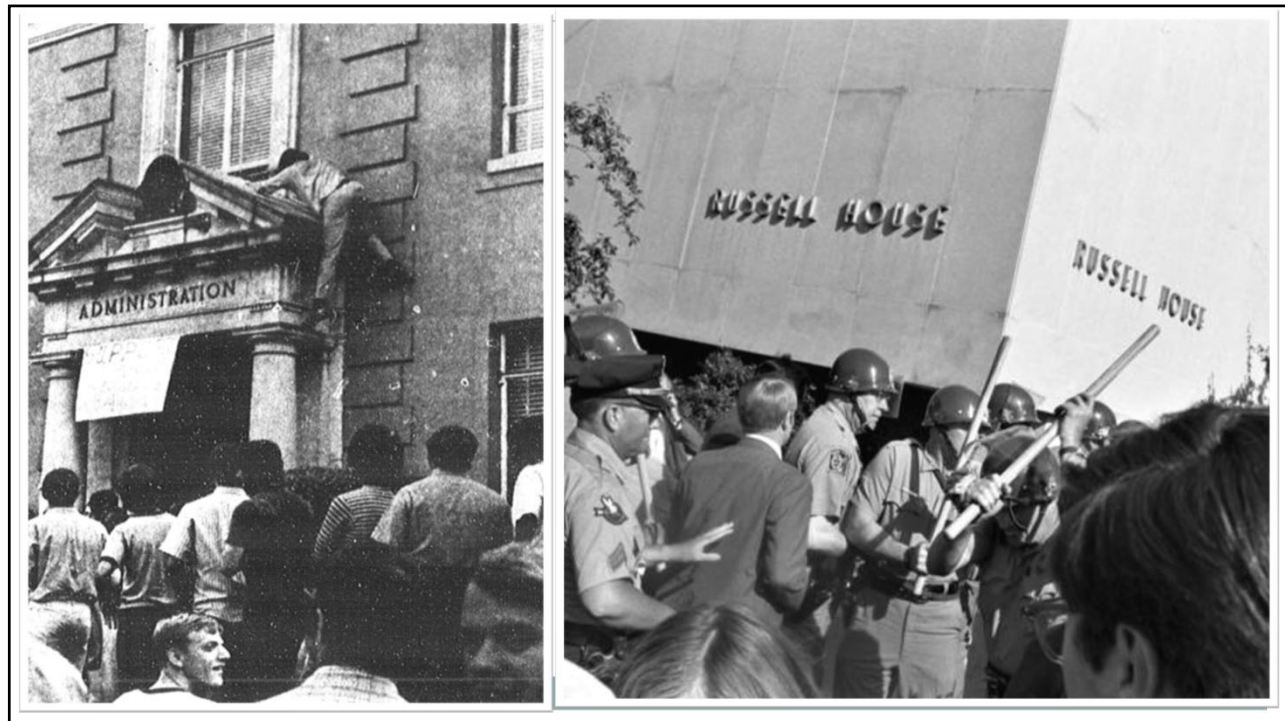


The Purpose & Power of a First-Year Seminar

1



2



3







University 101 Programs
University of South Carolina



4

Historical Origins and Founding Premises



“

U101 is for all students. Not
just the very bright or not
just the disadvantaged.

”

5

Historical Origins and Founding Premises



“

Desire to make the
university a more
humane place.

”

6

Historical Origins and Founding Premises



“

Grounded in the human
potential movement
rather than remediating
deficits.

”

7

Historical Origins and Founding Premises



“

The original intent was to create a
dialogue between students and
instructor about important aspects
of the college experience and to
improve the academic orientation of
entering students.

”

8

Does it Work?

- Academic achievement – GPA and hours earned
- Persistence to second year
- Utilization of campus resources



Paul Fidler

9

Body of Research



10

Prevalence

78%
of respondents reported
having
a first-year seminar

Forthcoming: Johnson, J.D. & Krstanovic, M. (2025). First-Year Seminars. In Johnson, J.D. (Ed.), *2023 National Survey on the First-Year Experience*. National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition, University of South Carolina.

11

FYS as a HIP

High-Impact Educational Practices

First-Year Seminars and Experiences
Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. 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.

Common Intellectual Experiences
The chief idea of a common intellectual experience is a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and co-curricular options for students.

