Encouraging Engagement: A Comprehensive Assessment of an Initiative for First-Year Students

Thomas D. Burns, Frederick S. Foster-Clark, Laurie B. Hanich, Linda L. McDowell, Daniel F. O’Neill, Carol Y. Phillips, and Lisa R. Shibley

Millersville University of Pennsylvania

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Encouraging Engagement: A Comprehensive Assessment of an Initiative for First-Year Students

FYE Assessment Team

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Dr. Linda McDowell, First Year Experiences Coordinator
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Ms. Andrea Riffanacht, Graduate Assistant
Ms. Kylie Smith, Graduate Assistant
Ms. Lindsay Russell, Student Assistant
Overview of Presentation

• New FYE Program Model
  – Cornerstone of General Education revision plan
  – Three-credit, thematic seminars linked to a fundamentals course as part of a living-learning community
  – Student Affairs programming
  – Service learning
  – Peer Mentors

• Assessment Efforts & Findings
Overview of Presentation (cont.)

- Breakout Sessions
  - Qualitative Assessment: Civic Responsibility and Liberal Arts (writing prompts & rubrics)
  - Qualitative Assessment: Student and Faculty Perceptions (focus groups & interviews)
  - Developing the Overall Assessment Scheme
  - Common Reading Assessment
  - Coordinating Local and National Assessment Data
- Wrap-up: Lessons Learned and Future Directions
Profile of Millersville University

- Undergrad enrollment - 7259
  - 91% fulltime
  - 13% minority
  - 96% instate (Pennsylvania)

- Entering fall 2007 class of 1345 students (new freshman) –
  - Mean SATs = 1044;
  - Mean Percentile Rank = 68%

- 16th Ranked Public in US News & World Report’s Master’s Universities in the North

- Top Majors:
  - Undecided (881)
  - Business Administration (858)
  - Elementary Education (806)
  - Biology (542)
  - Industry & Technology (458)
  - Psychology (438)
  - Communications (416)
Section 1
Overview of the First Year Seminar/Learning Community Initiatives
The Charge

- Started in Fall 2001: Outgrowth of the Student Alcohol Abuse Task Force recommendations
- Develop potential models for a holistic first-year program
  - Social engagement
  - Civic engagement
  - Intellectual engagement
- Components to be included:
  - Enhanced advisement
  - Seminar course, the integrating element
  - Living/learning community with related programming
The Residential Component

Components
- All freshman housing
- Special programming (WOW*)
- Peer mentors
- Team building experiences
- Community building
- Tutoring on-site

*”What’s on Wednesday”

Outcomes
- Students make friends, congregate in groups
- Students form study groups with classmates
- Students like the residence hall experience
- Students involved in campus life
2003-2004 Residential Programs Assessment

- Almost 2000 students living in residence halls were surveyed about their satisfaction with staff performance and programming, in addition to security and facilities/maintenance.

- Students in a freshman living/learning dormitory rated several factors higher than students in general.

  *Living in the residence halls has been a positive experience for me.*

  \[
  \begin{align*}
  \text{General Student Population} & \quad 4.18 \\
  \text{Living Learning Dormitory} & \quad 4.26 \\
  \text{There’s a lot of community spirit in my hall} & \\
  \text{General Student Population} & \quad 3.50 \\
  \text{Living Learning Dormitory} & \quad 3.91 \\
  \end{align*}
  \]

Ranges: All scales based on 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree
Seminar/Learning Community Models

**UNIV 101**
- 1-credit extended orientation Seminar with linked fundamentals course (i.e., ENGL 110 or COMM 100)
- Socratic format
- Problem-based learning
- Co-curricular/ extracurricular assignments
- Service-learning
- Faculty as advisor

