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Identity, Wellness, And Academics: A Move Toward A Freshmen Seminar For All Students

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IDENTITY, WELLNESS, AND ACADEMICS:
A MOVE TOWARD A FRESHMEN SEMINAR FOR ALL STUDENTS

by

Matthew David Torgerson
Bachelor of Arts, University of Minnesota Morris, 2011

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

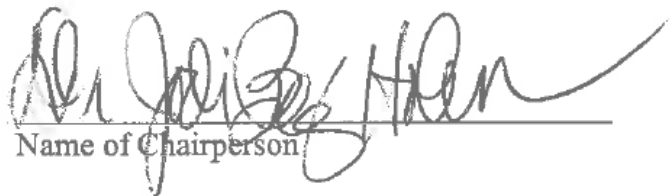
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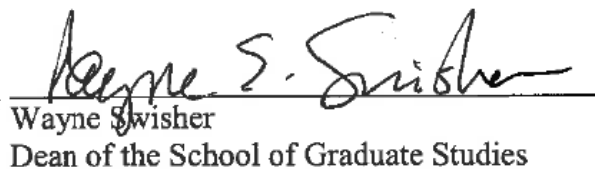
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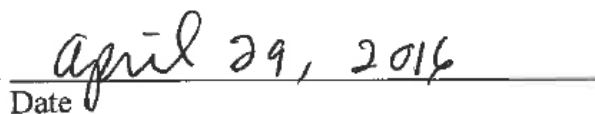

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ABSTRACT

Using the Dana (2014) inquiry model, research was conducted to discover what traditional first-year students need to be successful in their academic careers. The research consists extensively of literature review along with casual conversations with faculty, staff, and students at a small, rural college in the Midwest. Through this research, identity development, wellness, and academics were found to be the most prevalent needs for freshmen success. This paper discusses each of these areas in depth as well as gives discussion and recommendations on how identity, wellness, and academics can be implemented into a first-year seminar curriculum.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Context

There are many benefits to first-year seminar classes for first-time undergraduate students (Jamelske, 2009; Fidler & Hunter, 1989). These classes are meant to acclimate and support students in their academic endeavors so they can have a positive and successful collegiate experience. Currently, one small, rural, university in the Midwest has a first-year seminar in place, but it is only required for students who did not meet regular admission requirements and thus, were admitted conditionally. These students show academic promise, but may have difficulties in a particular area. The issue is that this class could be beneficial to all traditional, first-year students.

Following the Dana (2014) inquiry model, a wondering was developed into the following questions: what do traditional first-year college students need both academically and socially to persist and succeed in college? How can these needs be met in a first-year seminar class?

Purpose

The purpose of this action research study was to discover what traditional first-year students need in order to have a successful start to their academic careers in higher education. The research consisted of: personal journal entries, reviewing the history of first-year seminars in the United States higher educational systems, studying the academic and social needs of first-year students, syllabi review, and the institution's responsibilities in assisting students. The

overall goal is to use the information gathered here to develop a first-year seminar that could be implemented and benefit all first-year students.

From a student affairs perspective, it seems as if the students who are the most outspoken are becoming the “leaders” on campus. In my experience, how much you speak is not correlated with how capable a leader you are. On this particular campus limited opportunities exist because of the small campus size and the fact that the same few students seem to be taking advantage of these opportunities. This may be that these outspoken students take the opportunities before the calm and collected ones can mull it over and respond to the current discussion. This proposed course could give other students more opportunities to speak up and participate on campus and in the community.

An opportunity that the university is not currently taking advantage of is having all students take the first-year seminar. Currently, it is only mandatory for the university's conditionally admitted students. Many schools make a class like this a requirement for all first-year students. The class is meant to help students transition to college life both academically and socially. In the fall of 2015, 88 out of the 310 freshmen students took the first-year seminar. I believe this should be a requirement for all students because no matter how academically gifted a student is, there are still other social and emotional transitions that should be addressed when beginning college. For this reason, I have chosen to employ the Dana (2014) Inquiry Cycle to investigate the benefits of a first-year seminar for all students regardless of academic tracking.

Personal Interest

My interest in creating a first-year seminar course for all students comes from believing that many students would benefit from a more formal acclimation process. I also think that students at a collegiate level should have some power over their own education. Many instructors

and professors on campuses around the country follow a teaching style that is based much off of lecture and the memorization of facts. It would be more beneficial for students to have experiences in a hands-on situation where they are learning content through practicing skills.

According to Dewey:

The term *unity of knowledge* did not mean that all knowledge is contained and derived from one overarching great idea or form in the Platonic sense. Rather, the unity of knowledge meant that knowing is intimately related to and connected to doing. To know means to experience the consequences that come from acting on an idea, which is itself a plan of action (Dewey as cited in Gutek, 2004, p. 71).

Curriculum is involved in everything that happens in a classroom. Having hands-on, academic experiences can be implemented throughout the entire curriculum which can increase the overall learning of the students.

Our current schooling is based on an antiquated system of memorizing and regurgitating information. This was needed centuries ago because there were not the same technologies to find information. We now live in a technological era that gives many, the capability to find vast amounts of information in the world with the click of a few buttons. Since our academic resources have changed, we can change the way we teach and therefore change how students learn. This can be done by teaching students *how* to research and process information rather than *what* to research and process. Education should be about the process more so than the specific information given to attain some sort of end product. This is how graduate level work is done and it challenges students to think for themselves and create their own conclusions. If the most

advanced students in the country (graduate students) are being taught successfully in this manner, why do we give different instruction to all others?

Students need to be given more voice and choice in their learning. They should have more freedom to explore things that are of a greater interest to them. This will hopefully make the learning more enjoyable for the students and also add more depth to their thinking and researching. They can begin to discover and develop their own personal truths. Universities should not push universal truths onto these students, but rather guide them to find their own truth. “We make our own truths based on our intuitions, perceptions, and reflections that arise in our experience” (Guttek, 2004, p. 125). If you give a man a fish, he will eat for a day. If you teach a man to fish, he will eat for a lifetime. This well-known proverb helps explain the point I am trying to make. By giving students the information we are helping them in the short term. If we instead guide and teach them how to obtain and utilize their own resources and information, they can and will become lifelong learners.

I believe that the model for this proposed seminar class should be entirely student centered. The majority of the work to be done would be between the students and their peers with the instructors and professors taking on facilitator roles. “Believing that human intelligence arises from a process of social interaction, Dewey put many of the problem-solving learning episodes in a group setting” (Dewey as cited in Guttek, 2004, p. 71). Students should be able to contribute to their learning and the causes in which they are interested and give them the opportunity to recognize why it is important to them personally. Through lectures we oftentimes tell our students exactly what they are supposed to think about a particular topic. We should not push our views onto the students but instead let them come to their own conclusions about the topics. The students would become deeper, more critical thinkers who could someday solve

some of these issues that are present in the world. This would also give more personal responsibility for the students not just in the classes but also in their lives. They will be able to practice and internalize the processes that in turn build their character.

Ethics concerns issues of moral right and wrong and aesthetics examines how judgments are made about what is beautiful or ugly. Education, in any society, seeks to develop a particular kind of character that exhibits preferred behaviors (Guttek, 2004, p. 6).

History of First-Year Seminar

The idea of a freshman student, someone who has moved from one place to another strictly for educational purposes, has been around for about 800 years yet the term *freshman* is only about 400 years old. The first records of these freshmen come from Bologna in the twelfth century. During the Renaissance, students would travel to nearby towns with a university to study. These new students became the original freshman in higher education. Many of these freshmen were hazed and assaulted as an initiation into this scholarly society at the universities. This led many universities to look into ways to end these practices of hazing (Dwyer, 1989). These hazing practices are still happening to students today, centuries later. This is why universities should take a more active approach in acclimating students to the campus and making sure the students feel safe.

One of the long held theories regarding all collegiate students, especially freshmen and sophomores, is that of *in loco parentis*, which translates to “in the place of a parent”. This theory states that colleges act on behalf of parents for the good of the students (Upcraft, 1989). This theory places the responsibility of caring for the well-being of the students into the hands of the college. So many colleges are now working to end the hazing practices and create programs to

assist in the transition to collegiate life. As a result of these feelings of responsibility for the students' well-being, colleges began new programs including first-year seminars.

One of the first first-year seminars was held over a century ago, at Boston University in 1888. From this point into the early twentieth century, these courses were developed and put into practice at many of the colleges in the United States. In 1911, Reed College started offering "The College Life Course" which was the first orientation course for credit in the United States. All of the universities had different curricula for the courses and different topics that were included. Some of these topics included the purpose of college, the college curriculum, the individual plan of study, student honesty, student government, intercollegiate athletics, and college religion (Gordon, 1989).

Orientation courses grew even more rapidly following World War I and larger institutions such as Princeton, Stanford, and Johns Hopkins were beginning to offer these courses for credit. All of these courses could be grouped into three categories. The first type was meant to adjust students to this new life step. Students were given information about the institution as a whole and how they fit into it. The second type was set up to give students the skills they needed to succeed in this setting of higher-order thinking. The third type was meant to orient students socially and intellectually. This last type focused on social problems, citizenship, and humanity, which was done through fields such as philosophy, religion, humanities, and government (Gordon, 1989).

In 1930, about one-third of colleges and universities offered some sort of first-year seminar and by 1938, nine out of ten freshmen were required to take them. After this, orientation courses began to decline. This was due to faculty not wanting to give academic credit for

character development. This new thought process caused these courses to almost disappear completely by the mid-1960s (Gordon, 1989).

In the 1970s, college administrators were beginning to see the need for orientation courses once again. Dwyer (1989) gives three reasons for this change in attitude. First, new students, many of who were the first members of their families to go beyond high school, arrived on campus without "the skills of studenthood" (Cohen & Jody, 1978, p. 2). Second, because of revisions of curricula and changes in regulations on campus, the choices for freshmen became more complex. Finally, peer culture, with its great potential for assistance to freshmen, "seemed to have lost much of its potency in helping students to adapt" (Cohen & Jody, 1978, p. 2).

All of this led to a revitalization of first-year seminars. More and more first generation college students are attending colleges and universities. Because of this, institutions once again need to take on the theory of *in loco parentis* to help these students persist and succeed in their academic careers.

Chapter Information

All of the chapters are organized around a framework of Upcraft and Gardner's (1989) definition for student success which they define with six educational and personal goals that should be met. The goals are as follows:

Developing academic and intellectual competence is done by learning how to learn, synthesize, integrate, criticize, and analyze what they learn.

Establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships is needed so students have a support system. This may also be the first time some students must relate to others with different cultural background, sexual orientation, life experience, physical ability, and race.

Developing identity happens a lot during a student's college experience. The students need to personally reflect on things such as gender, sexual orientation, race, cultural background, ethnic origin, and disability and how these identifying characteristics relate to them.

Deciding on a career and life-style is probably the goal that most students have a good idea of before going to college. Students need to decide on a career which will also guide their choices in which major to pursue.

Maintaining personal health and wellness is needed for students to keep their physical and emotional well-being. The students need skills such as coping with stress and time management. They will also need to make decisions on alcohol and substance use, sexual activity, and nutritional habits.

Developing an integrated philosophy of life is where students figure out who they are and how they want to live their lives. Freshmen must reconsider what they believe to be right and wrong, their priorities in life, their religious and spiritual beliefs, and how they fit into the larger order of things in the universe. Their values and beliefs must be integrated and internalized so that there is a consistency between what they believe and how they behave.

