



Regent's Momentum Year Award for Excellence in Teaching and Curricular Innovation

**Nomination Packet for the First-Year Seminar Program
Department of First Year and Transition Studies
University College
Kennesaw State University
December 4, 2018**

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for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition
University of South Carolina



Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

December 3, 2018

Dr. Martha Venn
Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
University System of Georgia

Dear Dr. Venn and Awards Selection Committee:

It is my great pleasure to nominate the First-Year Seminar (FYS) program in the Department of First-Year and Transition Studies in University College for the Regent's Momentum Year Award for Excellence in Teaching and Curricular Innovation. As the application will show, this nationally recognized program meets all the criteria for this award—and then some.

For decades, FYS has been helping tens of thousands of students transition to college, always evolving in keeping with the cutting edge of learning-science findings. In the current incarnation, the program helps students cultivate a sense of academic and social belonging, deep and transformative learning, and collaborative problem-solving. These core dimensions are designed to uncover each student's purposeful choice of major, to promote a growth mindset, to foster metacognitive skills, and to encourage engagement in projects that introduce students to high-impact practices (HIPs), all goals central to the Momentum Year Initiative. The success of the program is evidenced by the high retention rate of the students it touches.

Our students are well aware of the impact the program is having on them. Madison Hilton's reflections echo those of countless others: "This experience has furthered my self-development to another level that is beyond imaginable, and one that is a direct influence of my success as a student teacher at the local high school. I have developed as a person through the FYS Program in ways that have provided me with direction, helped to cultivate my motivation, and supported me personally and professionally. I am proud to say I will graduate in four years and the seminar program has been a central part of my journey."

But do not take our word for it. Jennifer Keup, Director of the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition at the University of South Carolina, showers the program with praise: "The Kennesaw State University First-Year Seminar course is an excellent program that represents a current model of best practice in the field and an integral voice in the national conversation about FYE, new student success and curriculum development. However, the FYS course at KSU also serves as a leader and a driver of innovation and change that is helping chart a path for the future in our field." FYS is one of the feathers in our cap. We hope we have done it justice in these 20 pages and we are proud to present it for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ronald Matson, PhD

Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Introduction

The First-Year Seminar (FYS) program, which was introduced at Kennesaw State University (KSU) in 1983, has helped to facilitate the academic success and retention of first-year students for more than three decades. Drawing on the foundational work of the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition and research on first-year programs and initiatives, KSU has built an FYS program that has earned a national reputation as a leader in innovative programming for first-year students. Over the past 15 years, the program has been featured more than ten times in the *US News and World Report's* "Best Colleges" issue in the category of First-Year Experiences, which recognizes those institutions "with stellar examples of first-year experiences."

As the student population at KSU has grown dramatically over the past five years and the needs of each incoming class have evolved, KSU's FYS program has adapted its content and delivery to best serve its students. Most recently (starting in 2015), the program has been thoroughly reviewed and significantly revised such that its content is more informed by established and recent research in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL), Educational Psychology, Social Psychology, and Education Policy.

While the support elements of the FYS program such as faculty development and out-of-class engagement with campus partners are essential to the program's success, the First-Year Seminar course is the central vehicle through which the objectives of the Momentum Year are addressed and achieved. This course, which is required of most first-time full-time students entering the institution, has served approximately 3,000 students each fall semester since 2015 when the university was consolidated with Southern Polytechnic. The broad reach of this program has helped to contribute to KSU's strong first-year retention rate, which has ranged between 77% and 80% in the years since the consolidation.

Table 1

Retention and Graduation Rates of First Time Full-Time Students by Fall Semester Entrance Cohort		
First-Year Seminar Enrollment and Retention		
Cohort		1 Year Retention Rate (%)
Fall	Headcount	
2014	2,234	77.6
2015	2,955	80.3
2016	3,137	77.9
2017	2,947	
Notes: Fall Cohorts IPEDS definition of First Time Full Time Students (FY 16-17)		

Recent revisions to the course curriculum align exceptionally well with the objectives of College Complete Georgia and the Momentum Year initiative, in particular. When several KSU administrators and FYS faculty attended the USG Momentum Year Summit in February 2018 and the Mindset Summit in May 2018, each came away energized and inspired that revisions to KSU's FYS program corresponded with the USG initiatives.

The new curriculum was developed based on the findings of a multi-year program review and published research in a variety of disciplines, particularly Educational Psychology, which demonstrated that non-cognitive factors are foundational for academic success. The course design was also informed by a decade of longitudinal surveys conducted by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, which show that new college students *expect and desire* to be challenged in college (by field-specific content, faculty interaction, and peer interaction) but are consistently under-challenged and isolated. Consequently, in order to both challenge students and equip them to meet those challenges, the new curriculum focuses on three core dimensions essential to academic success: a sense of academic and social belonging, deep and transformative learning, and collaborative problem-solving. As illustrated through the course learning objectives, these core dimensions are designed to uncover each student's purposeful choice of major, to promote a growth mindset, to foster metacognitive skills, and to encourage engagement in projects that introduce students to the variety of high-impact practices (HIPs) they will experience throughout their time in college.

