

# **The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success with First Year College Students**

Joseph Pechulis

Marywood University

SLAS 6013: Qualifying Seminar

Fall 2023

### **Abstract**

The first-year experience (FYE), is a function of almost every college campus around the world, whether it is perceived with an actual name/department or is there in essence with no name or tangible office. Such a notion is much more than just the general experiences first-year students have on a college campus. The FYE entails first-year student initiatives inside of the classroom and social engagements outside of the classroom sponsored by the institution. Applying multiple student development theories and best practices from the top ranked schools in the country, this paper examines the transition from high school to college in terms of the FYE and analyzes the FYE at colleges and universities in the Scranton/Wilkes Barre (SWB) area with the following questions: what do first year students look for in the transition to college, what do colleges and universities in the Scranton/Wilkes Barre area of Pennsylvania do for their FYE initiatives, and how do top-ranked schools structure and implement their first-year experience initiatives?

**Keywords:** Resident Assistant (RA), First-Year Experience (FYE), Housing and Residence Life (HRL), Northeast Pennsylvania (NEPA), Scranton/Wilkes Barre (SWB)

**Table of Contents**

Introduction.....4

Literature Review.....5

    Factors students look for when committing and returning to a college.....5

    FYE initiatives colleges in the Scranton/Wilkes Barre area provide to students.....8

    FYE initiatives the top schools in the country provide to students.....13

Analysis.....17

Ethical Implications.....24

Policy and Programming Recommendations.....26

Summary.....29

References.....35

## Introduction

With the arrival of each new group of college students, there come certain responsibilities and expectations. That idea might involve attending mandatory Resident Assistant (RA) floor meetings, managing their own wake-up routines for classes, handling their course registrations independently, and dealing with various other tasks. Something that typically helps with the transition from high school to college is a robust first-year experience (FYE) program. The top ten schools in the country when it comes to the FYE have a few things in common. They facilitate seamless transitions guiding high school students from initial inquiries through enrollment, summer orientation, FYE classes, specialized FYE programming, and continue their support throughout the transition to sophomore year (Brooks, 2023).

The main focus at these schools seem to be the various iterations of an FYE class, social programs outside of the classroom, and an emphasis on empowering students early in their college career with student leadership opportunities. The class would teach the students about the school, the resources at the school, the area around campus, and serve as an overall transition with building college level skills. At most schools from the top ten list, the FYE class is a credited course and required for all incoming students (Brooks, 2023). Social programs outside of the classroom get students acquainted with their friend groups early, which eases that transition from home. Student leadership roles help students engrain themselves in the culture of the school while simultaneously sharing their enthusiasm about the culture with those also at the institution and family/friends at home (Friedman, 2022).

With that being said, no schools in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (SWB) area made the best FYE schools list. Why did no schools from the SWB area make the list in 2022 and 2023? The problem is in large part due to the lack of robust FYE programming at colleges in the SWB area.

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

This paper, focusing specifically on the first-year experience, seeks to analyze the criteria students consider during their transition from high school to college, examines the FYE initiatives implemented by schools in the SWB area of Pennsylvania, and reviews the offerings provided by the top-ranked first-year experience programs nationwide.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Factors that first-year students seek and take into account when deciding to return for their sophomore year**

The decision-making process of students in selecting and sustaining their presence in higher education institutions is a multifaceted and pivotal aspect of the educational landscape. Understanding the key factors influencing students' choices in choosing a school and subsequently fostering a sense of commitment to the institution is integral to enhancing the effectiveness of educational institutions from a first-year experience (FYE) perspective (Lindsay, 2003). From considerations during the initial selection process to the dynamic factors affecting students' decisions to persist or withdraw, the literature encapsulates a diverse array of factors that contribute to the complex tapestry of student-school relationships.

At a mid-size, public university in the mid-south in 2019, a study was conducted that delves into the distinctions between first-year students who progressed to year two and those who did not return for a second year. Employing the National Survey of Student Engagement, the research scrutinizes levels of student–faculty interaction, experiences within the campus environment, and engagement in collaborative learning (Griffin, 2019). A nuanced exploration of student engagement behaviors is conducted, considering variables such as gender, race/ethnicity, and first-generation college student status. The study, encompassing 1,402 first-year college students, unravels noteworthy insights. Specifically, students who continued into year two

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

exhibited significantly heightened engagement in collaborative learning environments as well as significantly more presence at social events outside of the classroom during their inaugural year. However, intriguing variations emerge, such as female returners reporting less faculty interaction compared to their none-returning counterparts. Additionally, a majority of students who continued gave higher ratings for experiences with the campus environment and engagement in outside of the classroom activities than those who did not proceed to their second year (Griffin, 2019).

What can be gathered from this study shows that students who feel connected inside and outside of the classroom tend to experience higher satisfaction rates and are more likely to come back for their second year. The connections outside of the classroom range from pop-up events students can stop by while walking to class, to large scale social gatherings where all students are invited for some time dedicated to decompressing from classes and meeting new people (Farrell, 2018).

When analyzing the aspects inside of the classroom, the study notes that the top performing FYE courses are skill building and engaging in nature. The classes are not lecture based. While there may be elements of lecture and presentation, the classes incorporate team building activities, icebreakers, games that revolve around pertinent material, as well as guest speakers from resources on campus as well as resources off of their campuses (Griffin, 2019).

Another study was conducted in 2018 investigating the expectations of students coming into college and their actual experiences in a university setting. The study analyzes the impact of these perceptions on their student identity and overall FYE satisfaction. A cohort of 554 first-year undergraduates at a prominent private university constitutes the participants, with data

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

analyzed using an adapted version of the Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education Survey (Ang, 2019).

Within this exploration, participants self-report their learning experiences and engagement within the university community. The findings reveal that, broadly, students primarily embark on their education with the aims of expanding career opportunities and developing skills. Concurrently, students' perspectives on their learning experiences and engagement within the university community register at a moderate level. Encouragingly, concerning student identity and overall satisfaction with their courses, students demonstrate positive perceptions. The examination delineates that student engagement serves as a more prominent explanatory factor for variations in student identity, while students' expectations and experiences account for a greater share of the variability in overall FYE satisfaction. The study further addresses practical implications, acknowledges limitations, and proposes recommendations for future research (Ang, 2019).

