

## **First-Year Experience: A Selective Annotated Bibliography**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper provides a selective annotated bibliography of journal articles addressing the issues relating to the First-Year Experience with special attention to academic advising & support; adjustment to university/college; curriculum; retention as they relate to the university environment. The bibliography draws on the specific contributions made to the literature from the Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition. The information presented in this paper is intended to assist and facilitate further research by raising the awareness of the literature.*

**Key words:** *First year experience; academic advising & support; adjustment to university/college; curriculum; retention.*

## Introduction

In recent years the focus on the First-Year Experience (FYE) of students has grown as a result of greater attention to the attrition rates being experienced by Australian universities. This has been given prominence by the instigation of Conferences dedicated specifically to addressing the First Year Experience supported by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, which is an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Leading proponents for research into the FYE have been able to facilitate debate from across a broad range of academic as well as administrative experiences. Prominent amongst the outcomes are the works regarding topics such as a framework for best practice (Kruase, McEwan & Blinco, 2009), embedding transition practices into first year curriculum (Kift & Nelson, 2005) and a model for university wide change (Pikethly & Prosser, 2001). The conferences have provided an opportunity for the development of research to better understand the issues surrounding the First-Year Experience.

A search on the databases EBSCO Host, HW Wilson and Gale Publishing reveals that there is an extensive literature pertaining to the First-Year Experience at the university level. The topics are however dispersed according to a diverse number of aspects and these are summarised in Table 1 according to generally identifiable categories:

**Table 1**

*General Categories of FYE research publications*

Academic advising and support services available to first years
Adjustment to university/college life
Administrative and structural issues
Admission policies
Building community (learning communities)
Curriculum issues
Effect of course type on first year learning
First year survival strategies
Groupings: socio-cultural, socio-economic, minority, gender, race, ethnic, disabled, overseas
Initiation issues
Orientation issues
Parental attachment and psychological separation
Personal goals and the first year experience
Predicting and promoting success in the first year transition
Religion and the first year experience
Retention issues
Social and emotional adjustment, self-esteem issues
Student learning issues
Student motivation issues
Student profile reports

Whilst there are a number of journals which have contributed to the literature and may have been influential in the development of research initiatives this bibliography is focused on the Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition. This journal was chosen because it is discipline neutral and is dedicated to the topic. As the web site explains:

*“The Journal of the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition is a semiannual refereed journal providing current research and scholarship on the first college year and other significant student transitions. The primary purpose of the Journal is to disseminate empirical research findings on student transition issues, including:*

- *Explorations into the academic and social experiences of first-year college students, sophomores, juniors, and seniors*
- *Transition issues unique to specific populations (e.g., nontraditional, traditional, ethnic minority, transfer, commuter, and part-time students)*
- *Examination of institutional policies and programs that affect students in transition “*

<http://sc.edu/fye/journal/submission.htm> - accessed 9/09/2009)

## Method

The articles published in the journal are presented in alphabetical order of the first author’s surname and are categorised according to the topics identified in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
*Categories of FYE research*

Topic	Number of journal articles	Starting page
Academic Advising and Support	25	44
Adjustment to University/College	5	49
Curriculum	27	51
Retention	27	57

These categories were selected on the basis that they are consistent with the current work being undertaken on the development of a framework (Kruase, McEwan & Blinco, 2009), as well as the embedding of transition practices into first year curriculum (Kift & Nelson, 2005) and addressing issues pertaining to a model for university wide change (Pikethly & Prosser, 2001).

The abstracts have been annotated to provide basic details on the issue addressed in the reported study and the subsequent findings where relevant.

## Academic Advising and Support

The topic of Academic Advising and Support is concerned with the quest to optimise first-year student experience by interventions designed to accommodate the transition period. The concern is that too much intervention can lead to dependency or boredom and not enough can lead to loss of confidence. Studies have shown that informal programs can be equally as influential as formal methods that focus on academic and time management skills. Student attitudes, including the gap between expectations and experience, need to be targeted and managed. An important finding is that student needs change over time and a program most likely to succeed will be dynamic and flexible. Studies have also reported that gender can be a significant factor.

Aldridge, M., & Delucia, R. C. (1989). Boredom: The academic plague of first-year students. 1(2), 43-56.

The paper examines the concept that many first-year students experience academic boredom, which hinders learning and academic integration.

The paper posits that through an understanding of the factors that cause boredom, institutions can confront this problem through various policies and programs.

Brower, A. M. (1997). Prototype matching and striving for future-selves: Information management strategies in the transition to college. 9(1), 7-42.

The paper analyzes the literature to present a sequence of decisions that students make in their transition to college.

The paper argues that universities can best present information and support to students by knowing the particular phase in which those students are currently involved.

Eison, J. (1990). "Why study?" A guide for discussion leaders. 2(1), 119-126.

The paper presents a theoretically based activity designed to motivate first-year students to study.

Related topic heading(s): Curriculum.

Eison, J., & Holtschlag, D. (1989). Time management difficulties: A self-assessment and problem-solving activity. 1(1), 99-110.

Using the Problems in Time Survey (PITS), instructors of first-year seminars can assist students in identifying personal time management weaknesses and can use strategies to modify students' behavior.

Related topic heading(s): Curriculum.

Fuertes, J. N., Sedlacek, W. E., Roger, P. R., & Mohr, J. J. (2000). Correlates of universal-diverse orientation among first-year university students. 12(1), 45–59.

