that must take place in the sophomore year, including choosing a major, getting involved in college activities, and deciding whether to stay in school beyond the sophomore year. She also indicates that transition to the sophomore year can mean a lack of support from university administrators who, believing that second-year students are now well acclimated to the institution, “devote their energies to orienting the incoming class” (p. 89).

In many ways, the issues sophomores face today are the same as those Woodworth described in 1938. With the growth of the first-year experience in higher education and the front-loading of support for first-year students through programs such as new student orientation and first-year seminars, many students returning to their institution in the second year may wonder whether the university cares for them at all. As one sophomore participating in a 2005 focus group at the University of South Carolina described,

I think my sophomore year kind of left me more stranded—not so much stranded because you have that friendship of the people you met last semester and you know the campus—more because your freshman year there were so many things that were reaching out to you that you come back your sophomore that it’s just like you’re on your own.

Issues of major selection, career development, and involvement on campus come to the forefront for many second-year students. This chapter will examine the unique issues that sophomores face as the context for an emerging national emphasis on sophomore-specific programming on college and university campuses.

## Describing the Second College Year

Over the years, educators have grappled with how to describe the sophomore-year experience, with the term *sophomore slump* embodying the second college year for many researchers and practitioners. Yet, what is meant by the sophomore slump and when it occurs has been construed differently by various researchers. Freedman (1956) suggested, “evidences of what has been called ‘sophomore slump’ are rare. Rather, it appears the inertia or disorganization implied by this term are more likely to occur in the second semester of the freshman year” (p. 22). In their review of the literature, Feldman and Newcomb (1969) discovered a number of studies that characterized the sophomore slump as students’ overall dissatisfaction with the institution rather than the disorganization Freedman discussed.

Many researchers and practitioners framed the sophomore slump within student development theory. For example, Kohlberg and Kramer (1969) found that sophomore students regressed in their moral development from a postconventional stage of morality (i.e., a social contract, legalistic orientation in Kohlberg’s model) to preconventional stage 2 morality (i.e., an instrumental relativist orientation or “you scratch my back, and I’ll scratch yours” mentality) in their second year of college. They argued that this slide could be due to the freedom students experience between adolescence and adulthood. While such freedom may ultimately result in growth and learning (i.e., more sophisticated moral reasoning skills), students may initially struggle with decision making in a new context. Margolis’ (1976) research provides additional insight into this struggle. He postulated that for many second-year students, academic, social, and internal issues combined form a crisis of identity in which students question the college experience and “become more introspective and philosophical but without a resource base from which to resolve these issues” (p. 134).

Richmond and Lemons (1985) go beyond simply offering a definition and identify specific characteristics of the sophomore slump, including “doubts regarding the choice of a career, dissatisfaction with personal relationships, and a heightened awareness of and concern for the financial aspects of one’s college education” (p. 176). In a separate analysis, Lemons and Richmond (1987) used Chickering’s (1969) seven vectors of student development as a lens to interpret the experience of students and specifically linked evidence of a slump to the vectors of achieving competence, developing autonomy, establishing identity, and developing purpose. In reflecting on their work with students, they anecdotally described developing purpose as a possible cause of the sophomore slump and noted that there is pressure on sophomores because they are expected to have clarity about their choice of major and career while balancing the many academic and social demands of college. They recommended using Holland’s *The Self-Directed Search* (1974) as a tool to assist sophomores in examining specific career pathways.

More recently, Schaller (2005) drew on theories related to cognitive-structural development and self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 1992) to describe the experiences of second-year college students. Drawing on qualitative research with 19 traditional-age sophomores at a private midwestern university, Schaller developed a four-stage model of development during the early college years. For many students, the first year of college was a time for *random exploration* through which they moved with great excitement and enthusiasm, learning about themselves and the world around them and exploring all that college had to offer. Many students entered their sophomore year in an extended phase of random exploration. However, during the year, they moved into *focused exploration* or a time when they began to

question the choices they had made during random exploration and wondered out loud about the mistakes they had made. Complicating matters for many was the pressure they felt to select a major, to have a sense of a future career and life direction. (pp. 18-19)



As students began to grow developmentally, they shifted from an external sense of authority to an internal sense of authority that is foundational to self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 1992). This shift can produce a range of emotions. As some students in Schaller's study went through this process of exploration, they began to feel a growing sense of frustration, which could be characterized as a slump or identity crisis. However, other students who stayed in the focused exploration phase grew in their capacity for self-reflection, which contributes to the process of self-authorship. After focused exploration, students progressed into a stage of *tentative choices* in which they were able to see the future and their direction and purpose more clearly. The amount of reflection in which students engage can be especially important in navigating this stage. Finally, students moved from these tentative choices into commitment, where they solidified their decisions and future direction. Schaller's framework can help educators set goals for their work with sophomore students, especially as that work relates to helping students become more internally directed.

## Examining Key Issues in the Second College Year

Over the last decade, there has been a resurgence of interest in the second year of college. This resurgence has occurred for many reasons; however, a review of the literature reveals that several key issues have been of specific interest, including student satisfaction, retention, and engagement. These three variables are important because they have an impact on students' academic success and persistence and at the same time can affect a university's bottom line.

### *Student Satisfaction*

Student satisfaction has been an important assessment measure in higher education because it is closely tied to students' perceptions of the quality of their educational experiences and their connection to an institution. Upcraft and Schuh (1996) suggest that student satisfaction measures may also serve as a proxy to assess the extent to which students' educational experiences "foster their learning and growth" (p. 149). Several studies have explored the importance of student satisfaction to second-year student success. Juillerat (2000) used data collected from more than 118,000 students on the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) to explore the issues sophomores valued most and their satisfaction related to these issues in an effort to "illuminate issues related to the sophomore slump" (p. 20). Specifically, she compared the responses of students at different institutional types by their class standing on their home campus. Juillerat found that sophomores value many of the same things that other college students value (e.g., opportunity for intellectual growth, quality instruction, feeling of support and care from faculty). However, differences appeared when examining satisfaction by institutional type. For example, she found that sophomores at private colleges were significantly less satisfied with the openness and care of their advisors, while sophomores at public colleges were less satisfied with university services, such as the library staff, selection of food, quality of instruction, and financial aid. In a separate analysis, Juillerat also compared the SSI scores of those at private religiously affiliated institutions who persisted into their junior year to those who dropped out. In general, sophomore dropouts had "lower expectations and significantly lower satisfaction scores than sophomore persisters" (Juillerat, p. 27), illustrating the importance of second-year student satisfaction in determining persistence.

Nearly a decade later, Schreiner (2010) explored the impact of student satisfaction on sophomores' academic success and goal orientation. She found that the majority of second-year students reported the sophomore year was better than their first year and planned to re-enroll as juniors. Schreiner concluded, "students' satisfaction with their overall college experience was the strongest predictor of intent to re-enroll and graduate" (p. 49). Several other variables contributed to students'

overall satisfaction and intent to re-enroll, including the frequency of student/faculty interaction and peer satisfaction. Like Juillerat (2000), Schreiner found that students' satisfaction differs by institutional type, with those attending private institutions experiencing more interaction with faculty and greater satisfaction with those interactions, greater involvement in campus activities, and increased participation in community service and service-learning than their counterparts at public institutions.

Taken together, these studies indicate the importance of student satisfaction in the sophomore year. Many universities front-load resources in the first college year to support new students' transition to college. These types of intentional services raise students' expectations for that level of support to continue throughout all four years. For many students, entering their sophomore year may feel as though the institution has withdrawn meaningful support at a time when they need it the most. As one University of South Carolina sophomore indicated in a 2007 focus group, "I felt that the first year [was] so supportive. Now, I feel like I have to run off a cliff and learn how to fly, fast!" Therefore, initiatives that emphasize sophomore student satisfaction can play an important role in helping address the changing level of institutional support that students perceive between the first and second years of college.

### *Retention*

Over the last 20 years, the issue of retention has become increasingly important in higher education. In both positive and negative economic times, limiting student departure has an impact on an institution's financial and educational success. Efforts to address student departure have primarily been focused in the first year of college. However many institutions now realize that persistence to the junior year is also an important concern. As Lipka (2006) reported in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, "while 80.6 percent of freshman who enrolled in 2003 came back as sophomores [in 2004], only 70.7 percent of those students were still enrolled at their original institutions as juniors [in 2005]" (para. 4). This drop in persistence is one of the primary reasons why many universities have begun to create second-year initiatives.

Tinto's (1993) work on student departure provides the foundation for many current retention practices. Tinto's theory indicates that the degree to which students feel connected to an institution both academically and socially will directly affect the likelihood of their persistence. For Tinto (1993), academic integration happens formally through students' academic performance and informally through their interactions with faculty and staff. Likewise, social integration occurs through formal participation in extracurricular activities and informally through peer-group interactions. Using Tinto's theory as a framework, many universities have begun to front-load resources into the first year of college to increase the likelihood of this integration occurring early and, ultimately, to facilitate student success and retention.

The importance of orientation, convocation, first-year seminars, and similar initiatives cannot be underestimated in promoting first-year student success and retention; however, there has not been a similar focus on initiatives to promote integration in the second year of college. In 1991, Flanagan studied the retention practices of two separate consortia of private liberal arts colleges and small universities, which were aligned by mission and type of students. He found that retention was an important issue for these institutions, and while many of them had been very intentional in designing initiatives to help students make the initial transition to college, those efforts were "not continued during the sophomore year, despite the fact that the most significant retention problem... occurs following the sophomore year" (Flanagan, p. 88). Using an instrument he created based on Tinto's (1987) theory of college student departure, Flanagan found that "academic integration, skills and ability, and environment were . . . very significant in predicting improved sophomore

retention” (p. 84). Furthermore, in 2007, the Noel-Levitz higher education consulting group conducted a national research study entitled *Student Retention Practices at Four-Year Institutions*. In surveying 193 four-year institutions about their retention practices, they found that 86.6% of four-year public and 85.2% of four-year private universities have programs specifically designed for first-year students; however, only 19.7% and 22.3% of the same institutions have programs specifically designed for second-year students. These studies indicate that there is a decline in institutional support for second-year students because many of the programs initiated for first-year students are not continued into the second college year.

Academic success can also play an important role in student persistence as it contributes to students’ academic integration. Graunke and Woosley (2005) found that certainty in the choice of a major and interactions with faculty members were both significant predictors of students’ academic success in the sophomore year and concluded that institutions should invest in programs focused on major and career decision making and increase faculty interaction with sophomores as such efforts would “ultimately . . . increase [students’] chances of success at their current institution” (p. 375). These types of programs are important because they reinforce students’ sense of self-efficacy and break down barriers with faculty who can provide intentional support to help students navigate their experience at an institution.

Along with the importance of choosing a major and connecting with faculty, a national study by Adelman (2006) used transcript data from 12,000 students to explore the nature of students’ academic progress and how the number of credits taken each semester influenced students’ time to degree completion. This study revealed that students with low credit-hour momentum (generally defined as 20 hours of course credit or less by the end of the first year of college) were less likely to persist and had lower GPAs. For example, Adelman found that “by the end of the second calendar year, those who never earned their bachelor’s degree were already 25 credits behind those who did” (p. 55). These results were consistent across two-year and four-year institutions and led Adelman to conclude that “the second academic calendar year offers students the opportunity to recapture any lack of momentum of the first. In that respect, the second year may be even more important than the first” (p. 53).

