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ABSTRACT

Title: A First-Year Experience Course for Community College Students

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The purpose of this creative project was to find ways for community colleges to assist its first-year students in becoming more comfortable in their college environment. Studies show that students who are socially integrated are more likely to persist than those who are not (Tinto, 1987). This information will help students understand the role of social involvement and its importance in fostering a positive college experience and ultimately helping them reach their goals. A 10-week one credit hour first-year experience (FYE) course was created which is mandatory for first-time freshman under 25 years of age who are pursuing Associates of Arts or Science degrees and is to be taken during their first semester at a community college.

The components of this creative project include an introduction to the project, a review of related literature, the methodology that was used, and the elements of the FYE course. The elements of the course include a project summary, course catalog and course description, course syllabus, lesson plans, and the website pages.
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INTRODUCTION

Since their origins over a century ago, community colleges have struggled with student retention (Community College Research Center, 2011). Many students who choose to attend a community college do so with the goal of graduation in mind; some students choose to attend a community college with the sole purpose of eventually transferring to a four-year institution. Whatever their reason or reasons, research has shown that students who feel socially integrated, in addition to academically integrated, are more likely to persist at the college. Throughout the past decades, there have been numerous studies geared toward giving community colleges assistance in providing ways for students to receive the social guidance that they need to succeed.

There are many ways for students to become socially connected at their college. Some of these are attending orientation or transition programs, joining clubs or organizations, attending counseling or advising sessions, working on campus, taking part in extracurricular activities, and taking required first-year experience (FYE) programs offered and/or required at the college. Another aspect of assisting the student in feeling comfortable in the college environment is having the ability to have good communication with faculty, staff, and other students. Orientation is typically a student’s first experience in connecting face-to-face with a college. Providing ongoing resources to students after
this initial welcoming experience is crucial so they can become socially integrated at the college.

**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this creative project was to find ways for community colleges to assist its first-year students in becoming more comfortable in their college environment. Studies show that students who are socially integrated are more likely to persist than those who are not (Tinto, 1987). This information will help students understand the role of social involvement and its importance in fostering a positive college experience and ultimately helping them reach their goals. A 10-week one credit hour first-year experience (FYE) course was created which is mandatory for first-time freshman under 25 years of age who are pursuing Associates of Arts or Science degrees and is to be taken during their first semester at a community college.

**Significance of the Study**

This creative project about a mandatory FYE course for community college students will be beneficial in fostering retention as students will feel more “accepted” at the college when becoming socially integrated. It will provide support to students who may not feel comfortable in the college environment and allow them to be active in their degree attainment. Students will learn about many aspects of the college life; many of which they may not have been aware. Students will be able to use the information that they learn and can educate other students who may need assistance.
Scope and Limitations

This creative project will be a tool that community colleges can use to ensure that all new students under the age of 25 are able to learn about ways to enrich their college experience. The course will highlight the main issues that the community college determines will most help its students. Because the course will be a required part of the core curriculum for all first-semester freshmen under the age of 25 who are pursuing Associate of Arts or Science degrees, students will not have the choice of whether or not they want to take it. Not all students will embrace the fact that the course is mandatory, nor be enthusiastic in being a part of the course. The college will need to make sure it is employing and training qualified staff to make sure the whole scope of the FYE is being met.

Because some students may not be starting community college as a recent high school graduate, these students may not feel that they should be required to take this course. This course will not only provide information about the college and its expectations of students, but will also supply students with information about ways they can be more socially integrated at the college. This will, in turn, help the students persist and feel that they “own” their college experience.

Terms

For this creative project, these are the terms that will frequently be used. The definitions supplied will describe the various aspects of college experiences and FYE courses. Because the creative project demonstrates the importance of FYE issues at community colleges and the importance of addressing these issues by providing a mandatory course for its first-time freshmen, when discussing the whole aspect of the
course, **FYE Programs** will be used. The FYE programs can be utilized by the college as a **course**, which would consist of a formal class which meets throughout a semester or semesters; or a **seminar**, which would typically be a one-time meeting.

**Community colleges** are educational institutions that provide two years of academic instruction for undergraduate students and technical and vocational training (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2012). The term **college environment** is referred to when describing the numerous characteristics of colleges. This includes such things as knowing how to access library materials, what offices students need to see for various issues, dates and deadlines with which to be familiar, and where to go for advising. **Persistence** is the term used to describe a student’s ability to remain at an institution beyond the first year and reach their goal of graduation. The main objective of FYE programs is to help students persist in their college experience. The term **socially integrated** encompasses the numerous aspects of college life that can help to incorporate a student into the college environment in ways that are not related to academic facets. **First-year student** is a term used to describe a student who has never attended a college before, no matter what their age.

**Organization of the Paper**

This creative project was organized into four chapters. Chapter two discussed pertinent literature relating to the importance of social integration for students who attend a community college, the history of this importance, and ways for colleges to assist students so they persist. Chapter three provided an explanation of the methodology used to develop the FYE course. Chapter four outlines the syllabus, lesson plans, and a website that can be used for the course.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Summary of the Project

Many first-year community college students are socially ill-prepared for the issues and challenges that they face during their first year at their institution of choice. Most students are receptive to becoming autonomous and feeling included at the college; some students feel that they are not there to make friends and just want to go to school. Studies show, however, that students who are immersed in the college atmosphere are more likely to persist. If the college does not attempt to help all of its students, the students may not persist at the college and will not reach their goals of graduation. Institutions need to provide many avenues of access for students to become socially integrated into the college. This focus needs to be more geared to first-year students as these students are the most “at risk” students for departure.

