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## Boomerang Students: Transfers Return to the Four-Year Institution

**A** growing number of students referred to as reverse transfers are withdrawing from four-year institutions and transferring to two-year institutions (e.g., McGlynn, 2006; Yang, 2006). Few studies, however, have explored the concept of reverse transfer students returning to their original four-year institution to complete their baccalaureate degree. The authors have termed this returning group as boomerang students. By shifting institutional thinking, reverse transfers can be viewed as retention opportunities rather than attrition casualties (Woosley, Slabaugh, Sadler, & Mason, 2005).

In an effort to increase students' persistence to graduation and explore factors attributing to graduation rates, the University of Louisville (UofL) undertook a two-part study in 2008 of students who transferred from the University to community colleges. The first part was a study to identify characteristics of students who transferred. The second part was a survey to determine factors contributing to students' departure from the University. The objective of the project was to use identified factors to create targeted interventions that would bring the students back to UofL to achieve their initial goal of obtaining a baccalaureate degree. The focus of the study was restricted to students who transferred to two-year institutions since research indicates that students who transfer from a four-year institution to another four-year institution often report dissatisfaction with their initial institution (e.g., Ishitani, 2008). Targeted interventions will not help these students as it is more likely an issue of "institutional fit," which is more appropriately addressed within an institution's strategic enrollment management plan.

### Part I - The Study

Data readily available within UofL's information management system (i.e., PeopleSoft) coupled with data from the National Student Clearinghouse were analyzed. Three fundamental questions were addressed: (a) which students transfer to two-year institutions after initially enrolling at UofL; (b) what factors, if any, predict why students transfer to a two-year institution; and (c) what targeted interventions can be implemented to address the needs of these students?

To answer these questions, institutional data (e.g., retention and graduation rates) were collected for six years from first-time students in the 1999, 2000, and 2001 cohorts of which there were approximately 2,300 students each year. By examining the differences between the initial cohorts and across the six snapshots, the intention was to better understand factors that influenced students' decision to transfer to a two-year institution. At the end of six years, the number of students who graduated were 842, 909, and 984 respectively, while those still

#### Cheryl Gilchrist

*Director, Undergraduate Assessment, Retention and Research  
Institutional Effectiveness*

#### Kathleen Mandlehr

*Director, Ultra Office of Undergraduate Affairs  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, KY*

enrolled totaled 215, 164, and 398, respectively. The remaining students (i.e., 1231, 1168, and 1,005) were considered potential transfer students, and a list was sent to the National Student Clearinghouse to confirm whether these students had transferred to another institution.

Preliminary findings indicated that, on average, 25.6% of students from each cohort transferred to another institution. Black, non-Hispanic students accounted for 15% of the total student cohort; however, they made up approximately 19% of the transfers with a higher number transferring to two-year over four-year institutions ( $p = .021$ ). White students, on the other hand, transferred in significantly greater numbers to other four-year institutions ( $p = .034$ ). The most striking factor we found was that approximately 38% of the students regardless of where they transferred to a four-year or two-year institution had an undeclared major when they left UofL. Students with the following characteristics were more likely to transfer to a two-year school:

- Remained within close geographical proximity
- Were female ( $p = .019$ )
- Had an average composite ACT score of 21.42 with a standard deviation of 3.89
- Were Black, non-Hispanic
- Had an undeclared major (i.e., approximately 40% of the two-year school transfers)

## Part II - The Survey

Most UofL students who transfer to a community college choose to attend Jefferson Community and Technical College (JCTC) located a short distance away. In 2008, a survey was sent to reverse transfer students at JCTC asking why they had transferred from the University to the community college. Seventy-four students (18%) responded. Of these students, 53% reported that they planned to return to UofL. Their reasons for leaving included

- Too expensive (39%)
- Lack of concern by faculty for students (33%)
- Too large and impersonal (29%)
- Suspended or put on probation (17%)
- Conflict with work schedule (13%)

When asked why they transferred to the community college, factors cited were

- Less expensive (73%)
- Smaller classes (55%)
- Desired degree program (45%)
- Recommended by family or friends (22%)
- Less academically competitive (15%)

## Targeted Intervention

Based on the results of the study, survey information, and best practices in advising transfer students (e.g., Gordon & McDonald, 2004), UofL recognized that reverse transfer students who leave and enroll at JCTC need intrusive and individual advising. UofL had created a transfer program (Ultra) in 2005 to serve students enrolled at JCTC who planned to transfer to the University. With Ultra advisors already embedded at JCTC, the program was expanded to use these advisors to work with reverse transfer students and their complex needs.

See BOOMERANG, p. 3

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By shifting institutional thinking, reverse transfers can be viewed as retention opportunities rather than attrition casualties.

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Ultra advisors use the following strategies when working with reverse transfer students:

- Ensure the student clearly understands the process of returning to the University.
- For suspended students, discuss the policy on taking classes at another institution. At UofL, classes taken at another institution within a year of suspension are not transferable; however, those classes are reviewed as evidence of changed academic behavior when appealing to be readmitted.
- Question the student about his or her financial situation. Students who have had financial difficulty at the University may need to contact the financial aid department to work out payment plans or take care of debts incurred before being able to return.
- Encourage the student to become familiar with the schedules and policies of the community college. Dates for registering, adding or dropping classes, or financial aid deadlines can be different at each institution.
- For academically at-risk students, advise them on strategies to repair a low GPA. Advisors need to communicate policies at both the University and the community college on retaking courses for grade replacement.
- Connect the reverse transfer student to the academic support system at the community college to develop the skills necessary for success.
- Encourage students to get to know their professors. Students may find this easier to do in smaller community college classroom settings than large university lecture halls.
- Discuss choice of major and degree. As the UofL study revealed, almost 40% of reverse transfer students were undecided on a major; referring students to a career center for counseling may help them find a degree program that motivates and provides a goal.
- Work to keep the reverse transfer connected to his or her original institution. Encourage students to keep associations with groups and clubs. UofL permits students to purchase a student ID if they are in a partner program, and most recognized student organizations allow associate memberships.
- Meet regularly and with intention. The student who feels like progress is being made toward the goal of a bachelor's degree will be more likely to return to the four-year institution. The advisor's job is to motivate, help in academic planning, and monitor progress.

