Find Me on Facebook . . . as Long as You Are Not a Faculty Member or Administrator

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The Facebook craze on college campuses has been established, and there are probably few, if any, students who do not know what this online service entails. Some use it; some do not, but those who do feel the service is specifically for students, not faculty, administrators, or student affairs professionals at their schools.

Launched in February 2004, Facebook (see www.facebook.com) allows college and high school students to connect with friends and acquaintances at many institutions, including their own. Students create personal profiles that display their likes and dislikes, pictures, class schedules, and membership in online groups made up of Facebook users with similar interests. Students also post personal information about themselves and their lives. There seems to be no limit to the type of information students share on Facebook. A September article in The Boston Globe (Schweitzer, 2005) reported students referencing recreational use of marijuana and a desire to sleep with a university professor on their Facebook profiles and postings.

Some Facebook users suggest that profiles and postings may not be a good description of students. Grace Blakely, a student at the University of South Carolina (USC) notes, “Not everyone cares to accurately represent themselves, so one should be wary of assuming things about someone based on their Facebook profile.”

Faculty and administrators, however, are concerned that, true or not, the posted information may have a detrimental effect on a student’s image. For instance, a university official reviewing a student’s job application for on-campus employment could login to Facebook to learn more about the applicant and discover some personal information such as compromising or illegal activities that would negatively impact his or her impression of that student.

Students’ primary response to faculty and staff is that non-students should not have access to their online postings. They believe that faculty and administration should respect students’ right to privacy and not use Facebook as a means of checking on them. Lindsay Ketchum, a junior at USC, said, “I know that they [faculty] can register with Facebook because they have university e-mail addresses. However, when I post things in my profile or message other people, I don’t usually think about administrators, staff, and faculty looking at the information. I guess they do have the right to look at the postings, though I don’t think I’d really want them to see what I am posting.”

A first-year student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, David Koon, goes even further, “I don’t think the administration here should use my information because I regard it as personal information that is private to me and to those I grant permission to see it.” This student is obviously aware of the privacy option that only allows certain friends to review his profile and postings, yet seems to think that non-students should not have access to the web site in the first place.

Some students recognize that faculty might form an unjustified opinion of their peers if they read Facebook. Lauren Kohn, a junior at USC, said, “I think students express their personalities differently on the Facebook than they do in the classroom. I think faculty might make judgments about a student (Continued on page 2)
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depending on what is in his or her profile." These opinions suggest that students are aware of the possibility of others viewing information, yet may not necessarily adjust their profiles in case a professor comes upon their listing.

Recent news articles indicate that faculty and professionals on campus might use Facebook to provide necessary interventions for students in need. In October, Inside Higher Ed (Epstein, 2005) detailed a Facebook group specifically devoted to Adderall, a drug used to treat Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, which students are illegally using to assist them in studying for exams. Such high-risk behaviors and tendencies may not be apparent to administrators except through the monitoring of Facebook, which may then result in providing important programs to assist these students. Colleges and universities who undertake this effort will be forced to make an ethically problematic decision: Invade students’ privacy or not? Then, once they have obtained the information, they have to choose what to do with it.

For the time being, however, it seems that most students view Facebook as a social tool and are somewhat careful about what they post and whom they allow to view their information. Elizabeth Hunter, a first-year student at Clemson University, echoed the feelings of many current students when she said, “Facebook has nothing to do with any particular school or university. It has to do with kids who are students there. Facebook is used for social communicating and networking. Having the faculty involved would ruin that aspect. Besides, I don’t see why they would want to see this sort of information anyway. It’s just college kids acting like college kids, over the web.”

References

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Emerging Role of Sustainability in Higher Education
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If you ask college students what percentage of the world’s resources Americans use, most would not know.

If you ask whether it is fair that with roughly 4% of the world’s population, the US uses about 25% of the world’s energy, most would say “no.”

Nevertheless, students may wonder why these facts should interest them. “This sounds nice, but what does it have to do with me?” students may ask. Colleges and universities throughout the world are beginning to focus student attention on this and related questions by creating courses focused on sustainability.