This integration may include connecting to faculty, staff, and other students or may include offering programs and/or the ability to join organizations which will then help the student feel more socially involved. This involvement will cause students to feel more in charge of their college environment, even those who may not feel that they need the integration. Some community colleges need to help their faculty and staff and assist them with ways to better communicate with their student population. Designing
programs, such as FYE programs, is an aspect of the social integration of which colleges need to be better educated.

**Social Integration Issues**

Is the persistence of community college students affected by whether or not they interact with other students while on campus? Is persistence affected by whether or not they join a group organization while in college? Is their interaction with faculty a factor? How much should students be “pushed” to be social? The main goal of students who attend community college is to graduate, but do they need to make friends while they are there? Tinto (1993) stated that “the adjustment to college may be particularly stressful, for it combines both intellectual and social forms of adjustment... college is as much a social testing ground as an academic one” (p. 47). According to Tinto’s research (1975), studies show that the more aware of their learning environment, both academic and social, the more willing students are to persist. In their research, Terenzini and Pascarella (1991) found that the more deeply students are absorbed in the college environment the more likely they are to succeed. Tinto (1987) also stated that colleges need to not only concentrate on the academic concerns of its students, but also focus on their social concerns because “social isolation may lead to departure independent of one’s academic performance” (p. 107). There are many ways for students to have social integration while attending an institution: relationships with faculty, staff, or other students or participating in extracurcurricular activities, clubs, or organizations (Seidman, 2005).

Students who attend community college do so for many reasons, such as the lower tuition cost, smaller class sizes, close proximately to their homes, and more one-on-one assistance from the faculty (Saret, 2007). One of the main objectives for a college is to
find ways to assist their students in reaching their goals while attending the institution.
One way this can be done is to offer ways for students to feel a part of the college (i.e.,
social programs or interaction with faculty). Students who feel validated by the faculty,
staff, and other students can make successful transitions into the institution (Rendon &
Jalomo, 1995).

First-year students may need additional assistance with the transition of their life
from a high school student to an adult life as a college student (Tinto, 1993). Tinto’s
research was rooted in typical four-year institutions, but the concept of academic and
social integration and its effect on retention applies to community colleges as well (Tinto
& Russo, 1994). The main goal for most students who begin college is degree
attainment. Metz (2002) noted that “the influence of institutional variables, such as
faculty-student interaction, peer group interaction, and extracurricular involvement,
helped shape the students’ progression through college” (p. 5).

**Overview of Tinto’s Theory of Persistence**

Tinto’s Theory of Persistence (Seidman, 2005; Tinto, 1987; 1993) identifies three
major reasons that students do not persist: academic difficulties, lack of ability in
narrowing their educational and occupational goals, and failure to remain or become
integrated into the college. Community college students who possess just one of these
may have difficulty persisting to their goal of graduation. Tinto (1987) stated that “more
students leave college or university prior to degree completion than stay” (p. 1). In 1986,
approximately 60% of students who entered college for the first time left without earning
a degree. Tinto’s Theory of Persistence noted that in order for institutions to foster
successful student retention they must not only involve themselves in the academic development of its students, but also their social development.

Students who make the decision to attend college have individual expectations and aspirations (Metz, 2002). While many students adjust well to the atmosphere of the college, some students have a difficult time in separating themselves from the “world they knew” and adjusting to the academic and social life of the college. Students must learn to adjust socially and intellectually in order to make this difficult adjustment (Tinto, 1993). Because community college students come from many different backgrounds, determining the best way to retain students is a difficult task for institutions. It makes sense that “the more a student perceives that the institution is committed to the welfare of its students, the greater the student’s level of social integration” (Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004, p. 23).

Even though, through academic integration, faculty may emphasize the importance of students’ involvement in academic aspects, it is not the most significant factor of persistence (Forsyth & McMillan, 1991). Seidman (2005) noted that Tinto defined four propositions that suggest that social integration, not academic integration, is the key to understanding student departure and persistence:

Students bring to college different entry characteristics which will impact their initial commitment to the institution; a student’s initial commitment to the institution will impact the student’s future commitment to the institution; students’ continued commitment to the institution is enhanced by the level of social integration they realize early on; and the greater the level of commitment
to the institution, the higher the likelihood of the student being retained through graduation. (p. 24)

The data in these propositions demonstrates that social integration, not academic integration, may be the key to attempting to understand why some students leave college before they complete their degrees. The single most important predictor of student departure is “the absence of sufficient contact with other members of the institution” (Tinto, 1993, p. 56). Even though some students may not feel the need to have this contact with faculty, staff, and other students, research shows that when students feel integrated into the college environment, they have a tendency to persist because they devote a greater effort into learning. A good college environment fosters a good experience both academically and socially. The Community College Research Center (2011) stated that “meaningful social relationships promote persistence by helping students feel comfortable in college and by providing them access to important information” (p. 1). Institutions that promote social integration will help its students meet their college goals while also increasing the college’s retention rates.

**Making Connections in College**

Durkheim (1951) stated that integration of individuals into social environments was essential to human culture. Tinto (1993) stated that some students who are challenged with the task of entering the college environment for the first time may have to learn a completely new set of social skills appropriate to college life. Of those students, many are teenagers who have typically had little or no time to prepare for the many challenging issues of adult life. Seidman (2005) noted that:
Students . . . form social bonds with other at the college and such attachments, when strong and focused on the positive aspects of learning and developing, help a student fit in with other at the school. Weak social attachments, or those that reinforce destructive or avoidant behavior, can hurt retention. (p. 227)

Braxton et al. (2004) noted that “making new friends and getting involved in the social life of a college or university require both time and a considerable investment of psychological energy” (p. 26). Students need to be ready to devote energy in having interactions with faculty, staff, or other students or participate in campus groups and/or organizations in order to fulfill their desires for social integration.

