

## **FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE EVALUATION PLAN**

In order to assess the effect of FYE on the success of first year students, a comprehensive multi-year evaluation plan, serving both formative and summative purposes, must be designed and implemented. Academic/career planning, academic preparation and performance, and overall student satisfaction with the quality of college life must be assessed. Courses, activities, and advising strategies, specifically designed for first year students, must also be evaluated.

### **The goals of the First Year Experiences are:**

1. Increase success of first year students.
2. Provide ongoing career exploration activities to assist students in declaring/confirming a major by the end of their first year.
3. Prepare students to enter a major thereby allowing them to complete prerequisites while preparing for a major and degree.
4. Provide an array of co-curricular activities that focus on/attend to first year issues.

### **Summer Orientation**

The initial phase of a student's First Year Experience is summer orientation.

The SVP Summer Orientation Program is (as specified in the Strategic Plan and in the FYE CC design proposal) charged to:

1. Assist students in their transition to college life (addresses FYE goals 1& 4).
2. Orient students to the NTID/RIT community (addresses FYE goals 1& 4).
3. Provide assessment for appropriate placement into first quarter courses (addresses FYE goals 1& 3).
4. Provide career exploration/decision-making activities that will enable students to choose an appropriate major or career studies (addresses FYE goals 1& 2).

The SOAR Summer Orientation Program, supplemented by RIT's Fall Orientation, addresses three components common with SVP:

1. Transition to college life
2. Orientation to NTID/RIT
3. Assessment for course placement

The FYE Coordinating Committee felt strongly that each of the summer orientation components deserves equal importance. The programming necessary to optimally (or even adequately) support each component may not be equivalent in frequency or duration.

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**First Academic Year**

First Year Experiences available during a student's first academic year include:

- Affiliation and Declaration Process (addresses FYE goals 1, 2 & 3)
- Freshman Seminar (addresses FYE goals 1 & 4)
- Career Exploration and Decision Making course (addresses FYE goals 1 & 2)
- Essential Academic Skills programming (addresses FYE goals 1, 3 & 4)
- Arts and Sciences courses required for each particular major and degree level (addresses FYE goals 1 & 3)
- Introductory Technical courses (addresses FYE goals 1, 2 & 3)
- Advising /Counseling services and programming (addresses FYE goals 1, 2, 3 & 4)
- Mentoring (faculty/staff/student mentoring) (addresses FYE goals 1, 2, 3 & 4)
- Co-curricular activities (addresses FYE goals 1& 4)
- Student Services /Resources (addresses FYE goals 1 & 4)
- Residence Life programming (addresses FYE goals 1 & 4)

**Evaluation** [*italicized names identify primary evaluation agents*]

Evaluation of the First Year Experiences **as a total** will be accomplished by gathering the following data, comparing the data with those collected in previous years, addressing cause of data abnormalities and/or trend deviations, and addressing frequency or percent changes sought but not achieved.

**Examining Retention** [*CIS, CRTL, CSR*]

1. Identify the number and percent of, and reason (via formal exit interviews and/or follow-up phone contacts) for first year students leaving RIT. These data should be looked at as a total and for the following sub-groups: (a) NTID students who attended summer orientation (SVP) vs. those who did not, (b) cross-registered students who attended summer orientation (SOAR) vs. those who did not, (c) declared students, (d) affiliated students, (e) Career Exploration students, (f) diploma students, (g) AOS students, (h) AAS students, (i) pre-Bacc students, (j) Bacc students, (k) students by major, and (l) by quarter (prior to registration for first four academic quarters).

2. Attempts should be made to categorize “reasons” for leaving as either preventable/nonpreventable or positive/negative.

3. Using a comparable group of first year students, attempts should also be made to assess and categorize “reasons” for staying.

4. Reports/Studies/Evaluations done by the Retention Committee will be shared with the FYE Coordinator.

**Examining Career Exploration and Declaration of Major** [*CIS, CRTL*]

1. Identify the number and percent of first quarter students who, at the beginning of their first academic quarter,: (a) declare their major, (b) affiliate with a department, (c) affiliate with Career Exploration due to preparedness, (d) affiliate with Career Exploration due to a desire for further Career Exploration, (e) affiliate with a Pre-Bacc program, or (f) matriculate in a Bacc

program.