An often-quoted definition of sustainability appears in Our Common Future by the World Commission on Environment and Development (Bruntland, 1987). The Commission defines sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” In other words, development may be necessary to meet our needs and improve the quality of life, but if humanity is to survive, it must occur in such a way that the capacity of the natural world to regenerate itself is not harmed

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College and university programs focused on sustainability range from modules inserted into existing courses to PhD programs. Prescott College in Arizona has recently instituted a doctorate in education with a focus on sustainability education (see http://www.prescott.edu/news/phd_approved.html). Unity College in Maine has structured its entire curriculum around sustainability (see http://www.unity.edu/sustainability). Ithaca College has been studying and applying sustainability principles on its campus for several years (see http://www.aacu.edu/peerreview/pr-sp05/pr-sp05feature3.cfm). Several schools have instituted master's level programs addressing sustainability, notably the University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler Business School that offers a master of business administration degree with a concentration in sustainable enterprise.

At the University of South Carolina (USC), graduate students present an Introduction to Sustainable Living to first-year students in University 101 classes (for the script and ecofootprint used in these presentations, see http://www.sc.edu/sustainable/pdf/Sustainable-LivingPres.htm). The exercises are designed to spark thought and discussion about population and consumption, availability of resources, and lifestyle choices (see also Resource in sidebar).

In addition, sustainability presents an array of exciting opportunities and new careers for students. For example, the emphasis on “green building” has already created needs in a variety of professions. Architects and engineers who understand how to design to take advantage of site and climate and to create high-efficiency buildings are in demand. Engineers and materials scientists are called upon to develop new and better building materials. Electrical and mechanical engineers are being asked to develop more efficient power generation, as well as appliances that use it more effectively. Landscape artists who work with native plant species, who understand the use of plants in shading and microclimate control, and who can develop designs which minimize disturbance on a site are needed now and will be in greater demand in the future.

Farther in the future, new areas of study will include such topics as biomimicry (Benyus, 1997) — copying natural processes or structures to produce needed goods or services — will allow
scientists and engineers to develop fibers as strong as spider silk (much stronger than any man-made material to date) or generate electricity the way “pond scum” captures the sun’s energy. New materials will allow energy to be captured by the clothes or accessories we wear, allowing (for example) an iPod to be powered by our movement as we walk instead of by batteries, which contain toxic materials.

The challenge for educators, during the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (see sidebar) and beyond, is to help students understand the complex web of connections that inextricably link our economy, the environment, and social well-being. We need to help students see that sustainability is not a matter of self-denial, but rather an opportunity to make changes now that will expand our options in the future and that failure to understand sustainability is what will ultimately limit our success as a species.

References

Sources of Additional Information
www.nwf.org/campusecology (National Wildlife Federation’s Campus Ecology program)
www.ulsf.org (University Leaders for a Sustainable Future)
www.secondnature.org (Education for Sustainability should be “second nature”)
www.aashe.org (Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education)
Dining in a purportedly haunted former bank vault in what is now a downtown Spartanburg (South Carolina) restaurant is a novel experience and became a part of the town-and-gown component of the inaugural session of Wofford College’s The Novel Experience, an innovative reading program for first-year students.

Begun in 2002, The Novel Experience encompasses shared experiences among first-year students—reading the same novel over the summer, enjoying dinner and discussion of the book with their humanities section classmates and professor in local restaurants, writing essays on a question arising from the novel, and hearing from the author in person.

“The Novel Experience introduces Wofford freshmen to the world of contemporary fiction,” says John Lane, associate professor of English and creative writing. “They read a provocative novel, write about it, then soon after, hear the writer read from their work and respond to their questions.”

“It’s the perfect space for making the importance of fiction clear,” Lane continues. “A dozen or so of our students work to craft novels in one of our creative writing classes, so what better way could there be to honor the art of fiction than this shared reading experience?”