**UNIV 179/103**
- 3-credit, content-rich passion Seminar linked with fundamentals course
- General education credit
- Co-curricular/ extracurricular assignments
- Service-learning
- Faculty may or may not serve as advisor
## Evolution of FYE Program Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall 2001 to Fall 2004</th>
<th>Fall 2005</th>
<th>Fall 2006</th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNIV 101</strong> →</td>
<td><strong>UNIV 179</strong> →</td>
<td><strong>UNIV 179</strong> →</td>
<td><strong>UNIV 179</strong> →</td>
<td><strong>UNIV 103</strong> →</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(one credit)</td>
<td>(three credits)</td>
<td>(three credits)</td>
<td>(three credits)</td>
<td>(three credits)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students who were involved in a freshman seminar . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Had more serious conversations with students who were very different in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values than students who were not involved in a freshman seminar.</th>
<th>Means (all differences $p &lt; .05$) [Based on scale of 1 (Never) to 4 (Very Often)]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminar = 2.28</td>
<td>No Seminar= 2.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Worked more with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments than students who were not involved in a freshman seminar. | Seminar = 2.59 |
| --- | No Seminar= 2.32 |

| Worked more on a paper or project that required researching ideas or information from various sources than students who were not involved in a freshman seminar. | Seminar = 2.71 |
| --- | No Seminar= 2.40 |

| Asked more questions in class and contributed to class discussions than students who were not involved in a freshman seminar. | Seminar = 2.87 |
| --- | No Seminar= 2.63 |

| Came to class without completing readings or assignments less than students who were not involved in a freshman seminar. | Seminar = 1.61 |
| --- | No Seminar= 1.83 |

Students in the freshman seminar had more serious conversations with different students, worked more with classmates outside of class, researched for a paper more, contributed more to class, and came to class more prepared than students who were not in a freshman seminar.
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Freshman Year Mid-Term Survey – Fall 2005 Results

The one-credit seminar was rated higher than the three-credit seminar for meeting with faculty outside of class and marginally higher for evaluation of the entire educational experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students in the one-credit seminar met with faculty members outside of class for advising or to discuss assignments or grades more than students in the three-credit seminar.</td>
<td>One-Credit = 2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three-Credit= 1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( p &lt; .05 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Based on scale of 1 (Never) to 4 (Very Often)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students in the one-credit seminar evaluate their entire educational experience received at Millersville higher than students in the three-credit seminar.</td>
<td>One-Credit = 3.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three-Credit= 3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( p &lt; .10 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Based on scale of 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent)]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Components of the First-Year Inquiry Seminar

- Paired with first-year fundamental course (Composition or Speech)
- Living-learning connection (Students live together in Freshman residence halls)
- Service Learning (15 hours recommended)
- Attentive advising by seminar instructors with support from Resident Life and Exploratory programs
- Peer mentors (live in residence halls; one assigned to each seminar)
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Common Learning Objectives of the First-Year Inquiry Seminar

1. Communicating orally and in writing
2. Obtaining and evaluating information (information literacy)
3. Engaging in critical inquiry
4. Appreciating the importance of civic engagement
5. Understanding the importance of a liberal arts education
6. Making a successful transition into university life, both academically and socially
Selected First-Year Inquiry Seminar Topics

- Why We Hate
- Facing Fear
- Homes and Homelessness
- The Amish and the Media
- Scientific Revolutions: An Exploration of Method
- Culture, Science and Mathematics in the Pre-Columbian Americas
- Liberty and Justice for All: The Promise of American Education
- The Deindustrialization of America: Jobs Today, Gone Tomorrow
- Biodiversity and the Sixth Great Extinction
- IPod, YouTube - Our Technological Choices
- The Perfect Beat: A Social History of Rock and Roll
- Public Health: Science and Art in Action
- What Turns You On? Minds, Motivation, and Learning
- The Great IQ Debate
Evolution of FYE Program Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall 2001 to Fall 2004</th>
<th>Fall 2005</th>
<th>Fall 2006</th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNIV 101</strong> (one credit)</td>
<td><strong>UNIV 179</strong> (three credits)</td>
<td><strong>UNIV 179</strong> (three credits)</td>
<td><strong>UNIV 179</strong> (three credits)</td>
<td><strong>UNIV 103</strong> (three credits)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 2
Assessment of the Program
Assessment Components (Fall 2006 & Fall 2007 Cohorts)