The study measured UDO (universal-diverse orientation) among a sample group of students.

The results were that UDO levels had some modest but significant correlation with factors such as academic self-confidence and help-seeking behaviors. Implications of findings and suggestions are included.

Related topic heading(s): Assessment, Student Behavior, Characteristics, & Development.

Gallagher, D. J., & Allen, N. (2000). First-year initiatives and results of a year-long advising pilot study: A proposed advising model. 12(2), 107–128.

The study investigates expectation-experience discrepancies and tests the hypothesis that a focus on first-year developmental advising would be related to increased satisfaction with advising and with the institution.

A stratified random sampling was used to select 140 first-year students from the fall 1997 class at a small independent comprehensive college in suburban Philadelphia. Of this sample, 70 students were assigned randomly to the pilot and control groups. Seven faculty advisors volunteered to meet frequently with advisees. The papers concludes with a proposal for an advising structure.

Related topic heading(s): Assessment.

Gold, M., Deming, M. P., & Stone, K. (1992). The bridge: A summer enrichment program to retain African American collegians. 4(2), 101-117.

This paper examines a four-week summer enrichment (summer bridge) program at Georgia State University. The program was targeted at African-American students who entered the college in the fall, with the goal of preparing the students for college-level coursework and increasing their rate of retention.

Related topic heading(s): Retention.

Gordon, V. N., & Steele, G. E. (2003). Undecided first-year students: A 25-year longitudinal study. 15(1), 19-38.

This study surveyed undecided first-year students over a 25-year period to obtain a profile that could be used to target their changing educational and career advising needs.

The students' responses over this period were consistent in terms of their demographic characteristics, reasons for attending college, levels of undecidedness, and type of advising requested. On the other hand, their levels of anxiety about choosing a major and their areas of academic and career interest reported changed slightly over the years.

Hayes, J., Munro, S., Arnold, L., & Duckwall, J. (1993). A support program for freshman medical students. 5(1), 77-92.

The paper describes the Year One Support Program, an intervention designed to help students face the curriculum and developmental task demands associated with enrollment in the University of Missouri, Kansas City School of Medicine.

Helm, E., Sedlacek, W. E., & Prieto, D. (1998). Career advising issues for entering African-American students. 10(2), 77–88.

The paper presents a model of career advising based on noncognitive variables. Questionnaires were administered to 343 African-American, first-year students at a large eastern university to examine their needs and interests on a variety of topics including career and advising issues.

The study found that students most often reported going to college for job-related reasons. More males were likely to leave college to take a job than females while females were less sure of getting a job after graduation. The paper recommendations include how to make referrals to a career counselor.

Related topic heading(s): Students of Color, Student Behavior, Characteristics, & Development.

<p>Holt, D., &amp; Eison, J. (1989). Preparing freshmen to take essay examinations successfully. 1(2), 108-119.</p> <p>This article offers ten recommendations for instructors who wish to improve student writing skills.</p>
<p>Iaccino, J. F. (1989). Evaluation of Illinois Benedictine's freshman advising program. 1(1), 45-52.</p> <p>The importance of assessing advising programs is exemplified through Illinois Benedictine's evaluation and refinement of its Freshman Advising Program.</p>
<p>Iaccino, J. F. (1991). Assessment and comparison of advising for freshmen and upperclassmen. 3(2), 75-90.</p> <p>First-year students reported that their faculty advisors were more concerned about adjustments to college while upperclassmen rated advisors high on academically oriented dimensions such as knowledge about major courses and graduation requirements.</p>
<p>Kramer, G. L., Taylor, L. K., Rich, M. A., &amp; Udarbe, J. (1993). Using an automated freshman profile to advise the first year student, 5(2), 29-48.</p> <p>The paper documents the design, implementation and analysis of the Automated Freshman Profile concept at Brigham Young University.</p> <p>The paper addresses the selection of faculty as first-year student advisors, and provides a discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of the program.</p>
<p>Lipsky, S. A., &amp; Ender, S. C. (1990). Impact of a study skills course on probationary students' academic performance. 2(1), 7-15.</p> <p>Statistically significant improvements in retention and grade point averages resulted from exposing students to a one-credit study skills course. Related topic heading(s): Special Programs, Student Sub-Populations.</p>
<p>Logan, C. R., Salisbury-Glennon, J., &amp; Spence, L. D. (2000). The Learning Edge Academic Program: Toward a community of learners. 12(1), 77-104.</p> <p>The paper describes a comprehensive summer program for first-year students at a large research university. Data are presented to provide evidence for continuing programs that offer incoming student assistance in both curricular and social support mechanisms.</p> <p>The results suggest that participating first-year students are more likely to report positive college experience and greater ease in using technology.</p> <p>Related topic heading(s): Learning Communities.</p>
<p>Murtuza, A., &amp; Ketkar, K.W. (1995). Evaluation the cost-effectiveness of a freshman studies program on an urban campus. 7(1), 7-26.</p> <p>The study examined the cost-effectiveness of the Freshman Studies Program at Seton Hall University.</p> <p>The findings suggest that the program represented not only an effective approach to fulfilling the need for first-year student advisement but also the most financially sound method available.</p> <p>Related topic heading(s): Academic Advising &amp; Support.</p>

Noldon, D. F., Kim, S. H. & Sedlacek, W. E. (2000). The best and the worst: College seniors' experiences with academics and services. 12(2), 89-106.