Many colleges have first-year student reading programs, but few combine it with the town-and-gown element or ask students to write an essay. Students also have an opportunity to meet and hear the novel’s author. He or she is invited to campus for a special convocation for the entire student body and gives a public reading later in the evening. “Readings are the traditional way an author presents his work, and the author of The Novel Experience book reads from the assigned book as well as other works, giving us a chance to hear a range of his or her work,” Lane says.

The best student-written essays on the novel question from each humanities section are published in a high-end, glossy booklet and distributed at the convocation. The author is given a copy of the booklet earlier and often makes use of the essays in the convocation lecture. The writers of the winning essays meet the author and have lunch with him or her after the convocation.

The late Dr. John C. Cobb (Wofford College Class of 1976), who initiated the program when he was director of the humanities program, once said, “It’s an opportunity to give the students a common intellectual experience, introduce them to the community at large by taking them out to restaurants, bring an internationally known and tremendously respected writer to campus, and give the first-year class an experience that is both intellectually sophisticated and memorable.” Cobb embedded The Novel Experience in an improved program of first-year humanities seminars that Wofford pioneered in the 1970s. “The idea is to teach writing and discuss skills around topics that help students confront moral values and issues,” he said.

Students at first question whether they have time to read a novel over the summer before they start their college careers. “I was like, ‘Are you serious?’” says now sophomore Tanya George, 20, an English major, when she found that in the midst of getting her housing assignment and registering for classes, she would be required to read Geraline Brooks’ Year of Wonders.

Soon, though, George discovered the value of the experience. Because she was unable to attend the college’s orientation programs, the novel became a good conversation-starter with her classmates. “People would come up and ask, ‘Did you like the book?’ or if I had read the book,” she says.

Dr. Deno Trakas, English professor and coordinator of The Novel Experience, says that is one of the purposes of the program—getting students talking to each other and their professors. “One of our main reasons for The Novel Experience is to help create a campus community during the students’ first year. Once they get to campus, they talk about it in their dorm rooms with roommates or in the cafeteria. We just want to encourage conversation.”

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To that end and to help students become familiar with the surrounding community, the town-and-gown aspect of The Novel Experience takes each humanities section to a different local restaurant for dinner and a discussion of the novel. The restaurants range from upscale, sit-down dining venues to local hole-in-the-wall burger joints—each providing a different flavor, literally and figuratively.

Which restaurant a group visits is determined by the luck of the draw. One evening shortly after the fall semester begins, all first-year students come together with their humanities professors. A representative of each section is selected to either draw a lot with the name of the restaurant on it or spin a wheel to determine the restaurant. The gathering itself is a bonding experience. There is a lot of fun, frivolity, and nervous anticipation as students rejoice or grimace, depending on the selection and their personal taste. About two dozen restaurants are used for the program to accommodate all students and their sections. George notes, “No matter how different everyone is here, the one thing we all share is the first-year student reading experience. It felt good to be part of something.”

Authors who have participated in Wofford College’s The Novel Experience are: Ha Jin (Waiting), 2005; Orson Scott Card (Ender’s Game), 2004; Geraldine Brooks (Year of Wonders), 2003; and Charles Johnson (Middle Passage), 2002.

Lane says the 2006 Novel Experience book and author have not been selected, but that it will be a novel about war because the program is linked to a cluster of courses about war.
Supporting Sophomores in Making the Transition to an Internally Directed Life

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Leaders within higher education and researchers have focused their attention heavily on the first-year students and their needs and challenges. The same cannot be said for sophomore students. In the past few years, institutions have become increasingly aware of the issues facing sophomores. While this group of students is as diverse as any within higher education, there are some shared experiences in the sophomore year. Students, regardless of institution, must select a major by the end of their sophomore year. Those who wait to make this choice near the end of the year may find themselves behind in major requirements. While some programs are now structured to bring students to college directly into a major, most institutions allow for this change. Secondly, sophomores experience less support from administrators and campus policies and programs. The practice of frontloading the first year leaves sophomore students feeling as if they are suddenly expected to negotiate college on their own.