Learning Communities
The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with "big questions" that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses in a group and work closely with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link "liberal arts" and "professional courses"—others feature service learning.

Writing-Intensive Courses
These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this approach practice "across the curriculum" has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, and communication, information literacy, and, in some campuses, ethical inquiry.

Collaborative Assignments and Projects
Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing in cooperative projects and research.

Undergraduate Research
Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students' early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

Diversity/Global Learning
Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore "difficult differences" such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, international studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
In these programs, field-based "experiential learning" with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both apply what they are learning in real-world settings and offer to a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is a good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

Internships
Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

Capstone Courses and Projects
Whether they be called "senior capstones" or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of "best work," or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, to general education as well.




LEAP

12

Ensuring the Relevance & Excellence of the First-Year Seminar



13

The Prescription

R_x

PATIENT NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

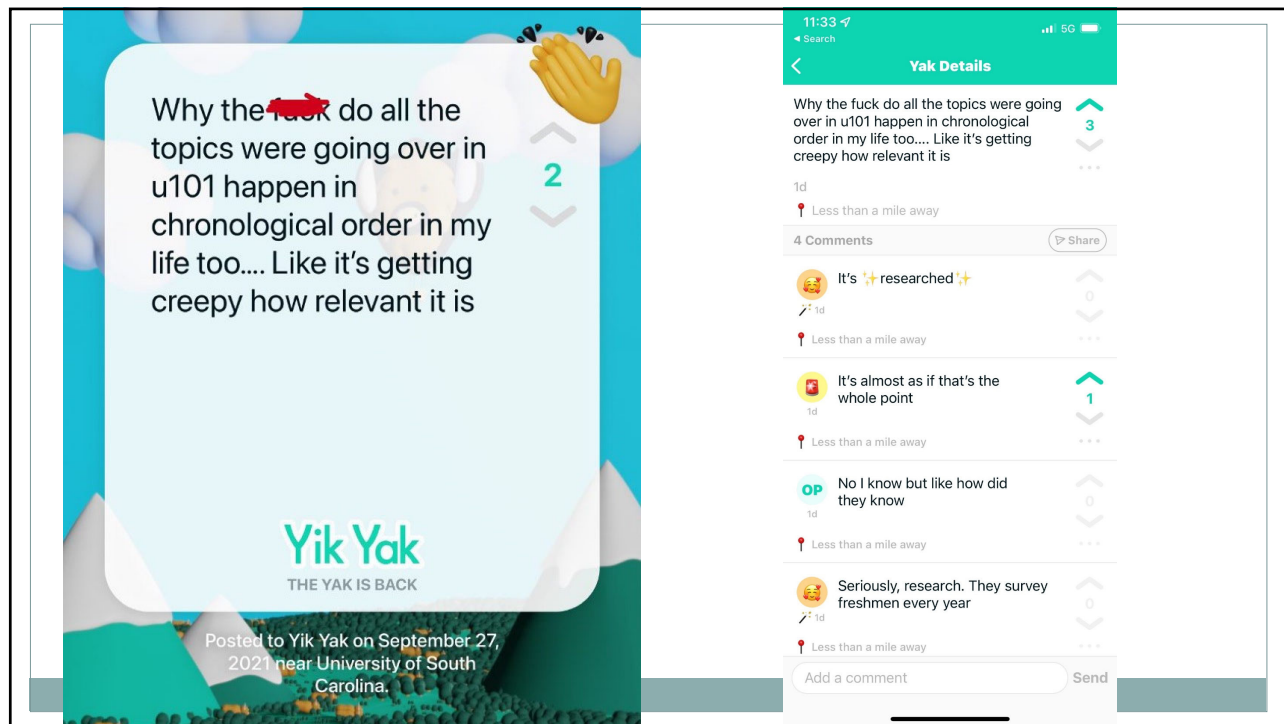
Prescription:

Relevance
(doing the right things)

Excellence
(doing things right)

Date _____ Signature _____

14



15

Words of Wisdom

Design your first-year seminar for the students you have, not the students you *think* you have or those you desire.

16

60-60 / 30-30

1. How would you describe students on your campus?
2. What do they need the most help in their first-semester?



17

Supporting first-year students

Give students the
**information &
support** they need....

when they need it

and **when they are
ready to receive it.**



18



What makes First-Year Seminars Effective?