Telephone surveys were used to measure college seniors' satisfaction with university academic and student services. A random sample of 155 seniors at a large eastern university described their best and worst experiences.

The results indicate that gender is a factor in determining preference for various types of services.

Related topic heading(s): Academic Advising & Support; Student Behavior, Characteristics, & Development.

Rice, R. (1992). Reactions of participants to either one-week pre-college orientation or to freshman seminar courses. 4(2), 85-100.

The study compares the reactions of first-year Oregon State University students to three different types of orientation/first-year seminar offerings.

The findings accent the importance of investigating the growing variety of first-year seminars in order to be able to identify their common effect and distinguish their differing impacts upon first-year students.

Related topic heading(s): First-Year Seminars-General.

Schein, H. K., & Bowers, P. M. (1992). Using living/learning centers to provide integrated campus services for freshmen. 4(1), 59-77.

The article presents a synopsis of living/learning centers at large universities, and it offers a case study of evaluation of a living/learning center academic program at the University of Illinois.

Related topic heading(s): Residence Life.

Somers, P. (1994). Analysis of the impact of student financial aid on first-time enrollment: A case study. 6(2), 101-118.

The paper presents some methods that institutions can employ to research the influence of financial aid on first-time enrollment.

The results of the study are presented, and implications for students and the institution are discussed.

Related topic heading(s): Financial Aid.

Strumpf, G., & Hunt, P. (1993). The effects of an orientation course on the retention and academic standing of entering freshmen, controlling for the volunteer effect. 5(1), 7-14.

This study examined the effect of an orientation course on the retention and academic standing of first-time, full-time first-year students.

The findings suggest that the orientation course is a successful method for increasing the rate of retention.

Related topic heading(s): First-Year Seminars-Outcomes, Retention.

Wilkie, C., & Redondo, B. (1996). Predictors of academic success and failure of first-year college students. 8(2), 17-32.

The study examined the possibility of predicting academic success of first-year students from self-reports of attitudes and behaviors during the first year.

The results highlighted a degree of correlation between positive attitudes and behavior and academic success.

Related topic heading(s): Student Behavior, Characteristics, & Development.

Wolf-Wendel, L. E. Tuttle, K., & Keller-Wolff, C. M. (1999). Assessment of a freshman summer transition program in an open-admissions institution. 11(2), 7-32.

The study examined a transition program for first-year students at the University of Kansas and provides an outcome assessment of its early implementation. The assessment measured the effect of the program through students' GPA and retention, self-efficacy, and qualitative responses in focus groups.

The findings included students with lower levels of academic preparation benefiting significantly in terms of social and academic self-efficacy and consistent qualitative responses from students at all levels indicating benefits from the program.

Related topic heading(s): Retention, Student Behavior, Characteristics, & Development.

Yockey, F. A., & George, A. A. (1998). The effects of a freshman seminar paired with Supplemental Instruction. 10(2), 57-76.

This study examined the impact on student performance of one section of a new model of first-year seminar, which is paired with an introductory-level core social science course.

The results indicated that students in the first-year seminar paired with Supplemental Instruction achieved significantly higher grades in the paired core course, attained significantly higher semester grade point averages for the semester of intervention, and had significantly better retention rates after two years than students in the control group.

Related topic heading(s): First-Year Seminars-Outcomes, Retention.



## Adjustment to University/ College

The literature on Adjustment to University/College explores the issues that confront students during the transition period. The studies report that students find the move into post-secondary education can be challenging and potentially stressful which leads many students to seek social support above all else. Paradoxically, the ultimate outcome of this adjustment period is one which teaches students to neither seek nor desire ongoing advice and support. However, the research does indicate that in the early stages of post-secondary education a sense of community is critical. The developing social networks made with other students, academics and the learning environment actually lays the groundwork for greater self-esteem and ultimate independence.

Brady, P., & Allingham, P. (2007). Help or hindrance? The role of secondary schools in a successful transition to university, 19(2), 47-67.

The study examined transition from secondary school to postsecondary education poses numerous challenges for first-year university students.

Two hundred and fifty second-year students attending a small Canadian university were surveyed regarding the ease or difficulty with which they adjusted, in the previous year, to the next phase in their formal education.

Quantitative and qualitative data analysis revealed that in attempting to assist their seniors to meet the academic requirements necessary for university admission, secondary schools may inadvertently be preventing a significant minority of students from making a smooth transition to tertiary education. Specifically, participants cited the difficulty in adjusting to a reduced level of support from their instructors as well as an increased requirement to engage in independent study as being especially problematic.

Johnson, V. K., Kerr, S., Gans, S. E., & Bierschwale, D. (2009). Adjustment to college before and after September 11, 2001. 20(1), 91-112.

The study compared college adjustment among emerging adults beginning college in 2000 (before the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks) and in 2001 (three weeks before 9/11).

A prospective longitudinal design was used to follow 41 students throughout their first college year. Participants completed questionnaires about symptoms of anxiety and depression before starting college and questionnaires about their adjustment to college in the first two semesters of college.

Students starting college weeks before 9/11 reported more difficulty with their social adjustment than the comparison sample. Furthermore, precollege depression and anxiety explain a significant portion of variance in spring semester social adjustment.