## Conclusion

This project provided key data to improve policies related to transfer admissions, advising, academic support services, and data collection at the University of Louisville. By better understanding the needs of the students who have left an institution, intentional resources can be allocated to support a university's strategic plan of increasing graduation rates, baccalaureate degree production, minority retention, and the number of students transferring from community colleges.

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## Contact:

Cheryl Gilchrist  
[cbgilc01@louisville.edu](mailto:cbgilc01@louisville.edu)

Kathleen Mandlehr  
[ktmand01@louisville.edu](mailto:ktmand01@louisville.edu)

For more information on the University of Louisville's Ultra program, please visit, [www.louisville.edu/ultra](http://www.louisville.edu/ultra)



# The Big Picture

## Joe Cuseo

*Associate Professor, Psychology  
Director, Freshman Seminar  
Marymount College  
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA*

## Moving Beyond Student Outcomes: Potential Campus-Wide Benefits of the First-Year Seminar

The previous issue of this column reflected on the empirical effects of the first-year seminar (FYS) on student outcomes, particularly student retention and academic performance. In addition to its demonstrated impact on important student outcomes, the FYS has the potential to fulfill broader institutional needs and goals. An intentionally designed seminar can take on the more far-reaching properties of an educational *program* with the potential to exert pervasive and enduring effects not only on first-year students, but the college as a whole, particularly if the course includes a focus on strengthening or developing other key elements of the undergraduate experience. This article will consider the potential of the FYS to strengthen an essential element of the undergraduate experience: the college curriculum.

First, the FYS strengthens the curriculum by filling a curricular void: it infuses a student-centered course into an otherwise content-dominant and content-driven curriculum. The seminar's focus on the learner and the development of student-success skills and strategies (i.e., for college and life) distinguishes the FYS from other courses that concentrate more heavily on the acquisition of a prescribed and circumscribed body of knowledge. As one student anonymously wrote in an evaluation of FYS, "This is the only course I've ever taken that was about me" (Cuseo, 1993). "We have met the content and it is us" is how another first-year seminar instructor and researcher described his students' experience in the FYS (Rice, 1992). It could be said that the FYS adds a trans-disciplinary or *meta-curricular* dimension to the college curriculum cultivating cross-disciplinary skills and strategies, which transfer across the curriculum and transcend the boundaries of discipline-bound content.

Secondly, because the seminar is not tightly tied to any one academic discipline, it adds an element of flexibility to the college curriculum by serving as a course that can be responsive to new topics and readily accommodate emerging educational issues or student needs. It is refreshing to see how readily the seminar has been able to assimilate successive waves of "hot topics" into its pre-existing course structure (e.g., technology, diversity, critical thinking, and service-learning). Betsy Barefoot (1993), one of the original architects of the national survey of first-year seminars, coined the term *flexible fixture* to capture the course's continual capacity to incorporate diverse topics within its existing structure.

See CUSEO, p. 5

An intentionally designed seminar can take on the more far-reaching properties of an educational *program* . . .

A third way in which the first-year seminar can strengthen the curriculum is by serving as a gateway or foundational course that introduces new students to the meaning, purpose, and value of general education and the academic disciplines that comprise the liberal arts curriculum. The education-for-life skills emphasized in the FYS dovetail closely with the lifelong learning goals of general education frequently cited in college catalogues. The FYS adds a distinctive element to the content-centered, general education curriculum that accurately aligns with the person-centered, skill-focused goals of liberal learning.

Moreover, if the FYS is offered as a core requirement in the college curriculum, it can provide common learning experience benefits to cohorts of new students. Common learning experiences, such as a common (summer) reading or common FYS, can magnify student learning by increasing the quantity and quality of conversations that students engage in with respect to their shared learning experience. Formal, classroom-based discussions in the FYS can spill over to out-of-class settings and be shared with students from other class sections who experience the same course content.

Lastly, the FYS can strengthen general education by increasing new students' awareness of the relevance of the liberal arts for career and personal success. One potential byproduct of this increased awareness is expanding students' options for college majors (and minors) that best complement their individual interests and talents. For instance, it might be reasonable to suspect that participation in the FYS, particularly one that includes discussion of the meaning, value, and career relevance of the liberal arts, may serve to increase the number of undergraduates who consider a major or minor in a liberal arts-related field. One campus (i.e., University of Maine) reports that students who participate in its FYS are more likely to select a broader range of majors than students who do not participate in the course (Birnbaum, 1993).

In sum, the first-year seminar can strengthen and develop the college curriculum in three key ways:

- By infusing a student-centered course into an otherwise content-driven curriculum
- By lending flexibility to the college curriculum—serving as a course that can readily accommodate new topics and quickly respond to emerging educational issues and student needs
- By serving as a gateway or foundational course that introduces new students to the meaning, purpose, and value of general education and the liberal arts curriculum, and provides a common learning experience for students transitioning to college

Moreover, by increasing student awareness of the relevance of the liberal arts for career and personal success, the FYS gives students a greater range of options for majors (and minors) to choose from, thereby increasing the likelihood they will select one that is most compatible with their personal interests and talents.