Figure 1

KSU FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR COURSE GOALS AND OUTCOMES	
GOALS AND OUTCOMES	
The course is all about helping you create a foundation for your college experience so that you stay and graduate from Kennesaw State with several skills, the confidence to succeed, and an excitement about the future (Skill, Will, and Thrill). By the end of this course, you will be able to:	
1.	Evaluate the core components of academic and social belonging at Kennesaw State University.
2.	Develop timely academic plans and preliminary career goals specific to personal areas of interest.
3.	Differentiate between fixed and growth mindsets and move from surface to deep learning for academic success.
4.	Apply deep learning principles to cultural practices, diversity, and values to interpret the interdependence of local-global issues .
5.	Evaluate the creative and collaborative components of evidence-based problem-solving .
6.	Collaborate as an interdependent team to propose evidence-based solutions to a current local-global issue.

Through its focus on cultivating academic and social belonging, engaging students in growth mindset and metacognitive practices, and helping students to develop resilience, KSU's FYS program engages students in transformative experiences intended to deepen learning during the first-year of college. These practices directly align with the objectives of the Momentum Year initiative and meet the criteria for the Regents' Momentum Year Award for Excellence in Teaching and Curricular Innovation.

Assignments and Pedagogy that Foster Purposeful Choice

The FYS program incorporates assignments and teaching pedagogy that foster purposeful choice among students in areas such as undergraduate research and degree and career mapping. Most sections of the FYS course invite students to participate in some form of undergraduate research or service learning. For example, the Creative and Collaborative Problem-Solving assignment, part of the revised curriculum for the FYS course, requires students to work in groups to research and propose a solution to “a problem worth solving.” To complete this assignment, students must conduct a review of the literature and develop an annotated bibliography that contains a minimum of ten peer-reviewed sources to ensure they are well-informed on the topic of their choice. They then conduct an analysis to identify a potential solution to their problem and, ultimately, give a group presentation that presents the problem and defends their proposed solution. Through this culminating assignment, students apply the skills and knowledge gained in the FYS course to research and “solve” a real-world problem, thereby engaging in deep and integrative learning. An abridged example of the “A Problem Worth Solving” assignment is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2

KSU 1101: First-Year Seminar	
Instructor:	
Assignment:	Unit III—Creative and Collaborative Problem Solving: “A Problem Worth Solving”
Due:	Team Charter (4/1); Annotated Bibliography (4/7), Presentation (4/12- 4/15), Team Analysis (4/13-4/16)
OVERVIEW	
This project is a culmination of the work you’ve done in this class. In pre-assigned groups, you will either solve or propose a solution to a “problem worth solving” according to you and your team. The goals of this project are you help you:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. learn how to use creativity and collaboration to solve problems in group settings;2. learn how to evaluate different kinds of evidence for reliability;3. apply your skills and knowledge to solve or propose a solution to a pressing local/global problem, and to;4. present in a manner expected in professional working environments.	
ACTIVITY	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group Assignments and Charter (1 per group):• Presentation (1 per group):• Annotated Bibliography (1 per group):• Team Analysis (1 per person)	

Each assignment in the revised curriculum is created following the principles of the Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) project. These principles require educators to be explicit with students about the purpose, task, and criteria for success. In each of the assignments and in faculty training workshops, special attention is paid to providing different examples of success in order to provide faculty with insight regarding the expectations they

should have of students and to afford students a frame of reference about what constitutes success.

Another required assignment that fosters purposeful choice among students and that occurs at the beginning of the semester is the Degree Mapping and Reflection Assignment, which is depicted in Figure 3. Through this assignment, students actively engage in degree and career exploration that helps them to see the connection between their academic discipline and potential careers. This assignment incorporates elements of the Momentum Year by requiring students to develop a degree map that not only includes fifteen credit hours per semester but also incorporates three classes in their focus area and the completion of math and English composition classes during their first year of college.

To help students understand the importance of the degree map they are asked to create and its significance in the context of their academic careers, students are required to read “What is Momentum Year” on the USG website. Additionally, the assignment facilitates students’ interaction with key campus resources and personnel by requiring that they draw on a variety of campus resources such as Degree Works, KSU College and School websites, degree program maps, their academic advisor, and their professor in order to complete the assignment. The reflective nature of this assignment, the purposeful choice it presents to students, the required use of campus resources, and the clear connection between the assignment and “real world” outcomes offer the opportunity for students to actively engage in an internal dialogue about their goals and future selves, both of which are key factors in motivating students to persist in college and achieve academic success.

Cultivation of Intrinsic Motivation

The FYS program seeks to foster an internal sense of motivation and create a productive academic mindset by presenting motivation theory (i.e., expectancy-value theory) in the FYS course by pairing this theoretical understanding with case studies that allow students both to analyze growth mindset versus fixed mindset and to apply the principles of growth mindset through the Learning Strategy Project. This project requires that students apply the study skills and learning strategies taught in the FYS course as they prepare for an exam in another class in which they are simultaneously enrolled, with the objective of achieving a higher test score than they earned on the first test in that class. Typically, students are asked to identify a course in which they were unhappy with their first test score – often a science or math class – and to propose a plan that implements the learning strategies taught in the seminar course to their preparation for a subsequent exam.