2. Identify the number and percent of students first entering programs (declared students) at the diploma, AOS, AAS, Bacc. levels by major.
3. Identify length of time used by affiliated (but undeclared) students prior to declaring a major (as a total and by major and degree level).
4. Identify length of time used by undecided, Career Exploration students prior to declaring a major (as a total and by major and degree level).
5. Identify the number of and reason for first year declared students changing majors as a total and for the following sub-groups: (a) fall quarter changers, (b) winter quarter changers, (c) spring quarter changers, and (d) repeated changers.
6. Identify the number of first year students who have declared a major by the end of their first year. For first year students who are undeclared by the end of their first year, identify reasons.

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### **Examining Preparation for a Major**

Identify length of time required for decided, Career Exploration students to prepare to enter a program by major and degree level.

### **Examining the Array of Co-curricular Activities** [*Co-curricular Planning Committee*]

An evaluation of co-curricular activities that focus on/attend to first year issues: (a) must first address whether the activities occurred, (b) will include the assessments generated through 'Component' evaluation items #1 & #2, and (c) will particularly address the activities that occur as a result of [or, 'in the context of'] Freshman Seminar (#7), Essential Academic Skills programming (#9), Advising/Counseling programming (#11), Mentoring (#12), Co-curricular activities (#13), Student Services /Resources (#5), and Residence Life programming (#14).

## **II. Examining Administrative Component of FYE** [*FYE Coordinator, CAS Director*]

FYE is a shared, college priority coordinated by CAS with implementation via the Dean's Office. A strong, central administrative team is essential to the transition period leading to full implementation of the First Year Experience. Assessment of the administrative component would include assessing the existence and effectiveness of liaisons of the FYE Coordinator with (1) the Retention Advisory Committee, Co-curricular Planning Committee, the SVP Planning Committee, Admissions/Outreach, CTS, CBGS, CRTL, CSR, Student Life, and Residence Life, and (2) the FYE Advisory Committee (representation TBA). Liaisons should include but not be limited to timely exchange of plans, progress, reports, and evaluation results.

Adequate resources, staffing, commitment and recognition by the Institute and its faculty/staff are essential to ensure the success of the First Year Experience. This too should be assessed annually.

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**III. Evaluation of the First Year Experiences – as components** – will inform us of the success of the programming as delivered, will assist us to appropriately revise/improve the component activities, and will assist in the eventual summative evaluation of the components needed to establish and maintain a high first year retention.

1. Evaluation of summer orientation program (SVP & SOAR) component activities will address: (a) timing & duration (scheduling issues), (b) student attendance, (c) effectiveness & recommended modifications (of the activity itself), (d) extent to which the activity achieves the component being addressed (and how this might be assessed), (e) content and timing of other programming seen as necessary to adequately address the component. The collection of data will be achieved by interviewing the person who implements /oversees the activity. The interview protocol will be informal but will be developed and administered (soon after the delivery of the component) by a team of evaluators. Summaries will be reported to the SVP Coordinator and the FYE Coordinator. *[FYE Coordinator, CRTL]*

2. Evaluation of academic year program component activities will be designed by the faculty and staff who have designed the component, implemented by the faculty/staff who oversee the activity, and reported to the FYE Coordinator. The formative items of the Student Rating System can provide one source of student perspective to the evaluation of this component.

3. Transition to College Life programming/ initiatives provided both during SVP (SOAR) and the student's first quarter will be assessed by (1) the Student Integration Survey administered as part of the Freshman Seminar course or (2) the number of first year students on academic probation (not to exceed 20%) at the end of winter quarter or (3) if neither of these measures effectively address the issue of successful transition, a new assessment strategy will have to be developed. *[CSR counselors, CAS, CRTL, CBGS advisors]*

4. Orientation to the NTID/RIT community provided both during SVP (SOAR) and fall quarter will be assessed by interviewing randomly selected students (from each counselor's/advisor's case load) at the end of winter quarter. The interview will ask for the student to identify the information or activities or discussion/advice that most helped and that which would have helped make that student's life more successful, less confusing or frustrating, easier and more comfortable at RIT. *[CSR counselors, CBGS advisors, CAS, CRTL]*