Chapter 2 is focused on identity development. Upcraft and Gardner (1989, p. 3) tell about the difficulties for students when working with the questions, "Who am I?" and "What are my beliefs?" This chapter uses two of Upcraft and Gardner's (1989) "six goals" for student success

that are centered on identity: developing identity and developing an integrated philosophy of life. Chapter 3 focuses on wellness, which includes physical, emotional, and financial wellness of students. Again, two of Upcraft and Gardner's (1989) "six goals" are used: maintaining personal health and wellness and establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships. Chapter 4 focuses on the final two goals of the six given by Upcraft and Gardner (1989) for student success: developing academic and intellectual competence and deciding on a career and life-style. This chapter will also contain information on college as an institution and how it can affect a first-year student. Chapter 5 will consist of the interpretations and recommendations in developing a first-year seminar to fit the current situation at the small, rural university noted above.

The following concept map demonstrates the needs of students for success in their first year of college. The three overarching needs of identity, wellness, and academics are all needed and all support each other. All pieces of the tripod need to be evenly represented in a student's first year and all parts should work from within the academic curriculum. Although at times the categories of identity, wellness, and academics may overlap, in my vision they stand separate but work together.

Concept Map for First-Year Success

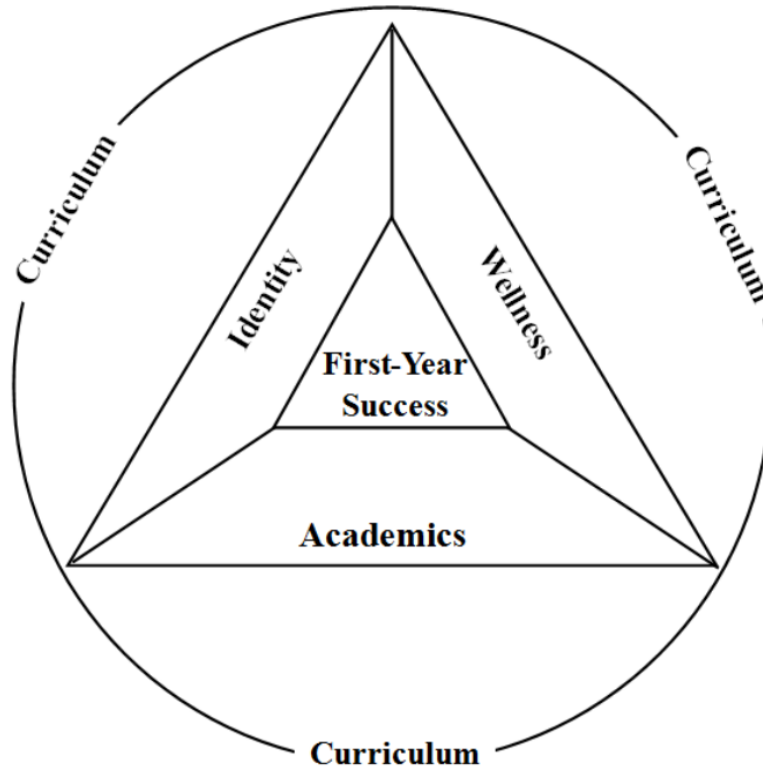


Figure 1: Concept Map (Torgerson, 2016)

CHAPTER II

IDENTITY

Developing an identity and philosophy of life is something all people should do and in doing so will assist in the success of first-year students (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989, pp. 2-3). Upcraft and Gardner (1989, p. 3) tell about the difficulties for students when working with the questions, "Who am I?" and "What are my beliefs?" These are questions that everyone grapples with throughout their lives. College is a time for students to have new experiences and figure out who they are and how they self-identify. It is the obligation of collegiate institutions to create safe spaces for students to discover their own identities. If students do not discover their own beliefs, they may experience cognitive dissonance, which is feeling an uncomfortable psychological arousal when their attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors are inconsistent (Kenrick, Neuberg, & Cialdini, 2015, p. 164). This chapter uses two of Upcraft and Gardner's (1989) "six goals" for student success that are centered on identity: developing identity and developing an integrated philosophy of life.

Developing a Personal Identity and Philosophy of Life

There are many traits that make up a personal identity such as gender, sexual orientation, race, cultural background, ethnic origin, or disability. Erickson's (1968) Psychosocial Stages, with the addition of Marcia's (1966) Ego Identity Statures, is one of the most well-known theories in human development especially when working with undergraduate students. According to Erickson's (1968) Psychosocial Stages, students will most likely be in the Identity vs. Role Confusion stage of their lives. Marcia (1966) states that this is the stage of life when

people question their current values and goals and how committed they are to them. At this stage people sometimes lack a positive identity and are trying to figure out who they are. This role confusion exists when young individuals find themselves exposed to a combination of experiences which demand their simultaneous commitment ranging from physical intimacy (not necessarily sexual in nature), decisive occupational choice, energetic competition, and psychosocial self-definition. This combination can cause people to feel cautious about commitment, feel young and old simultaneously, have an inability to concentrate, and express snobbish hostility towards suggested family and community roles (Erikson, 1968).

While many factors cause a person to act and think the way they do, some personal traits have been found to be more related to academic success than others. Self-efficacy, coping strategies, and personal control are all strong predictors of academic success (Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007; McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005; Bean & Eaton, 2001). Research has found that certain coping tactics, perfectionism, low optimism, extroversion, and low self-esteem account for students' physical and psychological decline (Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007). Loneliness, surprisingly, is not a significant predictor of attrition or a reduction in effectiveness of college (McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005).

Self-efficacy is the perception a person has of their ability to act in certain ways to assure certain outcomes. Do I have confidence that I will perform well here? A person's believed capabilities in one area do not transfer to other areas or subjects (Bean & Eaton, 2001). For example, someone who possesses high self-efficacy in mathematics and low self-efficacy in basketball might be much more confident in their ability to perform well on their calculus final than they are to shoot a free throw. Because self-efficacy is task specific, researchers should be looking into academic self-efficacy compared to general self-efficacy (Zajacova, Lynch, &

Espenshade, 2005). Individuals who feel academically competent have higher self-confidence when writing papers and taking tests, which results in higher levels of persistence in college (Bean & Eaton, 2001). Also, a negative correlation has been found between academic self-efficacy and academic stress, meaning those with high-levels of academic self-efficacy experience less stress in college. These people with high-levels of self-efficacy are more likely to view a situation as a challenge rather than a threat. When a task is seen as a challenge rather than a threat, it is more likely that a person will select an effective coping strategy to deal with this situation (Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005). Therefore, working with students on their academic self-efficacy can have a positive effect on their academic work.

Another trait affecting a student's persistence in college is that of adaptation. Adaptation is a characteristic that is well designed to help an animal survive and reproduce in a particular environment (Kenrick, Neuberg, & Cialdini, 2015). In this case, adaptation is how well a student can cope with a new environment (e.g. college). Along with this, coping can be defined as cognitive and behavioral attempts to alter potentially threatening events or circumstances to make them more manageable (Dyson & Renk, 2006). Multiple coping strategies assist in adaptation but the two major ones most relevant to student success are problem-focused coping, which is making attempts to actively alter a problematic situation, and emotion-focused coping, which is managing emotional responses to a problematic situation (Dyson & Renk, 2006). While some studies have shown a correlation between emotion-focused coping and depression, others have found no correlation between the two (Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007). According to Bean and Eaton (2001), "coping behaviors allow a student to adapt to school, and adaptation is the process by which a student becomes integrated into the new school environment." Although

research (Dyson & Renk, 2006) identifies adaptation and coping as important to retention, it is not clear as to what magnitude this plays a role.

An additional trait is personal control or locus of control. There are two types of loci of control: internal and external. People with an internal locus of control, look to themselves as the reason for successes or failures. This type of student is more likely to work hard and study for a test because they feel as if they have the power over their academic outcome. People with an external locus of control see successes and failures more dependent on fate or to happen by chance. This type of student is not as likely to study hard for a test because they will see academic success based on luck or related to a professor liking them rather than academic performance. They see their academic outcomes depending on factors outside of their control (Bean & Eaton, 2001). As a student becomes more empowered and shifts to a more internal locus of control rather than external, their academic persistence increases (Bean & Eaton, 2001).

Certain interpersonal traits such as interpersonal competence, marginality, and social interaction are also strong predictors of collegiate, academic success for undergraduate students (Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007; McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005; Bean & Eaton, 2001). It has been found that social anxiety is not a significant predictor of collegiate, academic success (Strahan, 2003).

Interpersonal competence is defined as the ability of a person to appropriately interact with others while practicing behaviors such as initiating contact, providing emotional support, self-disclosing, and resolving conflict (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2012; McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005). In many studies interpersonal competence is seen as a positive quality for a person to possess. It is used as an attribution goal for people to reach so they are able to work well with others and minimize conflicts. Educators and psychologists teach these skills to youth in many situations

(Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003; Cupach, Canary, & Spitzberg, 2009). However, even with these beneficial social attributes, McGaha and Fitzpatrick (2005) discovered that those who have a high level of interpersonal competence have a greater possibility of dropping out. This is not what one would expect because these social qualities are helpful in many other areas of life. McGaha and Fitzpatrick (2005) do give a possible explanation, suggesting that this competence can actually be detrimental to their success. These students are more likely to have a large social circle and be involved in many social activities, which could limit their time and energy put towards academics. Many times, groups view those who are ‘popular’ or ‘cool’ as ones who are carefree and less concerned with their grades. One thought is that students who hold these titles of ‘popular’ and ‘cool’ actually often self-handicap in terms of academics to maintain this status (Czopp, Terrell, Sweigard, Bradshaw, & Hammer, 1998).

Another factor that plays into the collegiate, academic success equation is social integration and marginality. Friendships with other students at the institution are an important part of social integration. According to Bean (2005), the quantity of friends seems less important than the quality of one or a few close friends. Bean (2005, p. 228) states that close friends are defined as those that “contain care, empathy, concern, affect, spending time, and so on.” Social support and close friendships form the core components of social integration (Bean J. P., 2005). A marginalized student is one with fewer opportunities and can feel disconnected from groups and organizations (McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005; Marschalek, Unterfrauner, & Fabian, 2009). These students can be apathetic towards their peers, faculty, and administration. McGaha and Fitzpatrick (2005) found students who were more marginalized were at greater risk for dropping out. They suggest that feeling marginalized, misunderstood, or disconnected from the mainstream college population can be detrimental because these students are less satisfied with

their college experience. Further, the most disconnected students “might be least likely to utilize the campus services that could reduce their risk of premature termination” (McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005).

An interesting result presents itself when comparing interpersonal competence to marginality. The research (McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005) shows that a student too high in interpersonal competence is more susceptible to dropping out. As mentioned, these students may place a higher emphasis on social status than on academic performance, which may lead to low academic persistence. On the other hand, students who feel too marginalized and alone are also more prone to dropping out. This could be attributed to their lack of social support and these students may be less likely to utilize resources that would lead to an increase in attrition (McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005).