This article focused on the first-year seminar role in strengthening and developing one key component of the undergraduate experience: the curriculum. In the next issue of *E-Source*, this column will examine the course's potential for developing another essential element of the undergraduate experience: the faculty.

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## Contact

Joe Cuseo  
[jcuseo@earthlink.net](mailto:jcuseo@earthlink.net)

## Engaging First-Year Students in Critical Thinking and Scholarly Inquiry

Since its inception in 1996, Washington State University's (WSU) elective, credit-bearing Freshman Seminar has proven to be an effective retention and student success tool. Encouraged by this achievement and responding to faculty concerns over the growing underpreparedness of many first-year students, especially regarding key skills in supporting argument effectively, properly citing sources, and thinking critically, the initiative expanded its focus in 2007. Renamed Pathways to Academic Success (PASS), the seminar actively incorporates the development of critical thinking and scholarly inquiry skills in the curriculum. The course remains open to every incoming first-year student; however, all students who have been placed on academic probation are now required to complete a PASS seminar to be eligible to continue at WSU. Fall sessions are open to all students (i.e., new and previously enrolled but now on probation) while the spring session is reserved specifically for newly at-risk first-year students (i.e., cumulative GPA below 2.0).

### Program Description

Unlike seminars designed for underprepared students with a remedial education objective, PASS is a research-based seminar where students are challenged to write a formal scholarly research paper on a topic linked to the common reading selection and general education courses. Along with the research paper, students produce a conference-style poster and communicate their findings to the campus community. The research project serves as a vehicle to hone written and verbal communication skills while introducing students to (a) the WSU library system, (b) the process of critically analyzing current events and relating these events to academic studies, and (c) methods of conducting research early in an academic career.

In addition to familiarizing students with campus resources and engaging students in active-learning strategies, PASS adapted five of WSU's Six Learning Goals of the Baccalaureate into the seminar's learning objectives to assist students in developing skills to prepare for academic success in all of their courses. Table 1 (see page 7) identifies the learning goals and targeted strategies.

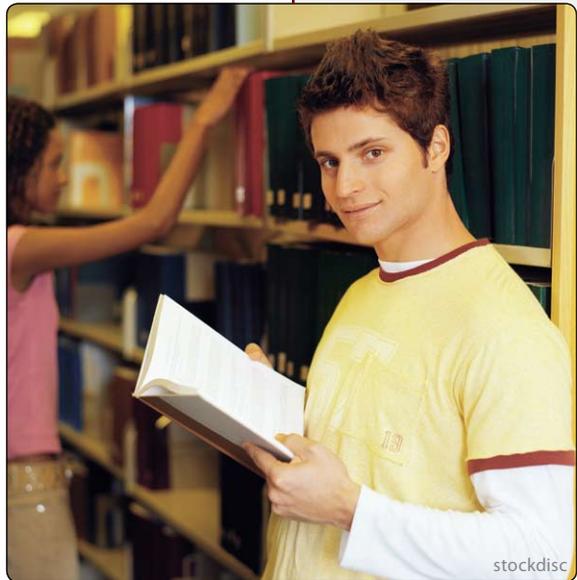
Students begin the first three to four weeks of class engaging in Socratic circles. Socratic circle discussions encourage students to think critically about various issues and how those issues may or may not impact them and why. This type of active engagement exposes students to diverse perspectives and challenges students to question as they learn. Discussion articles are carefully chosen to act as a bridge to student research projects. From these discussions, students begin to think about their research topics and issues in a more meaningful way. Examples of topic areas include globalization, environmental responsibility, American diversity, and alternative fuels.

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**Selena M. Castro**

*Program Director  
Pathways to Academic Success Seminar  
Explore Seminar  
Office of Educational Development  
Washington State University  
Pullman, WA*

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(PASS) has helped me learn how to set up a huge research project along with learning how to use library resources.

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See THINKING, p. 7

Table 1  
PASS Learning Objectives

Baccalaureate Learning Goal	Learning Strategy
Critical and creative thinking	Developed through Socratic discussions, source analysis, and review of literature with emphasis on peer reviewed journal articles
Analytical and symbolic reasoning	Demonstrated through the scholarly research process and drawing one's own conclusion based on scholarly evidence and support
Information literacy	Developed through immersion in both scholarly literature and electronic media via the Internet and determining what is valid and credible
Communication	Demonstrated through communicating one's research clearly and concisely to the academic community via conference-style poster exhibition and public speech
Knowledge of self in society	Acquired through participation in group activities, projects, and research on current issues while considering the impact of actions and decisions on one's self and others

Note: The sixth Baccalaureate goal, Specialty Pertaining to Major not included as a course objective.

PASS also includes mini single-topic workshops such as time management, tips on note taking, and test taking. Workshops are comprised of handouts for students to refer back to and a short activity using the information they are given.

Since the program's inception, there have been strong collaborations with WSU instructional faculty and librarians. Students are able to actively engage with faculty and librarians in a small class environment, a benefit not always available in a large lecture class format. Both faculty and instructional librarians assist students with refining topics for research, helping them learn more about current issues, themselves, and how their general education courses intersect.

### Program Assessment

Each PASS student progresses at his or her own pace, and therefore, growth is measured based on each student's ability. In addition to course evaluations provided by librarians, faculty, and PASS instructors, the WSU's Critical and Integrative Thinking Rubric (Center for Teaching, Learning, & Technology, 2006 – see sidebar this page) is used to give students specific feedback and responses on their papers. Students can also use the rubric to evaluate their own writing before turning in their papers. The rubric is generally used to gauge the level of ability (i.e., measured in seven categories across a 6-point range) expected of students by the time they graduate. For the purposes of the seminar, the rubric is used as an assessment of where students begin in the semester and how far they progress by the end of the semester. Most first-year PASS students demonstrate skills and abilities that fall between the *1-Emerging* and *3-Developing* ranges. By the end of the semester, the majority of students have progressed to a minimum *3-Developing* level up to the *5-Mastering* position.