5. Student Services /Resources

*Orientation to, accessibility of and effectiveness of student services for first year students will be assessed by interviewing randomly selected students (from each counselor's/ advisor's case load) at the end of winter quarter. The assessment (possibly an interview in conjunction with the orientation assessment interview) will assess student awareness of services, access issues,*

*services used, perceived value, and unmet needs. [CSR counselors, CBGS advisors, CRTL]*

6. Effectiveness of Assessments for Course Placement provided during SVP (SOAR) will be assessed by (a) analyzing students' success (grade level C or better) in the courses for which they qualified by placement scores, (b) completing the Early Warning Systems mid-quarter review on all first year students in the courses for which they qualified by placement scores, and/or (c) assessing students first year progress through the arts & sciences and technical curriculum as a component of CAS, CBGS, and CTS on-going curricular review. Data are also being collected by the Research Committee on Entry Criteria for Admissions to determine the effectiveness of the ACT for admissions decisions and course placement decisions. Reports from this committee should be shared with the FYE Coordinator.

7. Freshman Seminar

See #2 under Component evaluation. *[Freshman Seminar Faculty, FYE Coordinator]*

8. Career Exploration and Decision Making course

See #2 under Component evaluation. *[Course Faculty, FYE Coordinator]*

9. Essential Academic Skills programming

Examine admission test score (ACT) and GPA for those first year students leaving RIT. *[CRTL, CIS]*

10. Introductory Technical courses assess the Introductory Technical courses as career decision making mechanisms. Determine if Introductory Technical courses=majors or clusters of majors, thereby facilitating the refinement of a career decision without the loss of technical credit. See #2 under Component evaluation. *[CTS, CBGS, CSR counselors, CRTL]*

11. Advising/Counseling services and programming

Assess success of early warning indicators and follow-up programming. Assess feasibility of case loads for advisors /counselors of first year students. Correlate frequency and quality of contact between first year students and advisor /counselor with students' transition ratings such as the Student Integration Survey or the Student Styles Questionnaire to assess the impact of programming and the appropriate allocation of resources for first year students. *[CSR counselors, CBGS advisors, CRTL]*

12. Mentoring

Assess from the perspective of faculty/staff mentors, student mentors, and student mentors with regard to the quality and value of the program. Assess percentage of first year students active in tire mentoring program. Assess quality and value of and participation in the mentoring training programs. Assess the recognition and reward system for faculty/staff and student mentors. *[CSR Student Life Team, CRTL, FYE Coordinator]*

13. Co-curricular activities

Develop a first year student email distribution list. Quarterly, ask a sample of students to

identify co-curricular programming/initiatives that they attended (from a checklist) and provide feedback. Develop the checklist and monitor the feedback. Acquire and forward attendance lists to the FYE Coordinator. In addition, there is an assumption that co-curricular activities will have their own review and evaluation plans. These evaluation results should be shared with the Co-curricular Planning Committee. *[CIS, Co-curricular Planning Committee, FYE Coordinator]*

#### 14. Residence Life programming

Track (estimate) frequency of first year course failure and college attrition which can be potentially correlated with substance abuse issues, relationship issues, independence issues, living environment issues, time management issues, college readiness issues, loneliness /homesickness issues, bonding issues (see Examining Retention under Evaluation of the FYE as a total). Acquire and forward attendance lists to the FYE Coordinator. *[Residence Life, CSR counselors, CBGS advisors]*

In summary, since the First Year Experience is an Institute-wide priority, there is much to be done to evaluate the quality and value of its activities and implementation. Realistically, however, the evaluation of its effectiveness on first-year students' success should be addressed in stages beginning with addressing the transitional components (Admissions testing, SVP, Mentoring program, etc.); ensuring that responsible agents are aware of their roles in the evaluation process; and that the administration of this framework receive adequate supervision and support (staff, funds and research). Ongoing evaluations should look at reasons for first-year students leaving RIT and compare them to students who choose to stay. The effectiveness of activities dealing with orientation & transition to college, preparation for entry into a major and those related to career decision making & declaration of a major should also be assessed to ensure that the goals of FYE are being achieved

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