Tinto proposed that the more energy a student spends in their quest for social interactions, the greater their actual social integration (Tinto, 1987; 1993). One phase of this proposal noted that some students, as a coping mechanism, may deal with stress by avoiding social contacts with faculty, staff, or other students. In other words, students who are able to address their avoidance issues, informally (attending a party with friends) or formally (holding office in a campus organization), will have positive social integrations, whereas students who are unable to overcome this social avoidance will be affected negatively in their ability to succeed in social integration. Tinto (1993) stated that the more students are involved with the social life of a college, the more they make contact with faculty and others, which in turn may help in learning issues in and out of the classroom. The involvement will cause students to become more invested in their college career as they become more familiar with faculty, staff, and other students.
How Community Colleges Can Assist Students

Tinto stated that one of the most critical periods in the success of a student occurs in the first year of college, especially in the first semester. For the first time, students are away from friends whom they have known for several years or from their family members. Many new students “have difficulty in learning to fend for themselves in the adult world of the college” (Tinto, 1987, p. 148). Saret (2007) noted that the age, generational, and life-stage distinction should always be considered when institutions devise activities for social involvement. The highest incidence of withdraw is in the early stages of the student’s college career, therefore, institutions need to provide much-needed assistance to these first-year students. The need for student support from the college is “especially true during the first year of university study when student membership is so tenuous yet so critical to subsequent learning and persistence” (Seidman, 2005, p. 323).

Community colleges have found it a difficult task to increase student involvement and have devised many ways of assisting students (Tinto & Russo, 1994). This assistance can take many forms and may provide an easier transition to the academic and social life of the college. Freshman orientation and on-campus employment can provide this much-needed assistance at institutions, as well as three broad categories that were noted by Tinto: transition programs, early contact programs, and counseling and advising programs. Many colleges also provide FYE programs to facilitate an easier transition to the college environment (Jamelske, 2009).

Orientation Programs

The majority of students benefit from orientation programs at their college in many ways, even those who feel that they are socially prepared. Orientation programs
positively influence the social aspects by enabling students to learn behaviors, values, and attitudes which are needed to establish campus community membership (Seidman, 2005). It may be important for these programs to continue throughout the first year so first-year students can receive additional assistance as needed. These year-long programs would also be able to provide opportunities for social interaction among students.

**Transition Programs**

“Transition assistance programs are designed to assist individuals overcome the social and academic difficulties associated with making the transition to college” (Tinto, 1987, p. 149). There can be many academic components of this program: study skills, study habits, academic preparation, and learning how to access library materials. There can also be social aspects of this program, such as how to fend for oneself and how to make new friends.

**Early Contact Programs**

As the name states, these programs are designed to provide new students with contact with various members of an institution. Many students may be first-generation students who need additional support in finding their way through the “college culture” and learning the rules of the “college game” (Saret, 2007). The objective is to incorporate these young individuals into the academic and social communities of the college (Tinto, 1987; 1993). The long-term goal is for the students to feel comfortable that they have integrated themselves into the college environment. Braxton et al. (2004) stated that the earlier in a student’s college career they recognize that they are likely to find a compatible social community, the greater the student’s social integration. The college should “seek to encourage a wide range of contacts between new students and
various other members of the institution, faculty, staff, and other students” (Tinto, 1987, p. 149). Engaging new students into topics that interested them will then set the foundation for this integration. The contact not only assists the student in feeling more comfortable at the college, but also may help to cement the relationship that the student has with the faculty, staff, or other students which may last the entire time the student is attending the institution.

Counseling and Advising Programs

Because not all students enter college with clearly defined goals, the fact that many students use counseling and advising programs during the early part of their college career should emphasize the importance of these programs to the college’s counselors (Tinto, 1987). Students who are sure of their goals and future plans may often change paths during their college career due to the exposure to a variety of courses offered by the institution. Colleges may offer group counseling sessions for students who may have similar questions and concerns. Students find that being able to talk with students with similar interests they are better able to make decisions on their college career path.

Advising can be “streamlined through expended student success courses, which can be used to give students information about program planning procedures, financial aid, and other issues commonly discussed in advising sessions” (Community College Research Center, 2011, p. 3) If done in this style, one-on-one advising sessions could be used to satisfy students’ individual questions and situations. Some colleges may try online methods of counseling so students can log on and peruse the various options and information at their leisure. Research though has shown that most students need a
“human touch” and that too much reliance on technology may be counterproductive to a student’s success.

**Campus Employment and Extracurricular Activities**

One way to get a “formal” interaction within the social system of the college is to allow students to have campus employment (Tinto, 1987; 1993). Students who are able to obtain some type of position may feel a greater sense of social attachment which, in turn, may cause them to be more integrated into their college. This fact may also hold true for students who serve on the staff or hold office in a student association. Students who have a job on-campus or are a part of an organization may also feel better equipped to assist other students who they feel may need some support in their quest to become socially integrated.