This presents a good example of the Goldilocks principle. In the story, “Goldilocks and the Three Bears,” one bowl of porridge was too hot and one was too cold but the middle one was just right. Students at one extreme (i.e. high interpersonal competence) or the other (i.e. high marginality) are less likely to persist in college versus a student who falls in the middle of these two extreme margins. It would be interesting to research where this threshold falls. For example, at what point do these higher levels of interpersonal competence or these higher levels of marginality become detrimental to persistence? Further, it would be beneficial to look at what can be done to support these outlying students at the extremes to give them the greatest opportunity for success.

Two other social factors that would be assumed to play a role in retention are loneliness (McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005) and social anxiety (Strahan, 2003). Surprisingly, these factors are not associated with greater dropout rates. In fact, McGaha and Fitzpatrick (2005) speculated that

some students might accept a certain level of isolation and loneliness in order to achieve academic success. According to a two-year longitudinal study by Strahan (2003), social anxiety was not a significant predictor of college persistence or grade point average.

There are some weaknesses and gaps in the current research in regards to personal traits affecting student success. Many studies have started to pinpoint some of the personality traits or factors that can have an effect on academic success, but little information is given on how to rectify the problems. Some researchers have suggested that universities implement certain programs. Bean and Eaton (2001) suggest four different programs for universities to adopt to increase retention: service learning, freshman interest groups/learning communities, freshman orientation seminars, and mentoring programs. These four programs are thought to create a more social environment where students can build their interpersonal competence and create support systems for themselves in their new college community. Although Bean, Eaton and many others give these recommendations, very few studies have specifically looked at the implementation and outcomes of any of these programs or others like them. A possible reason for this may be that many universities already have programs like these, but little is being done in terms of assessing their effectiveness as it relates to academic success.

In the mid-20th century, personal identity was not as difficult for youth to discover because of the social norms that were in place. Most people did not go on from high school to college unless they were going into professional careers such as law or medicine. Instead they would find an entry-level position and put in the effort to get promoted within the company they were working. They would also find a partner soon after beginning this job and stay with them for life. Because of this, the person's identity came from their job and partner (Schwartz, Donnellan, Ravert, Luyckx, & Zamboanga, 2012).

In more recent years going to college has become more common and often necessary to have certain careers. They are also finding roommates rather than partners. This makes finding personal identity more ambiguous because it is no longer based on career and partner (Schwartz, Donnellan, Ravert, Luyckx, & Zamboanga, 2012). Adolescence and finding personal identity is taking longer to actualize than previously expected. This can be contributed to social, economic, and technological changes which is making it increasingly difficult to become an adult, at least how an adult used to be defined decades ago (Côté, 2000).

A person's identity can be made up of goals, values, and beliefs. People have many identities that can fall into personal and cultural/ethnic identities. Personal identities include political preference, occupational choice, moral standards, sexual and dating styles, and family relationships (Schwartz, Donnellan, Ravert, Luyckx, & Zamboanga, 2012). These identities are not considered equal. Cultural/ethnic identities are based on the feeling of solidarity one has with his or her cultural or ethnic group (Schwartz, Donnellan, Ravert, Luyckx, & Zamboanga, 2012, p. 341). People place higher emphasis with some identities compared to others (Grotevant, 1987) and this is especially true for people who identify with a minority group (Roberts, et al., 1999).

All of these personal traits mentioned can affect identity development for first-year students. Because of this it could be beneficial to have well-facilitated discussions about these personal characteristics with students in a classroom setting. This may help students realize what traits they have that can assist in their academic success as well as what traits they have that could hinder their success. Along with the discussions on their personal traits having students discuss and develop a personal philosophy can be beneficial. Students who have a better sense of their personal values and beliefs may be more confident in themselves. A good place to have these discussions would be in a first-year seminar that is required of all first-year students.

CHAPTER III

WELLNESS

In the definition given by Upcraft and Gardner (1989) there are two goals out of the six for student success that can be considered wellness focused. Those goals are maintaining personal health and wellness and establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships.

Maintaining Personal Health and Wellness

In a study by Gieck and Olsen (2007), it was found that taking a holistic approach to wellness can benefit the health of female, collegiate students. There were no results on the males because they opted out of the study but it can be assumed that the benefits would be similar for male students. Their proposed holistic wellness consisted of physical wellness, emotional wellness, spiritual wellness, social wellness, occupational wellness and intellectual wellness. For the purpose of this paper physical, emotional, and financial wellness will be discussed, based on Upcraft and Gardner's (1989) goal of personal health and wellness for freshmen students.

Physical Wellness

It is no surprise that people of all ages, both male and female, benefit from physical activity (United States Department of Health, 1996). However, it has been found that about only 30% of adults are active, which is defined as any adult getting less than 30 minutes of physical activity each day (Booth & Chakravarthy, 2002). College students do a little better with 44.2% being active but a decrease of activity starts in adolescents which leads into adulthood (American College Health Association, 2007). In a study by Stephens, Jacobs, and White (1985) evidence

suggested that there was a rapid reduction in physical activity between the ages of 18 and 24. Along with the increased inactivity of this age group, healthy eating habits often become worse (Grace, 1997). Students need to take part in physical activity to maintain their overall wellness.

Physical inactivity and poor dietary choices are one of the leading causes of death in the United States and accounts for more than 300,000 deaths per year (McGinnis & Foege, 1993). Physical activity can help prevent coronary heart disease, adult-onset diabetes, hypertension, colon cancer, osteoporosis, anxiety, and depression (Pate, et al., 1995). Along with personal health being negatively affected by inactivity, billions of dollars are spent every year due to physical inactivity. In a study of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota, it was estimated that in the year 2000, \$83.6 million dollars was spent due to medical bills and other related costs for problems that could have been avoided by participating in more physical activity. The study also attributed about 31% of cases of colon cancer, heart disease, osteoporosis, and stroke was caused by physical inactivity. The lack of physical activity can also cause emotional problems. Garrett, et al. (2004) attribute 12% of depression and anxiety to physical inactivity showing that it is not just physical health that is affected but emotional wellness as well.

College students take part in less physical activity and have worse eating habits compared to when they were younger. These choices can lead to a lifetime of health problems which can also lead into economic problems. These financial problems not only effect those directly involved but also multipliers are indirectly affected. For example, healthy people are having to pay more for insurance to offset the costs of unhealthy people. Another indirect effect is absenteeism from work and loss of productivity. Obesity, which often stems from physical inactivity and poor eating habits, has been linked to employees missing more days from work

due to short-term absences, long-term disability, and premature death (Colditz, 1992). The unhealthy choices of some can have economic problems for others.

Emotional Wellness

Emotional wellness has been more openly talked about in the recent decades and continues to be more public all of the time. This is an area that is difficult to assist students in because it is not as visible. Self-efficacy, certain coping strategies, and personal control are strong predictors of academic success (Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007; McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005; Bean & Eaton, 2001). Other coping tactics, perfectionism, low optimism, extroversion, and low self-esteem can negatively affect a student's physical and psychological well-being (Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007).

If students have higher academic self-efficacy they will have higher self-confidence which will lead into greater success. Those with higher self-efficacy also have lower academic stress (Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005). Colleges need to help students develop their self-efficacy even though it is hopefully honed at home from earlier ages. One way to do this is to help students come up with short-term, attainable goals. When students complete these goals they can see progress they are making which will increase their self-efficacy (Schunk & Pajares, 2007).

Another trait to be developed is adaptation as a coping behavior. Students need to adapt to their new college environment. Service learning, freshman interest groups/learning communities, freshman orientation seminars, and mentoring programs can all help students acclimate to their new school (Bean & Eaton, 2001).

Personal control or locus of control can also affect a student's emotional wellness. The goal is to have a student develop an internal locus of control, which means that they have the power over their own successes and failures. Someone with an external locus of control may not take responsibility for their outcomes (Bean & Eaton, 2001).

Students who have higher interpersonal competence will most likely work well with others and minimize conflict, which is positive to freshmen success. However, because these students are social they are likely to have many friend groups and be involved in many activities. This can actually be detrimental to their academic work. McGaha and Fitzpatrick (2005) discovered that these students have a greater risk of dropping out.

In order to rectify this possible problem, discussions should be had with students about time management and over involvement. While in college their academics should come first followed by their social obligations. Although they still need some social relationships to build support systems for their academics, they need to prioritize why they are attending college in the first place. Some of this responsibility is left up to the advisor of the student. An advisor should not only advise on the academics that the students need, they should also discuss the other factors affecting the students' social needs as well.

Financial Wellness

Lastly, students should focus on and learn to integrate financial wellness. Money is a big stressor for all people not just college students. The students should receive some financial advice from people who know finances and/or have been through the wallet-draining college experience already. In a study by Chen and Volpe (1998), it was discovered that college students are ill-equipped in their knowledge of finances. It was found that students tend to hold wrong

opinions and make poor decisions in general finances, savings and borrowings, and investments. Chen and Volpe (1998) suggest that there is a systematic lack of personal finance education which results in serious financial illiteracy found in the American public. This illiteracy is the cause of worry which results in poor productivity in the workplace. Poor financial management also causes problems for society as a whole (Chen & Volpe, 1998).

Establishing and Maintaining Interpersonal Relationships

Relationships are an important part of life for every person and especially the college student. There are relationships with their family, peers, and faculty/staff. Some researchers (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989; Chickering, 1969) speak to the anxiety that first-year students may have when finding friends who will support them in their academic careers. Healthy relationships with family, peers, and faculty/staff can build into support systems and can assist students when they are having problems. Social factors that can affect the success of a student include marginality, social integration, and interpersonal competence (Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007; McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005; Bean & Eaton, 2001). Also, college may be the first time some students interact with others from different cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations, life experiences, physical abilities, and races.

Student-Student Relationships

Everyone needs a place to belong and a group to identify with and college students are no different. Students need high quality friends. The quantity of friends does not matter nearly as much as the quality (Bean J. P., 2005). One way colleges can assist with this is through department and student activities. Students can find a club or organization they are interested in and they can be a part of that group. Ideally some friends will come out of that group because the students already have similar interests if they are joining the same club or organization. Another

way colleges can assist is to have more diverse programming on campus. For example, if every speaker, campus activity, guest artists, etc., was all about exercising, there would be some students who would benefit greatly and some that would never attend any of those events. By having more diverse programming the college can reach a greater number of students and therefore build some of those social groups.

If students do not find a friend group on campus or a place to belong they can begin to feel marginalized. A marginalized student is one who has fewer opportunities and can feel disconnected from groups and organizations (McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005; Marschalek, Unterfrauner, & Fabian, 2009). These students are more likely to drop-out and are less likely to use campus services as support systems (McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005). How do colleges identify students that feel marginalized? This can be difficult due to the withdrawn personality of someone who feels marginalized. One option would be to assist students in creating social groups to lower their chances of feeling marginalized. A good place to do this is with student clubs and organizations. Another option is first-year seminars so students will meet other freshmen in a class setting. Although, the college may not be able to identify all students who are feeling marginalized, they can create social opportunities so all students can find their niche on campus.

Involvement is one condition for student success as presented by Tinto and Pusser (2006, pp. 7-8) that can assist in the student-to-student relationships. Involvement can be described as academic and social integration. The more students are academically and socially involved, especially first-year students, the more likely they will persist and graduate. Involvement is very important in the classroom and labs because this is a place where students meet each other and

the faculty. This is also true because most student's commute to college and the classroom may be where the majority of their interactions take place on campus.

