



**FYE SSI TASK GROUP FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS – FINAL 9/18/2020**

The charge for the FYE SSI Task Group was to “focus on the elements of the first-year experience with the ideal that the first year should provide all students with a solid foundation to support continued success. This focus should be balanced by the needs of those students who are most likely to leave the university before graduating. Your work should consider the exemplar programs and best practices already employed, as well as the exploration of innovative and novel approaches for improving graduation rates and enhancing the overall Illinois experience. Your task group is empowered to boldly consider opportunities to improve, expand, and better integrate our efforts to help students achieve a degree at Illinois.”

Task Force membership consisted of campus professionals with experience and expertise in supporting students and their personal and academic development at Illinois. Members represented a wide variety of campus units including Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, and Academic Colleges across campus and included:

- Gretchen Forman, Grainger College of Engineering, co-chair
- Daniel Turner, Division of General Studies, co-chair
- Domico Cobb, Office of Minority Student Affairs
- Liv Thorstensson Davila, College of Education
- Rachel Graddy, Disability Resources & Educational Services
- Jeffrey W. Graham, Counseling Center
- Brianna Gregg, College of Agricultural, Consumer & Environmental Sciences
- Brian Steven Hodges, Office of Undergraduate Admissions
- Joycelyn Landrum-Brown, Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations
- Judith Pintar, School of Information Sciences
- Alicia Rodriguez, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Brian Russell, Division of Intercollegiate Athletics
- Nathan Sanden, University Housing
- Murillo Soranso, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Rachael Dietkus, Siebel Center for Design
- Corey Thoss, Student Success & Engagement, New Student Programs
- Zuri White, Student Success & Engagement, Parent & Family Programs
- Mary M. Edwards, College of Fine & Applied Arts, ex-officio
- Gioconda Guerra Perez, Office of Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, ex-officio
- Jim Hintz, Office of Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, ex-officio

The Task Group met monthly from October 2019 through February 2020. We took a pause for the scheduled March meeting due to the pandemic but began meeting again monthly starting in April 2020 through July 2020. Four subcommittees were developed to focus on specific topics outlined in the first-year experience: 1) Orientation; 2) FYE Courses; 3) Academic Experiences; and 4) Co-curricular Involvement. The subcommittees were charged with looking at relevant data, gathering student input, examining best practices at Illinois and at peer institutions, and identifying relevant literature and exemplar institutions. Recommendations came from the subcommittees as well as discussions of the whole Task Group. These recommendations were shared with the Task Group for evaluation and review.

Much reliance was based upon the Council for the Advancement of Standards, Standards for functional areas in higher education; specifically, the CAS for Orientation Programs, CAS for First-Year Experiences, CAS for Campus Activities Programs, and CAS for Academic Advising Programs (<https://www.cas.edu/>).

There was continued recognition of potential overlap with other SSI Task Groups due to the breadth of issues examined in the first-year experience. However, our group was specifically focused on students transition to the University of Illinois and success in their first year of college. Many of the recommendations suggest further review and discussion on specific areas and do not provide recommendations for implementation.

Overall, we have found this experience to be extremely helpful in bringing together professionals from across campus with different perspectives and focus areas to discuss student success. We would advocate for continued discussions focused on student success and student development to continue across campus regularly. One recommendation could be the development of an annual **University of Illinois Student Success Conference**. Such a conference could bring the entire campus together to discuss and share student success initiatives and would demonstrate an ongoing commitment to student success at Illinois. A segment of a Student Success Conference could be a continuation of the SSI conversations providing ongoing feedback, assessment, and discussion on the progress of Student Success at Illinois.

## **RECOMMENDATION CATEGORY 1: DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE ORIENTATION, TRANSITION, AND FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE PROGRAM FOR NEW STUDENTS AT ILLINOIS.**