- Pretest-Posttest Survey
  - Higher Education Values Inventory (HEVI; selected scales only in 2007)
  - Openness to Diversity & Challenge
  - Quick Discrimination Index (2007)
- Pretest-Posttest Open-Ended Responses
  - Civic Responsibility
  - Liberal Arts
- Information Literacy Assessment (2006)
- NSSE (End of spring term)
- End-of-Semester Focus Groups (students, Peer Mentors)
- Faculty Survey
- Persistence/Retention data
Higher Education Values Inventory (HEVI)

Family Expectations**
- My family would be disappointed if I were just an average student.

Scholastic Focus
- I find it difficult to study when there are more interesting things to do. (R)

Achievement Value**
- High grades are important to me.

General Education Value
- General education requirements are a waste of my time. (R)

Achievement Obstacles
- I would do better in school if other obligation took less of my time.

Notes: ** only subscales used in Fall 2007
(R) indicates reverse scoring
Openness to Diversity & Challenge

- The courses I enjoy the most are those that make me think about things from a different perspective.

- Contact with individuals whose background (e.g., race, national origin, sexual orientation) is different from my own is an essential part of my college education.

- I enjoy courses that are intellectually challenging.
Comparison of Pre-Test/Post-Test Means (Fall 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>( p ) value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEVI: Family Expectations</td>
<td>2.98 (.79)</td>
<td>2.98 (.86)</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEVI: Scholastic Focus</td>
<td>3.03 (.74)</td>
<td>2.84 (.79)</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEVI: Achievement Value</td>
<td>3.39 (.66)</td>
<td>3.37 (.65)</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEVI: General Education Value</td>
<td>3.45 (.59)</td>
<td>3.41 (.71)</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEVI: Achievement Obstacles</td>
<td>2.35 (.64)</td>
<td>2.49 (.78)</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to Diversity/Challenge</td>
<td>3.80 (.56)</td>
<td>3.94 (.68)</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: \( N \)'s ranged from 212 to 215; standard deviations in parentheses. 
Ranges: All scales based on 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree
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Quick Discrimination Index (QDI)

Cognitive Racial
• I think affirmative action programs on college campuses constitute reverse discrimination. (R)

Affective Racial
• I feel I could develop an intimate relationship with someone from a different race.

Women’s Equity
• I think it is more appropriate for the mother of the baby, rather than the father, to stay home with the baby during the first year. (R)

Total Scale
• Items from above subscales plus additional items
• All Americans should learn to speak two languages.

Note: (R) indicates reverse scoring
### Comparison of Pre-Test/Post-Test Means (Fall 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEVI: Family Expectations</td>
<td>3.09 (.71)</td>
<td>3.17 (.75)</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEVI: Achievement Value</td>
<td>3.33 (.71)</td>
<td>3.33 (.70)</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to Diversity/Challenge</td>
<td>3.72 (.50)</td>
<td>3.70 (.62)</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QDI: Cognitive Racial</td>
<td>3.20 (.33)</td>
<td>3.22 (.36)</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QDI: Affective Racial</td>
<td>3.61 (.42)</td>
<td>3.62 (.43)</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QDI: Women’s Equity</td>
<td>3.00 (.38)</td>
<td>2.96 (.37)</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** N’s ranged from 238 to 244; standard deviations in parentheses. Based on paired samples t tests.