19

Basic Principles

20



1 • Community should be established early to promote a sense of belonging and to create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment.

21

2 • The focus of this class is having students reflect on and process course content and their experiences, rather than simply distribute information.



22



23



24



25



26

University 101



3 credit hour

Extended orientation seminar

Full semester...1st semester

Graded

Fall 2024

Enrollment	6100
Class Size	20
Section Types	24
Sections Offered	318

27

Learning Outcomes

Foster Academic Success

- Academic skills
- Managing time & priorities
- Academic policies, advising, & resources



Discover & Connect with USC

- Relationships with peers, faculty, & staff
- Opportunities & resources
- History & traditions



Promote Personal Development, Well-being, & Social Responsibility

- Values & identity
- Carolinian Creed
- Well-being
- Employability



28

Recognition and Contribution to the Field



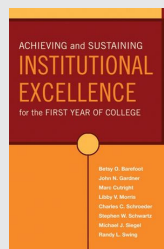
UofSC is recognized as the #1 university in the nation for our first-year student experience/University 101 course.

GOLD EXCELLENCE AWARD

Awarded by NASPA (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education)

Faculty Development Program
(2011)

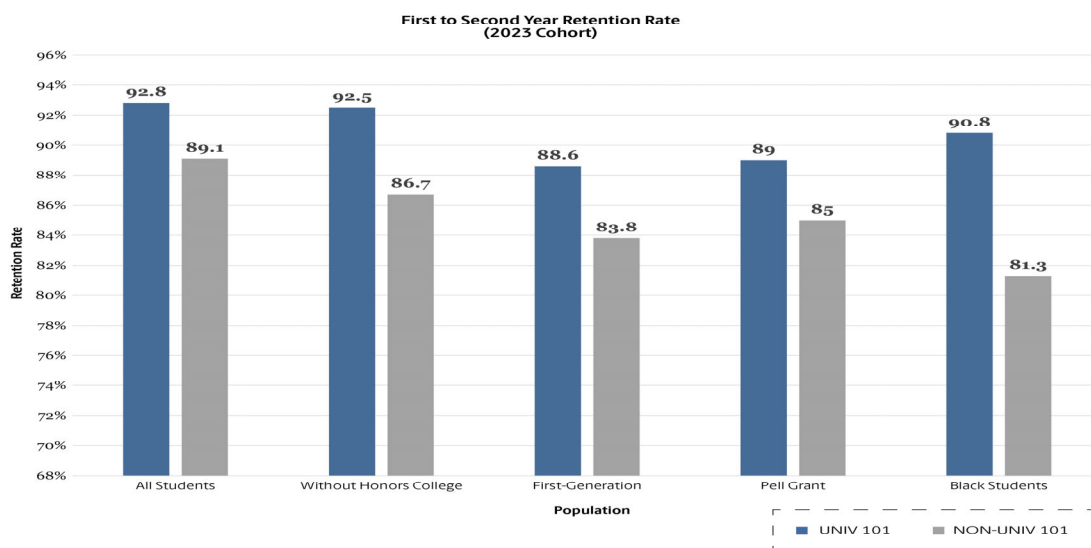
Peer Leader Program
(2018)



The University of South Carolina was one of 13 colleges and universities to be named an **Institution of Excellence in the First College Year** by the Policy Center on the First Year of College.

