Avoiding the Sophomore Slump: Using the first year to create a great second year

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Focusing on the First Year
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Sophomore Slump?

- Sophomore slump is a term frequently used by college educators to describe the period of confusion and uncertainty that occurs during the sophomore year. (Furr & Gannaway, 1982)

- Compared to the freshman year, during the sophomore year students may feel less hopeful, less engaged, and less competent. It is a year of reflection on what they have achieved academically, and on what they want to accomplish in the future. (Kramer, Taylor, Chynoweth, and Jenson, 1987 as cited in Gordon, Habley & Associates, 2000, p. 99)
Second Year Experience

The second year experience (SYE) cohort is new high school admits (NHS) who have completed one year of higher education at the University and are in their second year of undergraduate study. Transfer students may be included in the SYE as appropriate.

“…the transition to the second year begins during the spring semester of the first year”

-Second Year Experience Working Group Report, August 2012
Second Year Experience

Literature Highlights
What are the issues that students face during various times of their academic experience?

Persistence
Academic Success
Student Engagement
Satisfaction
Second-year students leave after the second year in the same numbers as first year students leave after the first year. (Berkner et al., 2002)

Factors that may lead to SY departures include academic self-efficacy, academic goals, and academic skills. (Robbins and others, 2004)

First generation students are at the greatest risk for leaving. (Ishitani, 2006)

Graunke and Woosley, (2000) suggest that the level of decidedness is a strong indicator of retention, even greater than grades.
Second year students report feeling a lack of:

- Satisfaction with faculty interactions
- Commitment to academic major
- Satisfaction with academic advising
- Leadership opportunities
- Support from student affairs professionals

(Finning-Kwoka, Clayton, & Newman, 2007)
Academic Challenges

Academic Standing

Continuing to make satisfactory academic progress and an opportunity for some to regain their footing after the first year

Major Decisions and Academic Self-Efficacy

- Required to choose and commit to an academic program by the end of the second year

Faculty Contact

- Less opportunity to develop quality interactions with faculty since students are often not yet in their major courses
Developmental Challenges

Career Development

- Developing the self-awareness and autonomy necessary to make a decision regarding major and possibly career plans

Student Motivation

- Lacking a specific direction or undefined goals can affect motivation and desire to persist

Social Integration and Involvement

- Fewer opportunities that promote involvement on campus compared to first year initiatives
Institutional Challenges

Financial Issues

- Heightened financial concerns due to less scholarship opportunities for second year students and the reality of first year financial costs setting in

Satisfaction

- Less satisfaction with their college experience compared to the first year
Response to the Data...

In a 2008 National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives, 37% of the institutions surveyed reported having a sophomore year initiative with an additional 29% stating that they are considering or currently developing sophomore initiatives. (Keup, Gahagan, and Goodwin, 2010)
Second Year Experience
at the University of Minnesota

“(I)t’s like freshman year is about figuring out college life and the sophomore year is about figuring out your career and what you want to do for the next 10 years.”
U of M Second Year Student
Over the last seven years (AY 2004 to 2010), on average, 18% of students did not persist to their third year of study.

Table 1
Retention and graduation rates by cohorts (NHS UMNTC students only).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2004 (n = 5556)</th>
<th>2005 (n = 5274)</th>
<th>2006 (n = 5419)</th>
<th>2007 (n = 5257)</th>
<th>2008 (n = 5090)</th>
<th>2009 (n = 5383)</th>
<th>2010 (n = 5311)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-to-Second Year Retention</td>
<td>4868</td>
<td>87.6</td>
<td>4550</td>
<td>86.3</td>
<td>4794</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>4655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second-to-Third Year Retention</td>
<td>4385</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>4123</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>4349</td>
<td>80.3</td>
<td>4308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third-to-Fourth Year Retention</td>
<td>4049</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>3813</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>4040</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>3983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth-to-Fifth Year Retention</td>
<td>1507</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>1378</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>1348</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>1243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth-to-Sixth Year Retention</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four-Year Graduation</td>
<td>2555</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>2490</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>2737</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>2841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six-Year Graduation</td>
<td>3922</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>3720</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Preliminary figures retrieved November 1, 2012.
Who is leaving?