**Ranges:** All scales based on 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.
Writing Prompts

Civic Responsibility
What is civic responsibility? [pre- & post-]

Liberal Arts
What is a liberal arts education? [pre- & post-]
### Encouraging Engagement: A Comprehensive Assessment of an Initiative for First-Year Students

#### Responses to Liberal Arts Writing Prompt (Pretest - Fall 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Off Target (1)</th>
<th>Partial/Developing (2)</th>
<th>On Target (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>The response indicates a misconception, lack of understanding, or may be incorrect regarding liberal arts education.</td>
<td>The response indicates a more limited understanding of a liberal arts education. Responses may focus on skills or dispositions but may be limited to one’s professional study, rather than across different disciplines.</td>
<td>The response indicates a well developed conceptualization and understanding of liberal arts education. Responses focus on the purpose of liberal arts to foster skills and dispositions about ways of knowing across different disciplines (e.g., problem solving, critical reflection, communication, computation). Responses are stated with context of multiple disciplines.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Examples of responses** | • Required for graduation  
• Related to arts, music, performance  
• Related to politics or political ideology  
• Major course/vocation courses  
• I don’t know  
• Incorrect answers | • Study of different cultures  
• Exposure to different perspectives (e.g., not formal disciplines or subjects).  
• General education (basic education)  
• Reading, writing, thinking, science, math.  
• Individual attributes (e.g., being smart, studious, etc.)  
• Well rounded person | • Exposure to different disciplines, courses, or subject areas  
• Ways of knowing about things from many different perspectives.  
• Designed to develop understanding, knowledge, and appreciation outside of one’s area of expertise.  
• Well rounded education |
| **Percentages (N)** | 49.0% (74) | 41.7% (63) | 9.3% (14) |
## Responses to Civic Responsibility Writing Prompt (Pretest-Fall 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Off Target (1)</th>
<th>Partial/Developing(2)</th>
<th>On Target (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The response indicates a misconception, lack of understanding, or may be incorrect regarding civic responsibility.</td>
<td>The response indicates a developing conceptualization or understanding of civic engagement yet is limited in scope. Responses focus on individual characteristics or interpersonal traits/skills, but don’t extend to how collective members of society are affected or how the community in which one resides is impacted. Responses are not stated in the context of community.</td>
<td>The response indicates a well developed conceptualization and understanding of civic engagement. Responses focus on the notion of civic engagement in a broad sense, by identifying how collective members of society are affected or how the community in which one resides is impacted. Responses are stated within the context of a community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of responses</td>
<td>Doing well in school</td>
<td>Descriptive traits that are not within a community context (good, respectful, kind, nice, etc).</td>
<td>Being a good citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>Personal/individual/family responsibilities</td>
<td>Giving back to the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incorrect answers</td>
<td>A personal “duty”</td>
<td>Helping others/neighbors in need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Being a good person</td>
<td>Adhering to laws or standards of the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Promoting common good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Actively engaged in political process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentages (N)</td>
<td>41.7% (63)</td>
<td>24.5% (37)</td>
<td>33.8% (51)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Levels of Elaboration in Writing Prompts (Pretest -- Fall 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Elaboration – Liberal Arts (Pretest)</th>
<th>Shallow (1)</th>
<th>Partial/Developing (2)</th>
<th>Deep (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Response includes shallow ideas with limited and unelaborated details. Response does not include evidence of critical reflection, insight, synthesis, or analysis.</td>
<td>Response includes minimal ideas that are supported with vague or simplistic details. Response is limited in critical reflection, insight, synthesis, or analysis.</td>
<td>Response includes deep and complex ideas that are supported by rich details. Response includes evidence of reflection, insight, synthesis, or analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentages (N)</td>
<td>28.5% (43)</td>
<td>55.6% (84)</td>
<td>15.9% (24)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Elaboration – Civic Responsibility (Pretest)</th>
<th>Shallow (1)</th>
<th>Partial/Developing (2)</th>
<th>Deep (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Response includes shallow ideas with limited and unelaborated details. Response does not include evidence of critical reflection, insight, synthesis, or analysis.</td>
<td>Response includes minimal ideas that are supported with vague or simplistic details. Response is limited in critical reflection, insight, synthesis, or analysis.</td>
<td>Response includes deep and complex ideas that are supported by rich details. Response includes evidence of reflection, insight, synthesis, or analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentages (N)</td>
<td>23.2% (35)</td>
<td>49.0% (74)</td>
<td>27.8% (42)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Comparison of Pre-Test/Post-Test Means (Fall 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>$p$ value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts Content</td>
<td>1.64 (.66)</td>
<td>1.99 (.80)</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts Level of Elaboration</td>
<td>1.90 (.62)</td>
<td>1.82 (.58)</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Responsibility Content</td>
<td>1.78 (.83)</td>
<td>2.32 (.71)</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Responsibility Level of Elaboration</td>
<td>2.01 (.70)</td>
<td>1.98 (.61)</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: $N = 122$ for Liberal Arts coding; $N = 114$ for Civic Responsibility coding; standard deviations in parentheses.*