In synthesizing the insights that arose from the two distinct research endeavors, a comprehensive understanding emerges regarding the intricate factors that first-year students consider when selecting and persisting in a college environment. The first study meticulously explores the disparities between students who progress to their second year and those who do not, shedding light on the nuanced elements that contribute to their decisions. Concurrently, the second study delves into the expectations and experiences of first-year undergraduates, unraveling their motivations for pursuing their education and gauging their satisfaction levels. Together, these studies offer a multifaceted view of the considerations that guide first-year students in their enrollment decisions and subsequent commitment to a college. It can be gathered that first-year students who have engagement levels, unique FYE class learning

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

experiences, and positive perceptions of the university support system tend to stay at the university past their first-year while concurrently having higher satisfaction levels with their school. To put it simply, students want to be engaged outside of the classroom through social initiatives, have a non-lecture based FYE course, and resources provided by the school that are easily accessible.

### **FYE initiatives institutions in the Scranton/Wilkes Barre (SWB) area provide for incoming students**

For this question seven schools were identified in the area. The outright names of the schools will not be mentioned throughout the paper for the sake of anonymity. They are all similar colleges with similar student populations. Five of the institutions all have student populations between 2,400 and 3,000 while there are two outliers in terms of size. One college has about 1,800 students currently enrolled while the other has about 6,000 (college navigator, n.d.).

The schools are relatively similar from a numbers perspective, but how do they handle first-year experience classes and other FYE initiatives? Most of the schools have their curriculums available online. It seems there are two different trains of thought between these schools. Out of the seven colleges, only four have one specific class dedicated to what can be considered a straightforward FYE class. This may be the only class available or it can be one class the student chooses from a catalog of classes. Other terms for the class include University 100 and First Year Seminar (FYS).

At one of these institutions, incoming students are sent a catalog of about twenty different FYS courses offered in the fall and spring semesters. These courses change every year and the professors that volunteer to teach a course, have a discretion over the topic. A few examples of



## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

these classes are The History of Guitar, Media Literacy, and American Comedy (Registrar, 2023a). Another school has a similar selection of FYS courses with some examples being Energy and Society, Making Meaning out of 9/11, and In Search of Wonder. There are just ten courses the students can pick from.

One university has a class that all freshmen have to take called “The Holy Cross Experience.” In this course, students learn about the history of the school as well as resources the school offers, but also dives a bit deeper into service learning, career planning, and social issues (New Student Orientation, n.d.). The last of these four schools has a course called “First Year Foundations” that is essentially the stereotypical University 100 class but with a twist. There are different sections with different topics, but the same outcomes are expected. Students learn about their school, college style writing, expectations, realities of college, and finding their possible passion (Registrar, 2019).

In contrast, there are three schools that have a more robust FYE class program. One college has a string of classes students have to take aside from their general educations. At this school, students must take a general First Year Seminar, College Writing I, College Writing II, and Speech Communications as first-year students (Admissions, 2023). The FYS is your typical FYS while College Writing I and II help with the transition from high school level writing to college writing. Speech Communications helps reinforce the importance of public speaking (Lindsay, 2003). Incoming students at another university have to take a class titled “First Year Experience.” It is an eight week, zero credit course designed to reinforce resources on campus and encourage students to pursue elements of time management, college writing, the history of the school, the core values and mission of the school, and engagement outside of the classroom. The piece outside of the classroom revolves around attending workshops, events from various

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

departments on campus, and events in the area. The students also have to have an approved one hour of service at the school. The service can entail helping the grounds crew pick weeds, volunteering at different local shelters, and various other school-approved service endeavors (Registrar, 2023b). They also now have an established Coordinator of the First Year Experience through Campus Life, which does first-year specific programming outside of the classroom for the entire year while also supervising all of the first-year residential areas on campus and the Community Assistant staff in each area. (Campus Life, 2023).

The last school in this group of seven has a new core that was implemented in the Fall of 2023 semester that was supposed to be implemented three years ago called the “Archway.” Changes stemming from COVID halted the plan. Students are required to take two courses in the fall and two courses in the spring of their first year. Students need to take Rhetoric, Philosophy, Religious Studies, and a choice of one class from History, Diversity, and Sociology. Rhetoric will give students the ability to learn a skill like respectful debating and conversation. They will be able to learn how to develop arguments and understand other sides. Philosophy will teach skills like critical thinking and thinking outside of the box. Religious studies will give students a partial understanding of religion since this school is a catholic institution. Students would also learn about the school and what it offers during orientation and along the way during their college life (Bernatowicz, 2022).

One thing that is common among all of these schools is the emphasis on college writing. Whether it is having it inherently present in the FYS classes or they have a class dedicated strictly to college writing, the extreme emphasis is there. Then, these colleges mix in courses that are applicable to day to day life like Psychology, Business, and Speech. Students that come into a new college environment are not always well versed in skills that help in their own success.

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

When it comes to improving their first-year experience, helping the students improve key skills like college writing, public speaking, and study habits go hand in hand. Some students may come from low-income areas where a quality education is not always available. Some students may never take an advanced placement or college prep class. There are also students who come into school with an undecided major. These are students who may not know exactly what they want to do in college just yet and are looking to be exposed to what their choice of college has to offer (Feldman, 2005). They may figure out their major through electives and general education courses, but FYS classes can also play a big role in student choice. It exposes them to the school in a broader sense and then gets into the specifics of what the school offers. Through an FYS class, students can possibly find what they are interested in depending on the many variables of the course like the lesson plans, curriculum, involvement, etc. (Baldwin, 2020).

Students may also have unrealistic expectations when coming to college. They may assume they are all alone and have to do everything themselves or learn everything on their own. They may also think that the culture of college is shrouded in activities like binge drinking drug use, sexual exploration, and overall questionable decision making based possibly on media like movies, TV, and music (Baker et al., 1985). FYE can be a great way to explain to students that through the resources available on campus, they are not alone. It can also be used to educate students that those other activities do happen, but the school provides other experiences that can be fillers for those self-destructive tendencies. FYS can also teach students how to be safe in their surroundings, with the people around them, and with themselves if they do want to participate in those activities (Nadelson, 2013).