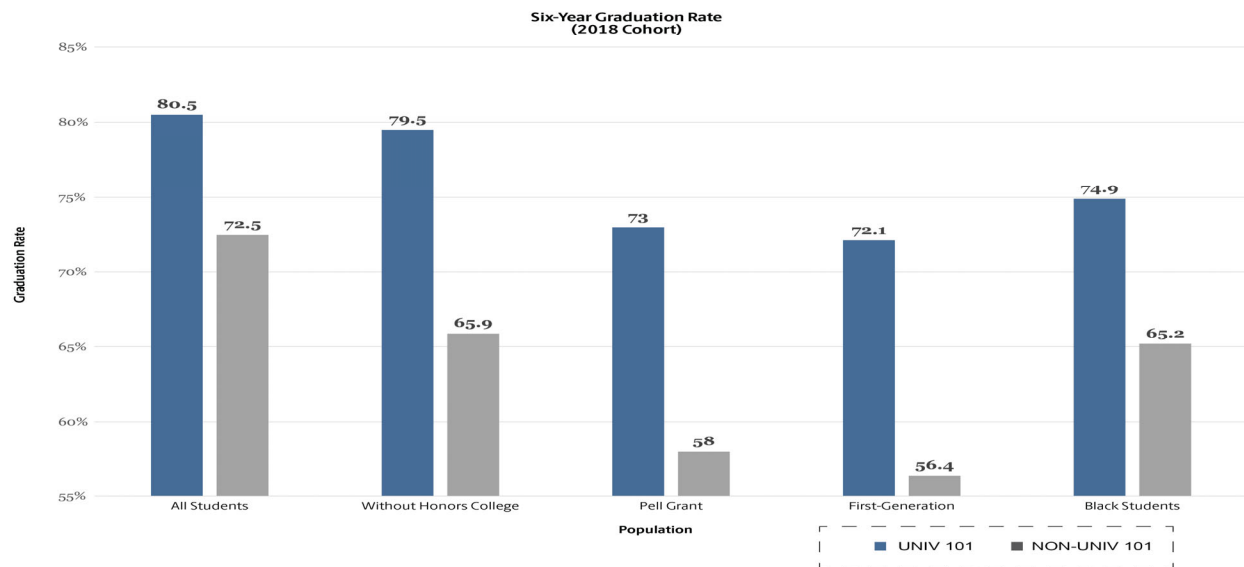
29

First to Second Year Retention (2023 Cohort)



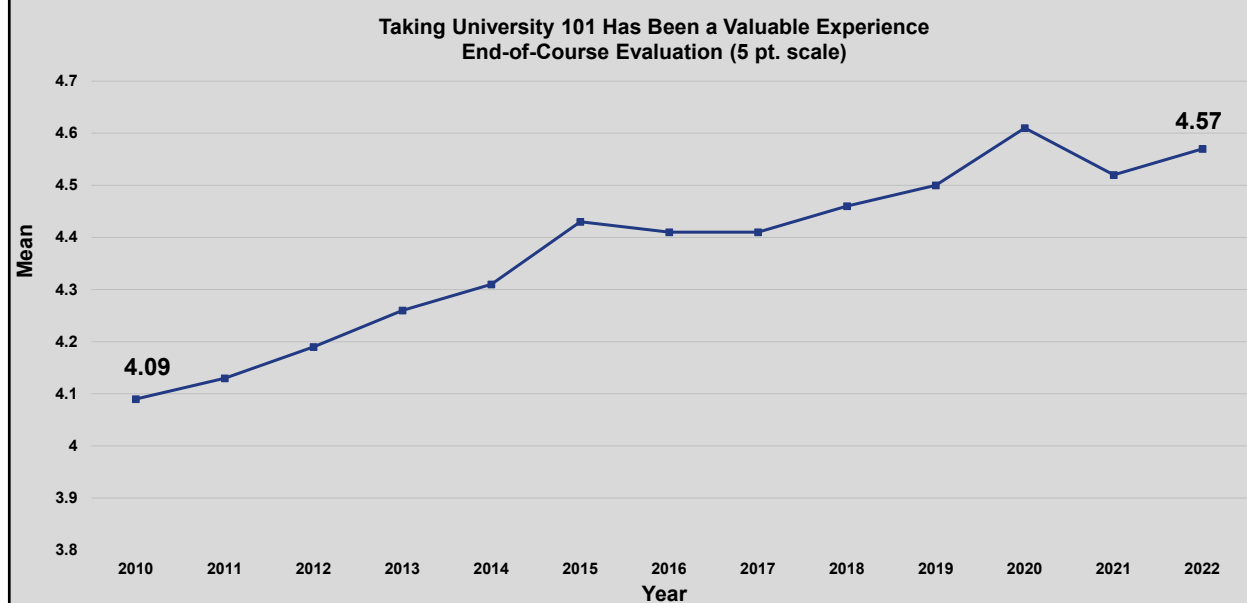
30

Six-Year Graduation Rate (2018 Cohort)



31

Student Perceptions of UNIV 101



32

What Makes a First-Year Seminar Work?

3 reasons

33

Reason One

What predicts Overall Course Effectiveness?