Academic Characteristics

- Sophomore year drop-out rates are higher for students ranked below 50% in high school or scored below 24 on the ACT.

- Roughly 60% of students who earned a GPA below 2.50 during the first semester of the freshman year will not persist to the third year.

Office of Undergraduate Education, 2011
Who is leaving?

**Race and Ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Population</th>
<th>Retention to Yr 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Pacific</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicano-Latino</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other students of color</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Office of Undergraduate Education, 2011
First year students spend more time than sophomores on…
  attending classes
  entertainment events
  socializing with friends
  participating in physical exercise.

Second year students spend more time than first-years on…
  employment
  performing community service
  participating in student organizations
  watching television
  commuting to school & work.
Second year students report a lower perception of campus climate compared to first year students.

**Campus Climate**

The data suggest that first-year students report a statistically significant higher perception of campus climate compared to second-year on all of the items in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>First-Years</th>
<th></th>
<th>Second-Years</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Students are respected here regardless of their religious beliefs</td>
<td>4.78, 0.97</td>
<td>1499</td>
<td>4.71, 1.02</td>
<td>1516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Students are respected here regardless of their political beliefs</td>
<td>4.72, 1.01</td>
<td>1502</td>
<td>4.64, 1.06</td>
<td>1514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I feel free to express my political beliefs on campus</td>
<td>4.78, 1.05</td>
<td>1488</td>
<td>4.69, 1.08</td>
<td>1497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I feel free to express my religious beliefs on campus</td>
<td>4.81, 1.04</td>
<td>1487</td>
<td>4.72, 1.08</td>
<td>1491</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The items began with, “Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements” and were coded 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree.
Second year students report higher levels of academic disengagement.

Table 4
Differences in academic disengagement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First-Years</th>
<th></th>
<th>Second-Years</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gone to class without completing assigned reading</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>1648</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gone to class unprepared</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1648</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The items began with, “How frequently during this academic year have you done each of the following?” and were coded 1 = never to 6 = very often.
Second year students report different **levels of satisfaction** compared to first year students.

### Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First-Years</th>
<th></th>
<th>Second-Years</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of faculty instruction</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>4.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to get into a major that you want</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1484</td>
<td>4.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of courses for general education or breadth requirements</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>4.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of courses needed for graduation</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>1496</td>
<td>4.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to small classes</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1493</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational enrichment programs (e.g., study abroad, internships)</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>1481</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of your education for the price you’re paying</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1504</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** The items began with, “How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your educational experience in the major?” and were coded 1 = very dissatisfied to 6 = very satisfied.
Case Studies
Second Year Outcomes

Sense of Purpose - Students with a sense of purpose possess a clear understanding of why they are at the University of Minnesota and what direction they are heading. They have experienced success in the classroom and engage in the academic life of the campus. They possess enthusiasm for their academic path and understand appropriate career options. They have set realistic and obtainable goals for themselves. They have hope and optimism for their remaining two years at the University.

Sense of Community - Students with a sense of community feel like they belong at the University of Minnesota. They have the support they need to be successful from peers, faculty and staff. They are engaged in campus life and feel a sense of ownership in creating their own University experience.

Sense of Self - Students with a sense of self have increased their overall self-awareness. They experience a safe, supportive, and respectful environment in which to explore aspects of their own identity and the diversity of others. Students have improved their overall well-being relating to financial, physical, spiritual, career and academic aspects of their lives.
Building a Second Year Experience

- Campus-wide Advisory Committee
- Communication Initiatives-leveraging the existing
  - Email messages
  - Portal announcements
  - Web page: [www.secondyear.umn.edu](http://www.secondyear.umn.edu)
  - Twitter: @UMNSeconds
- Student Advisory Committee
- Living Learning Community
- Collegiate Initiatives
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