Mentioned sporadically through this section is the word “orientation.” Orientation in the sense of the FYE refers to the onboarding of incoming students and their acclimation to the

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

college environment (Farrell, 2018). All seven institutions researched have very similar orientation processes. All of these schools have one-day orientations over the summer. These one-day orientations revolve around the students and parents/guardians coming to campus for one day in the middle of summer and getting some more in-depth knowledge of the resources and atmosphere the school provides. All schools in the SWB area also do a longer orientation the weekend before classes start. The longer orientation has the students move into their spaces on campus and participate in more social activities and events while having an educational undertone. An example of the events found at the longer orientation days can be students playing icebreaking games with students in their major or from their dorm floor (Farrell, 2018). The only differences that have been identified from these schools in terms of orientation are how many one-day orientations occur over the summer and how many days before classes the students arrive for the longer orientation. All of the colleges have their one-day orientations in June or July while students come back between three to five days before classes start for the longer orientation (Admissions, 2023; Campus Life, 2023; New Student Orientation, n.d.; Registrar, 2019; Registrar, 2023a; Registrar, 2023b.). It is also interesting to note that only one school has anything listed about a specific employee that supports just the first-year population over the course of their entire first-year.

While it may not be standard to have this FYE focused role, it is standard that every school has the power to determine what is taught to students as long as they meet certain governmental requirements (Friedman, 2022). The choice of adding the Archway is a prime example. Each educational institution possesses the authority to delineate the areas in which they perceive the strengths of their students. The phrase “strengths-based approach” get brought to the mind. Such an approach can be executed in a few ways. Two ways of achieving this are noting

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

the strengths of their students and molding courses/orientations around said strengths while the other way is identifying the strengths of the school and applying it to the classroom and orientation. In this regard is where these strengths can be passed on to the students (Soria & Stubblefield, 2003).

The outcomes of these different approaches are vastly different. When playing into the strengths of the student, the school is giving them reinforcement while refining their skills. When the school is presenting its strengths to the students, it takes a more liberal arts approach to the idea and tries to expand the mind and experience of the student (Soria & Stubblefield, 2003).

### **How top-ranked schools structure and implement their first-year experience initiatives**

Regardless, student outcomes and success are key elements to these approaches. Schools want students to find the balance of being supported but making their own path. It is all about knowing when to ask for help and understanding their own responsibilities at this stage in their life. Schools that have this balance and support student empowerment tend to have better retention rates and student satisfaction (Ang, 2019). In high school, material is presented to the students and, as an example, what is and is not on a test is easily known. On the college level, knowing what is and is not on a test may be more difficult, so appropriate study habits need to be developed. Students need to ask questions because they will not be spoon fed answers (Baker et al., 1985). FYE can take effect here. It can get the wheels turning in the mind of the student and help them understand that their own experiences, and what they get out of the institution, is mostly on them now. If they are invested in their experience and take an active role, they will get more out of their journey through college. The first-year experience as a whole inside and outside of the classroom can help augment students mind to help them understand this notion (Lindsay, 2003).

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

The First Year Experience Program is something that is believed to have its origins at the University of South Carolina (U of SC). The U of SC also is home to the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. The National Resource Center is a hub for publications and research based on the FYE. Every four to five years they invite about 4,000 public and private schools to participate in a National Survey of First-Year Experiences. Their latest survey was conducted in 2017 (delays with COVID have postponed more current results). About 4,000 schools were invited and 537 campuses responded and participated (Young, 2018).

The National Resource Center's working definition of the FYE can be summed up as follows: The first-year experience is not one program or initiative. It is intentional efforts made inside and outside of the classroom that support the first-year student's success (Young, 2018). Here are some of their findings from their 2017 survey. All of the 537 campuses that responded reported having at least one FYE program. The most frequent institutional objective was promoting academic success strategies. 80.4% of schools had this listed as an objective. The least frequent objective was graduate and/or professional school preparation. The top four most common programming initiatives were first- year academic advising, early alert systems, pre-term orientation, and FYS classes (in that order). The least common initiatives were service learning and learning beyond the classroom. The most common hoped for outcomes from the FYE programs at these schools were academic/social adjustment, improved confidence, increased engagement, and understanding of the campus culture and resources. (Young, 2018).

Analyzing the data further, 40% of the respondents had a first-year program office. 61.8% of the schools had an FYE course count as a three credit general education course and in 61% of those courses, undergraduate students helped with the course in some way. Those ways

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

can be helping guide the students, coming in as a speaker, extending the course outside of the classroom in the residence halls, and having a teacher assistant in the course who is an undergraduate student. These schools also report higher retention rates from the first to second year as well as higher student satisfaction on campus (Young, 2018).

It is very intriguing to think about the FYE and retention/satisfaction. The fact that all the schools that responded have some sort of FYE/FYS class and/or program is very telling. This goes along with what the other articles reinforced and stated about the freshman experience. That students like to feel supported by their peers and the school itself. What makes up an ideal FYE program? U.S. News and World Report publishes a ranking of the top FYE schools in the country. How they gather the information is as follows: U.S. News & World Report invites college presidents, chief academic officers, deans of students and admissions, and students from more than 1,500 schools to nominate 15 institutions that stand out in terms of FYE. Then, if a school receives ten or more nominations, they get entry to the list. When a school makes it onto the list they are ranked by how many nominations they receive. The top school has the most nominations, the bottom school has the least amount of those that qualify (Brooks, 2023).

In the 2022 to 2023 academic year, the top 10 schools were Elon University, University of South Carolina, Agnes Scott College, Georgia State University, Amherst College, Baylor University, Abilene Christian University, Berea College, Boston College, and Brown University. Granted, these schools are not all the same size. Some are Division I while others are Division III. Take for example the differences between Berea College and the University of South Carolina. Berea is a DIII school with about 1,400 students enrolled while the U of SC is Division I and has roughly 34,000 students enrolled (Brooks, 2023). There are big differences, but what makes them successful and what can be applied to the SWB/NEPA area?

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

A successful FYE school with a similar size to the SWB schools was found after analyzing these top schools. Amherst College is a small, private, liberal arts institution that has about 2,000 students enrolled at the school. They do something very unique. Students are required to go to certain events on campus called “Experience Events” that tie into the FYS course. Students go to these events, write reflection papers for their classes, and have to attend a certain amount by the end of the sophomore year. There are also many programs and events students are not required to go to on campus, but when students go to events, they are put into pools for prizes. They do not say what the prizes are, but it is an incentive for going to these events (Amherst College, n.d.).