See THINKING, p. 8

## WSU CRITICAL AND INTEGRATIVE THINKING RUBRIC, FALL 2006

<http://wsuctproject.wsu.edu/ctr.htm>

Emerging	Developing		Mastering		
1	2	3	4	5	6

**1** Identifies, summarizes (and appropriately reformulates) the **problem /question/ work assignment**

This dimension focuses on task or issue identification, including subsidiary, embedded, or implicit aspects of an issue and the relationships integral to effective analysis.

**2** Identifies and considers the influence of **context \* and assumptions.**

This dimension focuses on scope and context, and considers audience of the analysis. Context includes recognition of the relative nature of context and assumptions, the reflective challenges in addressing this complexity and bias, including the way ethics are shaped by context and shape assumptions.

**3** Develops, and communicates **OWN perspective, hypothesis or position.**

This dimension focuses on ownership of an issue, indicated by the justification and advancement of an original view or hypothesis, recognition of own bias, and skill at qualifying or integrating contrary views or interpretations.

**4** Presents, assesses, and analyzes appropriate **supporting data/evidence.**

This dimension focuses on evidence of search, selection, and source evaluation skills--including accuracy, relevance and completeness. High scores provide evidence of bias recognition, causality, and effective organization.

**5** Integrates issue using **OTHER (disciplinary) perspectives and positions.**

This dimension focuses on the treatment of diverse perspectives, effective interpretation and integration of contrary views and evidence through the reflective and nuanced judgment and justification.

**6** Identifies and assesses **conclusions, implications, and consequences.**

This dimension focuses on integrating previous dimensions and extending them as they explicitly and implicitly resolve in consequences. Well developed conclusions do more than summarize. They establish new directions for consideration in light of context and the breadth and depth of the evidence.

**7** **Communicates** effectively.

This dimension focuses on the presentation. If written, it is organized effectively, cited correctly; the language use is clear and effective, errors are minimal, and the style and format are appropriate for the audience.



Both qualitative and quantitative data collected through a beginning semester essay, reflective assignments, end-of-semester survey, retention rates, and the Critical and Integrative Thinking Rubric consistently support the effectiveness of the Pathways to Academic Success Seminar. Complete assessment data will be available when the 2007 (and up) cohorts begin to graduate commencing in spring 2011; however, early evidence suggests that students who take PASS as new students are less likely to become academically deficient, and first-year students who are deficient in their first semester and take PASS their second semester are less likely to be placed on probation a second time. Data from spring 2007 and 2008 indicate that at-risk first-year students who took PASS are more likely to be retained to the following year, an increase of 16% prior to spring 2007 (i.e., 64% to 80%). Retention to the second year of new incoming first-year students who take PASS in their first semester has remained consistent at 90% compared to 83% for nonseminar first-year students. In addition, 87% of PASS students indicate that the seminar helped them to develop key skills to apply in all other classes, and 81% felt they were encouraged to think analytically and to use careful reasoning. Examples of student comments on the PASS program included the following:

The one thing that I greatly appreciated was that PASS was less of a sink-or-swim class and more like water wings for college.

PASS created a situation where I was able to improve on some of my weaknesses through exploiting my already proven strengths.

It has helped me become more familiar with the library and has helped distinguish between good and bad sources.

PASS has shown me other points of view on events that I have never thought about.

It has helped me learn how to set up a huge research project along with learning how to use library resources.

## Conclusion

Overall, the PASS program has consistently demonstrated increases in student performance, critical thinking, and academic engagement. PASS also continues to be a valuable resource for students who need additional help in their second semester. With a dedicated focus on active engagement in the first year and employing effective strategies to promote active learning, PASS students have shown that they are learning—and meeting—the expectations of college.

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## Contact:

Selena M. Castro  
[scastro@wsu.edu](mailto:scastro@wsu.edu)

# High Impact, High Engagement: Designing First-Year Seminar Activities and Assignments to Promote Learning and Application

**Stephanie M. Foote**

*Director, Academic Success Center and  
First-Year Experience  
University of South Carolina Aiken  
Aiken, SC*

**M**any first-year seminars are taught using techniques that encourage active participation and engagement—allowing students to get to know each other and the instructor (Gordon & Grites, 1984; Hunter & Linder, 2005). While the structure and process of these classes often encourages social connections and a sense of community among the students in the class, these engaging activities do not necessarily result in improved learning. This article explores strategies to help first-year seminar instructors use high-impact, high-engagement activities and assignments to promote deeper learning.

These strategies are based on the findings of a recent qualitative study examining student perceptions of the influence of first-year seminar participation on their early college experience (Foote, 2009). The study was conducted with 18 students enrolled in selected first-year seminars at Clemson University, the University of South Carolina Columbia, and the University of South Carolina Aiken. The seminars included two major-specific sections (nursing and business), two sections for affinity or special populations, and four general sections. The data were collected through in-depth, one-on-one interviews conducted after the midpoint of the fall 2008 semester. Interviews were transcribed and themes were coded based on recurring ideas, perceptions, or experience. Seminar syllabi were also gathered and analyzed to compare the stated purposes of the courses with those of the participants.