Some institutions have found that involvement in extracurricular programs can assist in a student’s ability to become more socially integrated. Many community colleges have begun to offer more programs in their attempt to have students experience things other than just attending classes. Like the students who become involved in campus employment, these students may then feel that they are able to assist those students who feel that they do not need to be integrated socially. Tinto and Russo (1994) observed that many students who are involved in the social aspects of the college often feel valued by the college and felt more at ease when with other students. It was noted that “especially important was the emergence of a supportive community of peers that continued outside the classroom” (p. 21).
First-year Experience Programs

Barefoot and Searcy (1994) stated that “of the many programs and activities designed to assist first-year students in making decisions about academic majors and careers, one of the most efficient and effective may be the freshman seminar” (p. 59). Institutions are beginning to realize the importance and focus on having mandatory FYE programs for their first-time students and many community colleges have begun to allocate some of their resources to developing these programs. FYE programs can differ widely from one institution to another and can range from extremely organized to just a basic course giving students general information (Jamelske, 2009). Some key aspects of this program should include the following: acclimate students to the campus environment, offer ways to improve academic performance, provide access to other students to develop a sense of community, recommend advising and other support services, suggest involvement in social and extra-curricular activities, and present ways for students to be able to connect more with faculty and staff (Johnson & McFadden, 2000).

History of FYE Programs

Over one hundred years ago, as a way for colleges and institutions to assist in retention and improved grades, first-year seminars began to be developed (Barefoot, Arcario, & Guzman, 2011). Lee College, located in Kentucky, offered the first optional freshman seminar in 1882. The first seminar that was offered for college credit was part of the curriculum at Reed College in 1911 (Myers, 2003). The popularity of FYE programs has come and gone over the course of the last century with a gradual increase appearing in the last thirty years. In 1972, the University of South Carolina introduced a
new FYE program, University 101, as an “educational experiment in response to 1970 student riots against the Vietnam War, other perceived social injustices, and local campus issues” (University of South Carolina, 2012a, para. 3). Upcraft, Gardner, and Associates (1989) noted that “the University of South Carolina is well known for the training program for its University 101 course” (p. 194).

**University of South Carolina’s University 101**

The University of South Carolina’s hallmark course, University 101, is currently in its 39th year and is a national model for first-year seminars (University of South Carolina, 2012d). The purpose of University 101 is “to help new students make a successful transition to the University of South Carolina, both academically and personally” (University of South Carolina, 2012b, para. 1). This course, being the ground-breaking seminar for first-year students, proposes to help students develop a sense of belonging, encourage engagement in the academic and social aspects of the university, make sure students are aware of the expectations of the university and faculty, and acquire critical thinking skills so they can continue to refine their purpose, meaning, and direction. The course is taught by faculty members or administrative staff and upper-class peer leaders/grad leaders who have special interest in first-year student education (Barefoot & Searcy, 1994).

University 101 is an elective course for most enrolled students (University of South Carolina, 2012c). Students begin the three-hour course by completing the Strong Interest Inventory as an out-of-class activity to help them think about majors and careers (Barefoot & Searcy, 1994). Each student, after meeting with the University’s Career Center, then receives a personal interpretation of the results of their Strong Interest
Inventory. To assist students in preparing for their vocations, one whole class period in the seminar is dedicated to investigating the process of career planning. Several activities, which are supplied by Career Center professionals, are utilized to help students begin this process. According to the University of South Carolina (2012a), some key aims in the preliminary development of the seminar course were as follows:

To encourage students to develop more positive attitudes and behaviors toward the University; to increase student retention to the sophomore year and subsequently through the senior year to graduation; to assist student efforts to understand the multiple, essential purposes of higher education; and to facilitate a major faculty development initiative, which would improve teaching in all undergraduate courses, not just the first-year seminar. (para. 3)

Other class periods address topics such as academic advising, clarifying values, examining personal values, and utilizing decision making strategies.

FYE Topics

Some main goals in the initial development of the FYE seminars were to promote constructive behaviors toward the college, help students understand the various aspects of higher education, and to increase student retention (University of South Carolina, 2012a). Over the years there have been many changes to the areas of focus for FYE programs. Some community college students may also require more basic skills such as how to think and study in college, how to use critical reasoning and problem solving, decision making, determining a college major, and defining their learning styles and how to apply this style in and out of the classroom (Barefoot & Searcy, 1994; University of South Carolina, 2012b; Upcraft et al., 1989). Although freshman seminars vary widely
regarding specific topics, they share the common goal of meeting the academic, personal, and social needs of new students.

**FYE Seminar Types and Characteristics**

Because of the many variations in the terminology used to describe the term “freshman seminar,” there are difficulties in making an attempt to assign a fixed definition or description. According to Barefoot and Searcy (1994), the 1991 National Survey of Freshman Seminar Programming proposed and endorsed five of the most common seminar types: extended orientation seminars (freshman orientation), academic seminars with generally uniform academic content across sections (elective or required courses), academic seminars on various topics (specific faculty-chosen topics), professional seminars (taught by first-year professional school students), and basic study skills seminars (geared toward underprepared students). Whatever kind of program type the college decides to use, the main objective is always student retention (Myers, 2003).

Barefoot and Fidler (1993) noted that the 1991 National Survey research found several organizational characteristics found in freshman seminars: required or elective (45% were required), grading (68% earned a letter grade), academic credit (85% are for college credit), instruction (primarily taught by faculty and student affairs professionals), instructor training (71% offer instructor training), academic advising (23% of instructors are also academic advisors), special sections for student sub-groups (5% of institutions offer these), and outcomes (most commonly measured objective). Fidler (1991) stated that the relationships that students create with faculty, staff, and others demonstrate that the outcome of the freshman seminar is a positive experience. Johnson and McFadden (2000) also noted that one very important characteristic they observed was that “when
possible, and with proper training, instructional faculty should teach the seminar and facilitate academic monitoring and intervention” (p. 5).