Amherst is just one example. There were a few main themes that popped up across the board most of the other institutions in the top ten. Having a user friendly website was key in enrollment. If students are easily able to navigate a site and find the information they need, they are more likely to have a great first impression of the school and spend more time on the site (Ang, 2019). There are easy handoffs from the Admissions department to Housing and Residence Life/Orientation and from class year to class year. These schools have a great sense of empowering upperclassmen in mentor roles like Orientation Leaders, Resident Assistants, legitimate Mentor programs, advice columns, and Teaching Assistant roles. These schools also do great jobs at not just getting students involved on campus in social events, but empowering them early in their college careers in student leadership roles that leave the students feeling a sense of pride in themselves and the school, which also helps with retention rates as students are even more attached to each other and their university. Some other consistent themes are educational but firm conduct processes, non-redundant education modules from orientation to



## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

their FYE classes, having credited FYE classes, active early intervention systems, and large budgets dedicated to the social atmosphere on campus (Brooks, 2023).

### **Analysis**

Putting anything into different perspectives is key in navigating life. From being a student going through their first-year experience (FYE) to actually teaching the FYE class. Being able to put oneself in the shoes of someone else and see issues from their point of view is incredibly important in being a great leader (Higdon, 2012). The issues addressed thus far have substantial implications for a myriad of stakeholders. Ranging from the administrative and personnel levels within the educational institution to the student body, the local community, and ultimately the familial sphere, each individual with a connection to the college bears a significant stake in these matters.

Educational institutions serve a dual role as facilitators of student development and as entities operating within a business framework. While their primary mission is to provide support for students during their current academic phase and equip them for subsequent stages, it is paramount to acknowledge the inherent business aspect of colleges. Students, acting as pivotal contributors to the financial sustenance and reputational capital of these institutions, represent a critical determinant of their operational dynamics and overarching success (Gillies, 2015). The impact of students on a school is profound; the dissemination of thoughts and actions among students has the potential to shape or undermine the institution. Given the contagious nature of attitudes, it is imperative for students and faculty/staff alike to remain cognizant of their origins and consistently empathize by placing themselves back into the perspective of their peers or former identities (Higdon, 2012). These identities are developed throughout life, but especially at the transitional stage. Evans talked about Chickering's Theory of Identity in the article Student

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

Development in College (2016), which talked about the seven factors that contribute to the development of one's identity. Developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy and towards independence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing integrity, and developing purpose are all the main components that lead to a whole picture of one's identity.

Each of these are important, but drawing in the focus here is developing relationships and moving through autonomy towards independence. This perfectly summarizes the FYE experience inside and outside of the classroom. As a student transitions into college, they are going to have to make new friends and work towards a level of independence they may have never had in their life, which can lead to excess stressors being put on the student by themselves if they do not attach with a social group quick enough and are not able to manage their new found independence. In turn, this can lead to blaming of the school which can ultimately lead to resentment and withdrawal mentally and then physically by leaving (Evans, 2016).

It is easy to understand the logic here. If a student does not develop and maintain a friend group (developing those relationships) then they do not have anyone else in their life at school to support the identity they are trying to build away from home. Pair that with a new found independence and not being held to as much of a schedule as one was in high school, it can lead to self-destruction. Students may experience a sense of cultural misalignment within the school, coupled with difficulties in maintaining productivity and achieving academic excellence, ultimately impacting their grades as well (Evans, 2016)

In reference to the school's perspective, it would greatly enhance the institution's financial viability for schools to proactively cultivate the student experience prior to the students' physical presence on campus, and continue growing that experience over the course of their first

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

year (Gillies, 2015). Human Capital Theory (HCT) becomes applicable here. HCT suggests that individuals enhance their productive capacity and earning potential by acquiring knowledge, skills, and expertise through education and training. Human capital theory has been widely applied to understanding the economic benefits of education (Gillies, 2015).

HCT is typically applied to economics and business, but it directly relates to the students and their experiences on campus. Logic would dictate that the more the student is invested in their campus experience, the more they would invest financially through the means of continuing to live on campus (if applicable), maintaining their status as a full-time student, contributing through purchasing items at campus events, and ultimately donating as alumni (Gillies, 2015).

In summary, allocating resources towards enhancing the first-year student experience would yield financial dividends, or at the very least, a steady financial stream that remains stable. Recognizing that educational institutions function as businesses underscores the pragmatic reality that, despite the commendable focus on student welfare, financial viability is indispensable for their sustained operation. The juxtaposition of reputation against financial considerations is a recurring theme in this discourse, emphasizing that, on occasion, reputation holds a significance that transcends mere monetary value (Gillies, 2015). Through the development of these first-year initiatives, academic success appears to be paramount to anything else. First-year programs often focus on helping students develop critical academic skills, time management, and study strategies. When students have a strong foundation in their first year, they are better prepared for the challenges of more advanced coursework. This can lead to improved academic performance and increased satisfaction with the educational experience (Evans, 2016).

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

Institutions that invest in first-year programs and demonstrate a commitment to student success can enhance their reputation (Griffin, 2019). A positive reputation can attract more students, increase funding opportunities, and improve alumni engagement. Engaged alumni are more likely to give back to their alma mater, contributing to the financial health of the institution (Young, 2018). When schools are financially stable, they are able to give back to their students in a multitude of ways.

Schools need funds to cover day-to-day operational expenses, including salaries for faculty and staff, utility bills, maintenance, and administrative costs. Without a steady stream of revenue, it would be challenging to keep the institution physically running effectively. Financial resources are crucial for providing a high-quality education. This includes hiring qualified faculty, maintaining modern facilities, updating instructional materials, and offering innovative programs that keep pace with educational advancements (Gillies, 2015). Many students rely on scholarships and financial aid to access higher education. Schools use financial resources to provide scholarships and grants, making education more accessible to a wider range of students. Money is needed to fund student support services such as academic advising, counseling, tutoring, and career services. These services contribute to student success and well-being (Gillies, 2015).