Roderick, C., & Carusetta, E. (2006). Experiencing first-year university in a problem-based learning context. 18(1), 9-27.

This qualitative study examined the first-year university experiences of students in a problem-based learning context an area that has received little attention in the literature.

Data collection consisted of one-on-one interviews with students throughout their first year and of participant observation of students in the classroom at Renaissance College at the University of New Brunswick.

Major challenges for students included reconciling the discrepancy between their perceptions of the university and their actual experiences, time management, and adjusting to new grading schemes. Students' sense of support and community evolved from relationships with peers and faculty at the college and friendships developed in the larger university setting.

Tieu, T. & Pancer, S. M. (2009). Cocurricular involvement and first-year students' transition to university: Quality vs. quantity of involvement. 20(1), 43-64.

The study involved the use of a newly developed measure of the quality of students' involvement in cocurricular activities was used to assess the relationship between quality of involvement and adaptation during the transition to university.

The results indicated that the higher the quality of students' involvement, the better their adjustment to university. The relationship between involvement and adjustment was mediated by self-esteem, perceived stress, and social support. Implications for interventions to help students adjust to the transition to university are discussed.

Yazedjian, A., Purswell, K. E., Sevin, T., & Toews, M. L. (2007). Adjusting to the first year of college: Students' perceptions of the importance of parental, peer, and institutional support, 19(2), 29-46.

The study explores students' perceptions of the role of supportive relationships in their adjustment during their first year of college.

A total of 22 second-year students, who had a GPA of 2.0 or higher (the university's standard of academic success), reflected on their first year during focus group interviews. Students' narratives revealed that support from parents, peers, and the institution facilitated their adjustment to college. However, these support systems sometimes hindered their adjustment as well.

The paper posits that understanding how the same factors can both help and hinder students as they adjust to college is useful for developing, implementing, and evaluating activities and services aimed at facilitating students' adjustment to their new environment.

## Curriculum

The topic of curriculum encompasses a broad range of issues that may or may not be transferrable to a discipline specific situation in every case. Research has shown that gender again can be an important variable specifically in the persistence of student study within certain disciplines. The studies indicate that alternative approaches to teaching and assessing students' learning are important developments in addressing the first-year experience. Innovative teaching approaches such as out-of-class activities were endorsed by a majority of students in one study. The students reported benefits ranging from innovative learning, the gaining of new experiences as well as greater familiarisation with campus life. The appropriate teaching strategy is one component in the curriculum design the next appears to having the appropriate assessment task. The studies indicate that shared learning can be a precursor to greater student engagement. Overall the scholarship of teaching comes through as an important factor to student learning at least from the students' point of view.

Andrade, M. S. (2007). Addressing the linguistic needs of nonnative English speakers in the first year, 19(2), 69-86.

Examines academic language needed for success in college or university courses can be challenging for nonnative English speakers (NNES).

This study examined the effectiveness of a program in which NNES enroll in an English language course and a linked general education (GE) course.

Findings indicated that participants' GE course grades were generally comparable to those of mainstream students.

Beaudin, B. Q., Horvath, J., & Wright, S. P. (1992). Predicting freshman persistence in economics: A gender comparison. 4(2), 69-84.

The study to identifies variables that predict the probability of persisting in the study of economics.

Females persist as economic majors in smaller proportions than do their male counterparts. In addition, the grade that first-year women earned in the initial course affected persistence differently from that of first-year men.

Related topic (s): Retention.

Bohr, L. (1994). Courses associated with freshman learning. 6(1), 69-90.

The study examined the association of first-year student courses with reading, mathematics, and critical thinking skill gains for first-year students.

Reports on the effects of individual courses, and discusses how these data might affect first-year curricula.

Brent, D. (2006). Using an academic-content seminar to engage students with the culture of research. 18(1), 29-60.

Examines means of effectively introducing students to the research culture that sets research institutions apart from technical and community colleges.

A case study of an academic-content seminar focused on research to promote engagement with research culture. Interviews with students illustrate the gulf that they perceive between their high school research experiences and their university research experiences.

Three pedagogical features of research-based first-year seminars emerge as important: (a) repeated exposure to research activities; (b) a term-length research project; and (c) frequent, scheduled one-on-one conferences with the instructor.

Budny, D. (1994). Counselor tutorial program: A cooperative learning program for the high-risk freshman engineering courses. 6(1), 29-52.

The study examines the effects of the Counselor-Tutorial (CT) program-an optional, one-credit class offered by the Department of Freshman Engineering at Purdue University, West Lafayette campus-on matriculating students whose high school academic backgrounds indicate the potential to succeed in college, but who also show the highest likelihood of having difficulty in completing the first-year engineering curriculum.

Camarena, P., Saltarelli, A., & Lung, J. (2006). Expanding the role of required out-of-class experiences in FYE: Lessons from personal development and student development projects. 18(1), 61-84.

Assessment data from both an FYE-infused general education course (N = 153) and a first-year seminar (N = 392) were analyzed to identify students' perceptions about projects that required significant participation in out-of-class activities as an integral part of the course.

The results from this analysis revealed that in addition to increasing knowledge and campus engagement, these projects also promoted student development more broadly by encouraging students to "try new things" and "step out of the box."