Figure 3

KSU 1101: First-Year Seminar
Instructor:
Unit & Assignment: Unit 1—Degree Mapping and Reflection Assignment
Due Date: End of Unit 1: Typically falling between 9/1-9/15
OVERVIEW
For this assignment, you will be creating two Degree Maps for three potential paths to graduation. Your final submission will be included in your Belonging Portfolio. The Degree Map component of the Portfolio will include a completed spreadsheet with the degree maps and a response to each reflection question.
ACTIVITY
The following is a list of the steps to complete the Degree Mapping and Reflection Assignment:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Research the required courses and electives for General Education and your areas of interest (potential majors). Include prerequisites and co-requisites and how many hours are required for the degree. List which electives you prefer to take during your time at Kennesaw State. Your readings and resources for this project are: <i>Foundations</i> Textbook (Ch. 6 on Motivation, 7 on Time Management, and Ch. 9 on Career Planning), <i>What is Momentum Year?</i>, <i>Degree Works</i>, KSU College and School websites, KSU Program Maps, KSU Undergraduate Catalogue, your academic advisor, and your professor.2. Make a list of the additional curricular and co-curricular opportunities you would like to experience. List which required courses or electives you could take during these experiences. Consider when you will fit these experiences into your degree map.3. Research Career Planning to determine the best time to fit in a co-op or internships.4. Create two potential degree maps that show what you will take and when. If you choose to make two maps with the same major, create two maps with two different paths to graduation. Identify your projected graduation semester and year. Check your total number of hours and number of completed AP/transfer/summer credit hours. Have you covered all the bases?5. Rank your two degree maps in order of personal preference. Save as [last name_DegreeMap_1of2, 2of2 and include in your final Belonging Portfolio. In your portfolio reflection, be sure to have addressed the following questions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do these degree maps relate to cultivating a sense of belonging at KSU and among other communities?• What campus resources will you use to help stay on track?• What did you discover as a result of this exercise?

Students experience authentic application of theories presented in class, enact growth mindset principles and develop resilience by taking ownership of their grades and study habits, and adapt to meet the academic challenges they face in their first semester of college. As a result, many students have been able to increase their test scores, gain confidence in classes that they initially found to be challenging, and thereby increase their personal sense of accomplishment, self-efficacy, and motivation.

The Learning Strategy Project has the additional benefit of helping to cultivate a sense of belonging by requiring that students meet with the professor of the class that is the focus of their project. This required meeting encourages the students to connect with the professors on a personal level as they seek guidance regarding how they might improve their academic performance in the class. Through this interaction, the students are able to establish the type of relationship with a faculty member that can contribute to a sense of belonging and foster retention.

As with many of the assignments in the FYS course, the Learning Strategy Project was developed by a faculty member in the Department of First-Year and Transition Studies (FYTS) and served as a model for large-scale implementation across all sections of the course. Not only has the project been rigorously studied and reported on in the form of published research articles by the FYTS faculty member, feedback from students about the value of this project from conception to current implementation has been remarkably positive (see Figure 4). It has truly served to enlighten students as to the value of developing a strong sense of intrinsic motivation to become self-regulated learners.

Figure 4

"I was devastated at failing my first psychology test.... the fact that I failed an exam about psychology made me feel as if I suddenly weren't good enough for the subject. I saw this strategy project as a way out of my despair, a chance to reorganize myself and give myself a second chance at this class.... I took my exam with surprising ease and confidence. Then, later that evening, when I checked my grades, I saw it; I had made a perfect score, a one hundred percent. I couldn't believe it, at first I thought there had been some mistake, but upon reflecting on all that I had done to prepare for that exam, I knew that this was the grade I deserved."

While the comment in Figure 4 is that of a student who experienced a dramatic transformational change as a result of the project, most students realize a moderate improvement on the second test score as a result of this assignment, and some have even improved their subsequent test score by an entire letter grade. It is projects like these that demystify college for students and provide them with greater self-confidence in their ability to control their likelihood of academic success.

Impact Beyond Course

The FYS program has impact beyond the individual course in multiple ways that both connect students to the greater KSU community through core assignments and on a programmatic level, with the First-Year Seminar Director and FYTS Department Chair cultivating partnerships with key stakeholders across campus.

Through both the Degree Mapping and Reflection Assignment and the Learning Strategy Project, for example, students must engage with curricular and co-curricular units across campus. The Learning Strategy Project requires students to apply the strategies learned in the first-year seminar course to another of their classes, with the goal of improving their grade in that other class. In this way, the FYS program directly facilitates student success in other key classes beyond the seminar course itself, fosters the skills that will promote engaged learning

throughout the students' college careers, and, ultimately, aids students in achieving the grades necessary to maintain or gain eligibility for the HOPE scholarship.

The transferable skills that are taught through the program became abundantly clear when the program director was asked to present to the steering committee for KSU's Gateways to Completion initiative, which seeks to improve teaching and learning for the core courses with the highest drop, fail, and withdrawal (DFW) rates. The FYS program's emphasis on teaching metacognition as it pertains to all KSU courses was heartily welcomed and served to convince members of the steering committee to promote the efforts of the FYS program campus-wide.

KSU's FYS program has also been a central — and perhaps the primary — means of ensuring the success of the USG initiative with Motivate Lab that involved the distribution of a Mindset Survey in 2017 and 2018. Given that growth mindset is an integral part of the first-year seminar curriculum and that the results of the survey have the potential to inform future iterations of that curriculum and the FYS program, the FYS program collaborated with KSU's Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) to encourage all first-year seminar instructors to promote the survey to the students in their classes during the Fall 2018 semester. As a result, KSU had the largest number of student respondents to the survey of any USG institution (2087 total surveys were returned by KSU students), more than double that of any other institution and representing about 25% of the total number of surveys returned within the entire USG system.