To meet the needs of a growing student body or to expand academic programs, institutions will require financial resources for constructing new buildings, hiring additional faculty, and expanding facilities. Modern educational institutions heavily depend on technology for teaching, learning, administration, and communication. Investments in technology infrastructure are crucial to keep up with the evolving digital landscape. Educational institutions must meet accreditation standards and comply with state and federal regulations. Funds are

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

needed to support accreditation processes, compliance efforts, and reporting requirements (Gillies, 2015).

Overall, money is important for schools because it enables them to fulfill their educational mission, support students (through the development of FYE programs), provide quality education, maintain and improve facilities, and contribute to the overall development of their communities. Financial resources are the lifeblood of educational institutions, allowing them to achieve their goals and create a positive impact. Creating that positive impact starts with the first impressions that come from the school. Right from the first time a student visits campus on a random drive by, visits the website, gets an item in the mail, or sees the school at a college fair, first impressions matter. How the school presents itself right off the bat can make or break a sale to a student. Having the appropriate financial resources as a school is one of the best ways to help present themselves in the light of enrollment and the hopeful ultimate acceptance from the student (Gillies, 2015).

With that being said, schools do not just have to sell themselves to the student. Family members are also heavily involved in the decision making process. Approximately 77% percent of students in college are getting financial help from their families. This can be in the form of paying for textbooks, housing costs, meal plans, and/or tuition (Ipsos, 2023). Going into the perspective of the families is something that really cannot be understood unless someone has been there for themselves with a loved one going away for long periods of time. Everyone does not experience it. Yet those that do, there is a lot that can be pulled Attachment Theory that describes what it is like.

Attachment theory, developed by Bowlby, is primarily associated with early childhood development and the formation of emotional bonds between children and their caregivers.

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

However, attachment theory can also be relevant in understanding how students leaving for college experience and navigate this transition. Attachment theory recognizes that separation from attachment figures can evoke separation anxiety, even in adults. When students leave for college, they may experience feelings of anxiety, sadness, and loss as they separate from their family (Bowlby, 1978).

These emotions are normal and part of the adjustment process that can be addressed from the student perspective in FYE related courses and programming. Through FYE, students would also be learning about the resources the school has to offer. Colleges and universities often offer counseling and support services that can be beneficial for students experiencing emotional challenges related to attachment and separation. These services can provide a secure base for emotional support while away from home (Higdon, 2012).

Just like any change that occurs in life, having a child or sibling leave for college can create a whole range of emotions on all ends of the spectrum. There is the worrying, anxiety, sadness, maybe a sense of loss in the household, and a fear for the unknown. But, this transition can also promote excitement and pride in the family knowing that their child is going to college and hopefully aspiring to achieve many goals in their time away (Evans, 2016). For some, there may also be a sense of relief that their child is out of the home and the family may have more time on their hands to do things they were not able to do with their child present in the household (Higdon, 2012).

To finalize this section, regardless of the perspectives and theories that are analyzed in this paper, there is one theory that encapsulates everything that has been discussed and makes it a bit more concise. Over several decades, Dr. Astin has been researching and developing a Theory of Involvement. It was first published in 1984, but the theory has been molded and grown over

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

the course of many years. Astin's Theory of Involvement, often referred to as the Astin I-E-O Model, is a well-known framework in the field of higher education that aims to understand the factors influencing student development and success. The model is built on the premise that student development is influenced by a dynamic interplay among inputs (I), environments (E), and outcomes (O) (Astin, 1999).

Inputs are the pre-existing characteristics and attributes that students bring with them to college. These include their background, abilities, motivations, and prior experiences.

Environments are the educational and social contexts within which students find themselves in college. These contexts can be both in and out of the classroom and include interactions with faculty, peers, academic programs, and extracurricular activities. Outcomes refer to the changes, growth, and development that result from student involvement within the college environment. These outcomes can be academic, personal, and social. Examples of outcomes include academic achievement, personal development, critical thinking skills, and overall satisfaction with the college experience (Astin, 1999).

Astin's Theory of Involvement is highly relevant to the first-year experience both inside and outside of the classroom. Inside the classroom, it underscores the importance of students' active engagement in their coursework, including attending classes, participating in discussions, and investing time in academic activities. Outside the classroom, the theory emphasizes the significance of co-curricular involvement, such as joining clubs, student organizations, and campus events, as these experiences contribute to personal growth and development. Astin's model highlights that the first-year experience plays a crucial role in shaping students' patterns of involvement, which, in turn, influence their development, finances, and outcomes throughout their college journey (Astin, 1999).

### **Ethical Implications**

Overall, there are several ethical implications that need to be considered when implementing or failing to implement any first-year experience (FYE) initiatives in the Scranton/Wilkes Barre (SWB) area. The first revolves around the idea that not each and every individual comes from the same place and has the same experiences in their lives. From academics to finances, everyone is their own unique individual with their own story. If schools fail to implement any college prep programming, they fail to level the playing field for those enrolled (Lindsay, 2003). Students that had college prep classes in high school are much more ready for the college classroom than those who may be incoming students that are non-traditional in age and are coming from technical schools, the military, etc. Having some sort of college prep while in your first semester in college is crucial to give everyone the tools they need to succeed. College prep work can revolve around writing, communication (verbal, non-verbal, electronic), time management, financial responsibility, mental and physical health, and self-awareness in terms of attitudes, hygiene, etc (Friedman, 2022).

Another aspect to consider is commuter outreach. A lot of programming outside of the classroom benefits those that live on campus because social and/or education events are typically held after daytime class hours. It is much easier for a residential student to walk from their residence hall to an event compared to a commuter who may have to drive up to an hour back to campus. Not to mention gas prices and finances, weather, car problems, and other schedules/responsibilities. Making sure commuters are included in outside of the classroom programs is key as to not make them feel like they are an outside looking in (Farrell, 2018).