Students endorsed the value of the projects, with more than 97% of students in the FYE-infused class reporting support for the project. Similarly, 38% of students in the first-year seminar spontaneously identified the project as the most important part of the class. Specific categories of students' coded responses are presented and a model of key elements essential for the success of the project is described.

Cavote, S. E., & Kopera-Frye, K. (2004). Subject-based first-year experience courses: Questions about program effectiveness. 16(2), 85-102.

This study was part of a program evaluation that examined academic performance and retention differences between first-term students who completed a subject-based first-year experience (FYE) course and comparable first-term students who did not.

The results indicate that differences in academic performance and persistence were unrelated to completion of a FYE course.

Colarulli, G. C., & McDaniel, E. A. (1990). Interdisciplinary general education: Five ways it promotes good freshman teaching and learning. 2(1), 107-117.

Discusses benefit from interdisciplinary general education courses to students and faculty members because of the focus on faculty collaboration and the conjoining of disciplines.

Cross, K. P. (1990). Making teaching more effective. 2(2), 59-74.

Discusses how teachers who use practical means to collect feedback on their teaching effectiveness can improve academic instruction.

Dahlgren, D. J., Wille, D. E., Finkel, D. G., & Burger, T. (2005). Do active learning techniques enhance learning and increase persistence of first-year psychology students? 17(1), 49-65.

Two studies compared a lecture-only with a group-activity instruction method to enhancing student involvement in an introductory class and increase persistence and learning.

The results indicated that when group activities were used, first-year students were more involved and more likely to stay in college. However, exam grades were not enhanced when group activities were used.

Fidler, P. P., Neururer-Rotholz, J., & Richardson, S. (1999). Teaching the freshman seminar: Its effectiveness in promoting faculty development. 11(2), 59-74.

This study examined the effects of a training workshop on the teaching techniques of faculty who taught a first-year seminar. A survey was distributed to faculty who had participated in a training workshop and taught a first-year seminar.

Qualitative data were obtained later from all 20 of those who agreed to a follow-up interview. The experience appeared to expand concepts of faculty roles to include using a wider array of teaching techniques, lecturing less, and facilitating discussions more in discipline-based courses.

Related topic heading(s): Faculty Development/Training, First-Year Seminars-Outcomes.

Franklin, K. K. (2000). Shared and connected learning in a freshman learning community. 12(2), 33-60.

The study examines whether the opportunity for students to participate in connected and shared learning is in jeopardy due to increasing life role complexity.

First-year students participating in a learning community at one metropolitan university reported an understanding of and appreciation for connected and shared learning.

The conclusion was that shared learning is a pivotal antecedent to connected learning.

Related topic heading(s): Learning Communities.

Hanley, G. L., & Olson, S. L. (1996). Preparing incoming students for the university educational process: From the students' perspective and retrospective. 8(1), 47-78.

The study examines the effectiveness of a program called University 100 at California State University, Long Beach that introduced first-year students to the demands of university life.

The results indicated that University 100 was successful in helping students make the transfer to higher education.

Related topic heading(s): First-Year Seminars-General.

Nelson, E. S., & Dixon, C. (1997). Gender differences in enrollment in high prestige academic college majors. 9(2), 99114.

The study investigated gender in the population of first-year and senior students enrolled in high prestige majors at James Madison University.

The results indicated that male seniors did not have a higher percentage of enrollments in the top 10 majors than did female seniors.

Reynolds, K. C., & Nunn, C. E. (1998). Engaging freshmen in classroom discussion: Interaction and the instructor techniques that encourage it. 10(2), 7-24.

The research examined the relationship between student interaction in first-year seminar courses and instructor techniques and interaction.

The results indicate that first-year students differ significantly from upperclass students and somewhat from their instructors when reporting the effects of certain teaching techniques on participation. Students and their instructors reported higher levels of interaction in first-year seminar classrooms than in other first-year or upper-level classes.

Related topic heading(s): Faculty Development, First-Year Seminars-General.

Roderick, C., & Carusetta, E. (2006). Experiencing first-year university in a problem- based learning context. 18(1), 9-27.

This qualitative study provides insight into the first-year university experiences of students in a problem-based learning context—an area that has received little attention in the literature.

Data collection consisted of one-on-one interviews with students throughout their first year and of participant observation of students in the classroom at Renaissance College at the University of New Brunswick.

Major challenges for students included reconciling the discrepancy between their perceptions of the university and their actual experiences, time management, and adjusting to new grading schemes. Students' sense of support and community evolved from relationships with peers and faculty at the college and friendships developed in the larger university setting.

Schaer, B., Aull, J., Pancake, C., Curtis, C., & Wiens, G. (1991). A survey of gender biases of freshman students toward engineering. 3(1), 39-58.

The study involved a survey of first-year engineering students.

The results indicate that men agree with prevailing gender stereotypes of engineers, and women seem less secure with the choice of engineering as a career.

Related topic heading(s): Student Sub-Populations.

Schutte, N. S., & Malouff, J. M. (2002). Incorporating emotional skills content in a college transition course enhances student retention. 14(1), 7-22.

This study compared first-semester college students who completed college transition courses that incorporated information on emotional, communication, and critical thinking skills with students who completed first-year experience courses that did not incorporate these applied emotional concepts.

The results indicated that the first group showed a greater increase in the ability to understand, regulate, and harness emotions and a higher retention rate.

Smith, A. K., Carmack, H. J., & Titsworth, B. S. (2006). Managing the tension of in(ter)dependence: Communication and the socialization of first-year college students, 18(2), 83-109.

