

General Education Curriculum Instructor Group for Category TWELVE:  
Assessment Report

Spring 2019

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## **Brief overview of Goal Area 12**

FYEX 100 First Year Seminar and Goal Area 12 are designed to promote further development of student success skills, such as reading, writing and speaking; help students gain intellectual confidence; build in the expectation of academic success; and to provide assistance in making the transition to the University. FYEX 100 underwent major revision as part of the University's participation in the 2016-2018 AASCU Re-Imagining The First Year of College Initiative. Enhancements included the creation of a common syllabus, establishing instructor expectations toward common content, increased training opportunities for instructors, and clear learning objectives.

## **Importance of the Goal Area**

Recent research has demonstrated that the first year is critical to student success. According to Mehaffy, "The lives of our students, the future of our country, and the fate of our institutions are bound up in the nature and quality of the first year." (2016: 7). For many students, their introduction to college comes through the FYEX seminar. Providing students with opportunities for engagement and building a sense of belonging are crucial for student success.

First year seminars are an important component of high impact practices (HIPs). HIPs and engagement are crucial to student success and retention. Kuh identified the following as the best practices for enhancing student engagement and increasing student success: "make it possible for every student to participate in at least two high-impact activities during his or her undergraduate program, one in the first year, and one taken later in relation to the major field. The obvious choices for incoming students are first-year seminars, learning communities, and service learning" (2008: 19).

## **Details of the Goal Area**

Students will be able to:

- (a) experience higher personal expectations of his/her ability to meaningfully participate in academic life;
- (b) define and give examples of critical thinking;
- (c) interact with other students regarding academic matters;
- (d) affirm that careful thinking is an important aspect of the educational process;
- (e) make a comfortable transition to college life.

## **Highlight different needs and dynamics**

FYEX tries to meet a variety of different needs. Students come to the seminar with widely different experiences and preparation. For example, 43% of MSU students are first-generation college students. They have little training in how to "do college". The hidden curriculum and challenges in making connections with faculty and other students have a significant impact on their retention and completion. FYEX can be a first step toward bridging the achievement gap.

As colleges move to take over the primary planning and provision of FYEX classes, they should be mindful of the possibilities of first year seminars. FYEX has the potential to deepen student's involvement, with long-lasting impacts: "the nature of these high-impact activities puts

students in circumstances that essentially demand they interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters, typically over extended periods of time. A human-scale first-year seminar makes anonymity impossible, fosters face-to-face interaction, and fuels feedback.” (Kuh 2008: 14

Moreover, it is important to select enthusiastic faculty with pedagogical training. “The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students’ intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members’ own research.” (Kuh 2008: 9)

### **Data Collection Process**

In September 2018, FYEX instructors were contacted by the University Assessment coordinator, Paul Mackie, with a request to submit assessment data on the General Education Goal Area 12 for their FYEX section. Faculty members were provided a link to resources on general education assessment including the assessment rubric. A reminder email was also sent to faculty members at the end of November. Data was submitted through a web form provided by the office of Student Success, Analytics, and Integrated Planning.

### **Procedures**

Per the five-year assessment cycle and the new addition of General Education Category 12 Goal Area, FYEX instructors were asked to submit assessment results for the Fall 2018 offerings. Instructors were presented with sampling size guidelines that direct any course with 74 students or less to assess 100% of their students. Faculty members are permitted to complete the assessment of students “within a General Education course at any point in time.” The manner of assessing students is left to faculty discretion but usually consists of a course assignment, written reflection, course survey, etc.

Our committee received raw assessment data (excluding instructor names, sections, etc.) as well as the common core syllabus. Additional data were collected through a pre and post assessment of the students. There were 530 students from 26 of the 29 sections who completed the pre-assessment; while, 413 from 27 sections completed the post assessment. The total number of students in all sections was 675 so the response rates were 79 percent and 61 percent respectively. It was advised to not include the results of the assessments in this report, but rather to incorporate in another report as the program is undergoing changes for 2019-20.

### **Results**

FYEX courses are offered as part of the Honor’s student experience, Learning Communities, and for general incoming students. Ten out of a possible twenty-nine sections of FYEX offered in Fall 2018 were assessed and submitted data. Sixty percent of the courses assessed were taught by adjunct instructors, two were taught by tenured faculty, and two were taught by probationary

faculty members. All ten courses assessed were offered face-to-face. A total of 203 students were assessed out of a total 675 students for a 30% assessment rate.

<b>The type of the 10 sections completing the assessment</b>	
2	General, meaning, they were open to anyone (not group or membership specific)
1	Undecided students
1	Student athletes
1	Students in the Maverick Success Program (contract)
5	Learning Communities

Average scores across the entire assessment put students at the Developing to Proficient levels of proficiency.

	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
1	Experience higher personal expectations of his/her ability to meaningfully participate in academic life.	2.74
2	Define and give examples of critical thinking	2.21
3	Interact with other students regarding academic matters	2.66
4	Affirm that careful thinking is an important aspect of the educational process	2.88
5	Make a comfortable transition to college life	2.96

**Outcome 1 Results:** 183 assessments of students were reported for outcome 1. 91.79 percent of students assessed were at the developing to advanced stages of proficiency.