34

Reason One – Engaging Pedagogy

- A variety of teaching methods
- Meaningful discussion
- Encouragement for students to speak in class and work together
- Productive use of class time
- Meaningful homework & challenging assignments

Swing, R. L. (2002). *The impact of engaging pedagogy on first-year seminars* (Policy Center on the First Year of College Report). Retrieved from <http://www.sc.edu/fye/resources/assessment/essays/Swing-8.28.02.html>.

35

Reason Two – Informal Early Alert



36

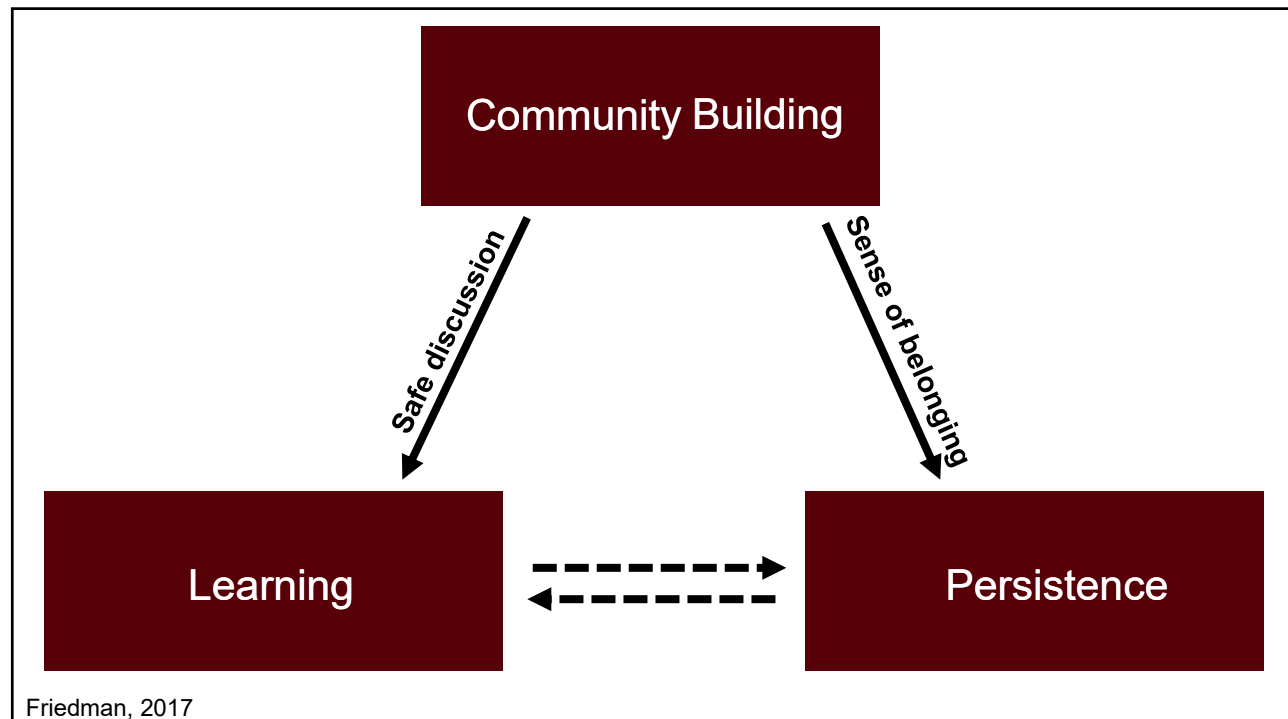
Reason Three

What factors predict persistence?