The study explored the experiences of college students as they navigate their first year of college.

Conducted individual interviews, focus group interviews, and shadowing observations.

The findings were that college students' socialization is driven by the tension of in(ter)dependence, a desire for independence and a continuing need for dependence. As students meet new people and establish themselves as college students, they do so while managing the need for connectedness and separateness and (re)defining their sense of self. Provides a discussion of how communication studies can substantially inform theory and praxis related to college student socialization.

Tokuno, K. A., & Campbell, F. L. (1992). The freshman interest group program at the University of Washington: Effects on retention and scholarship. 4(1), 7-22.

Examines the positive impact of the University of Washington's Freshman Interest Group (FIG) Program on retention and scholarship.

Report that the FIG Program at Washington is very successful in building social support and informing students about resources for learning outside the classroom.

Related topic heading(s): Learning Communities, Retention.

Weimer, M. (1992). Scholarship of teaching. 4(1), 41-58.

The paper outlines some steps-actions that can and should be undertaken in the interest of promoting a scholarship of teaching- and then makes conclusions regarding the impact and feasibility of such a field of study.

Weissman, J., & Magill, B. A. (2008). Developing a student typology to examine the effectiveness of first-year seminars. 20(2), 65-90.

This study used cluster analysis to develop a typology of student groups based on precollege characteristics and examined the influence of two types of seminars on the academic performance and retention of each student group.

The findings indicate that the influence of each type of seminar varied among the groups. Conclusions are that students' pre-college characteristics can be moderated by participation in the appropriate type of first-year seminar. Knowledge of their own students' characteristics may assist institutions in targeting students more effectively for particular first-year seminars and, thus, enhance academic success and retention.

Whiteley, J. M. (1990). The renewal of opportunity for enhancing character development during the college years. 2(2), 75-87.

This paper outlines a curriculum designed to influence moral development, and the challenges of measuring moral actions are described.

Related topic heading(s): Student Behavior, Characteristics, & Development.

Wilke, C. J. (2000). Preferred College Classroom Environment Scale: Creating positive classroom environments. 12(2), 7-32.

The study involved the use of focus group interviews with more than 100 students to construct the Preferred College Classroom Environment Scale (PCCES).

The PCCES is used to assess the degree to which five dimensions of a conventional college classroom environment help students learn. The study revealed the relative similarity of preferences of first-year males and females while emphasizing three meaningful differences.

Related topic heading(s): Assessment & Evaluation.

Wright, S. (1992). Promoting intellectual development during the freshman year. 4(1), 23-39.

The study examined the relationship between intellectual development in the first year of college and interdisciplinary general education courses that were designed to promote active learning at the University of Hartford.

The results indicate a significant relationship between intellectual growth and the number of general education courses that students were enrolled in.

Related topic heading(s): Student Behavior, Characteristics, & Development.

Yazedjian, A., & Toews, M. L. (2006). Predictors of college adjustment among Hispanic students, 18(2), 9-29.

The study assessed personal and interpersonal predictors of college adjustment among a sample of 190 first-year Hispanic students. Specifically, the extent to which personal factors such as self-esteem, acculturation, and ethnic identity and interpersonal factors such as parental education and parental attachment predicted adjustment during the first year of college.

A hierarchical regression revealed that students' personal and interpersonal variables were predictive of overall college adjustment during the first college year. Although independently related to overall college adjustment, interpersonal factors did not lead to a significant increase in variance explained in the dependent variable.

Related topic heading(s): Student Sub-Populations.

Yazedjian, A., Purswell, K. E., Sevin, T., & Toews, M. L. (2007). Adjusting to the first year of college: Students' perceptions of the importance of parental, peer, and institutional support, 19(2), 29-46.

The study explored students' perceptions of the role of supportive relationships in their adjustment during their first year of college.

A total of 22 second-year students, who had a GPA of 2.0 or higher (the university's standard of academic success), reflected on their first year during focus group interviews.

Students' narratives revealed that support from parents, peers, and the institution facilitated their adjustment to college. However, these support systems sometimes hindered their adjustment as well. Concluded that understanding how the same factors can both help and hinder students as they adjust to college is useful for developing, implementing, and evaluating activities and services aimed at facilitating students' adjustment to their new environment.



## Retention

The research predominantly focuses on identifying the reasons for not completing a course of study within the university sector. Research also examines the use of initiatives ranging from dedicated first-year seminars, summer programs, health improvements, student compatibility and attachment to their study institution, peer mentoring and formal orientation programs to determine their impact on retention rates. The studies may explore cognitive and non-cognitive indicators relating to student retention. Interestingly, studies have reported that non-cognitive indicators, such as social networks, study groups and mentor guidance can be as important to retention as cognitive indicators, such as previous academic success grades and demographic factors.

Anselmo, A. (1997). Is there life after freshman seminar? The case for the freshman seminar class reunion. 9(1), 105-130.

The study examined how first-year seminar class reunions increase the benefits of first-year seminars for the urban commuter college student.

The results of a pilot study that tested the effectiveness of class reunions in the reduction of attrition are discussed.

Related topic heading(s): First-Year Seminars-Outcomes.

Cavendish, J. M. (1996). Health service utilization by nonreturning freshmen. 8(1), 39-46.