Credit-hour momentum, selection of academic majors, and connection to faculty are critical issues facing sophomore students; however, retention is ultimately a campus-specific issue. For example, Hughes (2009) conducted a qualitative study to explore the reasons second-year students left Humboldt State University, a public university in the California State University network. Hughes gathered institutional data on 178 students in the 2006 cohort of first-year students who did not return for the beginning of their third year and conducted phone interviews with 112 of these students. His study revealed several interesting findings. First, most of the students who left in the sophomore year (73%) continued their education, “with a majority transferring to community colleges” (p. 3). Students offered a number of reasons for leaving in their sophomore year, including financial issues, academic performance, a desire to be closer to home, and institutional fit. Similar to Adelman (2006), Hughes also found that sophomores who had lower GPAs and fewer hours earned were less likely to be retained. Hughes’s findings led him to hypothesize that “it may be that Humboldt is not so much providing reasons for students to leave but not providing them with reasons to stay” (p. 9). This study also emphasized the complexity of student departure for second-year students and the importance of examining the experience on individual campuses rather than applying broad solutions across all institutional types.

## *Engagement*

Student engagement has become an increasingly important construct in higher education because of its connection to student learning, persistence, and other important educational outcomes (Pascarella, Seifert, & Blaich, 2010). In his keynote address at the 29th Annual Conference on The First-Year experience in Denver, Colorado, George Kuh (2010) offered a three-part definition of student engagement: (a) the time and energy students devoted to educationally purposeful activities, (b) educational practices used by institutions to induce students to do the right thing, and (c) strategies for channeling student energy to the right activities. Many institutions focus on the latter two, encouraging and institutionalizing student engagement in the first-year experience through orientation, convocation, first-year seminar courses, living and learning communities, and the like. However, there is a great need to extend these practices beyond the first year and to be intentional in helping sophomores maintain and expand their horizons. Similarly, because students' individual effort is one of the most important factors that determines the impact of college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), educators need to understand potential facilitators of and barriers to engagement in the sophomore year.

The sophomore year is an important time for universities to encourage educational experiences that will connect sophomores' in-class and beyond-the-classroom learning. As Evenbeck and Hamilton (2010) state, "a range of curricular and co-curricular supports in the sophomore year designed to foster intellectual development will improve students' ability to make choices about majors and individual courses and, one hopes, accelerate degree attainment" (p. 114). Especially important is emphasizing high-impact practices that increase student learning and engagement (Leskes & Miller, 2006; NSSE Report, 2007) by requiring students to devote time and effort to meaningful educational tasks, facilitating their interaction with faculty and peers about important academic topics, increasing the likelihood that they will interact with students and others from diverse backgrounds, providing more frequent feedback, exploring how learning works on and off campus, and promoting life changes. The sophomore year can be a nexus for students' exploration of or participation in high-impact activities, but intentional effort must be made to direct students to areas such as service-learning, study abroad, and undergraduate research.

For example, service-learning is a pedagogy that encourages the meaningful integration of non-remunerative service with academic coursework in a way that promotes reflection and meets a unique community need. Service-learning has been proven to have a positive impact on outcomes across a variety of measures including GPA, self-efficacy, leadership, and values clarification (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000). As such, service-learning experiences may help sophomores resolve some of the psychosocial and cognitive-structural developmental tasks identified as salient for these students by other researchers.

Along with service-learning, study abroad can help expand sophomore students' perspectives on diversity. As Sutton and Leslie (2010) suggest, "study abroad provides a context in which sophomores might grow to understand their goals and identity in the broadest social and cultural context" (p. 163). In 2007, the National Survey for Student Engagement examined the effects of participation in a study abroad program by surveying 1,500 seniors from 58 different campuses and found that students who had participated in a study-abroad program were more likely to participate in other educationally purposeful activities than their peers who did not participate.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) found several studies that "point to the positive influence of undergraduate research programs on persistence and degree completion" (p. 406). They also found that students who participate in undergraduate research have an increased likelihood of enrolling in graduate school. Clearly, these experiences are beneficial for students, but the challenge remains to encourage early participation in undergraduate research by second-year students. Wilson and

Crowe (2009) provide several key recommendations for encouraging sophomores to engage in research, including (a) making them aware and involving them early in their sophomore year, (b) intentionally nurturing the faculty mentor-student relationship, (c) paying attention to the research environment, and (d) designing research experiences with student learning and success in mind.

### *The Importance of Student/Faculty Interaction*

In reviewing the literature about sophomore student persistence, engagement, and satisfaction a central theme emerges: the importance of student/faculty interactions. Lemons and Richmond (1987) recommended providing individual support for sophomores to help them overcome the sophomore slump, and subsequent research demonstrates the positive impact of such support on academic performance and persistence. For example, Wilder (1993) explored the difference between sophomore students who maintained a steady GPA versus those who experienced a decline and found that “faculty/staff interactions, specifically individual contact with advisors, emerged as a significant variable” (p. 24) for those who maintained their academic performance. Similarly, Schreiner (2010) found that the frequency of sophomores’ contact with faculty and their satisfaction with that interaction were significant predictors of their persistence. Graunke and Woosley (2005) also found that “faculty interactions were a significant predictor of success” (p. 374). Ultimately, student satisfaction, retention, and engagement are important reasons to establish programs for second-year student success, yet in order for these to have maximum effectiveness, they may require the participation and support of faculty and staff from across the campus.

### **Conclusion**

Attempts to describe the experience of the second college year suggest that sophomore students may be in a period of intense exploration that may in some ways be hampered by a lack of appropriate frameworks or reference points for guiding that exploration. Students may also feel that important academic and social supports have been withdrawn at a time when they are most needed. Maintaining engagement in and satisfaction with high-quality educational experiences is critical for sophomore success and persistence. While a number of high-impact activities have been identified as potentially powerful in meeting this challenge, the literature provides little insight into the extent to which such activities have been adopted. The National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives was designed to gather information on the kinds of programs and services institutions are developing for second-year students. The following sections explore the results of the 2008 administration of the survey and offer implications and recommendations for practice. We hope this information challenges readers to think about their work with sophomores on their own campuses and provides insight into why and how other universities have begun these efforts. Additional research and assessment is critical as we continue to learn more about the most effective ways to support second-year students’ academic success, persistence, and learning.





## Findings From the 2008 National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives

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Though the history of the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition (National Resource Center) is rooted in first-year programs and research, we have long been aware that students' developmental and educational experiences do not begin and end in the first college year but, rather, are the first step in an educational trajectory. It is critical that institutions have a better understanding of student needs and challenges beyond the first year, so that they can provide the necessary programs, policies, and pedagogies to support students throughout their entire academic careers. In fact, in the past decade there has been increased attention paid to students at other critical points in postsecondary education; thus, the scope of the Center's interests, resources, and research agenda has expanded to include an emphasis on all students in transition, including sophomores.

In fall 2008, the National Resource Center administered the second National Survey on Sophomore-Year Initiatives. Similar to the first administration of this instrument in 2005, the staff of the National Resource Center asked chief student affairs officers at colleges and universities across the country to report on the programs and services that their institutions provide to second-year students (see Appendix A for methodology). Hundreds of institutions from every control, type, selectivity, and size of college responded to this call yielding a sample of 315 institutions for the study. Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample across several key institutional characteristics. As noted therein, the sample shows a significant over-representation of four-year institutions, public colleges and universities, larger campuses, and institutions with higher selectivity as defined by the Carnegie Classification.<sup>1</sup>

While these data are not nationally representative, they do offer a comprehensive sample of institutional information on initiatives designed to support second-year students. In aggregate, they help paint a broad picture of the national movement to support the success of second-year students. The findings from this survey also provide current data regarding the most commonly offered initiatives and services for sophomore students and the administration of those programs. As such, they provide an important context in which institutional personnel can analyze, assess, and understand their own decisions regarding sophomore success initiatives. Thus, these data and findings represent an important resource to researchers and campus leaders dedicated to the enhancement of the sophomore-year experience. In short, we offer these findings from the 2008 administration of the

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<sup>1</sup>The Carnegie Classification is the premier framework for describing institutional characteristics in American higher education. Originally developed in 1970 by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education and updated regularly, the Carnegie Classification uses empirical data on institutional organization, setting, curriculum, and students to create "a classification of colleges and universities to support...program[s] of research and policy analysis." (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, n.d.).



National Survey on Sophomore-Year Initiatives as a starting point in conversations and research on the topic of sophomore student success and encourage colleges and universities to consider how their sophomore programs and services compare with these national aggregates.

Table 1  
*Characteristics of Responding Institutions (n = 315)*

	Percentage of institutions responding to the survey	National percentage
<i>Institutional type (n = 315)</i>		
Two-year	24.4	38.5
Four-year	75.6	61.5
<i>Institutional affiliation (n = 311)</i>		
Private	47.9	61.5
Public	52.1	38.6
<i>Institutional enrollment (n = 314)</i>		
5,000 or less	62.4	85.2
5,001 – 10,000	16.2	7.3
10,001 – 15,000	9.2	3.2
15,001 – 20,000	3.8	1.5
More than 20,000	8.3	2.8
<i>Institutional selectivity (n = 285)</i>		
Two-year college	26.0	50.8
Special focus institution	4.9	5.1
Inclusive	8.1	12.1
Selective	35.1	21.7
More selective	26.0	10.4

*Note.* Figures for the national percentages are from the 2009 Almanac issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* at <http://chronicle.com/section/Almanac-of-Higher-Education/141/>, The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System at <http://nces.ed.gov/IPEDS/>, and The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education at <http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/>.

### **Institutional Offerings of Sophomore Success Initiatives**

Just over one third of the sample ( $n = 115$ ; 36.5%) reported that they offered at least one initiative “specifically or intentionally geared toward sophomore students” (see Appendix B for survey instrument). Further, at 67 of these campuses (58.3% of those with initiatives), there was an individual designated to oversee sophomore student success initiatives, although not always as a full-time position. More specifically, 47 institutions reported a faculty member, staff member, or administrator with full-time responsibilities in this area. On 20 campuses, those responsible for sophomore programs and services had this responsibility as a portion of their full range of duties or were part-time employees. Respondents were also asked to indicate where programs for sophomore students were housed. Fifteen respondents reported being a part of a specific office, unit, or division dedicated

to sophomore programs or the second-year experience. On other campuses, sophomore initiatives were housed within different campus units or departments, such as residence life ( $n = 8$ ), the dean of students ( $n = 7$ ), student life ( $n = 6$ ), career services ( $n = 5$ ), advising ( $n = 4$ ), retention ( $n = 2$ ), and transitions ( $n = 2$ ; i.e., dean of transitions). Many respondents provided specific titles for the individual coordinating sophomore initiatives or programs. Most frequently titles were at the dean, associate/assistant dean, director, coordinator, or manager levels. These position titles varied most significantly in residence life and student life and were more consistent in career services and advising, where most positions were reported at the director level.

Table 2 indicates the institutional characteristics of the responding colleges and universities that they offered sophomore success initiatives. These data show that private institutions in the sample reported offering sophomore success initiatives at a higher rate than public colleges and universities, a finding that was found to be statistically significant,  $t(306.071, N = 311) = 3.498$ ,  $p < .001$ . The data in this table also suggest that there is a significant positive relationship between offering a sophomore initiative and institutional selectivity. A follow-up chi-square analysis indicated that institutions with greater selectivity levels were more likely to have sophomore success initiatives than those from lower selectivity levels,  $\chi^2(12, N = 315) = 64.372$ ,  $p < .001$ . Although the data in Table 2 suggest that there is a slight curvilinear relationship between institutional size and offering sophomore success initiatives, a follow-up ANOVA showed that the differences between institutional enrollment categories does not reach statistically significant levels,  $F(4, 309) = .273$ ,  $p > .10$ . In other words, these data suggest that institutions from all size categories were equally likely to develop and deliver sophomore-year success initiatives.