Boundaries are another aspect that directly impacts those interacting with students on a regular basis, and even more-so the professionals who try and relate to and level with students as



## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

a way to promote openness and comfortability. Colleges want students to report things that happen on campus. Colleges want students to use the resources available to them, but there are power dynamics present in every social relationship between faculty/staff and the students (Farrell, 2018) Boundaries are determined by school policy and personal bubbles/preferences, but this is key with those students who do not have the understanding of power dynamics and/or boundary setting. Students may seem like they can confide certain things with employees, but most are mandated reporters. This means that employees have to report policy breaking behaviors and thoughts/actions that are putting students at risk whether to themselves or others. If students do not understand this boundary and it is not set upfront by the professionals, students may think they can confide in someone and lose trust with that person and the institution if it ends up getting reported. Word gets around quick at smaller schools (Farrell. 2018)

Another ethical dilemma are retention rates for schools. If students do not feel connected to their school, they will withdraw and explore other options. Statistics visible to the general public are impacted, which ultimately impact the reputation of the school and can end up hitting enrollment rates. This can then lead to schools possibly being absorbed by other schools or announcing closures (Ipsos, 2023). In both cases, students are losing options for college, graduates are losing credibility in their degrees from said institutions, and people are losing their jobs. Which then leads to rich school histories being lost through the annals of history and becoming a quick blip on the radar of time. Then tax payer money and donations were all for nothing. It is an extreme case and a bleak way to look at it, but it is the reality of situations that can be presented to schools at any point (Gillies, 2015).

Lastly, While COVID-19 appears to be the rearview mirror to many individuals, its lasting impact can still be felt on college campuses and universities to this very day. Budgets

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

have been cut, commuter populations increased while on-campus residents decreased, and enrollment statistics are just starting to get back to pre-COVID numbers (Sharma & Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2022). This led to some changes in the higher education landscape with families and prospective students seeing many schools close or some consolidate and join with other local schools to widen their reach under a larger moniker. An example in Pennsylvania is Cabrini University Closing (Moody, 2023). Another example is the creation of Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania which has combined Mansfield, Lock Haven, Bloomsburg, and Clearfield Universities under one multi-campus university (Hanna, 2022).

It needs to be kept in the minds of universities that while COVID was at its peak a few years ago, families and people themselves are still reeling from that point in history. Prospective students and families can investigate the financial standings of the schools they are interested in, see what programs are accredited, etc. Being truthful and transparent about these numbers is key in attitudes of students coming to a school, and staying at a school (Sharma & Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2022). In a related sense, educational institutions encouraging students to be active on campus is great, but having those emergency protocols when an on campus student tests positive for COVID-19 is key. Then, schools need to do everything in their power to make sure the student is still connected appropriate resources. When students are in isolation or quarantine, there can be a feeling of disconnectedness because of a situation out of their control, but how will the school appropriately keep the student up to date and engaged with the community, depending on what their isolation timelines look like (Sharma & Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2022)?

### **Policy and Programming Recommendations**

Anyone working on a college campus during COVID-19 has unique insights into higher education policy and just how much the landscape can shift from month to month. Many

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

Scranton/Wilkes Barre schools, just like most other colleges through the nation, had its main and satellite campuses closed and classes did shift to an online realm. In 2020, smaller schools with less than 5000 students experienced a 20% drop in incoming students who wanted to live on campus (Binkley & Amy, 2020). This means that less students may be applying for on campus-housing which not only has financial implications, but as previously stated, it is much easier to get those who live on campus involved in their first-year experience (FYE).

A few recommendations can be made because of this conundrum. The whole situation gives schools a perfect chance to bolster their satellite campuses. Those campuses are mostly commuter schools and much cheaper alternatives from the main campus (Binkley & Amy, 2020). The satellite campuses can become more enticing options for students because of not only the price, but a possible need to stay near home. Students may be hesitant to live in close quarters with people they do not know, so this gives the perfect opportunity to market those campuses. As a responses, this also means that schools will have to bolster their FYE presence at these campuses and make sure policies are consistent from the main campus to their satellite campuses.

This necessitates a critical reassessment of a school's core mission, particularly in instances where financial challenges arise. Faced with potential financial losses, institutions must scrutinize expenditure areas for possible reductions, and regrettably, this often involves reconsidering less popular programs. While this may not be an ideal scenario, it mirrors a trend observed in numerous educational institutions nationwide as they grapple with recalibrating their strengths and addressing weaknesses (Sharma & Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2022). Pragmatically, discontinuing less popular programs can yield fiscal benefits, mitigating financial losses to some extent. Undoubtedly, such decisions may entail staff reductions, albeit unavoidably. A plausible

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

response to this conundrum may involve pivoting toward the promotion of online education within the institution, a strategic move that aligns with the comparable cost structures of E-Campus offerings and traditional in-state satellite campuses (Binkley & Amy, 2020).

SWB schools also need to be able to communicate between departments to make sure that each is on the same page when it comes to student development and what is being presented to the student. With the top ten schools mentioned earlier, there are manageable and easy handoffs from the point of inquiry, to enrollment, to orientation and so on. This is something that the administration of any school needs to require of their staff. Developing a strategic plan or an action plan to support students throughout their application process is a necessary step towards a successful FYE program (Friedman, 2022).

Again, based on what the top schools in the United States have for the FYE, the biggest thing schools can implement is a strong FYE class paired with purposeful events outside of the classroom. The needs of the student are always changing. The positive and negative influences and experiences students will encounter are always changing. FYE experiences inside and outside of the classroom as a whole give the ability to adapt to and address these changes on a yearly basis. It also gives students that may not know what to expect from college life, the perspectives, or at least foundations to these perspectives, to thrive in the college sphere (Jaijairam, 2016).

In addition, it gives schools a baseline of comparison if they are looking to study the changes in a class from their first-year to senior years. The class can be a reliable way to give a survey in person and then compare it to a survey when they are graduating. The scenario can serve as a longitudinal study to see how perspectives and views of the school change over a student's time enrolled and taking classes. Also, this first-year experience can have a litany of

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

benefits outside of the classroom as well. It can promote student involvement on campus, foster positive relationships between individuals, and give the students an idea of their expectations so they can succeed at the next level, which is always great for the reputation of the school (Schnell & Doekott, 2003).

Lastly, something all of the schools in the top ten have in common is a specific mentorship role for student leaders that is different from a Resident Assistant or Orientation Leader. These mentors are prepared through various trainings and have experiences with community building, academic advising from the peer level, orientation, collecting data and reporting on said data, collaborating with other departments, being visible on campus, early intervention, and being a general role model and representative for the school. Some personal strengths of these mentors include communication, problem-solving, adaptability, empathy, boundary setting, and goal setting (Farrell, 2018).