Table 2

Institution	Survey Submissions
1. Kennesaw State University	2087
2. Albany State University	870
3. Dalton State College	712
9. University of Georgia	320
11. Georgia Institute of Technology	156
19. Georgia Southern University	63
System Total	7765

The ultimate goal, however, is not only to gather data on student mindset but to develop and cultivate a growth mindset so that the many challenges students will face throughout college can be surmounted and interpreted as learning experiences that will

improve students' overall success. To that end, the Degree Mapping and Reflection Assignment requires that students visit and report back about the many resources and offices outside the classroom and around campus that are designed to facilitate their personal and professional growth.

Data-Driven Process for Curriculum Design

To ensure the quality and integrity of the FYS program, the program pursues an ongoing and data-driven process for reviewing and reshaping its curriculum. We have established and abide by a cycle of continuous improvement through which decisions are made based on data triangulation, looking at several points and sources of data rather than using single measures or

instruments. The FYS Assessment Plan (Figure 5) identifies the main data sources that are used for program review and improvement

Figure 5

Fall 2018 First-Year Seminar Assessment Plan		
The FYS pilot is built around three core dimensions which build on each other when taught in following order.		
Unit 1 Topic	Academic and Social Belonging	
Unit 2 Topic	Deep and Transformative Learning	
Unit 3 Topic	Creative and Collaborative Problem-Solving	
Outcomes by Module		
M1	Evaluate the core components of academic and social belonging at KSU.	
M2	Develop timely academic plans and career goals specific to personal areas of interest.	
M3	Differentiate between fixed and growth mindsets and move from surface to deep learning for academic success.	
M4	Apply deep learning principles to cultural practices, diversity, and values to interpret the interdependence of local-global issues.	
M5	Evaluate the creative and collaborative components of evidence-based problem-solving	
M6	Collaborate as an interdependent team to propose evidence-based solutions to a current local-global issue.	
Assessments of Learning to be Collected During Semester		
MODULE	DIRECT ASSESSMENT ITEMS	INDIRECT ASSESSMENT ITEMS
M1	Pre-Course Reflection on Academic and Social Belonging	Post-Module Satisfaction Survey
M2	Degree and Career Map	Post-Module Satisfaction Survey
M3	Four Questions from Midterm	
M4		Post-Module Satisfaction Survey
M5	Team Charter Annotated Bibliography	
M6	Post-Course Reflection on Academic and Social Belonging	
Additional Data to be Collected		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grade on Midterm• End-of-semester student focus groups• Course Evaluations• Tracking of students in terms of enrollment in second fall from Institutional Research		

In analyzing the data, we look for convergences that isolate particular weaknesses or point to a misalignment between the stated goals and the actual outcomes. This process offers the benefit of providing us with a rich data set to guide programmatic decisions.

While the Assessment Plan illustrated in Figure 5 is for Fall 2018, the data-driven process is not new to the FYS program. The current plan emerged as a result of program data collected and analyzed over the past ten years. From 2010-2015, specifically, analysis of student and faculty

surveys led to the creation of four unique versions of the seminar to serve different interest groups. Each version of the seminar shared common learning outcomes but had its own distinct curriculum and approach to meeting those outcomes. As part of the program review that was launched in 2015, data was collected to examine the success of the different versions of the seminar through interviews with students, student satisfaction surveys, and interactive focus groups that were conducted with full-time faculty, experienced part-time faculty, student government representatives, and administrators within our college. Additionally, a thorough review of the textbook required for the first-year seminar course and its supplemental materials (e.g., presentation slides, quiz bank questions, etc.) was conducted.

Based on the findings from the data gathered, we identified needed changes to the curriculum and differentiated between those that could be addressed quickly and those that required more significant effort. For example, one relatively quick and simple improvement was to review and rewrite every question in the quiz bank. A more significant finding that needed to be addressed was the unevenness with which the different versions of the seminar achieved the common student learning outcomes. This unevenness, in conjunction with a desire to provide the greatest number of students with the best possible experience, led to a consolidation of the multiple versions of the seminar into a single course that integrated the best components of the four unique versions. Moreover, this consolidation allowed us to focus on revising the curriculum and introducing pedagogical enhancements in the form of exemplary projects like the Creative and Collaborative Research Project, revised learning outcomes that included key elements such as local/global interplay, and assignments that integrate growth mindset and problem-solving. The result of our efforts is the re-envisioned FYS program that includes new learning outcomes, a revised core syllabus, and a required research project.

Perhaps the most notable enhancement to the FYS program has been the development of three unique and robust rubrics that measure the core dimensions of the first-year seminar course. These rubrics, guided by the AAC&U VALUE rubrics, are used by faculty to assess student artifacts as a means of determining the program's success in meeting its stated learning outcomes. The ability to use student artifacts to measure our success in meeting the learning outcomes affords us a more objective and genuine assessment than is possible through surveys and other instruments that measure students' self-perceptions of their achievements or the subjective evaluation of reviewers. A portion of one such rubric is presented in abbreviated form in Figure 6.