*Range: All scales based on 1 = off target/shallow to 3 = on target/deep*
Pretest and Posttest Responses – Conceptions of the Liberal Arts – Fall 2007
Pretest and Posttest Responses – Conceptions of Civic Responsibility – Fall 2007

Response Coding

- Off Target
- Middle
- On Target

Pretest
Posttest
Encouraging Engagement: A Comprehensive Assessment of an Initiative for First-Year Students

Criteria for Information Literacy Competency – Fall 2006

The student...

• Identifies a variety of types and formats of potential sources.
• Summarizes the main ideas.
• Synthesizes main ideas to construct new concepts.
• Compares new knowledge with prior knowledge to determine the value added, contradictions, or other unique characteristics of information.
• Applies new and prior information to the planning and creation of the essay.

Assessed by Library faculty using a sample of 29* student papers drawn from four different sections of UNIV 179 in Fall 2006.

Note: * 12 additional papers from another section were initially identified for the sample but the nature of the assigned task was inconsistent with the application of the rubrics.
## Assessment Rubric for Student Essays

### Based on “Criteria for Information Literacy Competency”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The student…</th>
<th>Novice</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Accomplished</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Summarizes the main ideas</td>
<td>□ In developing the essay, the student has not selected the main ideas from the information gathered</td>
<td>□ In developing the essay, the student has selected data accurately</td>
<td>□ Within the essay, the student has appropriately identified verbatim material and appropriately quoted it</td>
<td>□ Within the essay, the student has summarized the main ideas from information sources and restated concepts in his/her own words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 4. Compares new knowledge with prior knowledge to determine the value added, contradictions, or other unique characteristics of information | □ Within the essay, the student does not express whether information gathered satisfies the information need | □ Within the essay, the student tests theories with appropriate techniques | □ Within the essay, the student appears to have consciously selected criteria to evaluate information from other sources and has drawn conclusions based upon information gathered | □ Within the essay, the student has integrated new information with prior knowledge and selected information that provides evidence for the topic. □ The student has determined probably accuracy by questioning the source of information and the reasonableness of conclusions |
### Information Literacy Competency – Fall 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Aggregate Score*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifies a variety of types and formats of potential sources</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarizes the main ideas</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesizes main ideas to construct new concepts</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compares new knowledge with prior knowledge to determine the value added, contradictions, or other unique characteristics of information</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applies new and prior information to the planning and creation of a the essay.</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Scale*: 1 = Novice; 2 = Developing; 3 = Proficient; 4 = Accomplished

Assessed by Library faculty using a sample of 29 student papers drawn from four different sections of UNIV 179.
Common Reading Program


- **Overview:**
  - Fall orientation program
  - One component of first-year programming

- **Academic Programming:**
  - Book discussions during fall orientation with incoming students
  - Author lecture presentation in September

- **Assessment:**
  - Student feedback on surveys after book discussions (e.g., open-ended responses about perceptions of book).
  - Facilitator feedback on surveys after book discussions (e.g., open-ended responses about perceptions of book and perceptions of student behaviors).
Common Reading Program


- Activities:
  - Book discussions during fall orientation with incoming students
  - Author lecture presentation in September
  - Writing Contest
  - Film series on children of war
  - Trick or Treat for UNICEF
  - Common text integrated into some ENGL and COMM courses

- Assessment:
  - Student feedback on surveys after book discussions (e.g., more close-ended items)
  - Facilitator feedback on surveys after book discussions (e.g., open and close-ended responses, program development)
Focus Group with FYI Students: Questions Asked

• One of the things I enjoyed most:

• One of the things I enjoyed least:

• How was living in the Freshman Hall?