### **CONSIDERATIONS/SUB-RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Illinois lacks a comprehensive, coordinated orientation, transition, and FY experience for new students that meets CAS standards.
2. Illinois lacks a comprehensive, coordinated curriculum for the First-Year experience.
3. Although we have several orientation programs and curriculum, it is not inclusive of the entire student population to meet the needs of students to successfully transition them into Illinois.
4. Ensure the needs of first-generation and minority students and issues of equity are at the forefront of discussions (i.e. The timing of New Student Registration to better include students from underrepresented backgrounds from CPS schools, which go through at least the third week of June.)
5. Consider the restructuring of units with orientation and transition responsibilities to provide a more coordinated student experience. This may include the development of a new First-Year Experience unit focused on the development of a comprehensive experience (i.e. the [Center for the First-Year Experience at UW Madison](#) or the [Office of First Year Experience Programs at IU Bloomington](#)) responsible for the delivery and/or coordination of orientation, transition, and FYE programming for new students at Illinois. Current units involved in FYE span Enrollment Management, Academic Affairs, and Students Affairs and include Admissions, each academic college (NSW and FYE), DGS, New Student Programs, University Housing, RSO offices, OMSA, and many others.
6. Develop a campus-wide FYE Team approach at Illinois to support students' transition and success in the first year (See CAS First-Year Experience Cross-Functional Framework). Encourage each college to develop FYE teams with a focus on specific college-level transition and student success issues.
7. Consider the utilization of consulting services such as NODA Consulting Services or participation in the Gardner Institute Foundations of Excellence Program.
8. If using online, consider intentionally designed modules instead of just websites with links.
9. Consider best practices for the sophomore year experience as the next step after the FYE.

#### RELEVANT LITERATURE AND RESOURCES:

1. [The Journal of College Orientation Transition and Retention \(JCOTR\)](#): “This journal focuses on the trends, practices, research, and development of programs, policies, and activities related to the matriculation, orientation, transition, and retention of college students.”
2. [Building Successful Foundations](#): “This new publication offers both the philosophical and the practical perspective for OTR professionals and other practitioners working specifically with students in their first year of college. This piece provides guidance and insight not only to the vast world of college orientation planning, but also a focus on the transition and retention of college students.”
3. [Orientation Planning Manual](#): “This indispensable resource explores all aspects of orientation, including philosophy, program development, and staff selection and training.” (VIA NODA)
4. [Designing Successful Transitions, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition](#): “Published jointly with National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition originally in 1993. The third edition was updated and released in 2010. This 16-chapter book has been edited by Jeanine A. Ward-Roof and written by numerous scholars and experts in the field.”
5. [Navigating the First College Year- A Guide for Parents and Families](#): “Parents and family members play a critical role in the success of new college students, but those who never attended college or who have been away from it for a while may lack critical information about the purpose, goals, and structure of higher education today. This brief guide offers parents and families an overview of the college experience, especially in the first year, and suggests strategies for helping their students succeed.” Leslie Banahan and Richard Mullendore.
6. **CAS Standards for Orientation Programs**: The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education has developed benchmarks and best practices for orientation programs (see attached).
7. **CAS First-Year Experience Cross-Functional Framework**: The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education has developed benchmarks and best practices for the First-Year Experience. This publication provides an overview of the literature detailing significant findings and impact of students’ first year of college (see attached)
8. [NODA Consulting Services](#): The Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education (NODA) provides consulting services to assist with a review and development of new student orientation programs. This may be a valuable resource to utilize in the initial phases of discussion about a comprehensive orientation program at Illinois and assist us with identifying gaps in our current model from the perspective of professional experts.
9. [Gardner Institute Foundations of Excellence](#): Process to engage the entire university community in assessment and strategic planning centered on improving first-year student success and retention.

#### KEY PEER INSTITUTIONS TO BENCHMARK:

1. [University of Minnesota](#)
2. [Purdue University](#)
3. [University of Nebraska Lincoln](#)
4. [Indiana University](#)
5. [Michigan State University](#)
6. [Penn State University](#)
7. [University of Wisconsin Madison](#)
8. [University of Colorado Boulder](#)
9. [University of Texas Austin](#)
10. [University of Washington](#)

**RECOMMENDATION CATEGORY 2: UNDERTAKE A COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE COURSES OFFERED AT ILLINOIS TO DEVELOP A SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BEST PRACTICES AND SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES.**