<b>Assessment Rubric #1: Experience higher personal expectations of his/her ability to meaningfully participate in academic life</b>			
<b>Proficiency Levels</b>		<b>Raw Data (n) (183 total)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Does not meet criteria for Beginning (0)		2	1.09
Beginning (1)	Identifies higher personal expectations...	13	7.10
Developing (2)	Describes higher personal...	64	34.97
Proficient (3)	Revises higher personal...	55	30.05
Advanced (4)	Evaluates higher personal...	49	26.77

**Outcome 2 Results:** 194 assessments of students were reported for outcome 2. The majority of students are split between the initial stages of Beginning and Developing with 44.84% of students vs. Proficient and Advanced with 44.33 % of students.

<b>Assessment Rubric #2: Define and give examples of critical thinking</b>			
<b>Proficiency</b>		<b>Raw Data (n) (194 total)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Does not meet criteria for Beginning (0)		21	10.82
Beginning (1)	<i>Identifies</i> examples of critical thinking	52	26.80
Developing (2)	<i>Describes</i> examples...	35	18.04
Proficient (3)	<i>Compares</i> examples...	37	19.07
Advanced (4)	<i>Evaluates</i> examples	49	25.26

**Outcome 3 Results:** 203 assessments of students were reported for outcome 3. This outcome has strong assessments in Proficient to Advanced levels of proficiency with 65.03% being assigned to those categories. There are marginal students (7.39%) in the Developing level. The third highest area is the Beginning stage with 24.63 % of students.

<b>Assessment Rubric #3: Interact with other students regarding academic matters</b>			
<b>Proficiency</b>		<b>Raw Data (n) (203 total)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Does not meet criteria for Beginning (0)		6	2.95
Beginning (1)	<i>Identify</i> academic matters to discuss	50	24.63
Developing (2)	<i>Describes</i> academic matters to discuss with other students	15	7.39
Proficient (3)	<i>Interact</i> with other students regarding academic matters	68	33.5
Advanced (4)	<i>Evaluates</i> interactions with other students to discuss academic matters	64	31.53

**Outcome 4 Results:** 156 assessments of students were reported for outcome 4. This outcome has strong levels with over 60% students being assessed as proficient to advanced.

<b>Assessment Rubric #4: Affirm that careful thinking is an important aspect of the educational process</b>			
<b>Proficiency</b>		<b>Raw Data (n) (156 total)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Does not meet criteria for Beginning (0)		2	1.28
Beginning (1)	<i>Identify</i> that careful thinking is an important aspect...	15	9.6
Developing (2)	<i>Describe</i> careful thinking as an important aspect...	33	21.59
Proficient (3)	<i>Compare</i> examples of careful thinking as important aspects...	55	35.26
Advanced (4)	<i>Evaluate</i> examples of careful thinking...	51	32.7

**Outcome 4 Results:** 203 assessments of students were reported for outcome 5. Over 40% of students were assessed as advanced for this learning outcome. The majority of students are Proficient or higher.

<b>Assessment Rubric #5: Make a comfortable transition to college life</b>			
<b>Proficiency</b>		<b>Raw Data (n) (203 total)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Does not meet criteria for Beginning (0)		4	1.97
Beginning (1)	<i>Identifies</i> steps to making a comfortable transition...	12	5.9
Developing (2)	<i>Describes</i> steps to making a comfortable transition...	59	29.06
Proficient (3)	<i>Revise</i> steps to making a comfortable transition...	42	20.69
Advanced (4)	<i>Evaluate steps taken</i> to make a comfortable transition...	86	42.36

## Recommendations

Based on the data, the following are recommendations for improving the Goal Area 12:

- Align course objectives with number of credits
  - Workload/Credit hours: 1 or 2 credit depending on the amount of required work
- Identify ways to increase critical thinking, but keep reasonable for 1 credit class
- Identify and educate new students on best practices of transition to college
- Compare instructor assessments to the student assessments
- Follow-up on student assessments immediately
  - Catch students that do not feel ready/prepared
- Assess impact of new format – how did new format change outcomes
- Incorporate Engineering and new college-specific sections into assessment
- Align learning outcomes in catalog with FYEX Syllabus
- Examine and make changes to assessment rubric
- Increase faculty preparation as more tenured faculty begin teaching freshmen
  - Adjunct training as well for other reasons
  - Student level of thinking and learning is different – not as strong
- Identify student-centered and engaging faculty to assist with retention

## Conclusions and Limitations

Across outcomes 1, 3, 4, and 5, 97% of students met or exceeded Beginning 1 proficiency. Outcome #2 had 89% of students meeting or exceeding Beginning 1 proficiency. There was some discrepancy found in the total numbers across different learning outcomes that may impact the assessment results. Numbers reported varied from 156 to 203 students in the learning outcomes.

Kuh, George D. (2008) *High-impact Educational Practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter*. Washington, D. C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Mehaffy, George (2016) *Re-Imagining the First Year of College. Public Purpose*, 6-10.