



"Re-Imagining the First Year of College": Year One Takeaways

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Institutional Intentionality (a culture of belonging)

- Data Analytics
- Satisfactory Academic Progress standards
- Communications makeovers (voicemail, automated email replies)
- Student Success Campaign

Curriculum

- Rename "Undeclared" as "Exploratory"
- Enhance participation rates in CSUN's confidence & belonging intervention
- Develop "meta-majors" for all first year students

Faculty and Staff

- Teach Faculty how to teach students to use office hours
- Develop best practices for providing better feedback to students
- Faculty learning community working to develop culturally competent teaching strategies and approaches

Students

- Reexamine current recommendations for freshman unit loads (15 to Finish / Think 30)
- Timely graduation initiative (graduation micro-grants)
- Peer mentor program
- Enhance Transfer Student Orientation

RFY: Some Terms to Know

AASCU and RFY: the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) launched an initiative a year ago to Re-imagine the First Year of college (RFY). Forty-four campuses are participating, with a goal of sharing their approaches to helping first-year freshmen and transfer students succeed. (<http://www.aascu.org/RFY/>)

Belonging: a student's sense that the college is a good academic and social fit. First-generation, low-income, and underrepresented minority students may be more likely than others to determine that they do not belong—that the institution is not a good match for them.

Choice paralysis: a predicament in which people find themselves unable to select from an overabundance of options. If you've ever tried to repaint your house (or a room in your apartment), you may have experienced this predicament. Students attempting to choose GE courses from the typically extensive array at our institutions may also be stopped by the bewildering number of possibilities.

Institutional intentionality: the whole-campus commitment to move in an agreed-upon direction to better serve students. Introduced along with RFY in February 2016, where George Mehaffy (AASCU) glossed it as "a culture of obligation" towards student success.

Meta-majors and guided pathways: two related terms for course packages that reduce choice paralysis by providing a limited number of options for students.

Mindset, Dweck, and Yeager: David Yeager studied with Carol Dweck and has extended her work on mindset to form the Mindset Scholars Network. People with a growth mindset believe that intelligence is fluid and that practice and effort will improve their work. People with a fixed mindset believe that intelligence is innate: either you have it or you don't, and there's nothing you can do to improve yourself. Yeager has developed a mindset intervention (currently piloting at scale) to support freshman success. (<http://mindsetscholarsnetwork.org/>)

Opportunity gap vs. Achievement gap: both terms refer to differences between groups in key performance indicators for student success (for instance, differences in units earned or GPA between Pell Grant recipients and other students, or between African-American males and other males). "Opportunity" suggests that work should be undertaken to close the gap. "Achievement" suggests that the student is the only one who needs to do that work—that it is the student's "fault."

Persistence vs. Retention: both terms refer to the rate at which students stay in college. "Persistence" suggests that students are active agents in their own progress. "Retention" gives that agency over to the institution (and for some scholars, evokes prisons).

Predictive analytics and big data: an approach to student success that uses large retrospective sets of individual student experience (course-taking, grades, persistence, and so on) to establish the likelihood that a particular student will or won't succeed in a given course or program.

For additional information on these and more, see California State University Northridge's RFY website: www.csun.edu/matador-momentum

36th Annual Conference on the First Year Experience: FD-91, "Re-imagining the First Year of College: Year One Takeaways." 12 Feb. 2017. Contacts: susanna.eng@csun.edu and cheryl.spector@csun.edu