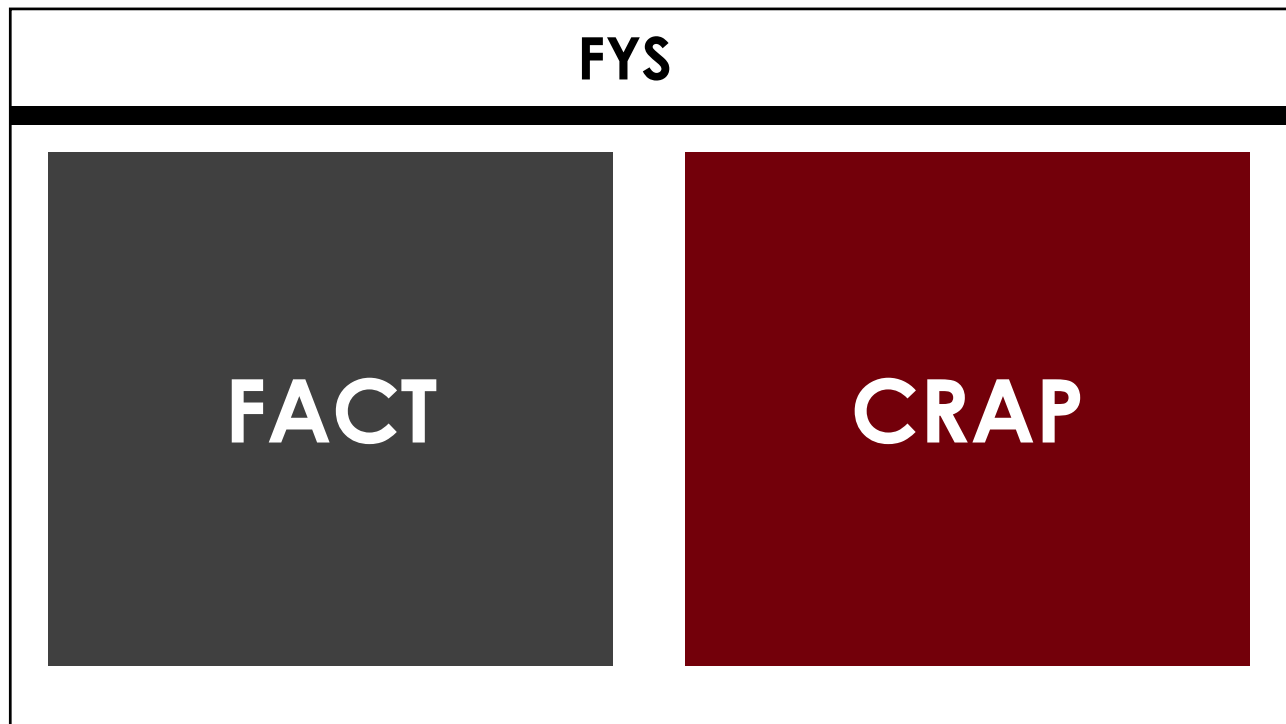
- Used FYI data set & included variables from student data file (persistence and GPA)
 - 2,014 responses (72% response rate)
- A series of logistic regressions were conducted
 - Controlled for gender, race, and high school grades