During the interviews, in-class interactions were consistently cited as the most useful aspects of the first-year seminars. The participants described in-class interactions as planned and unplanned class discussions and activities, where both the instructor and students in the class had equal opportunities to talk and participate. These interactions functioned as a way for the participants to share their thoughts and views, get to know each other, and to learn material in the course. For example, one participant stated, “Since it’s so small there’s room for discussion; it’s not just the teacher lecturing you. We have a chance to get everyone’s perspective” (Jessica). Another participant indicated that his seminar was the only class he spoke up in and felt his “voice was heard” (Jake).

An additional finding from the study was that although the participants described being highly engaged in class discussions and activities, they had difficulty recalling the details of these interactions. Further, some participants considered the course assignments, which were often connected to in-class discussions and activities, to be pointless or busy work. Because participants did not see a connection between the activities in the class and the course assignments, the impact of these aspects of first-year seminars in the study are called into question.

The following strategies are offered to instructors as tools to promote deeper learning and meaningful application of activities and assignments in a first-year seminar.

**Thoroughly examine assignments and activities in the context of the course goals and purpose.** Saroyan and Amundsen (2004) suggest that instructors develop a concept map to identify the main concepts in a course and then explore the relationship between those concepts. This approach requires moving beyond the mindset of what the course is and has been, to what it can and

The structure and content of first-year seminars make them ideal forums to promote deeper learning and application.

See IMPACT, p. 10

should become. Using Saroyan and Amundsen's steps (pp. 45-46) to create a concept map, instructors begin by listing all the things they think their students should be able to know or do as a result of taking the seminar. Next, they identify the most important concepts and organize those into groups or clusters with the course goals in the middle of the concept map. Following this exercise, instructors think critically about how they address the concepts in the seminar and evaluate whether specific assignments and activities align with those concepts and larger course goals.

**Use the course syllabus to demonstrate the intentionality and relationship between course concepts.** Once instructors have determined that all aspects of the course fit with the goals and purpose, they can demonstrate these relationships through the organization of the syllabus. For example, similar or related course topics can be grouped under headings reflecting themes that are linked to the course goals. Additionally, specific course assignments or readings can repeat or make reference to goals or learning outcomes that are specified in other parts of the syllabus.

**Describe the significance or role of activities and assignments up front.** Often the discussion before an in-class activity or an assignment focuses on the directions, rules (if there are any), and allotted time and resources. To help students see the meaning of seminar concepts, time should also be spent discussing the significance, purpose, and role of the activity or assignment relative to the course. Instructors can take this time to ask students to explain how they think the activity relates to a course concept they may have read or discussed in class, or they may ask students to discuss the relationship to specific goals in the course.

**Involve your students in creating the questions that shape class discussions.** Bain and Zimmerman (2009) describe how instructors can use questions about things that matter most to the students to get their attention and then move to information about the discipline. Instructors can ask students what questions or concerns are of utmost importance to them in regards to the challenges and opportunities they face in their college transition and then use those questions and concerns to shape the class discussions, activities, and assignments. Involving students in constructing the structure and content of the first-year seminar might also help them recall and potentially apply the information at a later time.

**Debrief to help students see the deliberate connections between aspects of the course and the larger goals and purpose.** Instructors can help students begin to see these connections by allowing time in class after an activity or an assignment to remind students of the purpose or learning outcomes of this aspect of the course and how it fits within the context of the entire course. Gross Davis (2009) describes several ways instructors can involve students in debriefing activities, such as asking a student to summarize key concepts from a class discussion or encouraging students to reflect on questions or ideas that have emerged as a result of an activity or assignment. Students should also be encouraged to consider how what they have learned can be applied to other classes or aspects of their college transition.

The structure and content of first-year seminars make them ideal forums to promote deeper learning and application. Instructors can begin cultivating this type of learning in their first-year seminar students by using these strategies to modify or create new activities and assignments to bring students into a culture of academic success.

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## Contact

Stephanie M. Foote  
[stephanief@usca.edu](mailto:stephanief@usca.edu)

## RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

## Exploring the Impact of Study Abroad on College Student Development

In 2006-2007, more than 215,000 American undergraduates participated in study abroad programs, and more than half of those students participated in short-term experiences lasting between two and eight weeks ([www.opendoors.iienetwork.org](http://www.opendoors.iienetwork.org)). A new book from SUNY Press suggests that these short-term experiences may yield similar results in terms of college students' intellectual development.

In *The First Time Effect: The Impact of Study Abroad on College Student Intellectual Development* (SUNY Press, 2009), Joshua McKeown, the director of International Education and Programs at the State University of New York at Oswego, reports on a study exploring the intellectual outcomes associated with college study abroad programs. Using the Measure of Intellectual Development (MID), an instrument designed to assess cognitive-structural development as defined by William Perry's Scheme of Ethical and Intellectual Development, McKeown assessed the impact of a one-semester study abroad program on 85 college students. While the majority of students experienced no change in MID score over the course of the study, McKeown noted that for one group of students—those for whom this was the first significant international exposure—study abroad appeared to facilitate significantly positive effects on intellectual development. In this study, “students who had traveled abroad prior to their study abroad semester for any length of time had both significantly higher prescores and higher postscores than those who had not engaged in such travel” (p. 91). However, students who had more extensive exposure (i.e., spending more than two weeks abroad) experienced no increases in posttest scores. Only those students for whom this was the first extended international exposure experienced an intellectual gain, catching “up to their more experienced peers after one semester abroad” (p. 92). Thus, the novelty of the experience rather than the length of stay appeared to have the greatest impact for some students.

On the whole, the study abroad experience did not appear to usher in sweeping intellectual changes, as all of the students were rated as a Perry position 3 at the end of the study, meaning that while they had begun to recognize that multiple views existed, they were still largely invested in knowledgeable authorities. Of the 85 students who completed both a pre and posttest, only 25 students showed a gain in intellectual development, and of those, 16 had gains of one third of a stage or less.