Faculty-Student Relationship

Chickering and Gamson (1987, p. 3) suggest that encouraging contacts between students and faculty is one of the most important factors in student motivation. When students have connections with faculty it enhances their intellectual commitment. It also encourages the students to think about their own value systems and future plans. Getting to know faculty can help students build relationships and support systems on campus. It is easier for students to ask for help with both academic and non-academic situations when they already know the faculty members (Mullendore & Banahan, 2014).

Quality feedback from the faculty is also a condition for student success. Students are more likely to succeed when they are provided with frequent feedback on their performance (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Giving prompt feedback is needed to keep students on track. They need opportunities to perform and suggestions to improve. This will then give them the opportunity to reflect on what they have been doing, what they still need to know, and how to assess themselves (Chickering & Gamson, 1987).

Brookhart (2008) suggests many things to consider when giving feedback. Things that need to be considered are time, amount of feedback, mode, audience, and content. Students should receive their feedback in a timely manner so they are still mindful of the learning target. They should also get the proper amount of feedback. Instructors should give enough feedback so students know what to do but not too much so that the assignment has been finished for them. The mode, or method of feedback delivery given by the instructor, and the student, (the receiver

of feedback) work together for the student to be able to process the material. Instructors must know their audience so they can decide the proper way to give feedback. For example, a good choice for feedback on a writing assignment would be written feedback so students can access the feedback as much as they need. In contrast, an assignment that needs physical activity or skill may need demonstrative feedback so the student can see what it is supposed to look like. Possibly the most important part is the content of the feedback. The content should consist of the focus, comparison, function, and valence of the feedback (Brookhart, 2008). When all of these are considered, instructors can give the most useful and effective feedback for the students.

Support Systems

Tinto and Pusser (2006) and Chickering and Gamson (1987) suggest that along with creating relationships, support systems are equally important for freshmen success. Tinto and Pusser (2006, p. 7) suggest that support is needed for the students to be successful. There are three types of support: academic, social, and financial. Mullendore and Banahan (2014) give information on the structures at colleges that support student success. Services such as campus career services, academic advising, co-curricular experiences, and high-impact activities such as study abroad and internships can all have an effect on student success. Even though not all of these systems affect students in their first year, it is worth mentioning them as they may affect them later.

In terms of academic support, many students enter the university academically unprepared for the new rigors of this higher level of academics. Developmental education courses, tutoring, study groups, and academic support programs are needed for these students to continue in their studies. The academic support can come from faculty, advisors, and different academic departments around campus. This support can also come from family and friends.

Students and their advisors, which are often faculty, should have a trusting and honest relationship. This can make their academic careers much more effective. The advisors have been through a college program before and can therefore use their personal experience and training to assist the students. Chickering and Gamson (1987, p. 3) suggest that encouraging contacts between students and faculty is one of the most important factors in student motivation. These connections can enhance a student's intellectual commitment.

Social support can come from family, friends, and different departments around campus. When the college offers different social activities on campus, students have the opportunity to meet new people. Social support can also be emotional support. This can come from friends but more importantly, there are counseling departments with staff members who are trained to help students who may need some emotional support. Social support can be given through counseling, and mentoring, while multicultural centers, such as a Native American Resource Center, can provide a safe place for students who identify with that culture.

Financial support can come from family or a financial aid office. There are many scholarships and grants available to students and the financial aid office can help students find them. Financial support can also come in the form of financial education. A class such as a first-year seminar can discuss financial strategies with students so they can use their money and resources at the greatest benefit to them.

Colleges also have many departments that can assist in one or all three of the areas of academic, social, and emotional support and students should be aware of these resources. Departments such as career planning, counseling services, tutoring, disability services, student activities, residential life, financial aid, study abroad, and others exist to assist the students so students should take advantage of these resources.

Interculturalism is an important part of the collegiate experience. Diversity and interculturalism can be topics that are difficult to talk about with some. For the purposes of this paper interculturalism will be defined as the exchange of two different cultures. Diversity can be related to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, disability, and much more. Even though colleges are bringing in more diverse populations, there is still a larger number of the majority groups on campuses both student and faculty/staff alike. Hu and Kuh (2003, p. 330) have found that there are benefits for all groups when there are interactions between groups. Benefits include increases in racial understanding, cultural awareness and appreciation, engagement with social and political issues, and openness to diversity and challenge. Students also have greater gains in intellectual engagement, academic motivation, intellectual self-concept, and social self-concept (Milem, 2003).

Because colleges and universities have become more diverse, many schools have added diversity to their core values and mission statements. This is also done to create more global students so the future graduates are more competitive when they get into the workforce. There are benefits for students when colleges place an emphasis on diversity. Institutions must take into account the racial, cultural, ethnic, age, and gender diversity of freshmen because college enrollment is becoming more diverse every year. (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989, pp. 4-5).

One way of improving on intercultural competence is to have people from different groups interact:

The contact hypothesis states that personal and cooperative interaction with people from out-groups will help reduce our negative attitudes and stereotypic beliefs about them, especially if we perceive that the individual is a typical member of his or her group (Blaine, 2013, p. 232).

The contact hypothesis has several conditions that must occur in order for it to hold true. First, the person someone is in contact with should be in a similar life circumstance as the individual. For example, a white student should be in contact with a black student rather than a black professor. Secondly, the time spent interacting with an out-group member must be sustained over a longer period and must also have the support of the institution such as the authorities for a diverse neighborhood, or the college for the students. Lastly, the out-group member needs to be a representative of the whole group. If the person does not fit the stereotype, they may be considered the *exception to the rule*. A college could attempt to create these conditions by having discussions in diverse classes such as a first-year seminar. These discussions on diversity need to be had on college campuses, however, instructors need to be wary of making a person becoming the token person in that population who is meant to represent everyone of that particular group (Blaine, 2013).

The contact hypothesis does not need to consist of direct contact. It can also happen with indirect contact such as witnessing contact between two diverse people. If those people are having a good interaction, it can reduce discrimination and bias in the witnesses also. Recently, it has been found that people do not even need to have any direct or indirect contact for this effect to work. Imagined intergroup contact occurs when someone imagines a positive interaction between them and someone from an out-group (Blaine, 2013).

Hu and Kuh (2003) looked into the benefits of having diverse populations interact. Through the College Student Experience Questionnaire (CESQ), which was a survey of 53,756 undergraduate students, it was found that there were benefits for all groups when there were interactions between the groups. The items that Hu and Kuh (2003, p. 323) considered to be interactional items were:

- Became acquainted with students whose race or ethnic background was different from yours
- Became acquainted with students from another country
- Had serious discussions with students whose philosophy of life or personal values were very different from yours
- Had serious discussions with students whose political opinions were very different from yours
- Had serious discussions with students whose religious beliefs were very different from yours
- Had serious discussions with students whose race or ethnic background was different from yours
- Had serious discussions with students from a country different from yours

Hu and Kuh (2003, p. 330) concluded that there are benefits for all populations of students to have more interaction between diverse populations. Students who identified as white, benefit slightly more from these interactions compared to students who identify with a minority group. It was believed this could be due to minorities being more accustomed to interacting with others outside their race and ethnicity.

Students who have more interactions with diversity while in college have greater gains in intellectual engagement, academic motivation, intellectual self-concept, and social self-concept. These students also have higher rates of persistence. It has also been found that students who experience more interaction with diversity in college have claimed higher levels of satisfaction with their college careers (Milem, 2003). Table 1 (Milem, 2003) gives the individual, institutional, and social benefits of working with diverse populations.

Summary of the Educational Benefits of Diverse College and University Campuses

Type of Benefit		
<i>Individual Benefits</i>	<i>Institutional Benefits</i>	<i>Societal Benefits</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved racial and cultural awareness • Enhanced openness to diversity and challenge • Greater commitment to increasing racial understanding • More occupational and residential desegregation later in life • Enhanced critical thinking ability • Greater satisfaction with the college experience • Perceptions of a more supportive campus racial climate • Increased Wages for Men who Graduate from Higher "Quality" Institutions 	<p style="text-align: center;">Benefits to Private Enterprise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivation of workforce with greater levels of crosscultural competence • Attraction of best available talent pool • Enhanced marketing efforts • Higher levels of creativity and innovation • Better problem-solving abilities • Greater organization flexibility <p style="text-align: center;">Benefits to Higher Education of Faculty Diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More student-centered approaches to teaching and learning • More diverse curricular offerings • More research focused on issues of race/ethnicity and gender • More women and faculty of color involved in community and volunteer service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More research on the Effects of Affirmative Action in the Workplace • Higher levels of service to community/civic organizations • Medical service by physicians of color to underserved communities • Greater equity in society • A more educated citizenry

Table 1: Summary of the Educational Benefits of Diverse College and University Campuses

Adapted from: Miley, 2003, p. 33

Another way of improving interculturalism is teaching students about systemic racism versus individual racism. The United States has progressed in recent decades towards becoming a more equitable country. However, there is still a lot of work to do until the country reaches true equality. Many people do not understand what systemic racism is and that causes some of the confusion and therefore leads to defensiveness of the hegemonic group domination when discussing racism.

As a white male myself, I realize that I could have racist tendencies. That does not mean that I am going out and committing micro-aggressions against people who are different than me. That would be individualistic racism. My racism comes from society as a whole. I have never had to feel uncomfortable about the color of my skin when walking through a store because one of the workers was watching my every move. This is systemic racism. This also seeps into the legal system with laws that some authorities claim are not meant to single out minority groups but they do such as stop and frisk and voter ID laws. If students are taught about systemic racism they will understand that they might have implicit racist tendencies based on societal norms. These discussions should be had in all areas of life and colleges might be the best place to do so.

There are individual benefits for students who take part in conversations regarding diversity in their collegiate careers. Students who are exposed to more diverse populations oftentimes show increased racial understanding, cultural awareness and appreciation, engagement with social and political issues, and openness to diversity as a challenge. They also are

less likely to stereotype people of color. Students also have growth in civic responsibility when they have more engagement with diversity while in college (Milem, 2003).

Student wellness should be a concern of colleges to make sure that students are staying healthy physically, emotionally, and financially. Teaching students how to maintain and develop a healthy lifestyle may not only help the students personally but also give them a better academic experience which in turn assist in academic retention and persistence. These discussions can also be had in a first-year seminar and students can learn early in their collegiate academic career how to maintain health and develop the coping skills needed to develop healthier practices.

CHAPTER IV

ACADEMICS

This chapter will focus on the final two goals from Upcraft and Gardner's "six goals" for student success: developing academic and intellectual competence and deciding on a career and life-style. This chapter will also contain information on college as an institution and how it can affect a first-year student.

Developing Academic and Intellectual Competence

Developing academic and intellectual competence may be the biggest worry for freshmen students. College academics are very different from secondary schooling and the college institution can help students make that transition (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989).

Peterson (1971) gives two areas that he views to be the make-up of intellectual competence: Academic Mastery and Intellectual Resourcefulness. Peterson's (1971) idea of Intellectual Competence is not a new idea and he does not claim it to be. People have talked about having *book smarts* and *street smarts* for many years. Students need to have abilities in both areas to be well-rounded. Working towards Academic Mastery is already established in degree programs. However, there are some weaknesses in the education of Intellectual Resourcefulness. Students are limited in receiving the opportunity to develop these skills in the classroom.