**Projected Outcomes of First-year Programs**

Institutions have numerous fundamental goals in requiring students to have a first-year course or seminar. Some of the formal goals are that students will adapt good academic strategies, be able to navigate library services, realize the safety and other requirements while on campus, develop written and oral communication with others, learn time management, and ascertain ways to assist in career planning (University of South Carolina, 2012b). Colleges may also have some informal goals: encouraging academic and social integration, and providing a setting for students to associate with other students (Jamelske, 2009).

An effective FYE hinges on instructors who have the ability to connect with his or her students, teach them what need to know to mature while at the institution, and enhance their learning experience (Evenbeck, 2008). Some factors of a successful FYE program “are the following: pursuing assessment and accountability, supporting a community of practice, sharing lessons learned, and embracing continuity as a context for change” (p. 4). One mid-western community college campus has experienced many benefits of implementing FYE programs: increased enrollment of recent high school graduates and increased continuing student enrollment (Johnson & McFadden, 2000).

**Summary**

The secret of student happiness, and ultimately retention, is having an institution’s willingness to provide not only academic integration to its students, but also assist them in their development of social integration (Tinto, 1993). It is imperative that community
colleges study and restructure the learning environment to find ways to actively involve students with faculty, staff, and other students. Noel, Levitz, and Saluri (1985) stated that:

> It is the people who come face-to-face with students on a regular basis who provide the positive growth experiences for students that enable them to identify their goals and talents and learn how to put them to use. The caring attitude of college personnel is viewed as the most potent retention force on a campus. (p. 17)

When students are not able to become socially integrated into the college community, they are not likely to persist. Tinto (1993) stated that “students will be more likely to invest in great effort to learn where they become involved as members of the college community” (p. 71).
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this creative project was to find ways for community colleges to assist its first-year students in becoming more comfortable in their college environment. Studies show that students who are socially integrated are more likely to persist than those who are not (Tinto, 1987). This information will help students understand the role of social involvement and its importance in fostering a positive college experience and ultimately helping them reach their goals. A 10-week one credit hour first-year experience (FYE) course was created which is mandatory for first-time freshman under 25 years of age who are pursuing Associates of Arts or Science degrees and is to be taken during their first semester at a community college.

Methodology

The first steps of this creative project were to review literature related to this topic. The areas that were researched were social integration issues with first-time students at a community college, Tinto’s Theory of Persistence, and ways for institutions to assist its students. The information in the literature review provided background demonstrating that there has been much research showing that social integration is an integral part of the college experience. Next, an online search was conducted of FYE programs offered at various colleges with information from 11 colleges being researched.
in-depth. This information was then used to gather essential details about the FYE courses that they offer, mandatory and optional, with emphasis on those with mandatory courses. The college’s syllabi were examined and four parts of a FYE course were designed: a course catalog description, a syllabus, lesson plans, and a website with the syllabus details included.

**Design of Project**

The First-Year Experience Course was created to assist first-year community college students acclimate to the college environment. The community college will ask for faculty member to consider teaching the course. A four-hour training session will be held one week before the fall semester begins for instructors at which the course materials will be addressed. Since several sections of the FYE course will be offered, it is imperative that the instructors of all sections are using the same materials and receiving the same information. Consistency in teaching the course is of utmost importance. The fact that students will be able to utilize all of the information they receive in the course throughout their college career makes the instructors job an important one. Students who receive all of the course details should find it easier to maneuver their way through the college environment to persist and complete their college degree.

The course catalog course description was designed to give an overview to first-time freshmen of the general objectives in the course. Students who will be new to the community college who review the catalog in their quest to determine the courses they will need to take will be able to view this description and know the class concept before beginning the course. There will be several sections of the class available so that all students’ schedules will be accommodated.
The course will have a set syllabus for the students that all faculty instructors will follow. The syllabus will outline the following guidelines: course objectives, required text, attendance, participation, classroom conduct, cell phone and laptop, students with disabilities, communication with instructor, weekly journal, reflection paper, and grading. Information about each guideline will be written in detail with more information to be discussed by the instructor. A weekly schedule of textbook readings, papers, and quizzes will be listed by week so students can look ahead and plan accordingly.

The course will also have a set of lesson plans for the faculty member who will teach the course. The lesson plans will be specific as to the readings that are required and when they will be discussed. Information will be included on each weekly plan about the topic and assignment that will be either discussed or due during that class period. Weekly journal entry, critical thinking, counseling and advising reflection, and a final reflection papers will be due throughout the semester and are listed in the lesson plans.

Along with the syllabus, students will have a website that they can refer to which will assist them. The information included in the website will mirror the syllabus and include a link for questions or comments that the student can send directly to the webmaster. The webmaster will in turn forward the question or comment to the appropriate instructor. Students will be given information at their summer orientation program which will detail the requirement of the mandatory course that will be taken their first semester.
Summary

The First-Year Experience Course will provide a myriad of information for students who are facing their first semester of college. The course will offer essential materials that can not only be used for the course, but also as the student completes their college career. It will also assist the community college since students who are socially integrated will be more inclined to persist.
CHAPTER FOUR

A FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE COURSE FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

Project Summary

This creative project created a first-year experience course to be used by a community college. This course will provide valuable information for first-year freshman. This project was designed as a mandatory 10-week one credit hour course and includes a course description for the college’s course catalog, the syllabus, lesson plans, and a website that students can use during and after the course. By requiring this course for all first-year freshmen under 25 years of age, the community college can make certain that all students are receiving the same information about much-needed areas at the institution.