**CONSIDERATIONS/SUB-RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. FYE courses at Illinois vary greatly in their curricula and outcomes. The most recent campus guidance on outcomes from 2004 needs to be reviewed regularly and updated.
2. Develop a core set of learning outcomes and content that is delivered in each FYE course while providing the flexibility to tailor the course to specific college or department needs.
  - a) Key outcomes should include wellness; building community/social belonging; major and career exploration; university resources; diversity, equity, and inclusion; power and privilege; critical thinking; academic integrity; etc. could be part of the core.
3. Ensure that students understand the value and learning outcomes of the FYE courses and view them positively.
4. There is no common practice of course assessment. Develop methodology for gaining input on the effectiveness of meeting the learning outcomes of each of the FYE courses at Illinois as well as student satisfaction. Understanding that meeting learning outcomes may not be entirely tied to student satisfaction.
5. Ensure continual, campus-wide assessment of FYE courses.
6. Ensure that issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, in addition to power and privilege, are considered to meet the specific needs of first-generation and minority students.
7. Consider the development of specialized sections tailored to specific student populations (i.e. first-generation students, students in EEP, students in AAP, international students, etc.) when possible.
8. Consider how the FYE courses could be used to identify students of concern to connect them to campus resources and support.
9. Ensure the best practices, training, and the specific needs of each academic College are considered when identifying FYE instructors.
10. Consider resources provided by campus units (i.e. CITL, Siebel Design Center, IT, Counseling Center, Career Center, OMSA, ODOS, Tutoring, etc.) to assist in the development and delivery of FYE courses and training of FYE course instructors.
11. Provide opportunities for FYE Directors to meet regularly and share information.
12. Create a central repository for information and course materials that may be available to students and faculty.
13. Provide resources for FYE Directors and instructors to attend the Annual Conference on the First-Year Experience, the National Conference on Students in Transition, or other conferences focused on FYE (i.e. the Midwest First-Year Experience Conference).
14. Host the Mid-West First-Year Experience Conference at Illinois. The MWFYE conference for Sept 2020 will be virtual. Plans are to host the 2021 conference in September at the IHotel on campus.

15. Provide funding to connect FYE Directors and professionals with publications, training, and other professional development opportunities related to FYE.
16. Develop a campus-wide culture of support for the First-Year Experience which educates faculty, staff, and students about the significant impact of well-developed FYE activities on student retention, persistence, and satisfaction.

**RELEVANT LITERATURE AND RESOURCES:**

1. [The Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition](#): Journal focused on current academic research on the first year of college.
2. [The Journal of College Orientation Transition and Retention \(JCOTR\)](#): This journal focuses on the trends, practices, research, and development of programs, policies, and activities related to the matriculation, orientation, transition, and retention of college students. Also encouraged are literature reviews, "how-to" articles, innovative initiatives, successful practices, perspectives, and new ideas.
3. [Challenging & Supporting the First-Year Student](#) (M. Lee Upgraff, John N. Gardner, Betsy O. Barefoot & Associates, 2005): Comprehensive guide to developing programs design to assist students with making a successful transition in their first year of college.
4. [Building Successful Foundations](#): "This new publication offers both the philosophical and the practical perspective for OTR professionals and other practitioners working specifically with students in their first year of college. This piece provides guidance and insight not only to the vast world of college orientation planning, but also a focus on the transition and retention of college students."
5. [Designing Successful Transitions, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition](#): "Published jointly with National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition originally in 1993. The third edition was updated and released in 2010. This 16-chapter book has been edited by Jeanine A. Ward-Roof and written by numerous scholars and experts in the field."
6. **CAS First-Year Experience Cross-Functional Framework**: The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education has developed benchmarks and best practices for the First-Year Experience (see attached). This publication provides an overview of the literature detailing significant findings and impact of students' first year of college. This is a critical read for anyone attempting to understand the impact of the First-Year Experience generally and FYE courses specifically.

According to the First-Year Experience Cross-Functional Framework, "

"Participation in first-year seminars has been linked to improved academic performance, more and better interactions with faculty, increased use of campus services, satisfaction with the institution, more active involvement in extracurricular activities, positive perceptions of self-as-learner, enhanced lifelong learning orientation, and development of academic, interpersonal, and communication skills (Keup & Barefoot, 2005; Koch, Foote, Hinkle, Keup, & Pistilli, 2007; Padgett & Keup, 2011; Padgett, Keup, & Pascarella, 2013; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005)."

7. [Gardner Institute Foundations of Excellence](#): Process to engage the entire university community in assessment and strategic planning centered on improving first-year student success and retention.
8. [The First Year of College](#) (R. S. Feldman, ed, 2018): Research, Theory, and Practice on Improving the Student Experience and Increasing Retention.