The lack of intellectual resourcefulness could be due to our current system of having students memorize information to regurgitate on a test. Memorizing facts is a lower level of

thinking and will not produce critical thinkers. Much of this can be attributed to the No Child Left Behind Act. The Act was meant to reduce achievement gaps among various subgroups of students and focused heavily on reading and mathematics. It was high-stakes testing for the reward of school funding. This caused schools to strip away curriculum that was seen as less necessary in order to spend more time on reading and math. This created skewed curriculum, discouraged teachers, and a numbers game where people were more worried about adjusting test scores than improving schools:

One of the worst-case scenarios that could result from an unbalanced curriculum is a generation of youth who have good ‘word attack’ skills but who know little and care less about important facts, events, and concepts in history, science, and the arts (Cawelti, 2006).

These are students who are now in college so the institution needs to work with these students on developing both sides of their academic competence.

There are ways to improve academic competence and student persistence. Ryan and Glenn (2004) looked into a strategy-based first-year seminar and found that there were significantly greater amounts of academic success for students in this class. Students who had a GPA of 2.0 or higher had a nine-point increase in retention and students with a GPA of lower than a 2.0 had a 29-point increase in retention. The strategy-based seminar gives students the skills they need to succeed and persist in their academic careers. It is focused on skills such as time management, note-taking, reading techniques, test-preparation, and test-taking strategies. Developing these skills can be greatly beneficial to all students especially freshmen students.

Time Management

One thing that many people, not just freshmen, struggle with is time management. Time management can actually affect college achievement (Britton & Tesser, 1991). Better time-management behaviors even have a greater effect on reducing academic stress compared to leisure activities (Misra & MeKean, 2000). Ellis (2013) suggests that first-year students create a time monitor to work on their time management skills. Students are supposed to monitor and record their time in 15-minute intervals in order to see how their time is being allocated.

Note Taking

Researchers debate on whether or not note taking has an influence on student comprehension and recollection. Hult, Cohn, and Potter (1984) found that effective note taking, in itself, is positively related to student comprehension while Henk and Stahl (1985) found the opposite and claim that there is no evidence to support this claim. However, Henk and Stahl (1985) found that students who review their notes have a significant gain in recall of material.

When note taking, various options exist on how to take notes. One option is taking notes electronically compared to hand-writing them. Mueller and Oppenheimer (2014) found that students who took notes on laptops performed worse on conceptual questions compared to students who wrote out their notes. They found that when students were note taking on their laptops, they were attempting to transcribe the lectures verbatim and were not processing the information and reframing it into their own words.

Another option in note-taking is taking notes in a linear versus a non-linear way. Linear note taking would be structured like an outline with bullet points and sub-bullets. Non-linear would be similar to creating a concept map to organize the information. Makany, Kemp, and

Dror (2009) found that students who took non-linear notes were better in quantity and quality of the learned material.

Reading Techniques

There are many ways to read through textbooks and articles and not one method is better than the rest. However, there are some methods that are suggested by researchers to help different students in different situations. When students are taught different methods, they can find the one that works best for them.

Robinson came up with the SQ3R method which stands for survey, question, read, recite, and review (Pauk, 1984). Since the SQ3R method there have been many similar versions and adaptations created. There is the PQRSST study plan designed by Spache and Berg (1966, p. 93) the OK5R system (Pauk, 1984) which adds an element of reflections to the process, and the Super Six R's System (Pauk, 1984).

A similar method that has been updated more recently is muscle reading (Ellis, 2013, pp. 128-133). Muscle reading consists of three phases split into eight steps. Phase one happens before you read. The reader is to preview, outline, and question what you are about to read. This can be done by looking at the table of contents and flipping through the pages of the chapter. While students are doing this, they should be outlining and coming up with questions they want answered based on what they were previewing. Phase two takes place while the student is reading. It consists of focusing and flagging answers. Focusing is needed to have more meaningful reading comprehension. Students should be in a good environment for reading and treat reading like a professional with good posture and attitude. The reader should also be looking for the answers to the questions they came up with during phase one. The final phase is recite, review, and review again. Students are to recite what they read to a friend or to themselves

out loud. Students should then review what they read within 24 hours. This will help shift the information from short-term memory to long-term memory. The last step of the final phase is to review again either weekly or monthly. This tends to keep the information in memory for much longer.

All of these methods are fairly similar. They all consist of breaking down the reading into steps of previewing, reading, and reviewing. Again, if students are presented with multiple techniques, they can choose which one will work best for them.

Test-Preparation

Students should be taking notes in their classroom lectures and based on their readings in the textbooks (Pauk, 1984). But, as stated in the section on note taking, the greatest benefit will come from the review of the notes not from the actual note taking in itself. Time should also be set aside to review and study for tests. Students should block out a specific time, ideally weekly, to keep up on their work for a class and use that same time to review for the class. A good idea is to also form study groups along with individual review. Students can use these groups to teach each other, test one another, and compare notes (Ellis, 2013).

Test-Taking

There are some physiological things students can do to when they first receive the test to reduce anxiety. The first thing is to breathe. Taking deep breaths can help calm the nerves. If a student gets anxiety during a test they should accept the feelings and their existence in order to move on from them. By trying to fight the anxiety, a student might only become more anxious (Ellis, 2013).

Before beginning to work on the test, students should listen and read instructions carefully. The student should make sure everything makes sense to them and ask questions if they need something clarified (Ellis, 2013; Pauk, 1984).

Once the student starts a test, they should do the problems that are easier for them. This will give them little successes and build their confidence when working on to harder parts of the tests (Ellis, 2013, p. 186). If there is a question that a student is getting stumped on, they should skip it and come back to it. Utilizing all of these techniques will hopefully help a student perform better on exams.

Deciding on a Career and Life-Style

Most students enter college with a career goal in mind. However, some students remain undecided in their academic pursuits. Upcraft and Gardner (1989, p. 3) state that college is an immediate test of students' career commitment. Many students change their majors and some drop out due to career indecision. Other factors such as change of interests, lack of academic success, and freedom from family pressures can also affect career choice.

Harren (1979) created a model on the career decision-making process of a traditional aged college student. This model consists of four stages: awareness, planning, commitment, and implementation. The conclusion of one usually leads directly into the next. Awareness takes place when a student takes stock in where they have been and where they are going. If dissatisfaction or anxiety results from the personal reflection, the student will recognize that they need to explore alternative options and will move into the planning stage. During the planning stage, students will expand and narrow their options based upon the personal meaning they give to each option. Once the student has enough information about the planned option they will move into the commitment stage. The commitment is first a personal test and if it feels right the

student will then look to others for feedback on their choice. If the feedback is positive it will add to their commitment. Students will also start to plan a way to implement their decision. Once they have finalized their decision they have reached implementation (Harren, 1979).

This is the process that college students go through to choose their careers (Harren, 1979). By understanding this process, the institution as a whole can assist students while they work through it. College departments such as career services can help students in exploring and clarifying career-related interests, abilities, and life values. They can then assist in making informed educational and career decisions to help them reach their career goals through their academics (Rayman & Garis, 1989).

Institutional Effects

Tinto and Pusser (2006, p. 12) claim institutional commitment as possibly the most important condition for student success. This condition actually comes from the institution as a whole being committed to the goal of increasing student success. This is especially true for low-income and underrepresented students. The institution needs to be willing to "invest resources and provide the incentives and rewards needed to enhance student success" (Tinto & Pusser, 2006) otherwise these programs will not prosper over a longer period of time.

Upcraft and Gardner (1989, pp. 4-5) state that institutions have an obligation to support and enhance the freshmen year. They also believe that the institution should have very deliberate goals for freshmen. It is beneficial for institutions to have a clear definition of freshman success and that the freshman year be strategically planned. The goals should be clear to all faculty and students, including prospective students. This will maintain integrity between what the institution says and what the goals are. Institutions can and should intentionally and effectively help freshmen achieve their academic personal goals.

It is both the teachers' and students' responsibilities to improve undergraduate education. To do this, colleges and universities need to create the right environment. A good environment would consist of “a strong sense of shared purposes, concrete support from administrators and faculty leaders for those purposes, adequate funding appropriate for the purposes, policies and procedures consistent with the purposes, and continuing examination of how well the purposes are being achieved” (Chickering & Gamson, 1987, p. 5).

Institutional Expectations

All educational institutions need to have high expectations (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005). This is especially true in higher education. Students will work to what their potential is and if they are not given greater opportunities, they will never grow as much as they are able. Students live up to the standards that are set for them, which for many is lower than what they are capable. In the classroom, instructors should treat the students as eager learners and they are more likely to become eager learners (Brophy, 1986). Communicating high expectations is needed to bring and keep the academics at a higher, appropriate level. Having high expectations can create a self-fulfilling prophecy when faculty also hold high expectations of themselves (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005).

The instructor will be more excited about class, which can cause the students to be more excited about class. This will increase their learning which will in turn cause the instructor to become more excited and this cyclical process continues over and over again.

Intelligence is hopefully viewed as fluid rather than static by instructors. If they view academic capabilities as static they may make assumptions about what students are capable of

achieving (Lumsden, 1997). Think of intelligence as a Slinky. If you stretch the Slinky a little it can go back to how it was originally. However, if you stretch the Slinky further it will warp and will not be able to go back to how it originally was. Student intelligence should be treated the same way. If they are only stretched and pushed a little, they may go back to a previous state. If they are stretched and pushed further than what may be comfortable, they cannot go back to a previous way of thinking. They are forever changed.

There is no downside to having higher expectations. These expectations can consist of students having higher caliber work, attending to deadlines, being more committed to their coursework, putting more critical thought into assignments, and willing to do more than what is expected of them. The self-fulfilling prophecy can take effect on an institutional level also. When the institution places higher expectations on their students, the students will in theory perform at a higher level. This will in turn increase the academic standard and thus, reputation of the college. Having a better reputation will allow universities/colleges to be more selective with their applicants and reinforce the higher academic standards and expectations.

Having higher expectations may be the best step that a college can take to improve the campus climate. Again, these high expectations will hopefully trickle into other parts of their lives. When a person actively develops one part of themselves for the better, they improve other parts of themselves as well and that is the ultimate goal of a growth model; to have the students graduate and leave better, smarter, and more prepared than when they arrived.

Institutional expectations should meet the needs of all students. Many institutions do not expect enough of their students. A national study (Tinto & Pusser, 2006) reported that first-year students are spending less time out of class on their academics than has been deemed necessary for successful learning. These students are living up to the standards that are presented to them,

which in many cases are lower than what they are capable. Expectations are also in reference to students knowing the rules and regulations while networking through campus. Some students will receive the information they need from advising but others will not. Oftentimes, students receive misleading or actual wrong information from their peers and this becomes problematic in the bigger picture.

Institutional Commitment

Institutional commitment may be the most important condition for student success (Tinto & Pusser, 2006, p. 6). The commitment should come from both sides: institution to student and student to institution. It is the obligation of the institution to enhance the academic experience of all students (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989, pp. 4-5). It is important for the institution to have very specific goals for the students. They should choose what it is they believe the students need to show their academic competence and then make goals and benchmarks to assess whether or not students are reaching academic competence. Assessment and reflection are important components of this process. This should be done actively and with purpose. Oftentimes institutions of higher education will see the graduation and retention rates and base the success of the school on these. But does the degree earned by the student represent the overarching goals of the school or did the student just take all of the right classes and get all of the boxes checked and that means they have earned a degree?