The project contains the following documents:

- Course Catalog: Course Description, page 31.
- Course Syllabus, page 32.
- Lesson Plans, page 36.
- Website Pages, page 46.
Course Catalog: Course Description

FYE 101

1 credit hour

Prerequisites: None. This 10-week mandatory course provides first-year freshman opportunities to receive an overview of skills and information that is necessary to attain their educational, career, and life goals. Areas of focus are: study skills, time management, critical thinking skills, academic preparation, learning about available curricular and co-curricular activities, and utilization of campus technology.
Syllabus: First-Year Course
FYE 101 (1 Credit hour)
Day of week, Time
Building and Room Number
Semester and Year

Instructor: Name and title
Office: Building name and room number
Email Address of Instructor: Email
Office Phone Number: xxx-xxx-xxxx
Office Hours: List of days and times

Class Website: http://fye101.weebly.com

It is the people who come face-to-face with students on a regular basis who provide the positive growth experiences for students that enable them to identify their goals and talents and learn how to put them to use. The caring attitude of college personnel is viewed as the most potent retention force on a campus.

-Noel, Levitz, & Saluri (1985)

Course Description and Objectives:
FYE 101 is a one-semester, one-credit hour course required of all first-time freshmen under 25 years of age. This course will provide first-year freshman opportunities to receive an overview of skills and information that is necessary to attain their educational, career, and life goals. This course will provide ways for you to actively participate in the college environment, define and give examples of critical thinking, interact with other students, and make it comfortable to transition to college life.

Required Text:
Roadways to Success; Williamson, McCandrew, and Muse; 4th Edition; 2007;
ISBN 0-13-171210-1

Attendance:
Class attendance is mandatory and will be taken at the beginning of each class session. The instructor must be contacted in advance of late arrivals or absences.

Participation:
This course is geared toward helping you become accustomed to the college environment and your learning will occur through in-class activities and class discussions. All assigned readings will need to be completed before each class begins.
**Classroom Conduct:**
Class discussion is expected and the views that each of you will provide will be relevant to the materials presented at each weekly class meeting. All students will respect the ideas that others choose to offer and appreciate their choice to share information. In order to facilitate learning, it is imperative that the classroom atmosphere be one of mutual respect.

**Cell Phones and Laptops:**
Cell phones are very disruptive to the learning environment. The use of cell phones and text messaging is prohibited while class is in session. Please turn cell phone off or put on silent during class. If you have an emergency which make it necessary to use cell phone in class, please see instructor. Laptops will be used for class work only.

**Students with Disabilities:**
If you are a student with a documented disability, please see the instructor to discuss necessary accommodations. Every attempt will be made to accommodate your needs.

**Communication with Instructor:**
If you have questions or comments about the course, do not hesitate to contact the instructor. You may do this by email, phone, or by making an appointment during the posted office hours.

**Weekly Journal:**
Students will keep a weekly typed journal over what they have learned in the required assignments. A one-page paper will be due each class period in weeks 2-10. You will be required to keep a copy in a binder which you will keep during the course for future reference.

**Reflection Paper:**
Students will reflect on what they have learned during the semester by developing a five-page paper and answering the following questions:

- Did you attend any activities during the semester that related to a subject in which you were interested?
- Did you attend any school organizations or clubs in which you plan to become more involved?
- Have the critical thinking tools been helpful to assist you with completing coursework for this class and others?
- What are your academic and personal goals for the future? Are you planning to transfer to a four-year institution after graduation?

This paper will be due on the last class day in lieu of a final test.
Grading:
All course work will be graded on content, neatness, and timeliness. Students should proofread and correct papers (invite classmates to read through your paper if you wish) before submitted at the beginning of class on the date it is due. Unless prior permission was given by the instructor, all late assignments will have 10 points deducted each day that it is late.

Paper Guidelines:
Each paper assignment should be typed with 12-point font and should be double-spaced. Please include your name, course section, and date in upper left corner of first page and staple all pages together prior to turning in to instructor.

Each assignment will be worth the following points:
- Attendance/Participation: 100 points
- Weekly journal: 125 points
- Quizzes (over assigned reading): 50 points
- Critical thinking paper: 50 points
- Advising reflection paper: 50 points
- Reaction paper: 50 points
- Final reflection paper: 125 points
  Total possible: 550 points

Grading scale:
A = 90-100% 495-550 points
B = 80-89% 440-494 points
C = 70-79% 385-439 points
D = 60-69% 330-384 points
F = 59% and below 329 or less points
Weekly schedule and assignments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Course and syllabus overview Discuss “Why are you in college?”</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Textbook reading – chapters 1-3 Know your campus: Review location of various offices on campus. Library tour.</td>
<td>Journal entry paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Managing yourself: Values, goals, and time management. Exercise: Weekly plan.</td>
<td>Journal entry paper Quiz over chapters 1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Advising and counseling speakers and overview: What do they offer me? How can they help me?</td>
<td>Journal entry paper Critical Thinking paper (2 pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Textbook reading – chapters 7-8 Reading and studying: How can you better focus on content?</td>
<td>Journal entry paper Advising reflection paper (2 pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Listening, note-taking, and memory: How to increase these abilities.</td>
<td>Journal entry paper Quiz over chapters 7-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Textbook reading – chapter 9 Test anxiety: Do you have this? How can you avoid this?</td>
<td>Journal entry paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Course and instructor evaluations What did you learn? Did it help you?</td>
<td>Journal entry paper Final reflection paper (5 pages)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lesson Plans for FYE 101
Week 1 – The Beginning

Learning Objectives

After Week 1 class students should be able to:

- Understand syllabus, textbook requirement, and course objectives.
- Understand parameters of weekly assignments and/or quizzes.