9. [Developing and Sustaining Successful First-Year Programs](#) (G. M. Greenfield, J. R. Keup, & J. N. Gardner, 2013): A Guide for Practitioners.
10. [What Makes the First-Year Seminar High Impact?](#) (T. L. Skipper, ed, 2017): An Exploration of Effective Educational Practices.
11. **See References Section of the CAS First-Year Experience Cross-Functional Framework:** Comprehensive list of research articles and resources related to FYE and FYE courses (attached).

**KEY PEER INSTITUTIONS TO BENCHMARK:**

1. [University of Minnesota](#)
2. [University of South Carolina](#)
3. [Indiana University](#)
4. [Ohio State University](#)
5. [Michigan State University](#)
6. [Penn State University](#)
7. [University of Michigan](#)
8. [University of Wisconsin Madison](#)
9. [University of Texas Austin](#)
10. [University of Washington](#)

**RECOMMENDATION CATEGORY 3: REVIEW SPECIFIC ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES TO ENSURE THEY SUPPORT THE RETENTION, GRADUATION, AND SUCCESS OF STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS.**

**CONSIDERATIONS/SUB-RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Academic Advising
  - a) Ensure first-year students understand the importance of academic advising and how advising works at the University of Illinois.
  - b) Develop campus level support for academic advising at Illinois which may be a position/division/unit that provides centralized support of academic advising at Illinois. This position/division/unit can serve as a clearinghouse for academic advising resources. This entity would provide support, training, and professional development opportunities for advisors across campus in addition to communication to the advising community. Some campuses have developed a Division of Student Success reporting directly to the Provost (See UT Knoxville).

Other peer institutions with this type of structure and support of academic advising include:

- Indiana University – Assistant Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Executive Director of Advising for University Division
- Michigan State University – Assistant Dean for University Advising
- Ohio State University – Senior Director of Academic Advising, Office of Student Academic Success.
- Penn State University – Associate Dean for Advising and Executive Director of the Division of Undergraduate Studies
- Purdue University – Executive Director of University Undergraduate Academic Advising

- University of Colorado – Associate Vice Provost for Advising and Exploratory Studies
  - University of Iowa – Assistant Provost for Enrollment Services and Director of Academic Advising Center
  - University of Maryland – Assistant Dean Office of Undergraduate Studies
  - University of Minnesota – Associate Vice Provost for Student Success
  - University of Nebraska Lincoln – Associate Dean Undergraduate Advising & Career Development
  - University of Washington – Associate Dean Undergraduate Academic Affairs
  - University of Wisconsin Madison – Associate Vice Provost & Director of Undergraduate Advising and Career Services
- c) Develop 4-year plans for all majors at Illinois posted to a central website (potentially the DGS Majors Handbook)
  - d) Review and propose a process to streamline the ICT process for students. Currently each college and even programs within the colleges have different timelines and application procedures which leads to confusion for students.
  - e) Review academic policies and procedures to ensure they are supportive of student success and positive developmental outcomes. Specifically consider issues of equity and inclusion that support student well-being. Make changes where they are not.
2. Develop single LMS for faculty and students to use in courses to eliminate confusion.
  3. Tutoring: Develop a coordinated, centralized approach to tutoring and supplemental instructional support across campus for all students. (See the [Academic Success Center at the University of Tennessee Knoxville](#)).
  4. Develop a campus-wide early alert system.
  5. Provide on-going development for faculty on best practices in the FYE and how they can best support first year students and the challenges they encounter at Illinois.
  6. Conduct a thorough assessment of the honors student experience at Illinois to determine how to improve the experience and develop consistent outcomes. (i.e. James Scholar, Chancellors Honors, Honors LLC, etc.) The current honors experience is extremely inconsistent and varies greatly by college. Having a shared experience which provides the opportunity to connect with other students, faculty, and staff has the potential to create a strong sense of belonging and connection to the University of Illinois experience.
  7. Initiate a thorough review of General Education requirements to determine if the current requirements meet the desired learning outcomes of the University of Illinois baccalaureate experience. The current requirements were established in the 1980s and are used by students as requirements to check off rather than an opportunity to develop a strong liberal arts background (i.e. critical thinking ability, interpersonal skills, use of technology, how to be an engaged citizen of the world in the 2020s and beyond). Students do not understand the purpose of our General Education requirements and the connection to their Illinois degree.