The academic process needs to be more intentional than that. There is concern that grade inflation, combined with less study time might give unrealistic expectations to students of what is needed to succeed academically and to prepare themselves professionally (DeBard, 2004). Are the core values and the mission statement of the college intentionally worked into the curriculum? If not, is the institution doing a disservice to the students? The core values and the

mission statements exist for a reason. At some point in time, members of the college thought they were important enough to be representative of the college. If you asked faculty and staff members what the mission statement of the college is would they know it? The college should purposefully plan for the students and make sure that everything that is being done is in the best interest of the students.

The continuation of academic skill development such as time management, note taking, reading techniques, and test taking strategies is beneficial to students even still at the collegiate level. It can develop academic competence and better prepare students for the higher academic rigor of collegiate academics. Being that these skills can be beneficial in any degree program, a first-year seminar that was required of all students could be a good environment to work on and develop these skills. A first-year seminar could also be a good environment to discuss career goals. The students can work along with the instructor on deciding on a goal and creating benchmarks of how to reach that goal.

CHAPTER V
METHODOLOGY
Inquiry Cycle

The Inquiry Cycle according to Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) is shown in Figure 2: Inquiry Cycle. The individual begins by developing a wondering. These wonderings do not emerge out of thin air, but rather materialize as professional passions through an inquirer's work, as complexities, difficulties, or real-world dilemmas (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, pp. 30-32). Once a question is well thought out, a research plan is developed. Van Ingen and Ariew (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, pp. 88-91) propose that first the researcher must consider the question, then begin the search, followed by reading and synthesizing the literature.



Figure 2: Inquiry Cycle (Dana, 2014)

According to Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014, p. 157), there are two types of data analysis: the first type is “ongoing throughout your entire inquiry and occurs *as* you are collecting your data” while the second type “takes place toward the end of your inquiry and occurs *after* you have finished your data collection.” As the inquirer completes the write-up, it is important to remember that this process is cyclical and not linear. It is crucial to take action based upon findings and to share the work with others (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, pp. 213-214).

Data Sources

Once I developed my wonderings, I began my ongoing formative analysis through document review on what freshmen need to be considered successful. Sources included my personal journal entries, journal articles, books, the University mandates, and course syllabi already in place. A major data source was my personal journal. Because I am in my first year of being the Assistant Director of Student Activities, I have kept many notes throughout the year to help me reflect and plan for the future. During the last year there have been two critical incidents that I see as evidence for the need of a different structure for the current first-year seminar.

Because I am in my first year of working as an assistant director in student activities, I have taken many notes about what I needed to do, what student programs went well, and what needs work. Upon reviewing my notes I recalled two critical incidents that I see as the major influencing factors that pushed my thinking towards the need for change to combat my perceptions about the 1) entitlement and 2) apathy of the current students on campus.

There were many smaller incidents that I noticed in the first semester of working with the student programming group as well. The group is made up of volunteer students who are led by an executive board. The smaller incidents included things such as forgetting volunteer duties,

setting bad examples for underclassmen (such as not attending the programs they themselves chose to come to campus), and not following the construct for meetings that they themselves created were common occurrences.

The beginning stages of the first critical incident started at the end of the first semester when stipends for the executive board of this group were discussed and decided by the executive committee. The executive board is made up of seven students who apply and interview for a position on the board. All members of the board receive a stipend at the end of the semester. The process of stipend giving is decided at a full board meeting where all members are present including executive and non-executive members alike. Each executive member is asked to step outside of the room while the full board can discuss how they feel the executive member performed in their role. After some discussion, I as the advisor gave the baseline monetary amount attached to the position. Through the discussions, all the board members need to decide whether they think the executive member did an average job and would receive the baseline stipend. All of this discussion follows parliamentary procedure. At this time, the students can also make a motion to raise or lower the stipend amount by a maximum of \$50 in either direction based on whether they think the executive member performed above or below their baseline responsibilities. I as the advisor have veto privileges of any motion I feel is unfair or unjustified. For many of the executive board members, stipends were reduced due to missing mandatory meetings without acceptable excuses, missing deadlines of duties, and doing less than the minimum obligations that are required of their positions. Because of these issues the full board decided that there was much improvement that was needed by the executive board. I as the advisor, acted only as a facilitator to this conversation.

The first critical incident actually came at our next executive meeting where I discussed with the executive members why the decision was made and how they could improve the following semester. This became a somewhat heated meeting with some executive members being on the defensive. It also resulted in the resignation of two of the seven executive members. At this point, I felt that these resignations were probably healthy for the overall group and that we could start the next semester with a fresh and hopefully more committed group.

I do not think our current stipend awarding procedure is emotionally healthy for anyone involved. For the stipend process we have a budgeted amount of money every year to give out as stipends. This is done twice a year at the end of the fall and spring semesters. I have already engaged in conversations with the chairperson of the executive board who is also a student leader in other student groups on campus about changing the format to a baseline stipend with opportunities for bonus if the executive members did more than what was expected of them. This would follow a rubric to keep these bonuses as unbiased as possible.

The beginning of the second critical incident happened at the beginning of the next semester. I thought that after the discussions for improvement, the executive board members that still remained would really improve their performance, which most did at the outset. The strong executive members stayed strong but the ones needing improvement became apathetic to much of the student programming that they themselves decided to bring to campus. The real tipping point was at our organization's Kiddie Carnival which is a small carnival that the students of this group organize and work at for young children in the area. Each executive member was supposed to come up with two games for the carnival and make the games, posters, and rule sheets. Although everyone did what they were supposed to, there was a noticeable lack of effort put into some. This show of apathy does not only exist with these few students. I have noticed it in the

culture of campus. I am familiar with a culture of activism so it is very difficult for me to stand by and watch students who appear apathetic to the idea of improving their organization and who do not fully commit to their personal responsibilities in the positions that they applied for.

The research that I have conducted for this paper is a reaction to my reflections on these incidents. There are many problems that I see on campus but I believe that they can be improved and that I can play a major role in this process. Upon reflecting on these incidents I started asking questions right away. I asked some of my co-workers about leadership programs on campus and those conversations led me to an academic department who was working on developing a leadership minor. I met with this department and got the information on what they have planned so far. In my opinion, there did not seem to be any sense of urgency with developing this minor. When I find something that I am passionate about, in example the need for a leadership program, I pursue it with fidelity.

Data Analysis

My analysis began from a point of reflection. I noticed a need for some sort of student development program on campus and I began to think about what that would look like. Being that one of my strengths is being an existentialist thinker, I did not just want to work on the current students' problems but rather put a program in place to change the culture on campus to make students more self-responsible for the decisions they make and the work they do. I believe that this can best be done through the future students as well as students who already accept campus the way it is. I also believe that the best way to develop leaders is to develop strong people and the natural leaders will emerge from this process. This is when I first decided that a first-year seminar class could be the best opportunity to improve this apathetic culture on campus. I then began to look into what first-year students need to succeed.

Through an extensive coding process of selected materials certain themes began to emerge. Themes that emerged were: relationships, personal identity, building academic skills, support systems, academic and career goals, feedback, and wellness (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989; Bean & Eaton, 2001; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005). I began to search these themes more in depth while creating concept maps and coding schemes in attempt to organize my work. Earlier in my research I put the themes into three categories: intrapersonal needs for success, interpersonal needs for success, and institutional expectations and benefits.

After continued research, casual conversations with colleagues, and several advisor meetings, I realized that my original categories did not best represent the research. Instead, I decided to look back to the most accepted definition of student success which was that of Upcraft and Gardner (1989) with their “six goals” for first-year student success. I used these goals and the common themes to create a new concept map and better framework for my research and found that freshmen student success can be categorized into the overarching categories of identity, wellness, and academics. After seeing that the major themes fit into these three categories, I dug deeper into the data sources to explore the areas of identity, wellness, and academics and how it relates to first-year student success.

To analyze my research in each of these three areas, I created several renditions of concept maps for each category. In doing so, I found that certain personal traits, such as self-efficacy, coping strategies, and personal control, are beneficial for students where as other traits such as perfectionism, low optimism, extroversion, and low self-esteem can be detrimental to student success. This agrees with the research being done by Pritchard, Wilson, and Yamnitz (2007), McGaha and Fitzpatrick (2005), and Bean and Eaton (2001). In terms of wellness, I found that there are benefits (such as lower stress and greater academic persistence), to taking a

holistic approach, which agrees with the research on holistic wellness done by Gieck and Olsen (2007).

Through my analysis, three major subcategories emerged: physical wellness, emotional wellness including relationships and support systems, and financial wellness. My research on academics identified the benefits for first-year students to continue developing their academic skill sets and future career and lifestyle. The academic skill sets include time management, note taking, reading techniques, test preparation, and test taking strategies (Britton & Tesser, 1991; Hult, Cohn, & Potter, 1984; Pauk, 1984; Ellis, 2013).

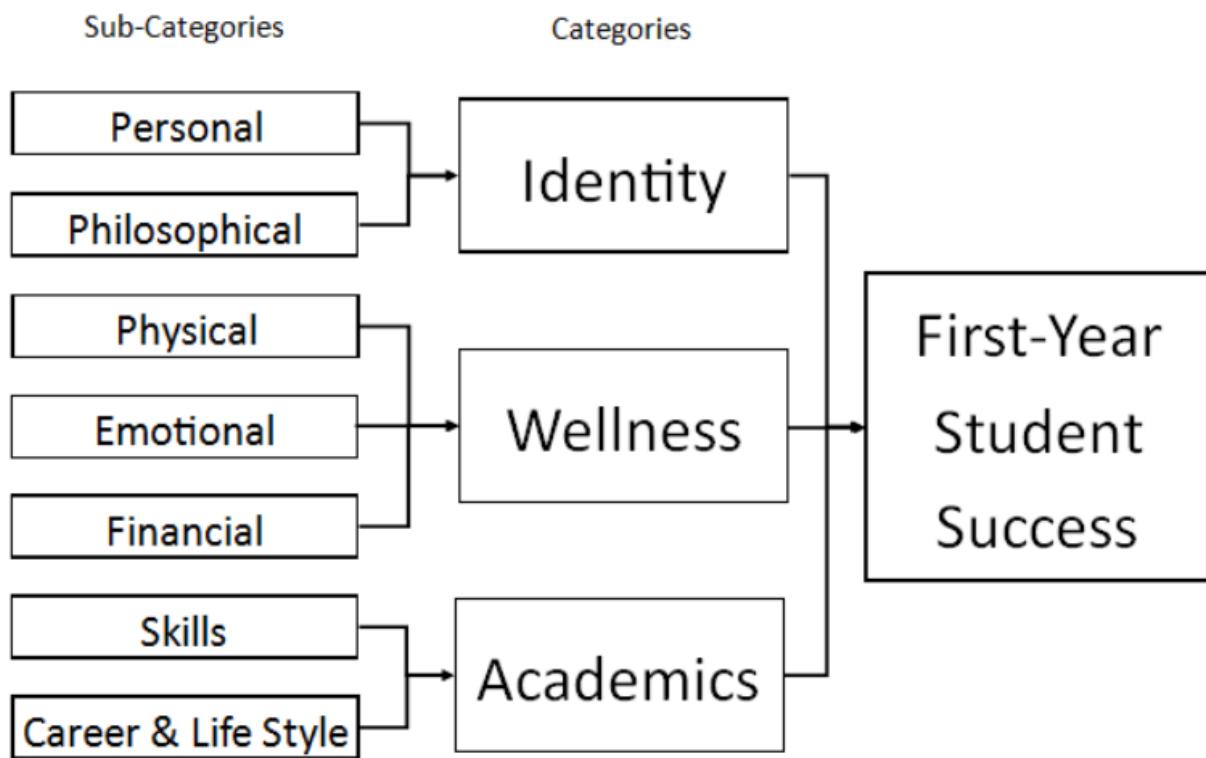


Figure 3: Flow Chart of Categories and Sub-Categories for First-Year Student Success (Torgerson, 2016)

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND ACTION PLAN

Identity

A person's identity can include many personal characteristics such as: race, gender, faith, sexual orientation, cultural background, ethnic origin, and disability (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). However, identity can be so much more than that. A person's values, beliefs, and behaviors also make up who they are. Discovering one's own identity can be a challenging and life-long process.