Lesson Outline

1. Begin class by instructor introduction. Have each student introduce themselves and state their intended college major.

2. Review syllabus, required textbook, and course objectives.

3. Discuss requirements for weekly journal entry papers – these papers should be one page in length and will focus on what was learned during the weekly class. These papers will be handed in at the beginning of each class time beginning with Week 2.

4. Discuss other papers that will be required: Reaction paper, Critical Thinking paper, Advising Reflection paper, and Final Reflection paper.

Homework Overview for Week 2

- Journal entry paper (1 page) due over what was learned in Week 1.
- Read chapters 1-3 in textbook and be prepared for discussion.
Lesson Plans for FYE 101
Week 2 – Know Your Campus

Learning Objectives

After Week 2 class students should be able to:

- Understand in more detail materials presented in chapters 1-3.
- Learn about the location of various offices at the colleges.
- Understand the many resources available in library.

Lesson Outline

1. Collect journal entry papers.
2. Review chapters 1-3 in textbook and conduct class discussion over information presented.
3. Handout campus maps and point out the location of pertinent offices.
4. Conduct tour of library (contact library staff ahead of time). Go over resources available and how students can utilize them.

Homework/Quiz Overview for Week 3

- Journal entry paper (1 page) due over what was learned in Week 2.
- Quiz over chapters 1-3.
Lesson Plans for FYE 101
Week 3 – Managing Yourself

**Learning Objectives**

After Week 3 class students should be able to:

- Learning to manage values, goals, and time management.
- Be able to make a realistic timeline of weekly values and goals.

**Lesson Outline**

1. Collect journal entry papers.
2. Hand out quiz over chapters 1-3 – give students 10 minutes to complete.
3. Discuss how students set values and goals for themselves.
4. Exercise: Have students set a timeline for this week with values and goals listed. Give examples of some “real” expectations for this exercise to make sure they understand parameters.
5. Review Reaction paper that is due next week over the exercise of setting a timeline and have students include their timeline (3 total pages).

**Homework/Quiz Overview for Week 4**

- Journal entry paper due (1 page) over what was learned in Week 3.
- Reaction paper (3 pages including timeline) due.
- Read chapters 4 and 8 in textbook and be prepared for discussion.
Lesson Plans for FYE 101
Week 4 – Critical Thinking

Learning Objectives

After Week 4 class students should be able to:

- Understand in more detail materials presented in chapters 4 and 8.
- Learn about problem-solving and decision-making through critical thinking.

Lesson Outline

1. Collect journal entry papers

2. Collect Reaction paper over Week 3 lesson.

3. Discuss with students what critical thinking skills are. Review chapters 4 and 8 in textbook. Assist students in learning about ways to improve problem-solving and making decisions that will enhance their ability to be successful in their college career.

4. Let students know that these same skills can also be applied to their lives outside college. Teach them how to determine most important to least important and make a list to this effect – and follow it!

5. Review Critical Thinking paper (2 pages) that is due next week over discussion and textbook information from today.

Homework/Quiz Overview for Week 5

- Journal entry paper (1 page) due over what was learned in Week 4.
- Critical Thinking paper due (2 pages).
- Advising and counseling center speakers.
Lesson Plans for FYE 101
Week 5 – Advising and Counseling

**Learning Objectives**

After Week 5 class students should be able to:

- Learn about services that are offered in the advising offices.
- Learn about services that are offered in the counseling offices.

**Lesson Outline**

1. Collect journal entry papers
2. Collect Critical Thinking papers.
3. Advising speaker - will discuss assistance in deciding major, how many hours to take each semester, and tutoring services.
4. Counseling speaker – will discuss counseling services, such as assistance in deciding major, study sessions, and personal counseling sessions.

**Homework/Quiz Overview for Week 6**

- Journal entry paper (1 page) due over what was learned in Week 5.
- Advising Reflection paper due over class discussion and speaker (2 pages).
- Read chapters 7-8 in textbook and be prepared for discussion.
Lesson Plans for FYE 101
Week 6 – Reading and Studying

Learning Objectives

After Week 6 class students should be able to:

- Understand how to be able to retain what is read and how to focus on content.
- Understand in more detail materials presented in chapters 7-8.

Lesson Outline

1. Collect journal entry papers.
2. Collect Advising Reflection papers.
3. Review chapters 7-8 in textbook which spotlight ways for students to read and retain what is read.
4. Do exercise with a page of textbook: Have student read page and then ask them questions for discussion and see how much detail is retained. Make sure students close book after reading the page.
5. Go over problems title “Applying what you know” on page 193 to reiterate what was discussed about ways to study effectively.

Homework/Quiz Overview for Week 7

- Journal entry paper (1 page) due over what was learned in Week 6.
- Quiz over chapters 7-8 from Week 6.
Lesson Plans for FYE 101
Week 7 – Listening, Note-taking, and Memory

Learning Objectives

After Week 7 class students should be able to:

- Learn about ways to increase listening skills, note-taking abilities, and memory.

