

It's in the Syllabus ... or Is It?

First Year Seminars and the Importance of Transparency

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What are some things we expect students to learn in the first year of college that they are not learning?

Which of these things should be taught in a first-year seminar?

How can we focus our work across campus to better teach students both in first-year seminars and beyond?



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Things we expect students to learn but we are not always sure
how they learn it
 (“hidden learning” in the first year)

- Where to find resources on campus when you need them
- How to connect with others on campus to develop a sense of belonging
- How and why to talk to professors
- How to develop a growth mindset about academic struggle
- How to study
- The purpose of general education
- Why diversity is a priority on a college campus
- How to read a syllabus
- Understand norms of a college classroom

Ironies of “hidden learning” required for success in college

- Research shows that hidden lessons are the things that are *most important* for student success in the first and second years of college
 - Factors that lead to increased success in first year
 - Feel connected to institution
 - Confidence interacting with faculty and staff
 - Believe they are capable of learning material
 - Perceived purpose of coursework
- Students who leave college the most frequently (first generation students and those from underrepresented groups) are *least likely* to learn these hidden lessons
- How do we make these lessons less hidden?

*Felton and Lambert, 2020

Tristan Denley, Tennessee Board of Regents, 2018

Jillian Kinze, 45 minutes ago

Part of the answer: The FYS Common Experience

Modules

- Week 1: Campus resources
- Week 2: Involvement
- Week 3: Belonging in college
- Week 4: How and why to talk to your professors
- Week 5: Developing a growth mindset
- Week 6: Learning how to study better
- Week 7: The purpose of general education
- Week 8: Diversity on a college campus
- Week 9: Registering for classes
- Week 10: College and your career
- Week 11: It Make\$ Cents!
- Week 12: Scholarships
- Week 13: Conclusion

Backward design of a FYS

- Primary classroom goals of FYS 100
 - Building relationships with and between students
 - Just-in-time information and answers
 - Problem-based learning
 - Opportunities to discover relevance of learning
 - Belonging
 - Growth mindset
 - Skills to succeed in college
 - Class as a transition community**

How we get there

- Faculty development: Instructor certification
- Closing the loop: Ongoing communication about purpose of the class and what students should be learning
- Adaptability: COVID lessons in FYS 2021–22
 - How COVID has influenced student experience/preparedness
 - High levels of anxiety due to unpredictability
 - Wide variability in accountability to course and faculty expectations
 - Students unfamiliar with the expectations of (college) classrooms

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A (Very) Brief History of First Year Seminars at UWGB

- The Beginnings

- Highly structured
- Collaboratively developed and implemented
- Common components

- 2014 – Gen Ed Reform Makes the FYS a Requirement

- The unintended consequence → unmoored from its intent
- The Gateways to Phoenix Success (GPS) Program sustained the course's roots ... and then some!

Recognizing the Importance of the FYS during the Pandemic

- Making Sense of the Senior Years of the Class of 2024 and 2025
 - High school isn't what you remember it as!
- Campus Conversations about EDI
 - The importance of making the "hidden curriculum" seen
 - Cultivating students' sense of belonging
- Recognizing a "Captive Audience" When You Have It
 - Delivering essential campus messages
 - Understanding the student experience

The Present State of First Year Seminars at UWGB

- “Expectations” Set
 - Training designed to bring seminars back to their beginnings
 - All First Year Seminars must....
- HIP Taxonomy Pilot
 - Developed by an “advisory board” of experienced profs
 - 12 participants
 - Plan: Assess, review, revise

The Future of First Year Seminars at UWGB

- **Becoming an Access Institution Requires First Year Seminars to Answer the Call to Lead the Culture Shift**
 - From “College Ready” to “Student Ready”
- **The First Year Seminar Needs to Be a Laboratory**
 - Skills need to be experimented with, applied to account for variables of other courses, and reflection on the outcomes
- **GPS for All = A True First Year Experience**

Questions for discussion

- *What are some things we expect students to learn in the first year of college that they are not learning?*
- *Which of these things should be taught in a first-year seminar?*
- *How can we focus our work across campus to better teach students both in first-year seminars and beyond?*