Table 2  
*Characteristics of Responding Institutions That Have Sophomore Initiatives*

	Percent of responding institutions that have sophomore initiatives
<i>Institutional type</i> ( $n = 115$ )	
Two-year	7.8
Four-year	92.2
<i>Institutional affiliation</i> ( $n = 114$ )	
Private	59.6
Public	40.4
<i>Institutional enrollment</i> ( $n = 115$ )	
5,000 or less	64.3
5,001 – 10,000	13.9
10,001 – 15,000	7.8
15,001 – 20,000	3.5
More than 20,000	10.4
<i>Institutional selectivity</i> ( $n = 109$ )	
Two-year college	8.3
Special focus institution	1.8
Inclusive	8.3
Selective	35.8
More selective	45.9

Table 2 also shows that sophomore success initiatives were far more common at the four-year institutions in the sample than at their two-year counterparts. In fact, only nine two-year colleges indicated that they offered some type of program or service for sophomores. Nonetheless, the average number of sophomore-year initiatives offered at the nine two-year schools ( $M = 7.0$ ) was virtually the same as the average offered at the 106 four-year institutions that responded to the survey ( $M = 6.8$ ). Thus, the two-year campuses that offered such initiatives appear to be as committed to their sophomore-year programs as the four-year campuses in the sample.

### Types of Sophomore Success Initiatives

In addition to inquiring whether an institution offered sophomore success initiatives, the 2008 National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives asked each campus to report the types of services, programs, and resources found on respondents' campuses. More specifically, the survey included a list of 20 success initiatives as well as an other category, and each institution reported which of these programs they sponsored for sophomores on their campus. Table 3 provides a snapshot of the types of sophomore initiatives most frequently found on the respondents' campuses.

Table 3  
*Types of Sophomore Success Initiatives Offered ( $n = 115$ )*

	Percent that have the sophomore initiative	Percent that do not know if they have the sophomore initiative
Career planning	76.7	5.2
Leadership development	58.8	2.6
Academic advising	57.4	7.8
Class events	50.9	5.4
Online resources	43.2	6.3
Peer mentoring by sophomores	38.6	3.5
Residence life	38.2	0.9
Study abroad	35.7	8.0
Community service/service-learning	32.5	8.8
Faculty/staff mentors	32.1	2.7
Student government	31.8	5.5
Print publications	31.0	5.3
Undergraduate research	27.0	12.6
Cultural enrichment activities	25.0	4.5
Retreats	20.4	2.7
Opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class	17.1	9.0
Financial aid	17.0	17.0
Peer mentoring for sophomores	16.7	7.9
Curricular learning communities	16.1	3.6
Credit-bearing course	14.7	4.6
Other	18.1	N/A

As Tobolowsky and Cox (2007a) note in reporting the findings of the 2005 administration of this same survey,

considering that the sophomore year is the time during which many schools require students to select a major (Packard, 2004-05) and that choice of a major has significant implications for the students' career choices, it seems appropriate that institutions have created mechanisms to assist sophomore students with these issues. (p. 13)

Thus, it is not surprising that by far the most common category of sophomore initiatives focused on career planning. In addition to career planning, over half of the respondents indicated that their campus also offered sophomore programs focused on leadership development, academic advising, and class events for second-year students. Online and print resources, residence life initiatives, mentoring (both for and by sophomores), and student government were other cocurricular initiatives used by between 30 and 50% of the respondent pool.

A few curricular sophomore initiatives were offered with some regularity among institutions in the sample. Most notably, study abroad programs, community service and service-learning initiatives, and undergraduate research programs were reported. However, several academic interventions were comparatively underused (i.e., less than 20%), including sophomore opportunities to co-teach a class, curricular learning communities, and credit-bearing courses for second-year students. Given that the classroom is often the only guaranteed common experience among college students—especially for commuters, nontraditional students, and working undergraduates—it appears that there is important potential for growth and impact for sophomore students within these academic initiatives.

The 18.1% of respondent institutions that indicated other types of sophomore initiatives were invited to provide additional detail about these programs, services, and resources for sophomores in an open-ended survey item. A total of 23 institutions provided additional information about sophomore success initiatives that fell outside the scope of the options identified in Table 3. The most common other activities to support second-year students were *career exploration* ( $n = 7$ , as opposed to *career planning*) and social activities specific to the sophomore year ( $n = 6$ ). More specifically, institutions reported sponsoring major and information fairs, workshops related to the career search, and internship programming to assist second-year students in their career exploration. With respect to social activities, institutional representatives cited welcome-back parties/luau's, a dinner series, and online social networking tools as ways they attempted to engage sophomores. Other types of sophomore success initiatives offered included more general student support events not targeted specifically to sophomores ( $n = 5$ ); mandatory meetings with an appointed faculty member, staff member, or peer on campus ( $n = 2$ ); and ceremonies focused on the notion of sophomore rites of passage ( $n = 2$ ).

The response options for the item about specific types of sophomore success initiatives were worded such that respondents could indicate *yes*, *no*, or *don't know* for each one. Although the emphasis of the analyses was on the proportion reporting *yes* to these items, the percent of institutional representatives responding that they did not know if their campus offered these initiatives is also interesting. As shown in Table 3, the range in this response to these survey items was less than 1% up to 17%. There were a few categories that yielded a higher proportion of don't-know responses, such as study abroad, peer mentoring for sophomores, academic advising, opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class, and community service/service-learning opportunities for second-year students (approximately 8-9% for each). However, respondents were especially unsure about their institution's offering of two specific types of sophomore success initiatives: undergraduate research (12.6%) and financial aid (17.0%). While it is certainly understandable that one institutional representative may not be aware of all of the success initiatives on campus, these rates of don't-know responses are an important reminder for faculty, staff, and administrators to investigate the

opportunities for sophomores on their own campuses. While students are their own best advocates, it is important that we, as educators, also are equipped to provide them accurate and informed counsel on the full range of resources available to them. Further, these responses may be a reflection of the relative youth of the sophomore-year experience as an institutional phenomenon in the national students-in-transition movement. As greater attention is paid to this important transition point in the educational career of undergraduates, it is likely that sophomore support initiatives will gain wider institutional support and become more integrated in development and delivery.

Given the potential for variance by institutional characteristics, types of sophomore success initiatives were analyzed by institutional affiliation, selectivity, and size.<sup>2</sup> As shown in Table 4, there were statistically significant differences for 5 of the 20 sophomore success initiatives when analyzed by institutional affiliation. More specifically, public institutions in the sample offered financial aid programs and curricular learning communities more frequently for sophomores than private institutions. Conversely, private colleges and universities that responded to the survey provided their sophomores opportunities to co-teach a class, roles in student government, and class events at a significantly higher rate than public institutions.

Initial analyses of this dataset yielded statistically significant differences between more selective institutions and less selective campuses in the likelihood of offering sophomore initiatives. To examine the relationship between selectivity and kinds of initiatives offered, the sample of institutions that reported having such programs and services was divided into two groups using the Carnegie Classification categories identified for selectivity. Specifically, the first group included the 50 institutions in the sample that had sophomore success initiatives and were classified as more selective. The second category included the remaining 57 institutions that the Carnegie system categorized as two-year, inclusive, or selective. Researchers conducted a comparative analysis for all types of sophomore success programs across these two categories (Table 5). Similar to the exploration of differences by institutions' public or private status, more selective and less selective institutions were more alike than different in the type of sophomore student success initiatives offered. However, statistically significant differences did emerge for a handful of initiatives. For example, more selective institutions provided print publications, class events, online resources, undergraduate research opportunities, and retreats for second-year students more often than their less selective peers. Less selective institutions hosted cultural enrichment activities and provided financial aid more frequently for their sophomore students than did more selective institutions.

Finally, the relationship between institutional size and offering specific types of sophomore-year initiatives was analyzed through a series of correlations between having the specific type of initiative and a continuous measure of institutional enrollment (Table 6).<sup>3</sup> In most instances, there was not a significant correlation between the service or program and institutional size. However, there was a small but statistically significant correlation between faculty/staff mentors for sophomores and larger institutions, which may be a way for these institutions to help students feel connected to the campus and find resources amidst such a large student body. Conversely, there was a statistically significant relationship between community service/service-learning opportunities and smaller institutions as well as similar relationships for career planning and academic advising and institutional size. The strongest and most significant correlation emerged with respect to the use of peer mentoring for sophomores at smaller institutions. It is possible that the smaller enrollment at these institutions allows for better tracking of upper-division students to recruit them for this purpose as well as better pathways to engage them to mentor their second-year peers.

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<sup>2</sup>The representation of two-year institutions in the sample was too small to conduct meaningful comparisons by institutional type.

<sup>3</sup>With a continuous measure of institutional size, statistically significant positive correlations indicate a meaningful association of the variable with larger institutions while a statistically significant negative correlation shows a meaningful relationship between the variable and smaller institutions.

Table 4  
*Types of Sophomore Success Initiatives Offered by Institutional Affiliation (n = 115)*

	Percentage at public institutions (n = 68)	Percentage at private institutions (n = 47)	Difference
<i>Percentages larger for public institutions</i>			
Financial aid	28.9	7.6	21.3*
Curricular learning communities	26.7	9.1	17.6*
<i>Percentages not statistically different</i>			
Faculty/staff mentors	40.0	27.3	12.7
Credit-bearing course	18.6	12.3	6.3
Peer mentoring for sophomores	19.6	14.9	4.7
Online resources	45.5	40.9	4.6
Cultural enrichment activities	26.7	22.7	4.0
Peer mentoring by sophomores	40.4	37.9	2.5
Academic advising	57.4	56.7	0.7
Leadership development	58.7	58.2	0.5
Print publications	27.3	33.8	-6.5
Undergraduate research	22.7	30.3	-7.6
Retreats	15.6	23.9	-8.3
Residence life	32.6	42.4	-9.8
Career planning	70.2	80.9	-10.7
Study abroad	28.9	40.9	-12.0
Community service/service-learning	23.9	37.3	-13.4
<i>Percentages larger for private institutions</i>			
Opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class	9.1	22.7	-13.6*
Student government	20.9	39.4	-18.5*
Class events	33.3	62.1	-28.8*

\* $p < .05$ .

Table 5  
*Types of Sophomore Success Initiatives Offered by Institutional Selectivity (n = 109)*

	Percentage at more selective institutions	Percentage at less selective institutions <sup>a</sup>	Difference
<i>Percentages larger for more selective institutions</i>			
Print publications	44.0	20.0	24.0*
Class events	64.0	42.6	21.4*
Online resources	55.1	34.5	20.6*
Undergraduate research	36.9	16.4	20.5*
Retreats	30.0	12.7	17.3*
<i>Percentages not statistically different</i>			
Study abroad	43.8	28.6	15.2
Residence life	46.9	32.1	14.8
Career planning	82.0	70.7	11.3
Opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class	22.4	13.0	9.4
Student government	36.0	26.9	9.1
Faculty/staff mentors	30.6	30.9	-0.3
Academic advising	54.0	57.9	-3.9
Community service/service-learning	30.6	35.1	-4.5
Leadership development	55.1	63.2	-8.1
Credit-bearing course	10.2	19.2	-9.0
Peer mentoring for sophomores	10.0	19.6	-9.6
Curricular learning communities	10.2	21.8	-11.6
Peer mentoring by sophomores	30.6	43.9	-13.3
<i>Percentages larger for less selective institutions</i>			
Cultural enrichment activities	16.3	32.7	-16.4*
Financial aid	6.3	26.8	-20.5*

<sup>a</sup>Includes "two-year," "inclusive," and "selective" categories as identified by the Carnegie Classification system.