Lesson Outline

1. Collect journal entry papers

2. Hand out quiz over chapters 7-8 from Week 6 – give students 10 minutes to complete.

3. Discuss way to increase listening skills and memory: Read paragraph from a magazine or book and inform students of how to pick out most important facts. Have class discussion to see how many students feel that they have good skills in these areas.

4. Discuss note-taking skills: Demonstrate how students should write only pertinent information that an instructor talks about.

Homework/Quiz Overview for Week 8

- Journal entry paper (1 page) due over what was learned in Week 7.

- Read chapter 9 in textbook and be prepared for discussion.
Lesson Plans for FYE 101
Week 8 – Test Anxiety

Learning Objectives

After Week 8 class students should be able to:

- Understand what test anxiety is and how it can affect grade outcomes.
- Be able to identify test anxiety symptoms and alleviate them.

Lesson Outline

1. Collect journal entry papers.
2. Review chapter 9 in textbook. Class discussion over their concept of test anxiety. Discuss ways to tell if test anxiety is affecting a student’s ability to perform well on tests and quizzes.
3. Review ways that textbook outlines to assist students in relaxation and stress relief techniques before taking a test – have all students practice this.

Homework/Quiz Overview for Week 9

- Journal entry paper (1 page) due over what was learned in Week 8.
- Read chapter 10 in textbook and be prepared for discussion.
Lesson Plans for FYE 101  
Week 9 - Wellness

Learning Objectives

After Week 9 class students should be able to:

- Ways to stay healthy in college.
- Learn about the financial aid process with a representative from the Financial Aid Office.

Lesson Outline

1. Collect journal entry papers.
2. Discuss chapter 10 in textbook which outlines steps to stay healthy in college.
3. Discuss the food pyramid on page 222.
4. Go over suggested ways to stay active: Walking or jogging, taking stairs instead of elevator, or riding bicycle.
5. Speaker: Financial Aid representative will discuss the financial aid process and answer any questions from students.

Homework/Quiz Overview for Week 10

- Journal entry paper (1 page) due over what was learned in Week 9.
- Final Reflection paper (5 pages) due over what was learned in whole course.
Lesson Plans for FYE 101
Week 10 - Evaluations

Learning Objectives

After Week 10 class students should be able to:

- Understand what the whole course was about and be able to use these skills for the rest of the students’ college careers.

Lesson Outline

1. Collect journal entry papers.
2. Collect Final Reflection paper (5 pages)
3. Discuss these questions: What did you learn? Did it help you?
4. Hand out course and instructor evaluations and have students leave after these are completed.
First-Year Experience Course

FYE 101 Syllabus

**Required Text:**

**Attendance:**
Class attendance is mandatory and will be taken at the beginning of each class session. The instructor must be contacted in advance of late arrivals or absences.

**Participation:**
This course is geared toward helping you become accustomed to the college environment and your learning will occur through in-class activities and class discussions. All assigned readings will need to be completed before each class begins.

**Classroom Conduct:**
Class discussion is expected and the views that each of you will provide will be relevant to the materials presented at each weekly class meeting. All students will respect the ideas that others choose to offer and appreciate their choice to share information. In order to facilitate learning, it is imperative that the classroom atmosphere be one of mutual respect.

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If you are a student with a documented disability, please see the instructor to discuss necessary accommodations. Every attempt will be made to accommodate your needs.

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If you have questions or comments about the course, do not hesitate to contact the instructor. You may do this by email, phones, or by making an appointment during the posted office hours.

**Weekly Journal:**
Students will keep a weekly typed journal over what they have learned in the required assignments. A one-page paper will be due each class period in weeks 2-10. You will be required to keep a copy in a binder which you will keep during the course for future reference. Work will be graded on content, neatness, and timeliness. Students should proofread and correct papers (invite classmates to read through your paper if you wish) before submitted at the beginning of class on the date it is due. Unless prior permission was given by the instructor, all late assignments will have 10 points deducted each day that it is late.
Each assignment will be worth the following points:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance/Participation</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Journal</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes over assigned reading</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking paper</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising reflection paper</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction paper</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final reflection paper</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total possible points:</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grading scale:**

- **A** = 90-100%  
  495-550 points
- **B** = 80-89%  
  440-494 points
- **C** = 70-79%  
  385-439 points
- **D** = 60-69%  
  330-384 points
- **F** = 59% and below  
  329 or less points
Weekly Assignment Schedule

**Week 1**  
Course and syllabus overview. Discuss "Why are you in college?"
- No assignment

**Week 2**  
- Journal entry paper due

**Week 3**  
Managing yourself: Values, goals, and time management.
- Journal entry paper due. Quiz over chapters 1-3.

**Week 4**  
Textbook reading - chapters 4 & 8. Critical thinking: How do you solve problems and make decisions?
- Journal entry paper due. Reaction paper - week #3 due (3 pages).

**Week 5**  
Speakers: Advising and counseling centers: What do they offer me? How can they help me?

**Week 6**  
Textbook reading - chapters 7-8. Reading and studying: How can you better focus on content.

**Week 7**  
Listening, note-taking, and memory: How to increase these abilities.
- Journal entry paper due. Quiz over chapters 7-8.

**Week 8**  
Textbook reading – chapter 9. Test anxiety: Do you have this? How can you avoid this?
- Journal entry paper due.

**Week 9**  
- Journal entry paper due.

**Week 10**  
Course and instructor evaluations. What did you learn? Did it help you?
REFERENCES