Along with a person discovering the traits that they identify with is their personal philosophy which results in their impact on the world, and how the world impacts them. Impact in this sense is not necessarily as conscious as something like activism where a person is intentionally trying to change something in the world. Rather, impact can happen solely due to the existence of the person and their influence on everything they encounter. "The person creates her or his own essence by the process of self-determination and self-realization that completes the project of being human" (Gutek, 2004, p. 87).

Developing identity and developing an integrated philosophy of life are important goals for freshmen success. In my opinion, these are the ultimate goals for students to reach while they are in college. It is beneficial for students to think about and write a personal philosophy. This philosophy should include how they identify themselves, their values and beliefs, their short and long term goals, and anything else they feel is important to them. Who are they as a person? Who

are they on campus? Who are they in the world? How do they want people to remember them? All of these are just the start of questions that can be answered. It is important for students and people in general to reflect on themselves and what they can do to better themselves.

One way to develop identity is to have students discuss their goals, values, and beliefs with the faculty, staff, and their peers. More so, students need to listen to others about their goals, values, and beliefs. These conversations can lead to better understandings between groups and present students with new beliefs and values they may never have considered before. Possibly the most influential aspect of developing an identity is experiencing new things. A person can then decide, based on these experiences, whether they support or reject that experience. For example, many people claim to hate Brussels sprouts without ever having tried them. People hold certain beliefs that they believe are true based on their upbringing or what they have learned from society. In order to truly claim to dislike Brussels sprouts, one needs to have experienced them, arguably on more than one occasion, before making that decision. In order for students to develop their true identity, they must be exposed to new experiences.

Developing an identity and personal philosophy can be done in a first-year seminar by facilitating discussions with students about their identities and philosophies on life (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). The instructor will hopefully also share their personal philosophy and how they identify themselves to set an example for the students. It is important that these in-class discussions be open and without judgment. The discussions can give students the opportunity to hear about others' identities and philosophies which may challenge their own. All of these discussions would lead into the articulating of a written personal philosophy paper, which is suggested in the curriculum. This paper would include their personal views, beliefs, and values as well as how they identify themselves. They should also provide evidence of how they practice

these in their everyday lives. I believe that the writing of the paper would encourage the students to think more in depth about their identities.

Wellness

Wellness is the overall term given to describe the health and stability of a student. Wellness in this paper includes physical wellness, emotional wellness, and financial wellness. Physical wellness can be thought of in the terms of diet and exercise. Emotional wellness is maintaining mental stability. It includes personal traits such as self-efficacy and coping strategies and how they affect a student's stress and anxiety. Financial wellness is having the skills and knowledge to maintain one's resources in order to attain their basic needs. These three areas encompass the body, mind, and personal needs. Taking a holistic approach to wellness can benefit students (Gieck & Olsen, 2007).

Other factors that influence a student's wellness are those of relationships and support systems. These relationships can be student-student, faculty-students, and intercultural. These relationships can build into the students' support systems, which are needed for student success (Tinto & Pusser, 2006, p. 7). Along with these personal relationships and support systems, college have on-campus departments such as career services, academic advising, and co-curricular experiences which are dedicated to student wellness.

We have heard for many years the importance of a healthy diet and exercise. Yet, we still hear about the *freshman fifteen* where it is common for students in their first year to gain about fifteen pounds. I have also heard the phrase *freshman fifty* in multiple conversations with students where they were only half joking. While the institution cannot control what the students eat and how active they are, they can create the conditions for physical wellness. For a healthy diet, the institution can make sure that there are healthy meal choices and that the nutrition facts

are posted with the food. Campus departments can also do programming to teach about healthy food options. Cooking classes, campus gardens, and student conversations with nutritionists are a few easy options to educate students on healthy eating. The institution can also give students a place to exercise that is safe and up to date. Offering group exercise classes, fitness certifications, and individual physical training sessions are all effective ways to promote physical wellness. Other departments around campus can also encourage physical wellness by encouraging students to take the stairs, walk to class, and participate in 10,000 steps-a-day clubs.

Emotional wellness can be more difficult to address because it is less visible and more uncomfortable to talk about. A stigma still exists surrounding mental health and emotional wellness. For most students, emotional wellness comes from their personal support groups such as friends and family. Students need coping skills for when things like coursework and relationships become overwhelming and cause stress and anxiety. For others who are affected by differing levels of mental illness, much more structured support is needed. Although there are many departments on campuses that are dedicated to helping all students who are having emotional wellness issues, is it possible for the campus seek out those who are not utilizing these resources? One way is to have discussions on campus on issues like coping with stress and anxiety to mental illness and how it is uncontrollable for many people. The coping skills can come from campus programming through departments such as counseling and health services. As for mental illness, it is an illness that cannot be controlled by the person affected. The old mentality of “suck it up” is going away. People are finally seeing that mental illness is very much like a healthy person who gets cancer. People would not blame the person for getting cancer. Mental illness can be explained the same way. It is caused by chemical imbalances in the brain and environmental factors in cases like post-traumatic stress disorder. If we can have these

conversations and attempt to reduce and eliminate the stigma, students may start to utilize the resources that are made available for them.

Financial wellness can be just as important after their collegiate experience as it is during. Students need to know good spending and saving habits to reduce the amount of debt they incur. Students on average are leaving school with higher amounts of student loans than in previous years (US Dept. of Education, 2013). The cost of school keeps going up and for many careers and jobs, students cannot get hired without the proper degree. Having programs on financial wellness would be very beneficial to students. These programs should talk about budgeting and spending wisely. It is a disservice to students to send them off with an earned degree but tens of thousands of dollars in debt without being equipped to pay it back in a reasonable amount of time. However, students need to think of college as an investment and not a hoop to jump through to get the career of their dreams.

One last piece that falls into wellness is that of relationships. These are student-to-student, faculty-to-student, support systems, and interculturalism. For student-to-student relationships, the institution can make sure that there are plentiful opportunities for students to socialize and meet new people. This is especially true for freshmen at the beginning of the year. Residential life and student activities can work together to create opportunities for students to meet new people. It is also important that students have good relationships with faculty members. These faculty members will be mentors and academic coaches to students. Other opportunities such as undergraduate research and internship possibilities can come from building relationships with faculty members. Support systems are created through friends, family, faculty, and staff. These support systems will assist students in coping with different problems they may be experiencing.

An important relationship to be discussed on a systemic level is that of interculturalism. As a white male myself, I will never truly understand racism from any perspective other than that of my own. All I do know is that I used get very defensive when the subject of race and white privilege would come up in conversation and people were talked about in majority and minority groups. It was not until I was educated on systemic racism through critical race theory that I started to understand that I did have racist tendencies based on my context. I was not going out trying to purposefully commit microaggressions but rather I was oblivious to the inequities that exist in our society. I see this systemic racism in my family and friends and it does not come from a place of hate but rather from a place of misunderstanding and lack of education on systemic racism.

In a first-year seminar, students can learn about opportunities to maintain their personal wellness. Discussions on diet and exercise, resources on campus, and finances can all be beneficial to students. Other discussion topics can be about the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety and how students can cope with these feelings. It can be to a great benefit to have conversations about racism and critical race theory with students soon after they begin college and continue these conversations throughout their academic careers (Blaine, 2013). This will give them years of guided wrestling with their views of what racism is and how it does still exist in today's society. These conversations can be done in a first-year seminar and the college would know that all first-year students are receiving this information if the first-year seminar is a required course.

Academics

Academics for the purpose of this paper refers to the students' pursuit for academic mastery and intellectual resourcefulness (Peterson, 1971). Academic mastery encompasses the

content area and making academic progress towards a degree. Intellectual resourcefulness encompasses the critical and deeper thinking that is developed by students. Developing both of these can give students the greatest opportunity for success.

This also refers to the skills to be developed for academic success. These skills include time management, note-taking, reading techniques, test-preparation, and test-taking abilities. A college putting an emphasis on the students' development of these skills can better prepare them for the new academic rigors of collegiate academics.

An important idea to come out of Chapter 4 on academics is that of having high expectations and commitment. This commitment can and should come from both the institution as a whole as well as the students. The institution should have high expectations and commitment to all of the students. Students will live up to the standards that are put before them. If the institution has lower standards then the students will not be as challenged academically and will show less growth. However, when the institution has high standards and makes those high standards known, students will have the opportunity to get more from their academics through this higher challenge. These high standards can be reached by making research opportunities available to all students and recognizing students with high ability and involvement through scholarship programs and academic awards given by the college such as outstanding student achievement awards. Students should also have high expectations and commitment to the institution and make sure that they are getting the academic experience that they deserve. By students and institutions both working to better the academics, schools will create a culture of high expectations and a degree from said college will be more highly recognized by employers. A first-year seminar can set the expectations for high standards of turning assignments in on time, thinking of discussion topics critically, and using their available resources to perform to the

best of their ability. A first-year seminar also can show that the college is committed to their academic success which will result in the students being more committed to the college.

Personally, some of the best classes I had were the ones that challenged me the most. I may have been frustrated during parts of the class but when it was finished and I was reflecting about what I accomplished throughout the semester, I was extremely pleased with the progress I had made and the learning that occurred. In my experience, students want to know more and want to learn new things.

Developing academic skills can be discussed and practiced in a first-year seminar class. An option for a class assignment can be to have students create a study calendar. This calendar would include all of the students' classes and other commitments. The students would then be able to see where they have open time in their schedules and can fill those times with planned, scheduled out-of-class work.

Through this inquiry I have discovered that the key to freshmen success is not anything unknown to the general public. The formula for first-year success is not a secret. In fact, many schools already implement many of the ideas that I have referenced in this paper. Currently, the small rural Midwestern university in which I am employed focuses on academic skill development, student involvement, and personal strengths identity and use in the current first-year seminar. However, the class is only required for students who are admitted conditionally due to low ACT scores or low high school GPA and the class only meets once a week. I personally do not think this is enough time spent for class nor content covered in class. I have looked at multiple programs and most seem to cover the same basics. Many programs cover the study skills and academics. Some cover wellness but not necessarily all three areas of physical, emotional, and financial wellness. The area that not many first-year seminars address is identity

which I personally see as the most important piece. A student's identity affects everything they think and do. Their character, values, and beliefs are a part of every decision they make. By developing the students' characters and working with them to become more self-aware, I believe that students will increase their personal expectations, their commitment to their life goals and philosophy, and their morality.

Overall, first-year seminars are the perfect opportunities to acclimate students to collegiate life, set the expectations for the new students, develop and discuss personal identity and philosophy, and create relationships and social support systems. Although there are some gaps in the research in regards to the implementation of these programs, some benefits have been discovered (Jamelske, 2009; Fidler & Hunter, 1989) and I believe that every student would gain something from a well-developed first-year seminar. It would not just benefit the students who are having difficulties in a particular area but benefit all traditional first-year students and prepare them for the academic path they are starting.