#### RELEVANT LITERATURE AND RESOURCES:

1. **CAS Standards for Academic Advising Programs:** The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education has developed benchmarks and best practices for academic advising programs (see attached).
2. [Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook](#) (Virginia N. Gordon, Wesley R. Habley and Associates, 2008): Provides significant overview of best practices in the field of academic advising.

3. [The New Advisor Guidebook: Mastering the Art of Academic Advising](#) (Pat Folsom, Franklin Yoder, Jennifer E. Joslin, 2015): Overview of best practices in academic advising for new advising professionals.
4. [Academic Advising Approaches: Strategies That Teach Students to Make the Most of College](#) (Jayne K. Drake, Peggy Jordan, Marsha A. Miller, 2013): Overview of academic advising approaches.
5. [National Collegiate Honors Council](#)

**KEY PEER INSTITUTIONS TO BENCHMARK:**

1. [Student Success Initiatives - University of Texas Austin](#)
2. [University Division - Indiana University Bloomington](#)
3. [Undergraduate Education - Michigan State University](#)
4. [Office of Student Academic Success - Ohio State University](#)
5. [Division of Undergraduate Studies – PennState University](#)
6. [Office of Undergraduate Education – University of Colorado Boulder](#)
7. [Academic Success Centers – University of Minnesota](#)
8. [Undergraduate Academic Affairs – University of Washington](#)
9. [Office of Undergraduate Advising – University of Wisconsin Madison](#)
10. [Division of Student Success - University of Tennessee Knoxville](#)

**RECOMMENDATION CATEGORY 4: DEVELOP CO-CURRICULAR OUTCOMES, GOALS, AND EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS AT ILLINOIS IN THEIR FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE AND TOOLS TO DOCUMENT AND TRACK THESE EXPERIENCES.**

- A. *HELP STUDENTS MAKE MEANING OF EXPERIENCES*
- B. *SHARE THESE EXPERIENCES.*
- C. *CREATE VISION FOR WHERE STUDENTS SEE THEMSELVES GOING*

**CONSIDERATIONS/SUB-RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Develop a Co-Curricular First-Year Track for University of Illinois Students
  - a) Identify the co-curricular experiences and experiences a student at Illinois should have to develop and define what it means to be a student at the University of Illinois.
  - b) Driven and guided by the development of specific student learning outcomes.
  - c) Student Development Theory should provide a foundation for facilitating students’ personal and academic growth through co-curricular learning experiences.
  - d) Examine best practices for co-curricular experiences.
2. Develop a Co-Curricular E-Portfolio for University of Illinois Students
  - a) Provide access and training for students on the utilization of an ePortfolio, such as DigiCation, that enables students to keep track of their co-curricular involvement and learning experiences during their first-year and throughout their time at the University of Illinois.
  - b) This would enable students to reflect on their experiences and showcase the out-of-class learning taking place during their undergraduate experience.
3. Develop intentional co-curricular and curricular holistic integration
  - a) Identify strategies to integrate the co-curricular and curricular offerings at the University of Illinois to create a holistic learning experience like “The Clarke Compass” at Clarke University in Iowa. This is advertised as “The path is advertised to students as a way to organize and track all of their important collegiate experiences,



integrating coursework, extra-curricular and co-curricular offerings while building tangible skills employers hope to see.”

- b) Focus on the values of our Land-Grant Mission.
- c) Incorporate Career Readiness, Leadership development, critical thinking, communication skills, etc.
- d) All students will meet a set number of experiences that are identified as crucial to their development in college.

**RELEVANT LITERATURE AND RESOURCES:**

1. **CAS Standards for Campus Activities Programs:** The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education has developed benchmarks and best practices for campus activities programs.
2. [Illinois Digication](#)
3. [Combining Curricular and Co-Curricular Assessment using ePortfolios](#)
4. [Mixed-Method Study of Utilizing Portfolios to Document and Assess Co-Curricular Activities: Student and Advisor Perceptions](#)
5. [Co-Curricular Paths for Campus Wide Co-Curricular Initiatives](#)
6. [Brock University FYE Tracks](#)
7. [LAS 101 Experience at University of Illinois](#)
8. [The Clarke Compass at Clarke University in Iowa](#)
9. [Honors College at University of Houston](#)
10. [Weber State University – Department of Communication](#)
11. [University of Connecticut](#)

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. CAS for Orientation Programs
2. CAS Cross-Functional Framework for First-Year Experience
3. CAS for Academic Advising Programs
4. CAS for Campus Activities Programs