• If you could help design the freshman seminar for next year’s students, what would you insist on? Be specific. Location, format/structure, issues covered, activities?
Focus Group: One of the things I enjoyed most about the FYI seminar

• “It is helpful when your professor is also your advisor.”
• “I got to know a lot of people who have similar interests.”
• “It was easy to make friends.”
• “I received help with registration.”
• “I enjoyed the seminar format.”

The overall impression one gets when reading the student comments for this question is most of the freshmen that participate in these living/learning communities feel that they benefit from this experience both socially and academically.
Focus Groups with Peer Mentors

- Learned “life long skills”:
  - Communication
  - Time management
  - Problem solving
  - Crisis management
- Increased personal engagement with the university community through Peer Mentor experience
- Gratified by helping students with difficulties and “giving back” for help they received as freshmen
- Saw faculty as their mentors
Faculty Reactions: Rewards

- “Energizing--got me out of a teaching rut!”
- “I enjoyed a chance to spread my wings after a steady diet of required courses.”
- “Camaraderie with other faculty”
- “Got to know students well—both academically and personally.”
- “Being both teacher and advisor made me better at both!”
- “I could convey to students that college involves a high level of intellectual rigor…students rose to my high expectations.”
- “I enjoyed seeing the students blossom. They came in quiet and reserved and by the end of the semester they were engaging in discussion and debate.”
- “Students were ‘incredible’…attendance was phenomenal, the students were engaged, they participated, and they asked questions routinely. It was like teaching seniors.”
- “The students knew each other very well, and they often worked on course material or discussed that material in the dorms.”
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Faculty Reactions: Challenges

• Developing a brand new course involves a tremendous amount of work and preparation.
• Choosing the course topic well. The ideal topic “has clear impact on students’ personal lives…and can be treated with academic integrity.”
• Balancing course content and goals with attention to students’ general academic and personal progress
• Service Learning component is often the most difficult part of the course to administer. Identifying service opportunities, arranging transportation and other logistics etc. requires considerable advance planning and coordination with other campus offices.
• “Students didn’t get the seminar concept. At the beginning of the semester they were frustrated I wasn’t lecturing. I need to better prepare them for what a seminar is.”
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Persistence into Sophomore Year for Exploratory Students at Millersville – Fall 2001 to Fall 2006

- FYE Program
- Other Undecided
Section 3
Breakout Sessions
Breakout Sessions

First Breakout Period

• Qualitative Assessment: Liberal Arts and Civic Responsibility (writing prompts & rubrics) – green handouts
• Qualitative Assessment: Student and Faculty Perceptions (focus groups & interviews) – yellow handouts
• Developing the Overall Assessment Scheme – blue handouts

Second Breakout Period

• Qualitative Assessment: Civic Responsibility and Liberal Arts (writing prompts & rubrics) – green handouts
• Common Reading Assessment – pink handouts
• Coordinating Local and National Assessment Data – lavender handouts
Section 4
Lessons Learned and Future Directions
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Conclusion: Lessons Learned

- Assessment is needed to “sell” the program
- Seek efficiency through use of existing processes & data collection opportunities
- Embed assessment into courses & programs
- Avoid over-testing and survey burnout
- Collect data in seminar/other courses to enhance participation rates
- Stay flexible: Learn how to do assessment better as you go along
Conclusion: Future Directions

- Ongoing refinement of rubrics to enhance reliability & validity
- Continued assessment of students as juniors/seniors (longitudinal analysis)
- Looking at graduation rates & retention beyond the second year
- Linkage to the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education
Wrapping Up: Q & A

Are there any remaining questions or comments?
Thanks for attending our presentation. We hope our work is helpful to you in your own program development and assessment efforts.

Further information is available from our website: http://muweb.millersville.edu/~fye

Contact information follows on the next slide.
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Go to http://muweb.millersville.edu/~fye for information about our FYE program.