Figure 6

ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL BELONGING RUBRIC			
Unit 1 First-Year Seminar Outcomes:			
M1	Evaluate the core components of academic and social belonging at Kennesaw State University.		
M2	Develop timely academic plans and preliminary career goals specific to personal areas of interest.		
	EXEMPLARY	GOOD	SATISFACTORY / NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
Identity	<p>Articulates <u>and substantially analyzes</u> multiple insights into one's own identity as a student in the process of transition into college.</p> <p><u>Insightfully evaluates</u> how her/his previous experiences with education have shaped current perceptions about education and recognizes shifts in self-identification.</p>	<p>Articulates multiple insights into one's own identity as a student in the process of transition into college.</p> <p>Describes how her/his previous experiences with education have shaped current perceptions about education and recognizes shifts in self-identification.</p>	[[Removed for brevity]]
Mindset	<p><u>Interrogates several</u> challenges or setbacks in the transition to college as common and surmountable and, thus, that early struggles need not predict a permanent lack of belonging or potential.</p> <p>Language choices reflect focus on <u>areas under one's own control</u> (internal attribution).</p>	<p>Reviews some challenges or setbacks in the transition to college as common and surmountable and, thus, that early struggles need not predict a permanent lack of belonging or potential.</p> <p>Language choices reflect mixture of focus on areas under one's own control (internal attribution) and out of one's control (external attribution).</p>	[[Removed for brevity]]
Degree and Career	<p>Demonstrates <u>several clear and purposeful paths</u> to degree completion in a timely fashion based on personal areas of interest future goals; path includes thoughtful integration of curricular and co-curricular opportunities.</p> <p>Articulates how degree and career align <u>to establish an emerging professional identity</u>.</p>	<p>Demonstrates a clear and purposeful path to degree completion in a timely fashion based on personal areas of interest future goals; path includes thoughtful integration of curricular and co-curricular opportunities.</p> <p>Articulates how degree and career align.</p>	[[Removed for brevity]]

Systematic and Scholarly Examination of Student Learning and Pedagogy

As the FYS program course and assessment materials above demonstrate, taking a systematic and scholarly approach to all components of the program is paramount. The annual faculty development workshop, often conducted in collaboration with KSU's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, build on what we know about student learning and the instructional conditions that promote learning. Figure 7 presents the Fall 2018 workshop agenda.

Figure 7

 <p>KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY</p> <p>University College First-Year Seminar</p>		<p>First-Year Seminar Faculty Workshop First-Year Seminar Program August 8, 2018</p> <p>Kennesaw State University Sturgis Library, Room 101</p>
9:30am -- 10:00am	Sign-in—Registration / Coffee & Mingling	
10:00am -- 10:15am	Introductions and Session Overview (NT) Dr. Nirmal Trivedi —Director of First-Year Seminars Dr. Shelbee NguyenVoges — Assistant Director of First-Year Seminars Dr. Lynn Disbrow — Dean of University College	
10:15am -- 11:20am	First-Year Seminar Updates – What is Different from Last Year?	
	Housekeeping Items— 1.) Current LO's 2.) 2018-2019 Pilot/UPCC & 2019-2020 New Course/New eBook 3.) eBook 4.) Mindset Survey 5.) Lisa Nepogoda's --New role for the FYS	New Policies 6.) Course Observations 7.) Guest Speakers/Campus Partners—CETLSU library, CYAAR, Writing Center, Care Planning, Hillary, OD&I 8.) Laptop Cart New Course Resources 9.) Test bank—phasing out
	Break	
11:30am -- Noon	Navigating Digital Resources & Q&A	
Noon to 1:00pm	Working Lunch – Sharing Assignments Teaching Belonging, Learning and Problem Solving – Brainstorm and discussion on what might be needed to teaching these concepts—What has worked in the past? Challenge	
1:00pm to 1:10pm	Department Chair Remarks Dr. Ruth Goldfine —Department Chair, First-Year & Transition Studies	
1:10pm to 2:00pm	Towards a New FY Seminar Examples of Student Work (Degree Map, Narratives, Problem Solving) Exploration of Resources –break into units	

Internally, the program director ensures the quality and consistency of the content delivered in the first-year seminar course by coordinating and conducting approximately 50 course observations each fall semester. These observations, while time-intensive, are critical in promoting a collegial, growth-focused core of teaching faculty who are always learning from one another and discovering new challenges in the teaching of students. The rubric presented in Figure 8, in abbreviated form, draws on the research of Thomas Angelo and Patricia Cross on assessment of instructors.

Figure 8

KSU First-Year Seminar: Faculty Peer Observations

Overview

Thank you for taking the time this semester to observe your fellow faculty teaching the First-Year Seminar. The purpose of these observations is to allow faculty to learn from each other and for FYTS and First-Year Seminar Program to continually improve how we support faculty in their teaching practice.

In Section 3, in particular, we have an opportunity to share with the broader community an exemplary assignment, activity, reading, or other learning moment that can be showcased for other faculty in FYTS, and perhaps, to the university community. Permissions for sharing and author credits will absolutely be obtained first. The First-Year Seminar has incredible moments every day—let’s celebrate them!

Process

1. *[[Timeline explained]]*
2. *[[Scheduling explained]]*
3. *[[Observer instructions]]*
4. *[[Next steps]]*

Thank you all for your time and your dedication to our students!