The mentors are dedicated and passionate student leaders responsible for collaborating on the facilitation of the First Year Experience. The primary focus of this position is to provide comprehensive support, guidance, and mentorship to first-year students, fostering a successful transition to college life and academic success. The mentors collaborate with various campus stakeholders to develop and implement initiatives that address the unique needs of first-year students and promote their holistic development. Ultimately, this role can possibly serve as a filter program for RAs, OLs, and other student leadership opportunities on campus that can even lead to graduating students applying for roles within the university as alumni (Brooks, 2023).

### **Summary**

The first-year experience in the Scranton/Wilkes Barre area is ready to be reinvented. Reflected in the studies from the first question under the literature review, students overall are

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

clamoring for a more engaging way of being taught and engaged. If students are not engaged both inside and outside of the classroom, they will not come back to the school for their sophomore year. They want to discover their passions and build bridges along the way. Students want to feel empowered by their FYE. Students want to learn about themselves and the world while focusing on their passion and/or major (Ang, 2019). This is noticed in the always changing classes of first-year students going to school all around the United States. From looking at social media posts to just having casual conversations, people are more interested in the world and each other than ever before. It is all about finding that spark at the institution that gets the wheels spinning in the right direction (Mintz, 2017).

The FYE is something that is an extremely important time for colleges and universities to capitalize on the mold-ability of students coming to their schools. Take the Scranton/Wilkes Barre area of Northeastern Pennsylvania. It is mainly composed of division III schools that have enrollments between 1,400 and 6,000 students (college navigator, n.d.). The middle is where most schools fall, but there are some outliers. Schools of this size are shown to be in limbo when it comes to student population and finances since COVID-19. Cabrini University shut down and Commonwealth University was created and under its purview is Mansfield, Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Clearwater (Hanna, 2022). In order to stay active, what can schools in the SWB area take from much larger first-year experience programs around the country and apply to themselves to give a new life to their programs and enrollment so that they do not shut down or combine into a larger institution?

The concept stated comes down to SWB schools putting equal effort and emphasis in their FYE both inside and outside of the classroom. The SWB schools do not really have the most robust FYE experiences compared to schools that are way ahead of the curve and

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

expanding even after the pandemic. Out of the seven schools in the SWB area studied, one has a great foundation in its FYE class and has just started an FYE component outside of the classroom with the creation of a position called Campus Life Coordinator of the First-Year Experience, but it is yet to be seen the impact it will have with students (Campus Life, 2023). Four other schools all have classroom elements incoming students have to partake in, but no information was found when it comes to requirements and/or opportunities outside of the classroom, specifically for first-year students. Another SWB area school is implementing the Archway, a menagerie of foundational courses all incoming students have to take in order to move on to sophomore year (Bernatowicz, 2022).

Schools that ranked in the top ten FYE programs in the country have consistent themes across their FYE programming and curriculum that support their reputations while encouraging more students to apply and stay at the school (Brooks, 2023). These consistencies revolve around getting students involved in student leadership positions early, having peer to peer support, having faculty and staff buy into the messaging, developing a robust FYE classroom experience, offering a litany of outside of the classroom social events, and continuing the support from the day of inquiry to the point of graduation (Brooks, 2023).

After looking over the strengths of these larger schools, recommendations can be made that would benefit the overall outlook for the schools in the SWB area. The first recommendation centers itself on finances. Schools are still reeling from the impact of COVID. Students are commuting to schools in larger numbers and if schools have satellite campuses, they should be bolstering support and FYE presence to their satellite campuses. Another idea is unfortunate but tied into the finances of the schools, cutting programs that are not cost efficient and reallocating the resources elsewhere to bolster strengths (Gillies, 2015).

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

With that being said, schools may not know where their own strengths are located, so departments need to be able to communicate with each other to make sure the same messages are being communicated to students across the board and things are not getting to redundant to the point of the law of diminishing returns. This includes the FYE classes. FYE classes need to have a strong presence on SWB campuses without being redundant and boring. These classes ensure that all students have the same knowledge in resources on campus, history of the institution, and skills needed to succeed on the college level. In these classes, surveys and evaluations can be sent to students as a way of gathering data to see what the needs of the student are, who may not be returning for the next semester, and as an early alert system to notify the school for students who might be falling off the standards the schools want to uphold (Friedman, 2022)

Another way these larger schools keep in touch with their student populations is through mentorship programs that are different from Resident Assistants and Orientation Leaders. Resident Assistants typically oversee a floor of the residence halls on campus and Orientation Leaders oversee the orientation process from a facilitator point of view (Farrell, 2018). Each of these roles are typically undergraduate student filled for more peer to peer support. While OLs are with students for a short period of time and RAs have a stigma as being policy enforcers, these mentors are that peer to peer support that establish appropriate boundaries with residents but are there for them to answer questions and about a whole litany of different topics at the school while also serving as a role model the students can look up to.

When it comes to thinking about the entirety of this from different perspectives, a few come into the mind. Perspectives from the student, family, and school can be intertwined but so different in concern. Through Chickering's Theory of Identity, it is established that students are concerned about developing their own identity away from home both inside and outside of the



## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

classroom. The main factors of this are working through that autonomy, getting to an independent stage, and actually defining what their identity will be through various actions and engagements that school provides (Evans, 2016) The school has to worry about its own finances in relation to the student through Human Capital Theory. What the school puts into the student financially and through individual effort will be returned with more financial stability from the student and beyond (Gillies, 2015).

From the familial perspective, Attachment Theory talks about how parents and guardians can feel when their child leaves for college. They can feel proud internally and happy for the student yet excited at the fact they have more time for themselves. Even with that positivity, there can be this overarching sense of dread and not knowing what happens next. Regardless of what is being implemented at any SWB school, institutions need to make sure their decisions are ethically sound and do right by the students. Commuters need to be included, boundaries need to be set, students need a level playing field, and the school needs to seriously think about how their decisions impact retention, because retention can make or break the future (Griffin, 2019).

In conclusion, the synergistic integration of academic pursuits and the first-year experience is achievable when classroom curricula are strategically aligned with extracurricular events, fostering a cohesive and holistic educational environment. The alignment, even if it extends only to social aspects, contributes to increased visibility for the institution. Proactively implementing innovative ideas, substantiated by robust relationships and empirical data, may attract additional resources. The overarching goal is to orchestrate educational institutions as finely tuned mechanisms, akin to Swiss-made watches. This harmonious orchestration is contingent upon the seamless convergence of passion and effective communication among

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

faculty and staff, dedicated to providing comprehensive support for incoming students entering a pivotal new chapter in their academic journey.