The future goal of my work is to implement a first-year seminar class that would be required for all first-year students at the small, rural campus where I work. I truly believe that by creating this seminar based on the research of this paper, we will see a campus shift to higher academics, more involved and engaged students, and better overall wellness of the students. These can in turn have a positive impact on student retention and persistence. A first-year seminar could also build support systems and community for new students. These are only a few of the many possible benefits that could develop from this class.

Another goal would be to develop a leadership minor for students on campus and have the first-year seminar as the first class in the minor. I believe that for a person to be a good leader they must first be very self-aware and confident in their own abilities. This class could act as a

foundation to their leadership development. The leadership minor would consist of six three-credit courses based around personal development and concentrating on leadership skills. All six classes would be set up similarly to the first-year seminar in that they would be discussion based and the instructor would act more as a facilitator rather than a lecturer. I think that it would be beneficial that upperclassmen further in the leadership program assist as facilitators in the first-year seminars. This would give these upperclassmen the opportunity to help first-year students develop their skills and strengths and in doing so help themselves learn how to develop others which I believe is needed to be an effective leader. I also believe that all of the courses in a leadership minor should be very reflective of one's own work and development. I also see this minor program ending in a capstone class where students would reflect on everything they have learned from the six courses and how they live their personal lives to demonstrate their leadership. Overall, through this first-year seminar and leadership minor program, students would learn about themselves and how they can create positive change in the world.

APPENDIX 1: SUGGESTED SYLLABUS

COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE ESSENTIAL

Course title:	First-Year Seminar
Course designator:	General Education
Course number:	1000
Number of credits:	3
Term and Year:	Fall 2016
Department:	Liberal Arts and Education
Instructor's name:	Matt Torgerson
Office location:	XXXXX
Office hours:	XXXXX
Contact Information	
Phone:	XXX-XXX-XXXX
Email:	XXXXX
Course prerequisites:	None
Course Times and Location	
Days of Week:	Monday, Wednesday, Friday
Time:	9:00am-9:50am
Location:	XXXXX

CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to assist students to transition from high school to college-level academics and social life at the small, rural university. This course is a requirement for all new first-year students to enroll in their first semester on campus. The course provides an interactive and enjoyable environment in which students can acquire essential knowledge and strategic skills that are designed to set them on the path to academic success.

The course combines lectures, group discussions, group presentations and other exercises to explore a variety of topics related to the high school to college transition and to emphasize the development of a core set of competencies.

COURSE LEARNER OUTCOMES

Upon the successful completion of this course, each student will be able to:

1. Explore and understand the value of goal-setting and goal planning in establishing collegiate success.
2. Develop and use effective time management techniques and strategies to successfully prioritize and manage multiple academic, personal and social time demands.
3. Develop and understand skills needed to successfully fulfill the complexity of student responsibilities on campus and in academics.
4. Learn how to successfully contribute to and work within teams to achieve a common goal.
5. Improve the ability to question, analyze, and evaluate materials to enhance critical thinking skills.
6. Develop skills to maintain physical, emotional and financial wellness during times of stress.
7. Develop an understanding and awareness of self as a part of a global and diverse community.

REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS

Beiderwell, B., Tse, L., Lochhaas, T., & deKanter, N. (2015). *College Success*. University of XXXXX Libraries Publishing.

Levithan, D. (2012). *Every Day*. New York: Random House Children's Books.

GRADING AND TRANSCRIPTS

Grading will be based on the following scale:

A 93% - 100%

A- 90% - 92%

B+ 88% - 89%

B 82% - 87%

B- 80% - 81%

C+ 78% - 79%

C 72% - 77%

C- 70% - 71%

D+ 68% - 69%

D 60% - 67%

F below 60%

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF GRADED WORK

1. Study Calendar	10 pts
2. Goal Paper	20 pts
3. Involvement Fair Form	10 pts
4. Campus Event Form	10 pts
5. Strengths Finder	20 pts
6. Systemic Racism Paper	20 pts
7. Personal Philosophy Paper	50 pts
8. In-Class Activities and Discussions (5 points per class)	160 pts
Total	300 Points

Assignments & Papers: Will be submitted in typewritten form, (12 point, and double spaced, professional font such as Arial or Times New Roman). Descriptions and due dates for any projects are listed under “Projects” on the class Moodle web page. Test/exam dates are shown on the course outline.

ASSIGNMENT OUTLINE

1. Study Calendar – Students will create a schedule of all of their current commitments. The students will then find specific times in their schedules that can be dedicated to study and out-of-class work.
2. Goal Paper – Students will write a paper based on their goals for school, career, and life.
3. Involvement Fair Form – Students will attend the involvement fair and discover what students groups and organizations exist on campus.
4. Campus Event Form – Students will attend one athletic event, one club meeting, and one student program on campus. They will then write up a short summary and reflection on each event attended.
5. Strengths Finder – Students will take a strengths aptitude test. The results of their test will be discussed in class and students will learn how to use their strengths to their advantage.
6. Systemic Racism Paper – Following facilitated discussions in class, students will find evidence of one example of systemic racism. They will write a paper summarizing the problem and suggesting solutions to the problem.
7. Personal Philosophy Paper – Students will write a paper on their personal philosophy of life. This paper should include information on their personal identities, views, beliefs, and values. It should also give evidence of how they practice these in their everyday life.
8. In-Class Activities and Discussions – Students will be expected to participate in all in-class activities and discussions to gain the most out of the first-year seminar.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is expected for each class meeting. Students are expected to take exams at the times scheduled in the syllabus. Possible exceptions include serious illness, family emergency, or a legitimate conflict with recognized University activities. If these apply, you must contact your instructor to request a makeup. Make these arrangements as soon as you know of the conflict. Simply sending an email or leaving a voice mail message doesn't constitute approval.

There may be occasions when classes will be missed due to scheduled program requirements, athletics, or other sanctioned curricular and extracurricular events. You are required to coordinate such absences **before** the event and make arrangements to make up or turn in assignments, tests, or class work due on the absent date. Failure to make arrangements prior to the missed class may result in not receiving credit for that missed assignment, test, etc.

EXTRA CREDIT

No extra credit opportunities are planned for this class. Should the professor decide to offer any extra credit, all students will have equal opportunity to complete the optional work.

MISSED EXAMS / LATE WORK

All assignments must be submitted on time. Any exceptions will be judged individually due to the extraordinary circumstances. Late work will be reduced a minimum of one letter grade.

FINAL EXAM

A final paper will be used in lieu of a final examination test.

USE OF PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN THE CLASSROOM

Using personal electronic devices in the classroom setting can hinder instruction and learning, not only for the student using the device but also for other students in the class. To this end, the University establishes the right of each faculty member to determine if and how personal electronic devices are allowed to be used in the classroom. For complete information, please reference: <http://policy.xxx.edu/Policies/Education/Education/STUDENTRESP.html>

TEACHING AND LEARNING: STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES (STUDENT CONDUCT)

The University seeks an environment that promotes academic achievement and integrity, that is protective of free inquiry, and that serves the educational mission of the University. Similarly, the University seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; that is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and that does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community.

As a student at the University you are expected adhere to Board of Regents Policy: *Student Conduct Code*. To review the Student Conduct Code, please see http://regents.xxx.edu/sites/regents.xxx.edu/files/policies/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf.

Note that the conduct code specifically addresses disruptive classroom conduct, which means "engaging in behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability to teach or student learning. The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities."

SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY

You are expected to do your own academic work and cite sources as necessary. Failing to do so is scholastic dishonesty. Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. (Student Conduct Code: http://regents.xxx.edu/sites/default/files/policies/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf) If it is determined that a student has cheated, he or she may be given an "F" or an "N" for the course, and may face additional sanctions from the University. For additional information, please see: <http://policy.xxx.edu/Policies/Education/Education/INSTRUCTORRESP.html>.

The Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity has compiled a useful list of Frequently Asked Questions pertaining to scholastic dishonesty: <http://www1.xxx.edu/oscai/integrity/student/index.html>. If you have additional questions, please clarify with your instructor for the course. Your instructor can respond to your specific questions regarding what would constitute scholastic dishonesty in the context of a particular class-e.g., whether collaboration on assignments is permitted, requirements and methods for citing sources, if electronic aids are permitted or prohibited during an exam.

MAKEUP WORK FOR LEGITIMATE ABSENCES

Students will not be penalized for absence during the semester due to unavoidable or legitimate circumstances. Such circumstances include verified illness, participation in intercollegiate athletic events, subpoenas, jury duty, military service, bereavement, and religious observances. Such circumstances do not include voting in local, state, or national elections. For complete information, please see: <http://policy.xxx.edu/Policies/Education/Education/MAKEUPWORK.html>

APPROPRIATE STUDENT USE OF CLASS NOTES AND COURSE MATERIALS

Taking notes is a means of recording information but more importantly of personally absorbing and integrating the educational experience. However, broadly disseminating class notes beyond the classroom community or accepting compensation for taking and distributing classroom notes undermines instructor interests in their intellectual work product while not substantially furthering instructor and student interests in effective learning. Such actions violate shared norms and standards of the academic community. For additional information, please see: <http://policy.xxx.edu/Policies/Education/Education/STUDENTRESP.html>

GRADING AND TRANSCRIPTS

The University utilizes plus and minus grading on a 4.000 cumulative grade point scale in accordance with the following:

- A 4.000 - Represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements
- A- 3.667
- B+ 3.333
- B 3.000 - Represents achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements
- B- 2.667
- C+ 2.333
- C 2.000 - Represents achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect
- C- 1.667
- D+ 1.333
- D 1.000 - Represents achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements
- S Represents achievement that is satisfactory, which is equivalent to a C- or better.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

"Sexual harassment" means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment in any University activity or program. Such behavior is not acceptable in the University setting. For additional information, please consult Board of Regents Policy: <http://regents.xxx.edu/sites/default/files/policies/SexHarassment.pdf>

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, EQUAL OPPORTUNITY, AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The University provides equal access to and opportunity in its programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For more information, please consult Board of Regents Policy: http://regents.xxx.edu/sites/default/files/policies/Equity_Diversity_EO_AA.pdf.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

The University of XXXXX is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations.

If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical), please contact DRC at [XXX-XXX-XXXX](tel:XXX-XXX-XXXX) to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

If you are registered with DRC and have a current letter requesting reasonable accommodations, please contact your instructor as early in the semester as possible to discuss how the accommodations will be applied in the course. See the [Disability Resource Center website](#).

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University of XXXXX services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Student Mental Health Website: <http://www.mentalhealth.xxx.edu>

ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

Academic freedom is a cornerstone of the University. Within the scope and content of the course as defined by the instructor, it includes the freedom to discuss relevant matters in the classroom and conduct relevant research. Along with this freedom comes responsibility. Students are encouraged to develop the capacity for critical judgment and to engage in a sustained and independent search for truth. Students are free to take reasoned exception to the views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled.* When conducting research, pertinent institutional approvals must be obtained and the research must be consistent with University policies.

Reports of concerns about academic freedom are taken seriously, and there are individuals and offices available for help. Contact the instructor, the Department Chair, your adviser, the associate dean of the college, or the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs in the Office of the Provost.

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