Section 1: Observation Details
Section 2: Pre-Observation Preparation (Completed by Observer)
Section 3: Classroom Observation
Section 4: Exemplary Moments
Section 5: Post-Observation Debrief (Optional)

The following questions can be used for the two faculty members to discuss after the observation. These questions are not meant to be asked by any one of the faculty in particular. They are, rather, guiding question for a discussion. This debrief is optional, but strongly recommended so that both participants can use the experience to improve teaching practices.

- What aspects of the seminar are most enjoyable to teach?
- What aspects of the seminar are most challenging?
- What went really well and why do you think it was so successful?
- Is there any aspect of the session that did not go well? What is a lesson learned from the experience?

The program director also conducts research related to the seminar and disseminates the findings of that research; most notably, the director gave a national conference presentation on storytelling as a way of cultivating belonging among first-year students. It is critical for all members of the teaching faculty to keep a robust research agenda alongside their teaching practice in order to remain current and informed about how learning works and how current developments in the fields of teaching and learning are changing.

Momentum-Year-Driven Teaching Philosophy

The philosophy of the FYS program is to equip incoming college students with the knowledge and skills to academically excel, continually progress, and ultimately graduate from KSU by means of an intentionally sequenced curriculum that guides students through the transformative process of establishing a sense of belonging, understanding and implementing growth mindset and metacognitive learning strategies, and developing critical-thinking skills through evidence-based creative and collaborative problem-solving activities.

The curriculum, informed by published research and an assessment of the program itself, seeks to promote affinity with the institution and help students integrate into the campus community, thereby creating the foundation of trust and belonging necessary for them to fully engage with – and thrive in – the academic environment. As students become invested in campus life and embrace their identities as scholars within that community, they are better able to understand and value the growth mindset and metacognitive learning strategies that are taught in the FYS program. These strategies then became the foundation for the evidence-based creative and collaborative problem-solving activities in which the program engages students as a means to enhance their critical thinking skills.

The guiding principle of the FYS program right from the beginning is that when students transition to college, a sense of belonging must first be established before students can focus on developing or enhancing their academic skills and habits, since the latter require self-awareness of a future self. Consequently, the FYS program fosters a sense of belonging among students early in the first semester by introducing them to the campus community, the language of the institution, and campus resources; guiding them through a self-examination that asks students to confront their beliefs about themselves and their feelings about school and to challenge misconceptions about intelligence and learning; and, ultimately, better equipping them to confront the inevitable obstacles that often interfere with skill development and academic success.

As first-year students acquire a sense of belonging and begin to find their place within KSU's community of scholars, the FYS program introduces them to the concept of metacognition and its role in transforming students into self-regulated learners and critical thinkers. As students apply the metacognitive practice of reflection to their academic skill development and knowledge-building, they learn *how* to learn. The transformative power of learning how to learn has been validated over decades of research and the ability of metacognition to equip students with the confidence to succeed in any field of study is well-established, the conversation around which has been recently re-ignited by Sandra McGuire.

Once students begin to gain confidence in their ability to learn, they are asked to work as teams to both discover and solve an authentic problem. Decades of research in education have shown how authentic problem-solving is more effective in motivating students to push beyond minimum engagement than are tasks that are isolated from any “real world” context. By

tackling authentic assignments that require students to complete meaningful tasks that replicate the kinds of challenges found outside of the classroom, students learn how their semester's work on personal development and skill-building leads to collaborative teamwork that is both relevant and meaningful.

Conclusion

KSU's First-Year Seminar Program, a recognized leader in first-year experience programming for decades, has maintained its national prominence by continually evolving to meet the everchanging needs of each new generation of first-year students. Our data-informed and research-driven approach to curriculum design has allowed us to identify and embrace innovative approaches and inventive strategies that lead to deep and transformative learning for our students. The re-envisioned curriculum for the FYS program, which has been a deliberate and ongoing effort that began with a comprehensive program review in 2015, aligns well with the goals and objectives of the USG's Momentum Year initiative. As such, this program addresses the many criteria outlined in the call for nominations for the Board of Regents' Momentum Year Award for Excellence in Teaching and Curricular Innovation and is a strong candidate for this award. We thank you for your consideration and look forward to future conversations around these very important initiatives.



November 26, 2018

Regents' Momentum Year Award Committee Members:

This is a letter of recommendation for the First-Year Seminar (FYS) program for the USG Regents' Momentum Year award. At Kennesaw State University, I serve as Associate Vice President for Curriculum and Professor of Psychology. In my faculty administrative role, I serve as a Momentum Year steering committee member and co-chair of KSU's Gateways to Completion (G2C) project. FYS has been an essential partner in both of these initiatives. All first-year, full-time students entering KSU with fewer than 15 semester hours complete either the FYS course or a learning community. Approximately 4,500 entering students complete the FYS course each year.

The Momentum Year Initiative has three essential institutional practices critical to student learning and success: 1) Purposeful Choice: An institution's implementation of structured onboarding and advising processes to guide students' selection of a pathway; 2) Academic Mindset: Impacting beliefs and perceptions students have about learning; 3) Pathway/Program of Study: Implementing clearly organized academic pathways to graduation. KSU's FYS course addresses all three of the Momentum Year elements.

Purposeful Choice and Pathway/Program of Study.