As students transition into college, they experience a new environment, new requirements, and new challenges. Near the end of the first year and throughout the second year, students are faced with a different transition. In this second transition of college, students must decide on their future. They often select a set of friends that will remain with them for the remainder of their college years. In many cases, they come to a new understanding of who they are.

Nina, a sophomore in one of my research studies, said,

As a sophomore...you still need to get your grounding and be more comfortable with who you are, and also... finding yourself, and discovering who you are as a person. And, it was hard for me this year... when I sat back, I'm like, 'Wait, who am I?' That's why I think me being so moody, and not really comfortable with how I have been this year, has a lot to do with it because I really, you really need to know!

Nina’s experience is not atypical. Over the years, we may have called her experience “the sophomore slump.” However, there is more to the slump than just a struggle. There is also an end to the slump. At the other end, students either know themselves better, thus have a chance to make decisions about their life direction, or they give into the pressure and rely on external

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forces such as parents, peers, and professors to guide their decision making.

This phenomenon, this search for self, future, and healthy relationships, does not end abruptly at the end of the sophomore year. Instead, what happens in the sophomore year sets the stage for the remainder of the college experience. Administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals can structure the sophomore year to assist students in the search. I recommend that campuses consider some of these approaches:

1. Define the sophomore year as different.

Students are well prepared for the first year because of orientation and other programs. Students entering the sophomore year can also be informed about the challenges of the year. Let students know that the sophomore year is “the year you make it your own.” A number of institutions hold “welcome back” programs specifically directed at sophomores. Colorado College’s Sophomore Jump program is specifically directed at helping students learn more about themselves to assist them in career decision making.

2. Encourage self-reflection.

Knowing oneself is an important and challenging task. Learning to engage in self reflection, identifying one’s strengths and challenges, interests and aptitudes, can assist students in selecting a direction for life. Self-reflection can become a part of many courses during the sophomore year. It can also be the focus of co-curricular programs in explorations of majors, service work, and religious beliefs. Career development programs and classes, leadership development programs, and religious retreats for sophomores are being held on many campuses. At the University of Dayton, for example, campus ministers plan sophomore retreats that focus on these issues.

3. Challenge students to label external forces.

Society, parents, families, peers, professors, and others have expectations for students that may not match who the student is. An important part of the self-reflection process is identifying and understanding the impact of external forces on one’s decision-making process. Academic advisors, career specialists, faculty, and student affairs professionals can ask students to identify such forces as they make decisions about courses, majors, leadership positions, etc.

4. Provide ongoing opportunities for relationships with adults.

Students in the sophomore year continue to look for new connections and new ways of seeing the world. Relationships with adults who can listen and care about the student allows the student to see that there are many options in today’s world. Colgate University’s Sophomore-Year Experience program has engaged numerous alumni in on-campus visits, dinners, and discussions specifically targeted for sophomores. During these programs, alumni share their experiences searching for a major and finding life purpose with students. In addition, sophomores find connections that lead to summer internship opportunities through these programs.

5. Provide for expansion of peer relationships.

Sophomore students often continue to search for meaningful and healthy peer relationships. Requiring group work, i.e., encouraging students to become involved in new student groups or to work on service-learning projects together helps students expand their peer world and their view of themselves. Leadership development programs that focus on sophomores are one way to provide opportunities for sophomores to expand their peer group and to continue to explore their interests and life direction.

Supporting sophomores in their development is not an easy task. It will continue to require patience, innovation, and commitment. Professionals who work with sophomores may be tempted to believe that their responsibility is to simply provide for the students’ academic experience. However, this denies the wholeness of student lives. It is this wholeness for which we are responsible when we design the students’ environments.

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University Studies: Helping Students Become Citizens

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University Studies (www.pdx.edu/unst) is the general education requirement for the majority of students at Portland State University (PSU). The program, beginning in 1994, departed from the distribution model of general education (i.e., requirements are spread or distributed across the traditional areas of study such as science, social science, and humanities plus writing) and moved to a learning community model through an inquiry- and goal-based curriculum. Because the university was in the process of discovering what an urban institution could be and do, a new institutional motto, Let Knowledge Serve the City was adopted. There was an intentional shift to collaborating more visibly and closely with the city, region, and, more recently, the world, not only through research but also through the undergraduate curriculum in general education.