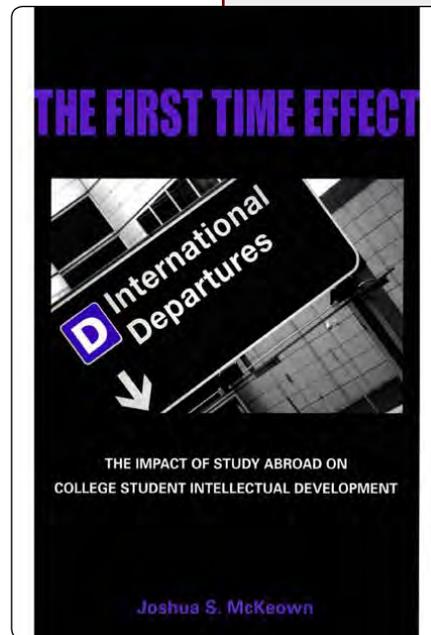
While such results are hardly dramatic, McKeown's study is nonetheless important in that it challenges educators to identify new approaches to study abroad assessment. While language learning, cultural understanding, and country-specific knowledge are common outcomes measures for study abroad programs, it is unlikely that students can make significant gains in these areas during increasingly brief (i.e., less than a semester) immersion experiences. In this

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**Tracy L. Skipper**

*Assistant Director for Publications  
National Resource Center for  
The First-Year Experience &  
Students in Transition  
University of South Carolina  
Columbia, SC*

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*The First Time Effect: The Impact of Study Abroad on College Student Intellectual Development*  
Joshua S. McKeown

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changing context, McKeown's study provides a useful model for assessing study abroad beyond these traditional outcomes.

McKeown's work also offers several useful considerations for structuring or restructuring study abroad programs so that they are more likely to promote intellectual development. These are briefly discussed below:

- *Timing of study abroad programs.* McKeown acknowledges that one of the reasons that his study revealed little change in intellectual development is because the most dramatic changes in MID scores are typically noted during times of transition, such as the first year or the end of the senior year. Nearly 90% of the students participating in McKeown's study were juniors or seniors and, thus, may have been outside those developmental windows. Educators might consider designing study abroad experiences for first-year students in order to facilitate or amplify the gains in intellectual development that many students experience during the transition to college. In the mid-1990s, Hartwick College in Oneonta, New York, designed a series of highly structured intercultural experiences for first-year students. While they did not assess intellectual development directly, they found that first-year study abroad students were more likely to consider different college majors and topics of study after their international experience (see Bachner, Malone, & Snider, 2001)—perhaps suggesting a greater openness to differing perspectives.

- *Location of study abroad programs.* Most of the students in McKeown's study (88%) studied in Western Europe and Australia/New Zealand. While study abroad in other regions is increasing annually, it is possible that students studying in largely Western cultures do not experience the kinds of cognitive dissonance that would prompt them to adopt new meaning-making strategies to make sense of and adapt to the host culture. Where feasible, study abroad educators should encourage and design learning experience in less Westernized settings. For students who do study in Europe and Australia/New Zealand, educators might seek ways to increase the students' experience of dissonance while supporting their efforts to grapple with a new culture.

- *Structure of study abroad programs.* While the structure of study abroad programs varies widely, McKeown notes that the experiences of students in this study were "not structured so that opportunities were present for students specifically to practice and refine their cognitive abilities" (p. 112). Without such practice, students are unlikely to make the developmental gains that educators desire. One way to offer such practice, McKeown argues, is to build in structured opportunities for student-faculty involvement through journals, group discussions,

Where feasible, study abroad educators should encourage and design learning experience in less Westernized settings.



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and online contact with faculty and advisors during the study abroad experience. Similarly, he suggests incorporating required readings and discussion questions into pretravel orientation weeks. The intercultural courses at Hartwick College followed such a model, with students participating in seven weeks of classroom-based study before and after a faculty-led study abroad during the January term (see Bachner et al., 2001 for sample syllabi).

- *Study abroad participants.* The findings of this study suggest that the students who are likely to enjoy the greatest benefits from study abroad participation are those who have limited international exposure. Yet some of these students—e.g., students from low-SES backgrounds, first-generation college students, adult learners—might also be the ones who are least likely to participate in traditional study abroad programs. Texas Women’s University, a public institution enrolling large numbers of first-generation college students, developed a flex-entry class model in order to make two-week study abroad experiences available to students for whom the traditional semester abroad was not feasible (Presnall & Hodges, 2007). In a recent national survey, more than half of the respondents indicated that they were seeking to expand short-term study abroad experiences to facilitate the involvement of a larger range of students (Gutierrez, Auerbach, & Bhandari, 2009).

As colleges seek ways to both engage students in learning and prepare them for careers in a global marketplace, study abroad experiences may become increasingly attractive. *The First Time Effect* offers some useful food for thought in designing or redesigning those experiences to ensure that programs help students achieve the outcomes educators intend.

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# The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition Advisory Board

In the May and July issues, we introduced the 2009 and 2010 classes of the National Resource Center's advisory board. In this issue, we are pleased to present the profiles of the board members whose terms end in 2011. Board members serve in a consultative role for the Center giving advice and contributing suggestions for publications, marketing and funding strategies, research topics, and conference speakers, as well as authoring articles for NRC publications. Members include leaders and experts in higher education, representing a variety of institutional types, professional associations, and research centers. The 16 advisors serve terms staggered over a four-year period. The contributions of these individuals have been and continue to be vital to our work in improving the lives of students.