The seminar design is sequenced in a way that catalyzes the students into researching KSU's focus areas, mapping a declared or potential degree by committing the principles of registering for 9 credits in their focus area, 30 credits in their first year, and core English and Math in their first year. Early on in the seminar course, students complete a Career Map and Degree Map. Students take a variety of assessments of their interests/skills and personality styles/preferences and map those to potential careers and KSU majors. Students then map out detailed degree map plans for two majors. The degree maps lists courses each term to graduate in four years, noting prerequisites, co-requisites, and electives, and high-impact practices the student will pursue (e.g., internships, undergraduate research, study abroad, etc.).

Academic Mindset

The seminar introduces these principles early in the first semester, then digs deep into what it means to belong and develop a growth mindset. As a Professor of Psychology, I understand the importance of belonging and mindset development in new college students. Students early on need to feel a connection to the institution.

The seminar course provides several assignments to provide that connection. Students read narratives of challenges other KSU students faced in their first semester and how those challenges were overcome. Students research student organizations they are interested in joining.

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Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Additionally, the FYS course is intentional in creating communities of students that span all courses the students are taking.

A critical component of the FYS course is to develop student's metacognitive and deep learning skills. Students are introduced to Bloom's levels of thinking. There is a strategy project in the course. Students select a test or exam in another class and map out the metacognitive strategies they learned in the seminar course and how they will apply them to study for the exam in the other course.

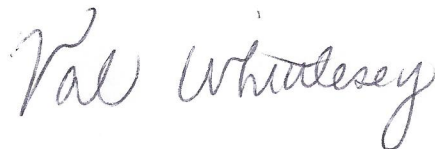
By the end of the course, students complete a research project. They select ten scholarly, peer reviewed research articles and create an annotated bibliography. Using the articles, they identify a contemporary problem and develop solutions to the problem. This assignment is completed as both a research paper and oral presentation, making use of several higher level thinking skills.

Gateways to Completion

The First-Year Seminar is an active and vital institutional partner working positively and collaboratively to increase KSU's retention, progression and graduation of students. FYS administrators and faculty worked with KSU's G2C co-chairs to bring Dr. Saundra McGuire, Director Emerita of the Center for Academic Success and Retired Professor of Chemistry at Louisiana State University, to campus during spring, 2018 to conduct student, faculty, and administrator sessions on enhancing students' metacognitive skills. As a result of Dr. McGuire's sessions, faculty are seeing how mindset development can have wide-ranging impact on learning gains and that incorporating metacognitive learning practices can be taught.

In conclusion, FYS is an integral part of Kennesaw State University and KSU's educational experience. After having served for 15 years as an administrator in the Provost's office, I am returning to full-time teaching in January, 2019. I am so impressed with the FYS experience program and course as borne out of research in Cognitive Psychology, Educational Psychology, and SOTL, I will teach the course beginning January and will be housed in the FYTS academic department.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Val Whittlesey".

Valerie Whittlesey, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President for Curriculum & Professor of
Psychology

Dear Committee:

My name is Madison Hilton and I am a senior at Kennesaw State University pursuing a degree in Mathematics Education. As a devoted Kennesaw Owl, I could not be more honored to compose a letter to represent our First-Year Seminars Program (FYS) to the entire University System, as this program and its faculty foster an inspiring and inviting environment for not only me, but also others, to achieve academic and social success. My advanced involvement with the FYS program has provided unique, unforgettable experiences as a first-year student, peer-leader, and currently a program assistant. The program, as a whole, has been essential to the progression of my academic career and my development as a person. In a way, this program has offered several transformative experiences that have deepened my understanding of how to advocate for my own learning, thrive from a productive mindset, and discover purpose and value in my occupational and academic responsibilities.

My time as a first-year student in the program was a mix of developing my self-belonging and transition into higher education. Although my first year was flooded with many unique opportunities and experiences, there is one memorable experience from the first-year seminar that I was able to transfer to my career advancement opportunities. In my seminar, we were challenged to define our purpose, strengthen our weaknesses, and determine the path to reach our personal and academic goals. One resource that supported this development was the “True Colors” exercise: an exercise that helped me personally learn more about myself than I ever could have on my own. This exercise explained the ways I think, learn, and communicate through a detailed analysis of my personality. This newfound knowledge about myself was something that would be essential to my career development.

My involvement with the FYS Program and campus community flourished as I took on the role of a Peer Leader for the incoming first-year students. Through this opportunity, I was able to understand myself further in regards to the way I communicate and support others through their own personal development. The skills and resources I acquired aided my purpose as a life-line and mentor for those beginning their transition in the college life. I pursued this opportunity to become a peer leader not only to reveal the extraordinary experiences Kennesaw State has to offer, but also because I knew the value of the FYS program and the potential it has to impact individuals within the program; I wanted to be a part of the transformative process for other students. One of the more impactful moments from this experience was the opportunity to see a few first-year students I mentored become Peer Leaders themselves; they each had expressed their desires to be a part of others’ college transition. I was fortunate to not only improve my professional skills through an engaging mentorship, but also help others discover their purpose and fulfillment through a program that supports motivation and value in academics and the sense of belonging.

Currently, my position as a Program Assistant for the FYS has provided an additional perspective on the workings of the program through my responsibilities of internal program communications, campus-wide alignment opportunities, and data-driven redesign developments. I was prompted to apply for the highly competitive position by a faculty member, who believed this position was the next step in the development of my skills. I am beyond proud to share with others my impact on the pilot program as I aided in creating the program's positive academic mindset, connecting the program's purpose to campus community goals, and developing evidence-based practices for faculty use to promote student learning and self-belonging. This experience has furthered my self-development to another level that is beyond imaginable, and one that is a direct influence of my success as a student teacher at the local high school.