\* $p < .05$ .



Table 6  
*Types of Sophomore Success Initiatives Offered by Institutional Size (n = 115)*

	Correlation with institutional size <sup>a</sup>
<i>Correlations significant for larger institutions (positive relationship)</i>	
Faculty/staff mentors	.19*
<i>Correlations not statistically significant</i>	
Curricular learning communities	.13
Online resources	.07
Financial aid	.05
Residence life	.02
Print publications	.00
Credit-bearing course	-.01
Leadership development	-.02
Cultural enrichment activities	-.03
Undergraduate research	-.06
Retreats	-.06
Class events	-.10
Opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class	-.12
Student government	-.13
Study abroad	-.13
Peer mentoring by sophomores	-.18
<i>Correlations significant for smaller institutions (negative relationship)</i>	
Community service/service-learning	-.19*
Career planning	-.19*
Academic advising	-.23*
Peer mentoring for sophomores	-.30**

<sup>a</sup> Size is a continuous variable.

\*  $p \leq .05$ . \*\*  $p \leq .01$ .

## Innovative Sophomore Success Initiatives

The 2008 National Survey on Sophomore-Year Initiatives also asked respondent institutions to identify which one of their second-year student success initiatives they considered to be their most innovative program. Table 7 summarizes the feedback from 106 institutional representatives who responded to this survey item. In several instances, there was overlap between the most commonly offered programs (Table 3) and the most innovative sophomore success initiatives. For example, more than 10% of institutions in the sample with sophomore success initiatives identified academic advising, career planning, and residence life as their most innovative initiatives. This similarity suggests that these initiatives may have been innovative for that institution but not for the field at large or that the institution was engaging in an innovative method of program or service delivery within these areas. Interestingly, 7.5% of respondents in the sample named credit-bearing courses as their most innovative initiative for sophomores. Given that this sophomore success initiative was one of the least commonly reported, these data suggest a potential new direction for sophomore programs. As such, we may see a greater representation of these courses in the mix of student success initiatives reported in future administrations of this survey. However, if these innovations and potential gains are to be actualized and sustained among innovative initiatives, a greater proportion of institutions would need to commit to assessment of their new programs. Survey responses show that only 31.9% of the institutions in the sample that have sophomore initiatives actually assess their innovative programs.

Table 7  
*Most Innovative Sophomore Success Initiatives (n = 106)*

	Percent that report sophomore initiative as most innovative
Academic advising	14.2
Career planning	13.2
Residence life	13.2
Class events	8.5
Credit-bearing course	7.5
Leadership development	7.5
Community service/service-learning	3.8
Faculty/staff mentors	3.8
Retreats	3.8
Peer mentoring by sophomores	2.8
Financial aid	1.9
Online resources	1.9
Study abroad	1.9
Curricular learning communities	0.9
Peer mentoring for sophomores	0.9
Cultural enrichment activities	0.0
Opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class	0.0
Print publications	0.0
Student government	0.0
Undergraduate research	0.0
Other	14.2

## Longstanding Sophomore Success Initiatives

Given that sophomore success initiatives have gained greater attention in American higher education in the past few years (Hunter et al., 2010; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007b), the 2008 administration of this instrument also inquired about the longest-standing initiatives for second-year students. Each responding institution was able to identify their two longest-standing initiatives from a list of 20 programs, services, and curricular interventions as well as indicate how long that initiative had been in existence on their campus. Because institutions were not asked to list the programs in a hierarchical fashion, each of the two responses was coded as a separate record in the dataset, thereby creating the possibility for 230 cases for the 115 responding campuses. These data showed that longstanding was a rather relative term, with program longevity ranging from less than one year to more than 15 years. The average history of a longstanding sophomore success initiative in the data set was just over six years ( $M = 6.37$ ).

The survey also inquired about the administrative unit that oversees the most longstanding sophomore success initiatives. In over half of the cases (56.6%), student affairs was the campus unit that housed the sophomore success initiative with the longest institutional history. Academic affairs oversaw some of these initiatives, but to a much lesser degree (21.7%). At 39 institutions, oversight of longstanding sophomore success initiatives represented a collaboration between academic and student affairs (17.6%), and nine institutions (4.1%) indicated that another unit oversaw longstanding sophomore resources and programs. Write-in entries showed that in four of these cases, admissions/enrollment management housed these second-year programs, housing and residential life provided oversight for three others, and the career center was the home for the last two cases in the other category.

Table 8 summarizes the results of the 211 responses to this survey question. Given the prominence of career planning and academic advising in both analyses of frequency and innovation, it is perhaps not surprising that these initiatives were also the ones reported as having the longest history with the colleges and universities in this sample. Although nowhere near the rate of these top two initiatives, other second-year services and programs that colleges and universities identified as longstanding included class events, leadership development, and residence life initiatives. Credit-bearing courses represented just over 5% of the cases in the analysis of longstanding sophomore success initiatives. Coupled with previous analyses of frequency and innovation, these data suggest that institutions with credit-bearing courses for sophomores either have these curricular interventions deeply entrenched in their programmatic history or that they are among the newest areas of development. All other sophomore success initiatives represented fewer than 5% of the cases, and five sophomore success programs and initiatives represented less than 1% of the cases in the analysis of longstanding success initiatives. In particular, responses to this survey indicate that curricular learning communities, opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class, undergraduate research, peer mentoring for sophomores, and print publications are newer initiatives among the campuses in our sample.

Table 8  
*Longstanding Sophomore Success Initiatives (n = 211)*

	Percent
Career planning	19.9
Academic advising	17.5
Class events	8.1
Leadership development	8.1
Residence life	7.6
Credit-bearing course	5.2
Faculty/staff mentors	4.3
Peer mentoring by sophomores	4.3
Student government	3.3
Cultural enrichment activities	3.0
Community service/service-learning	2.8
Online resources	2.8
Retreats	2.4
Financial aid	1.9
Study abroad	1.9
Curricular learning communities	0.9
Opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class	0.9
Undergraduate research	0.9
Peer mentoring for sophomores	0.5
Print publications	0.5
Other	6.2

According to 205 survey responses, colleges and universities embarked on the creation of these longstanding sophomore student success initiatives for a host of reasons (Table 9). The largest proportion of cases indicated that institutions wanted to improve retention and the two most significant correlates of persistence: student satisfaction and student engagement (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; 2005). (For a more detailed discussion of survey findings related to persistence, please see “Sophomore Success Initiatives and Retention” on pp. 26-27). Interestingly, these outcomes are similar to those of first-year seminars and other first-year initiatives at institutions across the country (Tobolowsky & Associates, 2008; Upcraft, Gardner, Barefoot, & Associates, 2005), suggesting that institutional personnel may be taking their most significant successes and investments from the first college year and mapping them onto the sophomore year.

Table 9  
*Reason for Establishing Longstanding Sophomore Success Initiative (n = 205)*

	Percent
Improve retention	65.7
Improve student satisfaction	64.9
Improve student engagement	62.9
Career preparation (e.g., internships)	49.8
Assist in selection of a major	49.3
Provide opportunities for career exploration	49.0
Develop student-institutional connection	46.8
Develop connection to faculty/staff	44.9
Promote self-awareness	40.0
Provide leadership opportunities	38.0
Develop class cohort/peer relationships	35.6
Provide institutional resources and information	33.2
Provide academic assistance	31.2
Promote critical thinking	29.6
Develop civic responsibility	22.9
Increase exposure to diversity	19.7
Improve oral communication skills	18.5
Response to student interest/request	18.0
Improve written communication skills	17.1
Ease financial burden on students	6.8
Encourage alumni giving	2.9
Other	4.9

One of the most common student issues of the second year includes identifying a major and a career path (Hunter et al., 2009; Packard, 2004-2005; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007a). Thus, it is not surprising that approximately half of the cases regarding the rationale for initiating longstanding sophomore success initiatives are intended to support students through this challenge—that is, career preparation, selection of a major, and opportunities for career exploration.

Other reasons for creating these longstanding sophomore success programs included the enhancement of institutional integration as evidenced by the proportion of cases in support of developing student/institutional connection, developing connection to faculty/staff, and providing institutional resources and information. Finally, responses to this survey indicated that another purpose behind many sophomore success programs is the development of specific cognitive and affective skills. Most notable in these data were a promotion of self-awareness, leadership opportunities, development of peer interpersonal relationships, academic assistance, and critical thinking.

## Sophomore Success Initiatives and Retention

The primary purpose of the 2008 administration of the National Survey on Sophomore-Year Initiatives was to capture national data on the characteristics of sophomore success initiatives. However, two questions on the instrument asked institutions to report institutional statistics regarding student persistence in an effort to investigate relationships between offering programming for second-year students and persistence in college.

First, the research staff of the National Resource Center asked institutions to report their second-to-third-year retention rate in order to analyze the relationship between having a sophomore success initiative and persistence to the third year of college. Given that many sophomore success programs and services are initiated for the purpose of enhancing retention rates, it is important to determine if efforts to support second-year students are, in fact, meeting this goal. Unfortunately, only 131 institutions (41.6%) were able to provide a second-to-third-year retention rate. While other retention statistics (e.g., first-to-second year, four-year graduation rates, six-year graduation rates) are common assessment data points, it appears that the persistence of students to their third year is calculated and reported less frequently. As such, many of the institutional representatives completing the survey did not appear to have such a statistic readily available to include on the survey. Despite these missing data, it is important to explore the potential relationship between having a sophomore success initiative and retention.

Among the 131 institutions that provided this statistic, the correlation between second-to-third-year retention rates and having a sophomore initiative is  $r = .339$ ,  $p < .001$ . This positive, statistically significant association indicates that there is a weak-to-moderate association between persistence to the third year of college and having a second-year success initiative. The comparison of institutions offering a sophomore-year initiative versus those that do not across retention categories provides additional evidence for a positive relationship between having a sophomore student success initiative and sophomore retention rates (Table A.1). More specifically, approximately two thirds of institutions with sophomore success initiatives indicate second-to-third year retention rates in the highest category, while only one third of institutions without such initiatives for second-year students reported similarly high persistence rates to the junior year. Follow-up  $t$ -tests also support these relationships: The second-to-third-year retention rates of responding institutions differed by their participation in sophomore success initiatives,  $t(128.612, N = 131) = -4.314$ ,  $p > .001$ . Although these descriptive and inferential statistics cannot determine causality, it is important to note the consistent patterns in these findings. Overall, institutions that develop and deliver sophomore-year success initiatives generally yield higher third-year return rates from their students, suggesting that such second-year programming is a worthy investment for institutions that are concerned with the second year as a leakage point in the educational pipeline.

Table A.1  
*Second-to-Third-Year Retention and Sophomore Success Initiatives ( $n = 131$ )*

<b>Second-to-third-year retention</b>	<b>Percent without sophomore initiatives (<math>n = 77</math>)</b>	<b>Percent with sophomore initiatives (<math>n = 54</math>)</b>
Less than 50%	14.3	3.7
51-75%	51.9	29.6
75-100%	33.8	66.7

*Note.* The correlation between second-to-third-year retention rates and having a sophomore initiative is  $r = .339$ ,  $p < .001$ . The second-to-third-year retention rates of responding institutions differed by their participation in sophomore success initiatives,  $t(128.612, N = 131) = -4.314$ ,  $p > .001$ .

The 2008 survey also asked institutions to report their first-to-second-year retention rate to explore the relationship between first-year student success and second-year support. While it may seem strange to explore the impact of sophomore-year initiatives retroactive to the first year, it is important to look at second-year support programs as a meaningful complement to first-year programs. It is possible that low retention rates across both years of students' lower-division undergraduate experience would motivate sophomore-year initiatives or that positive momentum from first-year experience programs and success with retention would generate institutional interest in supporting students through their second year as well. Either way, an analysis of the connection between first-year retention rates and second-year support can help educators better understand sophomore success initiatives as connected to other student success programming. Of the 315 institutions in the sample, three quarters ( $n = 241$ ) provided the first-to-second year retention statistic necessary to conduct these analyses.

For these 241 institutions, the correlation between first-to-second year retention rates and having a sophomore initiative was slightly higher than for second-to-third year retention and highly statistically significant ( $r = .374, p < .001$ ). Table A.2 shows the distribution of responses across three first-to-second year retention categories for institutions without sophomore success initiatives and those that reported having such initiatives. The differences in these distributions (e.g., 75.9% of institutions with sophomore success initiatives report a first-to-second year retention rate greater than 75%, while only 38.3% of institutions without sophomore initiatives report a similarly high first-to-second-year retention rate) provide further support for the moderate, positive relationship between these first-year retention rates and having sophomore student success initiatives. Further, results of  $t$ -tests show that the first-to-second-year retention rates of responding institutions differed by their participation in sophomore success initiatives,  $t(206.244, N = 241) = -6.166, p > .001$ . These findings provide evidence that institutions may be taking their most significant successes and investments from the first college year and mapping them onto the sophomore year.

Table A.2

*First-to-Second-Year Retention and Sophomore Success Initiatives ( $n = 241$ )*

<b>First-to-second-year retention</b>	<b>Percent without sophomore initiatives (<math>n = 154</math>)</b>	<b>Percent with sophomore initiatives (<math>n = 87</math>)</b>
Less than 50%	13.6	4.6
51-75%	48.1	19.5
75-100%	38.3	75.9

*Note.* The correlation between first-to-second-year retention rates and having a sophomore initiative is  $r = .374, p < .001$ . The first-to-second-year retention rates of responding institutions differed by their participation in sophomore success initiatives,  $t(206.244, N = 241) = -6.166, p > .001$ .

These analyses suggest that there is a practically and statistically significant relationship between having sophomore success initiatives and persistence during the first two years of college.



## Assessment of Sophomore Student Success Initiatives

The 2008 Survey of Sophomore Initiatives also asked if and how longstanding sophomore success initiatives were assessed. While the survey yielded 211 cases of longstanding initiatives, institutional representatives provided responses to these questions about assessment in only 154 cases. This sample was further winnowed down to just over 80 cases by follow-up questions about the methods used for these assessment efforts and their general outcomes. Our best guess as to the substantial degree of missing cases is that assessment information on these longstanding initiatives was nonexistent (i.e., assessment is not conducted), generally unavailable, or in progress. While far from a complete picture, we offer the data that we were able to collect for institutions to consider in the development of their own assessment and evaluation plans for sophomore success initiatives.

Of the 154 cases that did respond to the question about assessment of longstanding sophomore success initiatives, 89 (57.8%) reported that they, in fact, did assess these programs, resources, and curricular interventions for second-year students. Conversely, one third of this sample ( $n = 52$ ; 33.8%) indicated that they did not assess their longstanding sophomore success initiatives, and in 13 cases (8.4%), institutional representatives were unsure of the assessment activities surrounding these initiatives. In 83 of the 89 cases in which assessment was reported, institutions also responded to a question about the general success of these assessment efforts. Over half ( $n = 45$ ; 54.2%) reported that assessment data showed evidence that the longstanding sophomore success initiative had met its objectives; in 43.4% ( $n = 36$ ) cases it had met some of its objectives; and only two cases reported that the longstanding sophomore initiative had not met any of its objectives.

Table 10 summarizes the information about assessment methods that were reported for 82 cases of longstanding sophomore success initiatives. Overwhelmingly, the most common assessment method was the collection of survey data followed by focus groups with students and analyses of institutional data. Individual interviews with students were used far less frequently, most likely because of the time and resource investment of such one-on-one data collection methods. Five cases indicated other methods of assessment, which included course evaluations, informal discussion, and one instance of the initiative being the focus of a doctoral dissertation.

Focus groups and individual interviews with instructors/staff were among the least-used assessment method for the 82 institutional respondents to this survey item. These responses suggest that the faculty and administrative viewpoint may not be included in the assessment profile for sophomore success initiatives as frequently as students' input. Given the incredible investment that these faculty, staff, and administrators have likely put into sophomore success initiatives and the fact that their buy-in is necessary for continued success, their comparative under-representation is an unfortunate oversight in these assessment models.

Table 10

*Method of Assessment for Longstanding Sophomore Success Initiative ( $n = 82$ )*

	Percent
Survey instrument (e.g., national, local, or course-based)	80.5
Focus groups with students	50.0
Analysis of institutional data (e.g., GPA)	36.6
Individual interviews with students	19.5
Focus groups with instructors/staff	18.3
Individual interviews with instructors/staff	17.1
Other	6.1

## Future Sophomore Initiatives

Although the primary focus of the 2008 National Survey on Sophomore-Year Initiatives was to collect information on sophomore programs and services that currently exist, it was also our hope to collect data on future plans for developing sophomore success initiatives. Obviously, the greatest opportunity for such development is among the 201 colleges and universities that responded that they did not currently offer initiatives specifically or intentionally geared toward sophomore students. A follow-up survey item asked institutional representatives to identify the reasons why there was not a current sophomore initiative at their college or university. The most commonly cited reasons (Table 11) were a lack of resources—most notably, limited funding and time. However, knowledge does not appear to be viewed as a similarly limited resource; only 18.8% indicated lack of expertise as a reason why there is no current sophomore success initiative on their campus. Unfortunately, other responses seem to suggest that institutional conditions may not be conducive to optimizing this expertise. For example, slightly more than one third of respondents stated that sophomore initiatives were not an institutional priority and more than one quarter cited lack of staff and/or faculty buy-in as a limitation to instituting sophomore success initiatives on their college or university. Twenty percent of respondents reported other reasons, most of which can be coded into four themes. These include

1. The institution is in the process of creating a sophomore initiative (17 respondents).
2. The institution is a community college (12 respondents).
3. An institutional focus on the first-year experience exists (9 respondents).
4. The size/culture of the institution does not necessitate a program (7 respondents).

Despite these limitations, 28.8% of responding institutions with no current sophomore initiatives were considering or currently developing future sophomore success initiatives.

Table 11  
*Reason for No Sophomore Initiative (n = 191)*

	Percent
Lack of funding	53.9
Limited time	38.2
Sophomore issues are not an institutional priority	34.6
Lack of staff/faculty buy-in	27.7
Lack of expertise	18.8
Other	19.9

Survey responses indicate that a much greater proportion (72.6%) of colleges and universities in the sample with current sophomore initiatives were also considering or developing future sophomore initiatives. All respondents were asked to specify the types of programs, resources, and services being considered for sophomores on their respective campuses. The four most frequently cited initiatives were leadership development (50.7%), academic advising (46.7%), career planning (46.7%), and class events (44.0%). These data indicate that the national movement to support the success of sophomores is likely to at least maintain, if not gain, momentum.



## Implications for Practice

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The findings from the 2008 National Survey of Sophomore Initiatives provide insight into the types of initiatives most commonly offered for second-year students at institutions across the United States. However, these findings are only as valuable as their ability to inform practice and decisions on the institutional level for programming to serve second-year students. Although many of these initiatives are still fairly new, data from this study can provide an important starting place for readers to explore the sophomore-year experience on their own campuses and to consider possible directions for future programs for second-year students.

### Common Approaches

One of the great axioms of higher education is that we are much more alike than we are different and that we have much to learn from one another. As such, those sophomore-year success and support initiatives identified as most common among institutions responding to the National Survey of Sophomore Initiatives are worthy of greater discussion. In particular, four initiatives repeatedly arose in the analyses of the national survey data with respect to frequency and history and even tend to be the focus of innovative efforts for second-year programming: (a) career planning, (b) academic advising, (c) class events, and (d) leadership development. Such commonality suggests that these particular programs may be in high demand, easier to start and sustain, or widely perceived as effective. Thus, they represent important potential pathways toward launching, refining, or revamping second-year success programming.

#### *Career Planning in the Sophomore Year*

Career planning and preparation have become increasingly important as more students enter college to gain the skills needed for careers in the new knowledge economy. Similarly, employers are looking for students who have problem-solving skills and the ability to integrate ideas and concepts in order to meet the demands of the global workplace (Hart Research Associates, 2010). Thus, it was not surprising that career planning programs were the most frequently offered initiatives designed to support sophomore student success in both the 2005 (74.2%) and 2008 (76.7%) administration of the National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives. Further, they had the longest institutional history (20% of 2008 respondents identified them as their most longstanding sophomore success initiative) and were the second most common innovative initiative among institutions participating in the 2008 survey administration. Further, about half of the 2008 survey sample indicated that career preparation, assisting in the selection of a major, and providing opportunities for career exploration were each reasons for establishing longstanding sophomore success initiatives.

The impact of career development initiatives has been noted by Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) who found evidence that certain interventions can enhance students' career development

during college. Specifically, they suggest that the use of career development courses and workshops can enhance students' "ability to make a realistic career decision" and their "certainty of career choice" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 499). Research has illustrated that the sophomore year is a particularly critical time for students to explore majors, potential career paths, and issues of professional identity (Gore & Hunter, 2010; Schaller, 2010). Therefore, career planning, specifically in the sophomore year, can provide an important opportunity to help students move from an awareness of career center resources (often emphasized in first-year experience initiatives) to use of those services to facilitate their search for a discipline, selection of major, and career direction.

In order to facilitate this process of exploration and discovery, specific career planning initiatives in the sophomore year should give attention to helping students clarify their own strengths and abilities. Schaller (2005) indicated in her qualitative examination of sophomore student experiences and development that reflection is an important aspect of learning in the second year, including consideration of major and career path. Most students engage in this process through specific self-reflection about their interests and work values. Some use formal career-related assessments and inventories such as the Strong Interest Inventory (Prince, 1994), or the Clifton StrengthsFinder (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2007). Still others do so through involvement in experiential learning opportunities, including internships, job shadowing, and co-op opportunities. Since these are often mutually enforcing tactics, institutions may want to explore ways to bring self-reflection, career exploration, and experiential learning together for second-year students. Regardless of the specific program, success initiatives that support second-year students' process of planning and exploring major and career options represent a critical component of second-year programming.

### *Academic Advising*

Light (2001) noted in his book *Making the Most of College*, "good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience" (p. 81). Given the responses to the 2008 survey, this quote could be revised to indicate that good advising may be the most underestimated characteristic of a successful sophomore-year experience. The importance of advising is clearly evident in that 57.4% of institutions responding offered some form of academic advising for second-year students, that it is the most cited innovative sophomore success initiative, and that it is the second longest-running initiative among institutions in this sample. Further, many of the reasons cited for establishing a longstanding sophomore success initiative are intimately connected to academic advising, including assisting in the selection of a major (49.3% of participating institutions), developing connections with faculty and staff (44.9%), providing institutional resources and information (33.2%), and providing academic assistance (31.2%).

There are several reasons for the focus on advising in the sophomore year. For instance, many universities require students to have selected a major by the end of the sophomore year, which will force students to engage in some form of academic planning in order to make a smooth transition into the major. Some students may have already changed majors one or more times in the first year and may need an academic advisor to help them clarify their interests and refine their choice of major. Other students need the encouragement of an advisor to consider specific high-impact activities, such as study abroad, undergraduate research, and service-learning, which may enhance their academic engagement. Further, advising is often the means to promote and encourage students to engage in other common sophomore-year initiatives, including class events, leadership development activities, and especially career planning. Tobolowsky and Cox (2007a) noted that "academic advising is often a vehicle through which an institution can address curricular and career-related decisions with its students" (p. 15). As such, the importance of academic advising in the sophomore year cannot be understated.

Yet, how should advising for second-year students differ from that provided to other students? Gordon (2010) offers specific recommendations for advisors who work with sophomore students, which include:

- ◇ Encouraging advisees to reflect on their previous year's academic experiences at the beginning of the sophomore year and helping them set goals they want to accomplish in the second year
- ◇ Working with sophomore advisees early in the year to examine their past study habits, identify areas for improvement, and refer them to on-campus resources
- ◇ Paying special attention to the reasons sophomores give for changing majors, which are often different from those of first-year major changers
- ◇ Working with students who are still undecided in their sophomore year to explore the students' approaches to decision making and the amount and type of major and career information they have collected

### *Class Events*

Class events offer an important opportunity for second-year students to interact, and they communicate to students that the institution cares about them. However, class events play an even more important role when they include rituals, become identified as traditions, and mature into rights of passage. Magolda (2001) suggests that even seemingly inconsequential events may serve a ritualistic function and “transmit the institution's political, social, environmental, and cultural expectations and norms” (p. 2). Banning and Strange (2001) suggest these events are important because they serve to connect students to the institution, symbolize their participation in a group or subculture, and can link past to present. As such, the power of events and organized activities for second-year students cannot be underestimated.

More than half (50.9%) of respondents from the 2008 survey indicated they had established at least one class event specifically targeted to second-year students, and 20.4% reported that they held retreats for sophomores. Many institutions cite social events such as welcome back activities, dinners, dances, and even online social networking activities. However, class events are not limited solely to the social realm of college. In fact, sophomore class events are often a means to promote academic engagement, including mixers with faculty, activities connected with service-learning opportunities, induction events for specific schools or majors, and lectures or speakers' series (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007a). In yet another example, sophomore-year class events can also offer an opportunity for second-year students to welcome and mentor the newest cohort of first-year students as sophomores play a formal role in new student convocation and orientation or act as peer mentors for incoming students.

Rather than just treating the second year of college as the filler between the first-year experience and graduation, class events have the potential to mark the meaningful steps, transitions, and decisions common to the sophomore year as reasons for celebration and honor. As such, they may offer powerful ways to improve student satisfaction, promote student engagement, and develop class cohort/peer relationships, which were all identified as reasons for establishing longstanding sophomore-year initiatives by sizeable numbers of the 2008 survey sample. Further, class events also hold the potential to introduce students to other meaningful second-year initiatives, such as a career/major fair to assist sophomores with the process of career exploration or a sophomore advising event where students can meet and interact informally with academic advisors from their respective colleges (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007a). However, the key to making these events meaningful is by clearly articulating the purpose of the event to sophomores and by providing opportunities for students to reflect on the learning that occurred during the event or ritual.



### *Leadership Development*

Leadership development has become increasingly important for college students. As a recent study from Hart Research Associates (2010) indicated, employers are looking for universities to emphasize specific learning outcomes often associated with leadership development, such as being able to communicate effectively, solve complex problems, and use teamwork skills in a diverse setting. As the global workforce demands these skills from college graduates, institutions are placing a renewed emphasis on leadership development. Further, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) describes the work of most college and university leadership development programs as “seeking to empower students to enhance their self-efficacy as leaders and understand how they can make a difference, whether as positional leaders or as active participants in a group or community process” (Dean, 2009, p. 367).

Due to this growing interest in leadership and the potential for the second year of college to facilitate this skill, a category for leadership development was added to the list of potential sophomore-year initiatives on the 2008 instrument. This addition proved to be important as 58.8% of institutions responding to the 2008 survey indicated they had created leadership development programs specifically for second-year students, which was the second most common program reported. Further, more than one third (38%) of institutions indicated that providing leadership opportunities was a specific reason for establishing second-year initiatives. In fact, these results on leadership development represent one of the most significant evolutions from the 2005 administration of the survey in our understanding of national trends for second-year programming.

In many ways, the second year provides a prime opportunity to introduce students to leadership opportunities. Sophomores have successfully moved past the initial adjustment demands of the first year and now represent a more knowledgeable and successful student population that is uniquely positioned to provide leadership and mentorship to new first-year students (Evenbeck & Hamilton, 2010). Similarly, while the first year of college is typically focused on engaging students as members of student organizations and community agencies, the second year of college provides an important opportunity for sophomores to step into formal positions of leadership in the groups in which they became involved during their first year. In fact, feedback from students on the 2007 national administration of the Sophomore Experiences Survey indicates that approximately 25% are *involved or very involved* in leadership of student organizations on campus and an additional 26% are *occasionally or somewhat involved* in such leadership activities (Schreiner, 2010).

Sophomore activities that promote leadership development may serve as an important complement to the identity, major, and career exploration that is typical for second-year students and can effectively draw from students’ experiences in active learning environments, internships, and paid positions. Conversely, the experience and skills gained from leadership activities and involvement have the potential to enhance students’ performance in educational and professional settings. Given the promise of leadership development as a developmental tool for second-year students and our more recent understanding of its position as a common sophomore-year initiative, leadership development programs are likely to be a focus of ongoing observation and continued research in the study of second-year student success.

### **Opportunities for Development**

Although it is valuable to draw ideas from those categories that emerge as common to most programs, it is also important to look at programs and initiatives that are less frequently cited among respondents. While there may be good reasons for why some sophomore initiatives or activities are less common (e.g., organizational limitations, resource implications), these underused programs



and approaches may also highlight areas for future development or expansion with respect to support of second-year students. Responses to the 2008 survey indicate significant areas that represent possibilities for improvement and true innovation for the future of second-year programming, including assessment, specific learning outcomes, and curricular approaches.

### *Assessment*

One of the more surprising findings from this study was that of the respondents with longstanding sophomore success initiatives, more than 40% indicated either that the initiatives were not assessed or that they did not know whether the initiatives were assessed. Further, when institutions were asked about assessment techniques and approaches, only about 40% of the sample was able to provide comprehensive information regarding assessment practices. In this era of increased accountability and scrutiny of higher education, initiatives in the sophomore year cannot continue without being assessed. The future of the sophomore-year experience on college campuses will depend on the extent to which assessment results can be used to demonstrate specific contributions to institutional mission and progress toward goal statements (Gardner, Tobolowsky, & Hunter, 2010).

In order to demonstrate the impact that educators hope to encourage through sophomore initiatives and to guide policy and program decisions, institutions should use multiple assessment measures (Shulman, 2007). The combination of institutional data, surveys, focus groups, and interviews, as well as other data points can provide a helpful starting place for policy and programmatic decisions as well as critical information with respect to continuing program relevance and refinement. Yet, despite this good advice, those institutions responding to the assessment section of the 2008 survey reported a heavy reliance upon survey instruments as their primary method of assessment and a comparative underutilization of analyses of institutional data; focus groups and individual interviews with students; and, especially, qualitative assessment methods that draw data from instructors or staff members. As such, even the assessment data that are being collected and analyzed are limited in their ability to draw the most meaningful conclusions.

As institutions grapple with how to assess their sophomore programs, Gansemer-Topf and Pattengale (2010) have outlined a useful assessment cycle that includes (a) documenting what the institution already knows or should know about the student experience, (b) identifying learning outcomes, (c) identifying the methods most appropriate for measuring those learning outcomes, (d) gathering evidence, (e) interpreting evidence, and (f) implementing change. While Gansemer-Topf and Pattengale note that institutions can begin their assessment process at any step in this cycle, they suggest that continued involvement in this ongoing, iterative process is critical to program improvement and progress.

### *Identifying a Wide Range of Learning Outcomes*

Although educators can begin anywhere in the assessment cycle, identifying learning outcomes is often the most useful place to start. “As opposed to broader mission and course description statements, learning outcomes are specific, measurable objectives that describe what an individual will learn and be able to do as a result of a lesson or program” (Gahagan, Dingfelder, & Pei, 2010, p. 11). Identifying learning outcomes allows educators to focus on the question of why the program needs to be established and what issue(s) will be addressed even before developing it. Without measureable learning outcomes, sophomore initiatives can often lose their efficacy over time because they fail to maintain a clear focus or direction.

The 2008 National Survey of Sophomore Initiatives is the first study to explore why sophomore initiatives were created from an institutional perspective and, thus, provide insight into desired learning outcomes of these sophomore success programs. Perhaps not surprisingly, survey data indicated that

the majority of institutions were concerned with improving retention (65.7%), student satisfaction (64.9%), and engagement (62.9%). Although not necessarily unique to sophomores, in an era of increased accountability and financial uncertainty, these measures are commonly perceived as an indication of the success of most programs or services. However, approximately half of the institutions responding also indicated other reasons, such as career preparation (49.8%), assisting in the selection of a major (49.3%), providing opportunities for career exploration (49.0%), developing student/institution connections (48.8%), and developing connections to faculty/staff (46.8%), which are more representative of specific sophomore-year experiences and concerns. Unfortunately, the reasons least cited for establishing longstanding initiatives focused on individual and interpersonal skill development, including critical thinking (29.6%), civic responsibility (22.9%), exposure to diversity (19.7%), and written and oral communication skills (17.1% and 18.5% respectively).

The variety of reasons for developing these programs provides an indication of the general needs of students in transition, the complexity of issues that surround the sophomore year in particular, as well as specific areas of skill development that could be more effectively integrated into second-year support structures. In order to develop, evaluate, and refine outcomes for second-year experience programs, it is important that institutions ask several key questions, including:

- ◇ How does this program or experience connect to the institution's mission and goals?
- ◇ Are there specific general education outcomes or other learning objectives that should guide the development of this second-year program?
- ◇ Based on data collected from sophomore students on our campus, what issues or areas of concern need to be addressed?
- ◇ What knowledge or skills do I want students to obtain through their participation in this program? (adapted from Gahagan et al., 2010, pp. 19-20).

Answers to these questions provide important information to craft and evaluate learning outcomes for sophomore-year initiatives.

### *Curricular Approaches*

George Kuh (2010), in his remarks at the 29th Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience, encouraged educators to make the classroom the primary focus for building community for students. Higher education at large is moving toward a less residential and campus-centric experience as students are commuting to college from home for economic reasons, nontraditional students continue to participate in higher education in increasing numbers, and more students are working in jobs both on and off campus (Crissman-Ishler, 2005; Keup & Kinzie, 2007; Pryor, Hurtado, Saenz, Santos, & Korn, 2007). As a result, the classroom has become the primary common experience among students. The focus on curricular approaches may be especially germane to working with second-year students, as they are often in a position to choose to live off campus.

In addition to the need to capitalize on the classroom as the primary venue to reach all students, second-year students have a particular need for integrated curricular learning experiences (Evenbeck & Hamilton, 2010). These students are managing dual challenges of “continu[ing] in their general education and...making the transition to the major. It is a particularly important year to support their intellectual development and provide cohesion in the classroom” (Evenbeck & Hamilton, pp. 116-117). Additionally, many sophomores may feel a lack of institutional support because they no longer have the integrated learning experiences and intense cocurricular support that they had during the first college year. Engaging pedagogical approaches, curricula that develop sophomores' academic and cognitive skills, interaction with faculty, and classroom experiences

that are relevant and integrated with their out-of-class lives are critical tools in the intellectual development of second-year students (Evenbeck & Hamilton).

As such, curricular approaches should encourage second-year students to participate in specific high-impact practices, such as service-learning, study abroad, undergraduate research, and various curricular peer leadership opportunities (e.g., co-teaching a class). These practices are valuable because they provide an active learning environment to help students apply the principles they are learning and connect the curriculum and cocurriculum. For sophomores specifically, interaction with faculty through curricular initiatives helps them feel their tuition was a worthwhile investment and can be a strong predictor of their intent to re-enroll and graduate (Schreiner, 2010). Yet, several curricular-based academic initiatives on the 2008 survey seemed to be comparatively underused in promoting sophomore student success, including undergraduate research (27.0%); opportunities to co-teach a class (17.1%); curricular learning communities (16.1%); and, especially, credit-bearing courses (14.7%). Given the potential benefits of these tools in the classroom, it is critical for the second year to feature high-quality experiences in the classroom and be intentional in the use of curricular approaches that best support sophomore development and success.

### **Implications for Research**

The focus of this chapter is on how the 2008 survey findings can inform and impact practice. However, good research usually generates as many questions as it answers. As such, we would be remiss if we did not also address the implications of the results from the 2008 National Survey of Sophomore Year Initiatives for future research.

First and foremost, these data provide support for the sophomore year as a unit of observation in and of itself and an important focus for ongoing research in higher education. Too often research on student transitions focuses on the bookend experiences: transition into the university (i.e., the first-year experience or the experiences of new transfer students) and the transition out of the university (i.e., the senior year experience). Responses to the 2008 National Survey on Sophomore-Year Initiatives indicate that there are significant transitions going on in between these beginning and end points. Further, these data show that a significant proportion of institutions—approximately one third of the survey sample—are dedicating human and fiscal resources in curricular and cocurricular initiatives to support the success of second-year students in particular. However, there is relatively little research on these programs and the experiences of second-year students. This survey by the National Resource Center represents the only one of its kind to capture national information about these programs, while the Sophomore Experiences Survey (developed and administered by Laurie Schreiner, professor of higher education at Azusa Pacific University) is the only national instrument administered solely to second-year students to collect data on their sophomore-year experiences. Given the developmental, personal, intellectual, and professional significance of this second year of college as well as the institutional investment in program and services for sophomores, there is a need for additional research to focus on this important transition point.

While this survey achieved its goal to provide descriptive information about the types, nature, administration, and assessment of sophomore-year initiatives, its exploratory analyses with retention and first-year programming suggest an entirely new vein of research. More specifically, we cannot be content with descriptive information alone and must venture on to conduct research on the outcomes of the sophomore-year experience, particularly with respect to the impact of institutional initiatives specifically or intentionally geared toward sophomore students. While we can certainly acknowledge the development of these programs as a victory, we cannot wholly celebrate their success until we are able to empirically document their effect on second-year students both on an institutional and national level. Further, as mentioned earlier, it is important to research the impact

of these initiatives on a wide range of student learning outcomes. It may be tempting to merely examine their impact on retention, satisfaction, or engagement. However, this survey identified a host of reasons for establishing such programs (see Table 9), each of which represent potential outcome variables for future research. Similarly, the results of descriptive analyses of sophomore-year initiatives by institutional type, size, and control as well as administrative characteristics and program longevity suggest key independent variables to consider in future research on the impact of sophomore-year initiatives.

The limited data from the few survey respondents at community colleges also indicate another implication for research. As higher education welcomes more and more students who start their educational journey at community colleges, it is important to understand the second-year experience of students in the two-year sector of American higher education. It is certainly possible that second-year students and programs in these institutional settings will mirror their peers at four-year institutions. However, the second year at community colleges represents not only a typical progression through higher education as at other institutions, but it also is the capstone experience at that institution or in higher education for some students. For other students at community colleges, such as part-time or students with a heavy remedial course load, the sophomore year may offer a repeat or extension of first-year experiences and adjustment issues. As such, the sophomore-year experience at community colleges and the patterns of two-year institutions' responsiveness and support of these students is a worthy and important area of future study.

Finally, these survey analyses and findings suggest new directions for the content of the next administration of this national instrument. On the most basic level, responses to the other categories provide ideas for future response options and evolving types of sophomore-year initiatives, including more specific types of academic involvement (e.g., lecture series, common reading initiatives, induction events for majors) as well as new tools such as social networking media. It also provides a chance to ask additional questions about the administration of sophomore programs, such as items about funding sources and staffing structures. We also look to the next administration as an opportunity to collect data about key campus partners and advocates for student success to whom second-year students are introduced through sophomore success initiatives and who remain important support personnel to them. Additionally, we look forward to the prospect of asking institutions for more details about how sophomore-year initiatives are connected to institutional support and programming for other student transition points in order to create a seamless student experience from admission to graduation.

In sum, there is still a great deal to study and much to learn. The findings presented in this brief merely provide a starting point for an ongoing research agenda on the sophomore-year experience and one point in our empirical understanding of institutional responsiveness and support of students in transition.

## Summary

The second year of college is a unique experience for students; therefore, we encourage institutions to be intentional in bringing together the array of programs and services to create structures for sophomore student success on their campuses. The findings from the 2008 National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives provide important insights into practices that are commonly integrated into the second college year and suggest directions for future research on this topic. Survey data on career planning, academic advising, class events, and leadership development can inform the development and delivery of these programs to address the specific needs of sophomores as they engage in identity, major, and career exploration; assume new positions in the campus community;

continue to strengthen their relationships with their institution; and progress in their personal, academic, and interpersonal development.

These data also identify important areas for development for the future of second-year programs. Most notably, institutions need to engage in greater assessment of second-year support initiatives that engage a wider range of constituents (e.g., instructors and administrators as well as students), a variety of methodologies, and a wider range of learning outcomes. Additionally, survey data show that curricular approaches are a vastly underused pathway to sophomore student success that can be leveraged in the future. By incorporating classroom approaches, such as learning communities, student teaching opportunities, service-learning, and undergraduate research, educators have the potential to open new doors for sophomores and help them engage in their educational experience in new ways.

We encourage higher education researchers and practitioners to use these findings as a call to action. It is our hope that they incite institutional discussions, facilitate a national dialogue on the experiences and outcomes of second-year students, and identify pathways and practices to facilitate student success. Whether they provide options to consider in the development of new second-year support programs, present the context to reexamine and refine existing programs, suggest directions for institutional assessment efforts and national research studies, or all of the above, we hope these findings inform the thinking and guide the decisions of researchers and practitioners. Our second-year students both want and deserve such attention paid to their continuing college experience.



## Appendix A: Methodology

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This study is based upon data gathered from the 2008 National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives, which was the second national administration of this instrument sponsored by the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. The survey was originally designed by Barbara F. Tobolowsky and Brad E. Cox and administered in 2005. Much like the previous survey, the 2008 Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives “asked respondents to indicate whether or not their campus offered any initiatives specifically or intentionally geared toward sophomore students [while] subsequent...questions allowed respondents to identify the specific types of initiatives offered [and]...describe the objectives and administration of their initiatives” (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007a, p. 25). Similarly, the 2008 survey used the definition of sophomore designated by Tobolowsky and Cox on the original instrument: “students in their second year of postsecondary education.”

The web-based survey was pilot tested in early October 2008 to ensure that that survey items were clear and that the web-based platform was working properly. After reviewing and incorporating the feedback provided in the pilot, official survey administration began in late October 2008. The National Resource Center used contact information garnered from the *2008 Higher Education Directory* to send a prenotification message about the survey to 2,743 chief student affairs officers. This communication informed campus leaders about the survey, encouraged them to gather certain information in preparation for the survey (e.g., retention rates, program information), and asked them to provide the contact information for another staff member if the chief student affairs officer was not the appropriate person to complete the survey. If a chief student affairs officer was not represented on a specific campus, then the message was sent to the chief academic officer instead.

After faulty e-mail addresses from the prenotification message were removed from the database, invitations to participate in the survey were successfully e-mailed to representatives at 2,641 institutions on November 3, 2008. Several attempts were made to increase the response rate during the survey administration. First, three reminder messages were sent from the National Resource Center to the initial contact on November 11, 17, and December 11, 2008. Direct e-mails were also sent to 864 people who had purchased the 2007 sophomore monograph published by the National Resource Center entitled *Shedding Light on Sophomores: An Exploration of the Second College Year* edited by Barbara F. Tobolowsky and Bradley E. Cox. E-mails were also distributed over the National Resource Center’s sophomore listserv (SOPH-List) to 961 members during the week of December 1, 2008. The survey was initially closed on December 12, 2008 but was reopened the week of January 19, 2009 to allow an additional six institutional representatives to complete the instrument. These administration methods yielded a total of 477 responses to the online survey. This variety of recruitment methods was useful to increase the number of institutions that participated in the 2008 National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives but limited the ability of the National Resource Center to calculate an accurate response rate for the survey.



Once the survey closed, the data were cleaned and coded by the research staff of the National Resource Center. Within the 477 responses to the survey, the researchers found 32 responses from 16 institutions with the same name. In these instances, the record with the most complete information was kept in the database, and the other record was removed. Further, 146 responses did not include any institutional or personal identifiers, thus, making it impossible to determine if they were duplicate records already contained in the data file. In order to ensure the soundness of these data, the researchers used the most stringent data standards and removed these records from the data file. Therefore, the total number of valid responses for this study was 315.

Only one variable was added to the dataset post hoc. Because the survey did not inquire about institutional selectivity, the researchers added this variable in the data cleaning process for these 315 records. The categories and data included in the 2009 classification system maintained by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching were used to enter the values for this variable into the dataset ([http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/lookup\\_listings/institution.php](http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/lookup_listings/institution.php)).

Researchers created frequency distributions to identify the most common types of initiatives in place for second-year students at these institutions. Additional crosstabulations, *t*-tests, chi-square statistics, and ANOVAs were conducted to determine whether survey responses varied across key institutional characteristics as well as specific types of sophomore success initiatives. Further, correlations were calculated to identify relationships among the variables within the study. Open-ended items were analyzed using qualitative techniques to identify, compare, and confirm response patterns within these data.