## Jocelyn Harney

*College of DuPage*

Jocelyn Harney is the vice president of Enrollment and Student Affairs at the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. A graduate of Wright State University, Harney earned both her master's degree in rehabilitation counseling and her PhD in education from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Prior to assuming the position of vice president at the College of DuPage, she had served the college for 15 years in multiple capacities, such as counseling faculty, the coordinator of counseling, the associate dean of the Counseling Transfer and Advising Center, and as the dean of students. Currently, she also serves as the College's student judicial officer. Her scholarly interests include postsecondary education success, retention, persistence, and outcomes of special populations. She has given numerous presentations on these topics, including a 2007 teleconference with the National Resource Center on academic and career advising. Harney's service to the profession also includes her work as a consultant for the United States Department of Education and organizations such as the National Academic Advising Association.

## Robert Kenedy

*York University, Canada*

Robert A. Kenedy is an associate professor of sociology at York University in Toronto, Canada. He has been studying social movements and ethnic resettlement in Canada for more than 20 years, with much of his research focusing on activists and collective identity, as well as ethnic communities and identity formation. His current research compares family law policy in both Canada and the United Kingdom. He also examines resettlement, citizenship, and diasporas in Canada as well as civic participation among various ethnic groups. His pedagogical research includes articles about critical thinking, collaborative teaching, and university success skills. In addition to the sociology courses he teaches at York, Kenedy has been active in the success of the Fundamentals of Learning courses for students struggling with academic transitions. He has been recognized twice with the John O'Neil Award for Teaching Excellence

## Jennifer Zapatka

*Graduate Assistant  
National Resource Center for  
The First-Year Experience  
and Students in Transition  
University of South Carolina  
Columbia, SC*



Jocelyn Harney



Robert Kenedy



Jillian Kinzie



Molly Schaller

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in the Department of Sociology, as well as with the York University-Wide Teaching Award and the Glendon College Principal's Teaching Excellence Award.

### Jillian Kinzie

*Center for Postsecondary Research, Indiana University*

Jillian Kinzie is the associate director for the Center for Postsecondary Research and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Institute at Indiana University in Bloomington. Kinzie earned her PhD from Indiana University in higher education with a minor in women's studies. Prior to this, she served on the faculty of Indiana University and continued on to coordinate the University's master's program in higher education. She also worked as a researcher and administrator in academic and student affairs at several institutions, including Miami University and Case Western Reserve University. Her scholarly interests include the assessment of student engagement and the impact of programs and practices designed to support student success, as well as college choice, first-year student development, teaching and learning in college, access and equity, and women in under-represented fields. She has co-authored numerous publications including *Continuity and Change in College Choice: National Policy, Institutional Practices and Student Decision Making*, a monograph endorsed by the Lumina Foundation; *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter*; and *One Size Does Not Fit All: Traditional and Innovative Models of Student Affairs Practice*. Her service to the profession includes her work with the Documenting Effective Education Practices (DEEP) project and Building Engagement and Attainment of Minority Students (BEAMS).

### Molly Schaller

*University of Dayton*

Molly Schaller is an associate professor and coordinator of the College Student Personnel and Higher Education Administration Programs and a fellow in the Learning Teaching Center at the University of Dayton in Ohio. A graduate of The Ohio State University, Schaller earned her master's degree in college student personnel from Miami University and her PhD in higher education administration from Ohio University. She then worked in student affairs administration for 10 years before joining the faculty of the University of Dayton. Schaller became interested in the sophomore student while working as a student affairs practitioner and began studying the second-year student experience. She has published on the sophomore year in a number of publications, including *About Campus; Shedding Light on Sophomores: An Exploration of the Second College Year*, a 2007 monograph from the National Resource Center; and the NASPA Journal. She has delivered numerous keynote speeches, consulted widely with colleges and universities as they develop sophomore-year experience programs, and continues to study sophomore students. Schaller is actively involved in researching student affairs in Catholic higher education and also studies the relationship between learning space, learning, engagement, and pedagogy.

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### Related articles in E-Source

- (2009, May) The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition Advisory Board. 6(5), 13.
- (July, 2009) The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition Advisory Board. 6(6), 13.

### E-Source Submission Guidelines

For complete guidelines and issue dates, see [www.nrc.fye.sc.edu/esource/submission](http://www.nrc.fye.sc.edu/esource/submission).

**Audience:** *E-Source* readers include academic and student affairs administrators and faculty from a variety of fields interested in student transitions. All types of institutions are represented in the readership.

**Style:** Articles, tables, figures, and references should adhere to APA (American Psychological Association) style. *E-Source* does not publish endorsements of products for sale.

**Format:** Submissions should be sent via e-mail as a Microsoft Word attachment.

**Length:** Original feature-length articles should be 750-1200 words. Annotations of new resources should be no more than 500 words. The editor reserves the right to edit submissions for length. Photographs are welcome.

### Please address all questions and submissions to:

Toni Vakos, Editor  
National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition  
University of South Carolina  
1728 College Street  
Columbia, SC 29208  
E-mail: [vakost@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:vakost@mailbox.sc.edu)  
Phone: (803) 777-1924  
Fax: (803) 777-9358

# What's Happening at the National Resource Center

## Resource Development

### New Resource and Call for Contributions – Peer Educator Programs

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition has launched a new resource on our web site with a collection of research-based descriptions of peer educator programs. Five cases are presented from a range of different educational institutions using peer educators in a variety of different settings—first-year seminars, diversity education, orientation, support programs for at-risk students, and Supplemental Instruction.