The study examined the health service utilization patterns of 5,088 first-year students at West Virginia University.

The results showed that there may be a connection between health problems and student attrition.

Related topic heading(s): Health.

Fidler, P. P., & Moore, P. S. (1996). A comparison of effects of campus residence and freshman seminar attendance on freshman dropout rates. 8(2), 7-16.

The study compared dropout rates of first-year students living on campus versus participating in a first-year seminar.

The results indicated that participation in a first-year seminar reduced the dropout rate independently from the effect of housing.

Related topic heading(s): Residence Life, First-Year Seminars-Outcomes.

Garcia, P. (1991). Summer bridge: Improving retention rates for unprepared students. 3(2), 91-106.

The study discussed how a summer program was used to improve basic skills of underprepared students to familiarize these students with the campus environment and had a favorable impact on the retention rate of high-risk students.

Related topic heading(s): Special Programs, Student Sub-Populations.

Goldman, B. A., Blackwell, K. M., & Beach, S. S. (2003). Academically suspended university students: What percent return? What percent graduate? 15(1), 105-114.

This study tracked five cohorts of first-year students for six years after their initial enrollment to determine how many, by gender and race, were academically suspended for failure to remain in academic good standing, how many of those returned, and of those who returned, how many graduated.

Related topic heading(s): At-risk Students

Hoff, M. P., Cook, D., & Price, C. (1996). The first five years of freshman seminars at Dalton College: Student success and retention. 8(2), 33-42.

The study examined the success of the first-year seminar course at Dalton College for its first five years.

The results indicated that students who enrolled in the course did significantly better than other students in a number of ways, including a higher retention rate.

Related topic heading(s): First-Year Seminars-Outcomes.

Hyers, A. D., & Joslin, M. (1998). The first-year seminar as a predictor of academic achievement and persistence. 10(1), 7-30.

The study was conducted at a small liberal arts college where the first-year seminar (FYS) is required for all traditional age students.

The results indicated that students earning a C+ or less by mid-semester in FYS require closer attention or intervention to reduce risk of withdrawal.

Related topic heading(s): First-Year Seminars-Outcomes.

Kanoy, K. W., & Bruhn, J. W. (1996). Effects of a first-year living and learning residence hall on retention and academic performance. 8(1), 7-24.

The study compared first-year students in a living and learning residence hall with a control group to study differences in academic performance and retention rates.

The results indicated that those in the living/learning hall achieved greater academic success than did the control group, but the retention rates showed no difference.

Related topic heading(s): Research, Residence Life.

Ketkar, K., & Bennet, S. (1989). Strategies for evaluating a freshman studies program. 2(1), 33-44.

The paper shows how a freshman studies program can be evaluated in economic terms using the common business techniques of break-even analysis and the elasticity coefficient.

Related topic heading(s): Special Programs, Assessment & Evaluation.

Miller, J. W., Janz, J. C., & Chen, C. (2007). The retention impact of a first-year seminar on students with varying pre-college academic performance, 19(1), 47-62.

The paper reports on two studies undertaken to determine if there was a significant effect on retention to the second year of college for students who participated in a first-year seminar compared to those who did not for students of high, middle, and low levels of precollege academic preparation.

First-year seminar participants returned to the second year at a higher rate, as did students of higher pre-college academic preparation. No significant interaction effects were noted. All students benefited equally from participation.

These results indicate that students of all academic ability levels benefit from participation in a first-year seminar. Further, the level of the benefits does not differ based upon entering academic ability level.

Related topic heading(s): Retention.

Mitchell, D. F., Goldman, B. A., & Smith, M. (1999). Change factors affecting college matriculation: A re-analysis. 11(2), 75-92.

The study examined how changes in major, place of residence, and course load delay graduation among non-transfer students who persevere through 8 to 10 semesters of college.

The results suggest that less academically talented students are more likely to make changes and experience more delays in matriculation than are the more academically talented students.

Related topic heading(s): At-Risk Students; Student Behavior, Characteristics, & Development.

Morris, J., Beck, R., & Mattis, C. (2007). Examining worldview fit and first-year retention at a private, religiously affiliated institution. 19(1), 75-88.

The paper elaborates on a psychological concept related to Tinto's construct of social integration. The concept introduced in this article is worldview fit, defined as the perceived ideological compatibility between the student and the institution (e.g., faculty, peers).

This involved: (a) construction of a worldview fit measure and an assessment of its psychometric properties, (b) examination of worldview fit across demographic groups at a religiously affiliated campus that might show worldview fit differences, and (c) testing the ability of the worldview fit measure to predict fall-to-fall retention in first-year students at a religiously affiliated campus.

The results of suggest that worldview factors might contribute to student satisfaction and retention.

Perrine, R. M. (1998). Stress and college persistence as a function of attachment style. 11(1), 25-38.

The study explored college students' perceived stress and persistence in a college as a function of attachment style.

The first-year students completed questionnaires designed to rate (a) their attachment styles during the second week of the semester and (b) their perceived stress levels one month later.

The results indicated that students with secure attachment reported significantly less perceived stress and were less likely to quit college than students with insecure attachment.

Related topic heading(s): Student Behavior, Characteristics, & Development; Health.

Perrine, R. M. (2001). College stress and persistence as a function of attachment and support. 13(1), 7-22.

The study explored college students' stress and persistence as a function of social support and attachment style.