#1 Predictor = Sense of Belonging

37



38

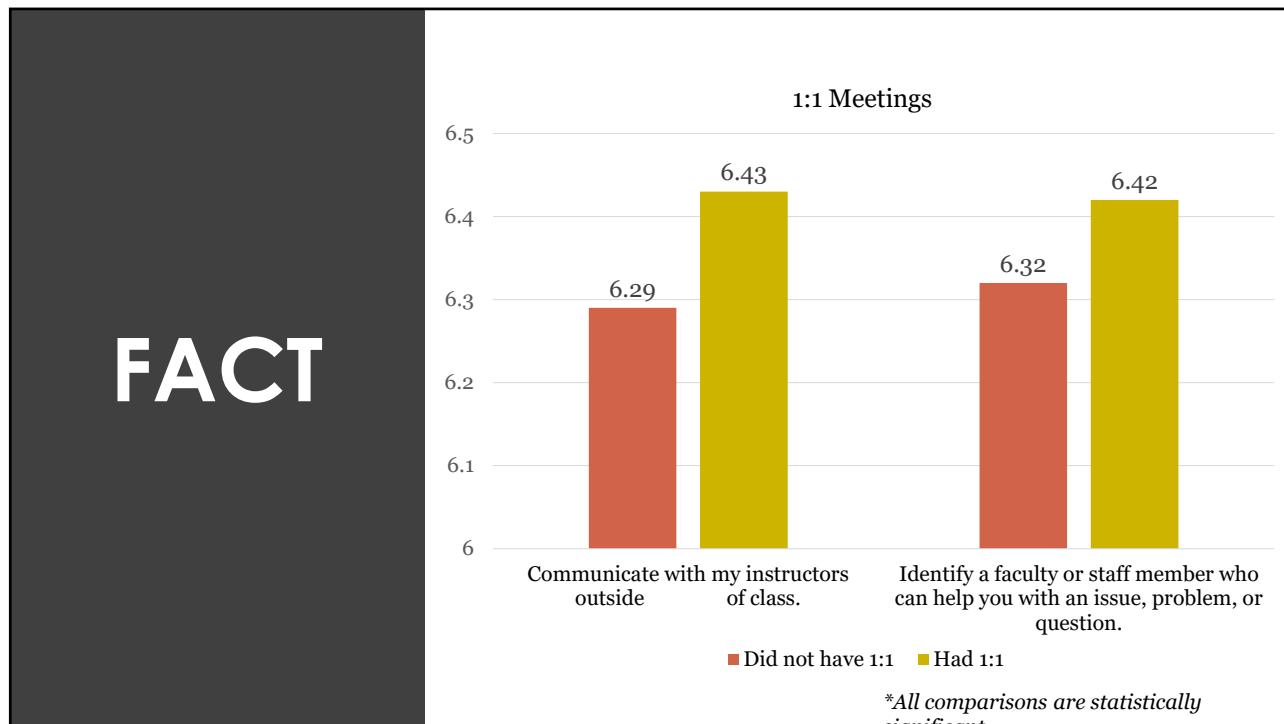


39

The diagram features a header with a gray top half containing the word "FACT" in white, serif capital letters, and a maroon bottom half containing the word "CRAP" in white, serif capital letters. A small black oval with the word "or" in white is positioned between the two words. Below this header is a white rectangular box containing the following text in a black serif font:

Students who had a 1:1 with their instructor reported significantly higher means on the Instructor Effectiveness factor.

40



41

FACT
or
CRAP

More frequent check-ins with the class (e.g. high or low) was associated with higher satisfaction with the course.

42

FACT		Frequency of Class Check-Ins		
		Rarely or Never <i>n</i> = 149	Occasionally <i>n</i> = 734	Frequently <i>n</i> = 3776
	Taking University 101 has been a valuable experience.	3.62	4.28	4.56
	Establish friendships with peers.	5.36	6.14	6.54

43

FACT

or

CRAP

U101 seems to contribute positively to students' mental health

44

FACT

University 101 helped me recognize I am not alone in my experiences, feelings, and challenges.

Mean % Agree

4.58 92.2%

In this class, I was able to speak openly and honestly about my mental health.

4.45 86.6%

University 101 has helped me better understand the mental health resources available to me.

4.56 91.8%

After taking University 101, I am more likely to seek help for my mental health needs.

4.39 83.0%

45

GREAT JOBS, GREAT LIVES

GALLUP-PURDUE INDEX INAUGURAL NATIONAL REPORT

The *Gallup-Purdue Index*, a recent survey of more than 30,000 U.S. college graduates, found that those who were emotionally supported during college, and who had experiential and deep learning, were more likely to have high well-being. These findings held true regardless of the type of four-year institution—public or private not-for-profit college; a highly selective institution or a less selective institution; or a top 100-ranked school in the *U.S. News & World Report* vs. other schools. Find the full report at www.gallup.com

THE UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE:

SUPPORT AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

(% Strongly Agree)

I had at least one professor who made me excited about learning. 63%

My professors cared about me as a person. 27%

I had a mentor who encouraged me to pursue my goals and dreams. 22%

All three 14%

I worked on a project that took a semester or more to complete. 32%

I had an internship or job that allowed me to apply what I was learning in the classroom. 29%

I was extremely active in extracurricular activities and organizations. 20%

All three 6%

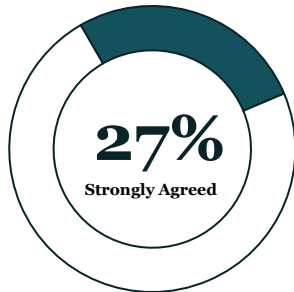
All six 3%

46

Inspiring and Supporting Students

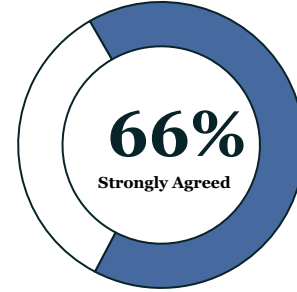
I had at least one instructor who cared about me as a person.

Gallup-Purdue Index 2014



VS.

U101 Former Student Survey



47

Inspiring and Supporting Students

I had at least one instructor who cared about me as a person.

U101 Former Student Survey



Of those who agreed

93%

indicated their U101 instructor served in this capacity.

48

In their words...



49