Although these data represent a comprehensive, national portrait of sophomore success initiatives at institutions across the country, the sample is not representative of all institutional types; thus, findings should be interpreted within the parameters of the study's sample and generalized with caution. Another limitation to this study includes the fact that the list of sophomore success initiative types in the 2008 survey did not include the category of *programs to assist with selection of major* as was listed in the 2005 administration of this instrument. While this category is highly correlated with the category *career planning*, this inadvertent omission in the 2008 instrument limits the comparability of the 2005 and 2008 data, especially for the category related to major selection. Finally, the identification of chief student affairs officers as the initial contact may have also limited to the study. While numerous programs are administered by student affairs staff, there are also many administered jointly by academic affairs and student affairs. Although we hope that communication and collaboration between these divisions would yield accurate survey responses for sophomore success initiatives, this cooperation cannot necessarily be assumed. Thus, distributing the survey through the chief student affairs officer could have affected the response rate and the data generated by the instrument.

## Appendix B: Survey Instrument

### 2008 National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives

Please select your response to each question by clicking in the appropriate space. When finished answering the questions on this page, please click on the continue button at the bottom of the page. The survey should take an average of 20 minutes to complete.

Please complete the entire survey in one sitting, because there is no way to save the survey and return to it later.

Thank you for your participation.

For the purposes of this survey, we are defining sophomores as students in their second year on the same campus.

Does your institution currently offer any initiatives specifically or intentionally geared toward sophomore students?

- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

### Administration

If yes, is there currently an individual in charge of sophomore students' programs or initiatives?

- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

### Position

If yes, what is this person's title (e.g., director, coordinator, dean of sophomore students' programs)?

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Is this position full-time (approximately 40 hours per week)?

- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Does this person have another position on campus? (Mark one.)

- ☐ Yes, academic affairs administrator
- ☐ Yes, faculty member
- ☐ Yes, student affairs administrator
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ No

### **Future Initiatives**

If your institution does not have a sophomore initiative, indicate the reason(s) why there is not a current sophomore initiative at your institution: (Mark all that apply.)

- ☐ Lack of expertise
- ☐ Lack of funding
- ☐ Lack of staff/faculty buy-in
- ☐ Limited time
- ☐ Sophomore issues are not an institutional priority
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Is your institution considering or developing any future initiatives specifically or intentionally geared toward sophomore students?

- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

### **Next Steps**

If yes, please indicate which future sophomore initiative(s) your institution is considering or developing: (Mark all that apply.)

- ☐ Academic advising
- ☐ Career planning
- ☐ Class events (i.e., trips, dinners, dances)
- ☐ Community service/service-learning
- ☐ Credit-bearing course (e.g., sophomore seminar)
- ☐ Cultural enrichment activities (e.g., plays, musical events, multicultural fairs)
- ☐ Curricular learning communities
- ☐ Faculty/staff mentors (i.e., faculty or staff mentoring sophomore students)
- ☐ Financial aid (e.g., sophomore scholarships, loans)
- ☐ Leadership development
- ☐ Online resources
- ☐ Opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class
- ☐ Peer mentoring by sophomores (i.e., sophomore students mentoring other students)
- ☐ Peer mentors for sophomores (i.e., students mentoring sophomores)
- ☐ Print publications (e.g., sophomore newsletters)

- ☐ Residence life (e.g. sophomore-specific living arrangements)
- ☐ Retreats
- ☐ Student government (e.g., sophomore council)
- ☐ Study abroad
- ☐ Undergraduate research
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_.

### Initiatives

In which of the following areas does your institution currently have initiatives specifically or intentionally geared toward sophomore students?

	Don't know	Yes	No
Academic advising			
Career planning			
Class events (e.g., trips, dinners, dances)			
Community service/service-learning			
Credit-bearing course (e.g., Sophomore Seminar)			
Cultural enrichment activities (e.g., plays, musical events, multicultural fairs)			
Curricular learning communities (i.e., linked courses)			
Faculty/staff mentors (i.e., faculty or staff mentoring sophomore students)			
Financial aid (e.g., sophomore scholarships, loans)			
Leadership development			
Opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class			
Online resources			
Peer mentoring by sophomores (i.e., sophomore students mentoring other students)			
Peer mentors for sophomores (i.e., students mentoring sophomores)			
Print publications (e.g., sophomore newsletters)			
Residence life (e.g., sophomore-specific living arrangements)			
Retreats			
Student government (e.g., sophomore council)			
Study abroad			
Undergraduate research			
Others			

**Longstanding Initiatives**

Please select up to two of the most longstanding initiatives specifically geared toward second-year students on your campus.

- ☐ Academic advising
- ☐ Career planning
- ☐ Class events (e.g., trips, dinners, dances)
- ☐ Community service/service-learning
- ☐ Credit-bearing course (e.g., Sophomore Seminar)
- ☐ Cultural enrichment activities (e.g., plays, musical events, multicultural fairs)
- ☐ Curricular learning communities
- ☐ Faculty/staff mentors (i.e., faculty or staff mentoring sophomore students)
- ☐ Financial aid (e.g., sophomore scholarships, loans)
- ☐ Leadership development
- ☐ Online resources
- ☐ Opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class
- ☐ Peer mentoring by sophomores (i.e., sophomore students mentoring other students)
- ☐ Peer mentors for sophomores (i.e., students mentoring sophomores)
- ☐ Print publications (e.g., sophomore newsletters)
- ☐ Residence life (e.g., sophomore-specific living arrangements)
- ☐ Retreats
- ☐ Student government (e.g., sophomore council)
- ☐ Study abroad
- ☐ Undergraduate research
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Information**

Please answer the following questions regarding your sophomore initiative.

How is the initiative primarily funded?

- ☐ Auxiliary funds (non-tuition based fees and services, e.g., housing, bookstore)
- ☐ Foundation or other grant funds
- ☐ Non-recurring or one-time funds
- ☐ Recurring state- or university-appropriated funds
- ☐ Student activity fees
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Why was the initiative established? (Mark all that apply.)

- ☐ Assist in selection of a major
- ☐ Career preparation (e.g., internships)
- ☐ Develop civic responsibility
- ☐ Develop class cohort/peer relationships

- ☐ Develop connection to faculty/staff
- ☐ Develop student-institutional connection
- ☐ Ease financial burden on students
- ☐ Encourage alumni giving
- ☐ Improve retention
- ☐ Improve student engagement
- ☐ Improve student satisfaction
- ☐ Improve oral communication skills
- ☐ Improve written communication skills
- ☐ Increase exposure to diversity
- ☐ Promote critical thinking
- ☐ Promote self-awareness
- ☐ Provide academic assistance
- ☐ Provide leadership opportunities
- ☐ Provide opportunities for career exploration
- ☐ Provide institutional resources and information
- ☐ Response to student interest/request
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

How long has the initiative been in place? (Include the current year.)

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1 year
- ☐ 2 years
- ☐ 3 years
- ☐ 4 years
- ☐ 5 years
- ☐ 6 years
- ☐ 7 years
- ☐ 8 years
- ☐ 9 years
- ☐ 10 years
- ☐ 11 years
- ☐ 12 years
- ☐ 13 years
- ☐ 14 years
- ☐ 15 years
- ☐ 16 years
- ☐ 17 years
- ☐ 18 years
- ☐ 19 years
- ☐ more than 20 years

Please provide a general description of the initiative:

---

What campus unit(s) directly administers the initiative? (Mark all that apply.)

- ☐ Academic affairs
- ☐ Student affairs
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

What are the objectives or learning outcomes of the initiative?

---

Has your campus conducted any assessment or evaluation of the initiative?

- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**Assessment of Longstanding Initiative**

If yes, which of the following methods has your campus used to assess the initiative? (Mark all that apply.)

- ☐ Analysis of institutional data (e.g., GPA)
- ☐ Focus groups with instructors/staff
- ☐ Focus groups with students
- ☐ Individual interviews with instructors/staff
- ☐ Individual interviews with students
- ☐ Survey instrument (e.g., national, local, or course-based)
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

What were the results of your evaluation?

- ☐ The initiative met objectives.
- ☐ The initiative met some objectives.
- ☐ The initiative did not meet objectives.

**Innovative Initiative**

Please select the most innovative or successful initiative specifically geared toward second-year students on your campus.

- ☐ Academic advising
- ☐ Career planning
- ☐ Class events (e.g., trips, dinners, dances)
- ☐ Community service/service-learning
- ☐ Credit-bearing course (e.g., sophomore seminar)
- ☐ Cultural enrichment activities (e.g., plays, musical events, multicultural fairs)
- ☐ Curricular learning communities



- ☐ Faculty/staff mentors (i.e., faculty or staff mentoring sophomore students)
- ☐ Financial aid (e.g., sophomore scholarships, loans)
- ☐ Leadership development
- ☐ Online resources
- ☐ Opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class
- ☐ Peer mentoring by sophomores (i.e., sophomore students mentoring other students)
- ☐ Peer mentors for sophomores (i.e., students mentoring sophomores)
- ☐ Print publications (e.g., sophomore newsletters, etc.)
- ☐ Residence life (e.g., sophomore-specific living arrangements)
- ☐ Retreats
- ☐ Student government (e.g., sophomore council)
- ☐ Study abroad
- ☐ Undergraduate research
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list and describe up to three elements or aspects of your sophomore initiative that you consider innovative or especially successful:

---

How long has the initiative been in place? (Include the current year.)

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1 year
- ☐ 2 years
- ☐ 3 years
- ☐ 4 years
- ☐ 5 years
- ☐ 6 years
- ☐ 7 years
- ☐ 8 years
- ☐ 9 years
- ☐ 10 years
- ☐ 11 years
- ☐ 12 years
- ☐ 13 years
- ☐ 14 years
- ☐ 15 years
- ☐ 16 years
- ☐ 17 years
- ☐ 18 years
- ☐ 19 years
- ☐ more than 20 years

What campus unit(s) directly administers the initiative? (Mark all that apply.)

- ☐ Academic affairs
- ☐ Student affairs
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

What are the objectives or learning outcomes of the initiative?

---

Has your campus conducted any assessment or evaluation of the initiative?

- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**Assessment of Innovative Initiative**

If yes, which of the following methods has your campus used to assess the initiative? (Mark all that apply.)

- ☐ Analysis of institutional data (e.g., GPA)
- ☐ Focus groups with instructors/staff
- ☐ Focus groups with students
- ☐ Individual interviews with instructors/staff
- ☐ Individual interviews with students
- ☐ Survey instrument (e.g., national, local, or course-based)
- ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

What were the results of your evaluation?

- ☐ The initiative met objectives.
- ☐ The initiative met some objectives.
- ☐ The initiative did not meet objectives.

**Background**

Name of person completing survey:

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Title:

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Institution Name:

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Mark the appropriate categories regarding your institution:

- ☐ Public
- ☐ Private

Please mark the appropriate institutional type:

- ☐ Two-year
- ☐ Four-year

Please specify the size of your institution:

---

Please specify your institution's most recent first-to-second-year retention rate:

---

Please specify your institution's most recent second-to-third-year retention rate:

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It is our practice to make available to requesting institutions and research partners the data from this survey. If you would like us to withhold your school's name and contact information when distributing survey data to requesting institutions and research partners, please make the appropriate selection below.

- ☐ You may share my school's name, contact information, and survey responses.
- ☐ Please do not share my school name or contact information, but you may share our survey responses.
- ☐ Please do not share any of our data (school name, contact info, or survey responses).



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