**References**

- Admissions. (2023, September 8). *General education requirements*. Keystone College.  
<https://www.keystone.edu/academics/general-education-requirements/>
- Amherst College. (n.d). *First Year Experience Programs and Events*.
- Ang, C.-S., Lee, K.-F., & Dipolog-Ubanan, G. F. (2019). Determinants of first-year student identity and satisfaction in higher education: a quantitative case study. *SAGE Open*, 9(2), 215824401984668. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019846689>
- Astin, A. W. (1999). Student involvement: a developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40(5), 518–529.
- Baker, R. W., McNeil, O. V., & Siryk, B. (1985). Expectation and reality in freshman adjustment to college. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 32(1), 94-103. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.32.1.94>
- Baldwin, A. (2020). *Promoting Belonging, Growth Mindset, and Resilience to Foster Student Success*. Columbia, SC: First Year Experience National Resource Center.
- Bernatowicz, E. (2022, October 17). *New Core curriculum to be rolled out for fall 2023*. The Wood Word. <https://www.thewoodword.org/news/2022/10/17/new-core-curriculum-to-be-rolled-out-for-fall-2023/>
- Binkley, C. (2020, April 30). *Financial hits pile up for colleges as some fight to survive*. AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/wa-state-wire-ct-state-wire-pa-state-wire-ma-state-wire-virus-outbreak-673bffcda00bf5522153c15e6e0373d5>
- Bowlby, J. (1978). Attachment theory and its therapeutic implications. *Adolescent Psychiatry*, 6, 5–33.

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

Brooks, E. (2023, September 17). *2024 colleges with great first-year experiences | US news best colleges*. U.S. News and World Report. <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/rankings/first-year-experience-programs>

Campus Life. (2023). *Contact information*. Misericordia University. <https://www.misericordia.edu/life-at-mu/campus-life/contact-information>

College navigator - national center for education statistics. (n.d.). <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>

Evans, N. (2016). Student development in college. *Theory, Research, and Practice*, 3, 37-45.

Farrell, L. C., Jorgenson, D., Fudge, J., & Pritchard, A. (2018). College connectedness: the student perspective. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 18(1), 75–95. <https://doi.org/10.14434/josotl.v18i1.22371>

Feldman, R. (2005). Engaging the first-year student. *Improving the First Year of College*, 177–192. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410611864-16>

Friedman, D. B. (2022). Key ingredients to a successful first-year seminar. *From Educational Experiment to Standard Bearer*, 76–88. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2j56z08.9>

Gillies, D. (2015). Human capital theory in education. *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*. Berlin, Germany: Springer Science: Business Media, 1–5.

Griffin, A. (2019). First-year college students' behaviors and characteristics of those who stay and those who go. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 23(4), 815–823. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025119879414>

Hanna, B. (2022, July 1). *President's message*. Commonwealth University. <https://www.commonwealthu.edu/presidents-message>

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

Higdon, J. (2012). Bowlby: Attachment and separation. *Psychodynamic Theory for Therapeutic Practice*, 158–186. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-230-35636-8\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-230-35636-8_7)

Howell, J. (2021, January 1). *College enrollment and retention in the era of Covid*. VECEDplus, the international tertiary education and research database.

<https://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv:95753>

Ipsos. (2023). *How America pays for college 2023 Sallie Mae | ipsos 2023 how America pays for college...salliemae.com*.

<https://www.salliemae.com/content/dam/slm/writtencontent/Research/HowAmericaPaysforCollege2023.pdf>

Jajairam, P. (2016). First-year seminar (fys)—the advantages that this course offers. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 5(2), 15. doi: 10.5539/jel.v5n2p15

Lindsay, Elizabeth B. (2003). A collaborative approach to information literacy in the freshman seminar. *Academic Exchange Quarterly* 7(3).

Mintz, S. (2017, February 23). *Reinventing the first year experience*. Inside Higher Ed | Higher Education News, Events and Jobs. <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/higher-ed-gamma/reinventing-first-year-experience>

Moody, J. (2023, June 26). *Cabrini University will close*. Inside Higher Ed | Higher Education News, Events and Jobs. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/business/financial-health/2023/06/26/cabrini-university-will-close>

Nadelson, L. (2013). Why did they come here?—"the influences and expectations of first-year students' college experience." *Higher Education Studies* 3(1), 50-62.

New Student Orientation. (n.d.). *First Year experience - pre-semester learning experiences*. First

## The First Year Formula: Recipes for Success

Year Experience - Pre-Semester Learning Experiences | King's College.

<https://www.kings.edu/orientation/pre-semester-learning-experiences>

Registrar. (2019). *Course descriptions*. Course Descriptions - Wilkes University - Acalog

ACMSTM. <https://www.wilkes.edu/bulletin/current/undergraduate/course-descriptions/first-year-foundations/index.aspx>

Registrar. (2023a). *First Year seminars*. First Year Seminars - University of Scranton - Acalog

ACMSTM. <https://catalog.scranton.edu/content.php?catoid=40&navoid=4835>

Registrar. (2023b, November 6). *Misericordia University Course Catalog*. Misericordia

University - Acalog ACMSTM. <https://catalog.misericordia.edu/index.php>

Schnell, C. A., & Doekott, C. D. (2003). First year seminars produce long-term

impact. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 4(4), 377–391. doi: 10.2190/nkpn-8b33-v7cy-17w1

Sharma, G., & Yukhymenko-Lescroart, M. A. (2022). Life purpose as a predictor of resilience and persistence in college students during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 152102512210768.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/15210251221076828>

Soria, K. M., & Stubblefield, R. (2014). first-year college students' strengths awareness:

building a foundation for student engagement and academic excellence. *Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*, 26(2), 69-88

Young, D. (2018). Data from the 2017 National Survey on the First-Year Experience: Creating

Connections to Go Beyond Traditional Thinking [PowerPoint Slides]. Retrieved from

[https://sc.edu/nrc/system/pub\\_files/1538846259\\_0.pdf](https://sc.edu/nrc/system/pub_files/1538846259_0.pdf)