We also invite you to help us expand the available resources on peer educators by including a description of your initiative in this online collection. If your institution has an assessed peer educator program that has a history of two years or more, we encourage you to submit a description of your program for consideration. We are interested in the objectives and structure of the program, how it has been assessed, what was learned, and how the assessment results have been used to improve the service provided to new students. The peer educator program collection and guidelines for those who would like to submit an initiative for publication can be found at [www.sc.edu/fye/resources/fyr/peers.html](http://www.sc.edu/fye/resources/fyr/peers.html)

### The Toolbox

The National Resource Center is now hosting the web page for *The Toolbox: A Teaching and Learning Resource for Instructors*, written by Brad Garner from Indiana Wesleyan University. The Toolbox is an online professional development newsletter offering innovative learner-centered strategies for empowering college students to achieve greater success. The newsletter is published six times a year, and the online subscription is free. To register for newsletter alerts and access back issues, please visit [www.sc.edu/fye/toolbox](http://www.sc.edu/fye/toolbox)

**The Toolbox**  
A TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCE FOR FACULTY  
Volume 1  
Issue 2  
October 2009

**Facilitating Classroom Interactions**

A good starting point for our discussion of facilitating classroom interactions is the ever-present, all-important question: *How do people learn best?* (Thinking, to be large extent, the answer to this question is individualized and based upon the gifts, talents, and motivations of the learner. From a somewhat different perspective, however, there are strategies of teaching techniques that are more likely to result in learning than others. One method of representing the relationship between instructional practices and student learning is Edgar Dale's "Cone of Learning." In its original form, published in the book *Individual Methods of Teaching* (1946), Dale never attempted to demonstrate that various approaches to teaching (e.g., reading, listening, watching, listening and watching, discussing with others, personally experiencing, and learning) result in varied levels of retention and learning. Over the years, percent ages of retention were added to the chart as a general means of transferring learning. The relationship between teaching methodology and learning (see further explanation at [www.purdue.edu/honors/ACE/2002/dalecone\\_06a.html](http://www.purdue.edu/honors/ACE/2002/dalecone_06a.html)).

Despite the possibility of a statistical enhancement of Dale's "Cone of Learning," it does maintain a sense of relative value. Think for a minute about the level at which you personally retain new knowledge or information. Is it very likely that you will remember materials that you both read and discussed or taught than materials you simply read? Given that most assignments take a few minutes to reflect on the manner in which you typically teach, is there a significant emphasis on remembering the contents of your lectures? (For your students required to read and digest large amounts of non-based materials? The data described above does not contradict information that is of long a nature format or required to be directly read over and over again in order to be more important course content. In fact, the data does reveal, however, is that we can greatly enhance the amount of information that our students receive by systematically providing classroom experiences that allow students to

- Discuss learning with others
- Engage in activities and learning experiences that allow them to personally interact with course content, and
- Teach one another

**The Factors That Lead to Student Interactions**

A study by Anderson and Carta (2002) investigated the factors that promote personalized classroom learning environments that promote openness, support, a level of comfort, safety, lack of threat, and an interpersonal climate. Students expressed a preference for classrooms in which they can work together, share information, and interact with one another. According to the research, students and teachers alike are willing to do the learning and teaching risks in these types of classrooms.

"Cooperative learning, role plays, discussion processes, and debates seemed to change the traditional method of students and faculty and led to outcomes that could not be achieved in more traditionally taught courses."  
Anderson & Carta, 2002, p. 35

## Conferences

### 2nd Midwest Drive-In Conference on Strengthening the First Year of College: Embracing Collaborative Partnerships

September 25, 2009 • Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois

This regional, one-day drive-in conference provides a forum for academic and student affairs professionals to share ideas, resources, and engaging pedagogy to enhance their instruction of first-year students. Keynote speaker will be John N. Gardner, Executive Director of the Policy Center on the First College Year, and Betsy O. Barefoot, codirector of the National Policy Center, will be the plenary speaker. For more information on the conference, please visit [www.fyconference.niu.edu](http://www.fyconference.niu.edu)

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**Institute on First-Year Assessment***October 10-12, 2009 • Charlotte, North Carolina*

This Institute has been developed for faculty, first-year program directors, student affairs professionals, institutional researchers, and assessment practitioners who are new to the field of first-year assessment and have recently become charged with the responsibility of assessing those programs and initiatives. For more information on the Institute, please visit <http://sc.edu/fye/events/assessment/>

**7th Ohio First-Year Summit***October 16, 2009 • Cincinnati, Ohio*

Hosted by the University of Cincinnati and the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, this one-day symposium will feature thought-provoking discussion and interaction about why tending to FYE matters, exemplar approaches, and what lies ahead as we embrace the 21st century. For more information, visit [www.uc.edu/conferencing/events/ohfye](http://www.uc.edu/conferencing/events/ohfye)

**16th National Conference on Students in Transition***November 6-8, 2009 • Salt Lake City, Utah*

Share with and learn from each other the latest trends, initiatives, best practices, ideas, research, and assessment strategies focused on supporting student success through the full spectrum of college transitions. For more information on the conference, please visit <http://sc.edu/fye/events/sit/>

**29th Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience®***February 12-16, 2010 • Denver, Colorado*

The First-Year Experience conferences are meetings where educators from two- and four-year institutions come together to openly share ideas, concepts, resources, assessment tools, programmatic interventions, and research results focused on the first college year. Online proposal information is available at <http://sc.edu/fye/events/annual/proposal.html>. Proposal deadline is October 5, 2009.

**Research****Sophomore-Year Initiatives**

The National Resource Center has completed data collection for the 2008 National Survey on Sophomore-Year Initiatives. A summary of the findings can be found at <http://sc.edu/fye/research/surveyfindings/pdf/Soph08.executivesummary.final609.pdf>

**HOME****PUBLICATIONS STAFF****Toni Vakos**

Editor

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Editorial Assistant

**Emily Mullins**

Editorial Assistant

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Graphic Designer

**Tracy L. Skipper**

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