The design of University Studies draws directly on research on student learning and general education. The program is designed to support faculty-student interaction, student-to-student interaction and learning from each other, active and applied learning, and a valuing of difference. The actual coursework brings entering students into the academic and social world of the university through Freshman Inquiry, a year-long, integrated learning community of 36 students, a faculty member, and a peer mentor. Faculty from different disciplines create the classes around a theme. Current examples are The Constructed Self: We, Them, and Us, Forbidden Knowledge, System Earth, and On Democracy.

The four goals of University Studies reflect PSU’s urban mission and outcomes necessary for students to be successful upon graduation. They are (a) inquiry and critical thinking, (b) communication (i.e., written, oral, visual, quantitative, group and technological), (c) social responsibility, and (d) ethical issues and the diversity of human experience. The university made a thoughtful and logical commitment to its students to help them graduate with an understanding of themselves and their place in the world as citizens of a democratic nation.

The focus on dissolving the barriers between university and the community was assisted by the location of the institution at the south end of the city. Park blocks (i.e., urban green spaces) run through the center of the campus and through the Portland downtown area. This easy access to not-for-profit agencies, businesses, and government offices has supported the development of an amazingly diverse and sizable community-based learning effort linked directly to the classroom. For example, the kind of community-based learning projects students participate in as part of Freshman Inquiry include tutoring middle schoolers in reading, participating in tree planting throughout the city in partnership with Friends of Trees, participating in sports training with inner city youth in partnership with the Blazer’s Boys and Girls Club, and preparing residency rooms for women and children from abusive home situations. Each project connects directly to the issues and materials in the course theme (http://partner.pdx.edu and http://www.pdx/unst/capstone_courses.html; see also E-Source, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 2 for capstone courses).

In University Studies, survey data report that students are learning in each of the four University Studies goals. The self-reported data is also validated by an annual student portfolio assessment. Data from the review of a random selection of Freshman Inquiry yearlong portfolios shows scores that are acceptable or more for each goal over the past seven years. Assessment reports are available online at http://www.pdx.edu/unst/assessreports.html.

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This is the first article in a series from luminaries in the field who share insights regarding their campuses and higher education in general.

Betty L. Siegel
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Dr. Betty L. Siegel, president of Kennesaw State University (http://www.kennesaw.edu/president/biography.html) is the first woman to head a public university in Georgia and is also the longest-serving woman president of a public university in the nation. She has been president of Kennesaw State University since 1981. Recently, she talked to the National Resource Center about the past 25 years of The First-Year Experience movement and speculated about the future. She said:

We want students who are more accomplished than just in a subject matter. We want students of the future to have leadership skills; who have communication skills; who have cross-functional team-building skills; who have a sense of appreciation for diversity; who have a global perspective; and who exercise ethical leadership.

Dr. Siegel went on to discuss how to start programs to foster these traits and abilities in students. She likened the process to a starfish. She explained.

A starfish can open an oyster shell very quickly through pressure on five different points. At Kennesaw, our five points are (a) people, (b) place, (c) programs, (d) policies, and (e) processes. The people are the best faculty on campus who make student success their priority. The place is inviting and sustains community. The curricular and co-curricular programs foster those skills mentioned earlier. And our policies and processes reward and reinforce the people and the programs. Just like the arms of the starfish, these five points work as a unit to instill those desirable qualities in our students.

During her tenure at Kennesaw, Dr. Siegel has started several new traditions on her campus. One is what she called a “sleepover.” During a sleepover, she first has dinner with residential assistants and then spends the rest of the evening talking to students in residence halls (http://acdevl.kennesaw.edu/access/newsreleases2.asp?dt=594). A new tradition involves students who are about to graduate.

We have a new Remembrance Rock on our campus. Our Remembrance Rock goes back to Carl Sandburg’s novel of the same name. Sandburg’s protagonist asked himself three questions every year as he sat on that rock: “Who am I? Where am I going? Where have I come from?” I have added a fourth question, “What is the meaning?” We just recently added a fifth question, which is, “How do I matter?”

These questions are going to be engraved on the Remembrance Rock on our campus. When our students graduate, they are going to put their hand on that rock; and they are going to be fully aware that, at Kennesaw, we want our graduates to ask these five questions of themselves.

To the question, “Who am I?” they would want to say, I think, that they are avid, life-long learners.

“Where have I come from?” They come from families, a community, and a university that encourages them.

“Where am I going?” They are going into a future that is uncertain. They are going into a future that will require extraordinary talents; talents like those mentioned earlier.

“What is the meaning?” They have found some meaning, some higher purpose, some calling, some passion to do something with their lives outside of just work.

And finally, when they ask, “How do I matter?” As graduates of Kennesaw, they will know that they matter.

Dr. Siegel will retire in 2006 and head a course in ethical leadership at Oxford University, England, in the spring.

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What’s Happening

Conferences
25th Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience
February 24-28, 2006, Atlanta Georgia

Teleconferences:
Transforming Campuses
The Forgotten Student: Understanding and Supporting Sophomores
March 9, 2006
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm EST

Cultivating Campus Cultures That Value Student Success
March 30, 2006
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm EST

Shattering Barriers: Transforming the College Experience for Students of Color
April 20, 2006
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm EDT

For teleconference details, please visit http://www.sc.edu/fye/events/teleconference/index.html

Research and Resources
Call for Submissions for New Monograph
The National Resource Center invites you to share your campus-specific research on sophomore (second-year) students and initiatives. Exploring the Evidence: Reporting Research on the Second Year of College is part of the series of monographs reporting assessment and research findings about topics of emerging importance in higher education. Submissions to Exploring the Evidence: Reporting Research on the Second Year of College are welcomed along two tracks: (a) general research on your institution’s sophomore students (e.g., satisfaction, engagement, study habits) and (b) assessment of programs and activities intentionally geared toward sophomore students.

Submissions are due February 1, 2006.
Complete submission guidelines are available at http://www.sc.edu/fye/research/soph/index.html

New Sophomore Research and Resources
The Center’s research team has recently completed data collection for the 2005 National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives. With several hundred schools responding, the data analysis is expected to continue well into the new year.

Assessment Essays Database
The Center recently launched a new web-based database that contains more than 75 essays addressing college assessment. The essays, written by an impressive collection of assessment experts, have been presented over the last five years as part of the First-Year Assessment Listserv’s (FYA-List’s) invited essays series. Visitors to our web site are now able to search for essays by keyword, author, title, or date. New essays will be added nearly every month.

To search the essay database, please visit http://nrc.fye.sc.edu/resources/FYAlist

To join the FYA-List and receive new essays in your inbox as they are published each month, please visit http://www.sc.edu/fye/listservs/subscribe.html

New Publication
Student Development in the First College Year: A Primer for College Educators by Tracy Skipper provides a detailed overview of some of the most commonly referenced theories of learning and development in the college years. What sets this primer apart from other treatments of student development theory is its careful attention to the first college year and the wide range of educational environments in which learning and development take place.
Neither prescriptive nor predictive, the primer is a useful starting point for understanding and relating to first-year college students and offers a framework for making informed decisions about program and curricular design.

Overview of Student Development in the First College Year
- Theories of psychosocial and identity development, including those describing women, students of color, and lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender students
- Theories of cognitive development and moral reasoning
- Models of student retention
- Theory-to-practice model with examples from the first-year classroom, residence life, and learning communities
- Strategies for assessing developmental outcomes

Student Development in the First College Year is an ideal resource for:
- First-year experience planning committees
- Academic and student affairs administrators
- Faculty and students in higher education and student affairs graduate programs
- Faculty and graduate teaching assistants teaching first-year courses
- Administrators providing programs and services for first-year students

For more information, see http://www.sc.edu/fye/publications/index.html