The results showed that students with one type of insecure attachment (fearful) perceived the most stress, were the least satisfied with their available support, and had the highest drop-out rate. Females perceived more stress, and dropped out at a higher rate, than males. Satisfaction with support mediated the relationship between attachment and stress, but not between gender and stress.

Related topic heading(s): Health, Student Behavior, Characteristics, and Development.

Pickering, J. W., Calliotte, J. A., & McAuliffe, G. J. (1992). The effect of noncognitive factors on freshman academic performance and retention. 4(2), 7-30.

The study involved a survey of first-year students designed to measure the non-cognitive predictors of (a) academic difficulty or academic success after the first year of college, and (b) attrition or retention in the second year.

The results indicated that, in both instances, the utilization of non-cognitive predictors was better than the utilization of either cognitive or demographic predictors alone.

Schwitzer, A. M., & Thomas, C. (1998). Implementation, utilization, and outcomes of a minority freshman peer-mentor program at a predominately White university. 10(1), 31-50.

The study examined a peer-mentoring program of 52 African-American first-year students.

The results indicated a higher two-year retention rate for the study group compared to nonparticipants.

Somers, P. (1995). First-to-second semester persistence: A case study. 7(2), 43-62.

The study examined the persistence of 2,100 first-year students at a public, west-coast university.

The results showed that college experience variables (i.e. grade point, attendance) had an impact on persistence, while financial aid did not.

Related topic heading(s): Student Behavior, Characteristics, & Development.

Starke, M. C., Harth, M., & Sirianni, F. (2001). Retention, bonding, and academic achievement: Success of a first-year seminar. 13(2), 7-36.

This study followed the progress of eight cohorts of first-year students exposed to a college seminar between 1986 and 1993 and to compare their college careers with those of students who did not take the course.

The results indicated that students who enrolled in a three-credit first-year orientation course fared significantly better than students who did not take the course on measures of retention. The data also showed significantly higher scores for students enrolled in a college seminar on many academic, personal, and social skills.

Related topic heading(s): First-Year Seminars-Outcomes.

Strasburger, R., Turner, M., & Walls, R. (1998). Factors relating to the postsecondary success of students with learning disabilities. 11(1), 63-76.

The study examined how secondary educational settings affect the aptitude of students with learning disabilities.

The results indicated that students having more inclusive, less structured and supported programs within the secondary school settings are more successful in graduating from college.

Related topic heading(s): At-Risk Students.

Strumpf, G., & Hunt, P. (1993). The effects of an orientation course on the retention and academic standing of entering freshmen, controlling for the volunteer effect. 5(1), 7-14.

This study examined the effect of an orientation course on the retention and academic standing of first-time, full-time first-year students.

The results suggest that the orientation course is a successful method for increasing the rate of retention.

Related topic heading(s): Assessment & Evaluation; First-Year Seminar-Outcomes.

Tinto, V. (1990). Principles for effective retention. 2(1), 35-48.

The paper identified and explored common characteristics of successful retention programs.

Tokuno, K. A. (1993). Long-term and recent student outcomes of the freshman interest group program. 5(2), 7-28.

The paper examines two studies involving three student cohorts in the Freshman Interest Group (FIG) program at the University of Washington.

The first study examined the effect of the FIG program on scholarship for the 1990 cohort. The second study provided long-term data on scholarship, progress, and retention of students from the three student cohorts and compares this data to students from the same matriculating classes who were not in the FIG program.

Related topic heading(s): Learning Communities.

Tukey, D. D. (1991). Models for student retention and migration. 3(2), 61-74.

The paper provides details of mathematical models that may be used to examine retention rates and calculate predicted enrollments.

Volp, P. M., Hall, T. L., & Frazier, C. L. (1998). Using telephone calls as examples of care to promote student success and retention. 10(1), 73-88.

The study examines a collaborative intervention conducted by faculty and student affairs staff in which telephone calls were made to at-risk first-year students.

The analysis found statistically significant differences between the study group and the comparison group. The study group earned higher average GPAs, more credit hours, and had higher fall-to-spring retention rates. Gender was found to be an important element of the intervention. Male students called by men showed the highest positive change in grades, and female students called by women had the highest retention rates.

Related topic heading(s): At-Risk Students.

Warner, M. J., & Noftsinger, J. B. (1994). Increasing student involvement through residence hall lifestyle assignments and developmental programming. *6*(1), 91-114.

This study investigated the effects of three lifestyle assignments (in terms of gender) on the involvement of students in residence hall activities.

The findings indicated that first-year students living in residence halls had enhanced involvement and retention rates.

Related topic heading(s): Residence Life; Student Behavior, Characteristics, & Development.

Washington, C. M., & Schwartz, R. A. (1998). African-American freshmen in an historically Black college. *11*(1), 39-62.

This study examined the academic success and retention of first-year African-American college students at a historically Black, private, liberal arts college. Students were surveyed about their preparation and readiness for college during their first week on campus.

Using step-wise regression analysis both cognitive and non-cognitive variables were found to be good predictors of academic success.

Wilkie, C., & Kuckuck, S. (1989). A longitudinal study of the effects of the freshman seminar. *1*(1), 7-16.

The study reports the results of a three-year research study of the cumulative grade point averages of high-risk students who successfully completed an orientation seminar in the first semester of their first year are reported.

Related topic heading(s): First-Year Seminars-Outcomes.

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