I have developed as a person through the FYS Program in ways that have provided me with direction, helped to cultivate my motivation, and supported me personally and professionally. I am proud to say I will graduate in four years and the seminar program has been a central part of my journey.

Madison L. Hilton
Kennesaw State University, Class of 2019
Mathematics Education
Program Assistant, First-Year Seminars
mhilton4@students.kennesaw.edu



November 27, 2018

Award Committee
Regents' Momentum Year Award for Excellence in
Teaching and Curricular Innovation
University System of Georgia; 270 Washington Street, S.W.

UNIVERSITY 101
NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR
THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE AND
STUDENTS IN TRANSITION

Dear Members of the Award Committee:

I am sending this correspondence as a letter of support for the First-Year Seminar (FYS) course at Kennesaw State University as a recipient of the Regents' Momentum Year Award for Excellence in Teaching and Curricular Innovation sponsored by the University System of Georgia. As the director of the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, I have a broad vantage for familiarity with a large number of first-year experience programs and student success initiatives. Further, I am intimately engaged with the topic of first-year seminars as a nationally renowned high-impact practice, a foundation of the Center's scholarly and best practice work, and a pillar in my own research agenda. This position and involvement in FYE has allowed me become familiar with the FYS course at KSU and to appreciate its excellence within a national context for first-year seminar programs.

The FYS course at KSU is a model for first-year seminars as a high-impact practice. It serves as an important vehicle for student success because it appears early in students' overall course of study, thereby setting a precedent for college-level learning, establishing high expectations for students' academic experiences, creating an intellectual and interpersonal community, and forging a meaningful relationship between the students and the institution. Additionally, the scale of KSU's FYS program is large enough (it serves approximately 4,500 new students each year) that it has "broad impact on significant numbers of first-year students, including, but not limited to, special student sub-populations," which is a criterion of excellence in FYE programming. Finally, the faculty and staff at KSU regularly examine, evaluate, and improve the FYS course to ensure that it meets industry standards and serves as an exemplar of best practice in higher ed.

In addition to timing, scope, and excellence, the FYS course at KSU very successfully meets the specific criteria for the Regent's Momentum Year Award as evidenced by:

- ***Fostering purposeful choice for students in regards to their major and career decisions.***
The design of the FYS at KSU is sequenced in a way that catalyzes students to research a focus area; map a degree; and commit to registering for 9 credits in their focus area, 30 credits in their first year, and core English and Math in their first year. To facilitate this process, the FYS textbook introduces several high-quality career exploration resources and the course engages a detailed degree and career map tool with the students. Research and best practice literature show that degree planning, career mapping, and early management of credit enrollment and progression are critical to retention, persistence, and graduation.

- ***Cultivating in students the intrinsic motivation necessary for personal and academic success by emphasizing growth mindset, resilience, and/or belonging both in and outside the classroom.*** After introducing informational and transactional principles early in the first semester, the course digs deeper into the meaning behind these activities by helping the students examine what it means to belong and develop a growth mindset, which is foundational to students' sense of belonging, personal and academic agency, overall adjustment, and first-year success. These ideas are integrated under the umbrella of the "momentum year principles" and are revisited in later units.
- ***Purposefully engaging students in research or service learning.*** The FYS course at KSU is built upon a commitment to fostering students' evidence use, problem solving, reflectiveness, and research skills. As noted in the syllabus, students are required to complete a research project for the seminar and textbook materials (e.g., chapters on leadership and research) set the foundation for students to engage in deeper research work as they progress in their major.
- ***Aligns with Momentum Year goals/activities in a way that is broad-reaching and involves campus partners outside of University College.*** KSU's FYS has been a highly connected node in the network of student success programming at the institution, in the USG, and nationally, including working with different institutional initiatives aimed at retention and graduation; sharing and promoting Program Maps by incorporating them into required assignments; active engagement in the Gen Ed Council to reshape learning outcomes to align with the USG priorities; and serving as a core partner for KSU's involvement in AASCU's Reimagining the First-Year, the Gateways to Completion (G2C), and Complete College America.
- ***Uses data to reshape the curriculum for the seminar.*** FYS faculty and administrators are dedicated to data-driven decision-making by implementing strategies to gather and analyze quantitative and qualitative data to reshape curriculum and inform and innovate the program.
- ***Takes a scholarly approach in designing the program and/or course.*** In addition to a commitment to using data, the FYS at KSU is deeply embedded in the body of research and best-practice literature. For example, the overview for the pilot of their recent program improvement has a reference list that would rival a scholarly publication. The seminar is one of the most researched initiatives in all of higher education. The team at KSU draws upon this history to inform their work but also uses their work to advance the scholarship and practice agenda for effective, efficient, and excellent development and delivery of FYS.

The KSU First-Year Seminar is an excellent program that represents a current model of best practice in the field and an integral voice in the national conversation about FYE, new student success and curriculum development. The FYS course at KSU also serves as a leader and a driver of innovation and change that is helping chart a path for the future in our field. As such, I believe that they would be a very worthy recipient of the Regents' Momentum Year Award. Please do not hesitate to contact me by phone (803-777-2570) or email (keupj@mailbox.sc.edu) if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,



Jennifer R. Keup

Director, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition