



New Directions for the
First-Year Experience

Based on the *Dimensions* of the
Foundations of Excellence[™] Project





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for the
First-Year Experience
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Foundations of Excellence™ Project*

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The Foundations of Excellence™ in the First College Year project was launched on September 5, 2003 with funding from The Atlantic Philanthropies and Lumina Foundation for Education.

Phase I (January, 2003 - August, 2003) of the project asked members of the AASCU (American Association of State Colleges and Universities) and CIC sectors to join in the preliminary work of defining characteristics of excellence and delineating the “Sources and Forms of Evidence” that might be examined to validate those characteristics. Phase II refined those characteristics—or, more precisely, those Foundational Dimensions™ statements—and used them to lay the foundation for a grand design on which the entire first year, and, by extension, the entire undergraduate experience, might rest.

Phase II: Twelve AASCU Founding Institutions and twelve CIC Founding Institutions were selected from a total of 219 institutions that participated in Phase I of Foundations of Excellence and applied for participation in Phase II. To qualify for selection, institutions were required to submit an application as well as a report on their work in Phase I. These were read and scored by members of an external review board, who made recommendations to the Policy Center. Final decisions were based on the readiness of the Founding Institutions to participate in Phase II, their prior commitment to first-year students, and their particular demographic / geographic characteristics.

Founding AASCU Institutions:

Chadron State College	Kennesaw State University
CUNY Brooklyn College	Missouri Western State College
CUNY Medgar Evars College	Plymouth State University
Georgia Southwestern State University	SUNY College at Brockport
Illinois State University	Texas A & M University-Corpus Christi
Indiana University-Purdue University	University Of Wisconsin-Parkside

What Are Dimensions?

Foundational Dimension™ statements, informally called Dimensions, are defining characteristics of an institution’s effectiveness in promoting learning and success of every first-year student. Learning and success include content and academic skill-building, higher order cognitive skill development, psychosocial development, and persistence in degree completion.

How were the Dimensions formed?

The Dimensions currently in use are the result of a two-tier process. Members of the Policy Center staff and their partners developed the original six Dimensions. Task Forces at 176 institutions analyzed these Dimensions and

Preface

submitted reports including commentary, emendations, and suggestions for new Dimensions to the Policy Center. Thorough analysis of the reports resulted in the development of 9 AASCU and 11 CIC Dimensions, which serve as the basis for measurement and evaluation in Phase II of the project. These Dimensions are still considered to be draft statements, subject to revision following the work of Phase II.

What is the Policy Center on the First Year of College?

The Policy Center on the First Year of College has as its basic mission the improvement of the first college year through enhanced learning outcomes and the success of first-year students. A particular focus of the Policy Center is the development and dissemination of a range of first-year assessment procedures and tools that can be used to strengthen or confirm practices in the curriculum, the co-curriculum, and institutional policy. In addition to improving practice, this process will contribute to the body of research on best practices in first-year programs.

The Policy Center on the First Year of College was initiated in October 1999 with a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, and is hosted on the campus of Brevard College in North Carolina. The work of the Policy Center is currently made possible by the generous support of two primary benefactors, The Atlantic Philanthropies and Lumina Foundation for Education, and is an extension of the work of John N. Gardner and his colleagues at the University of South Carolina's National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. The two entities work cooperatively on issues of central concern for the success of first-year college students.

Special Thanks:

Plymouth State University, and the PSU Foundations of Excellence Taskforce in particular, would like to express our sincere thanks to Dr. Randy L. Swing, Co-Director of the Policy Center on the First Year of College, and a Fellow of the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, University of South Carolina. As our liaison for this project, his knowledge, advice, insight, encouragement, campus visit, and constant telephone and email contact contributed immeasurably to our progress on this project. We are very grateful.

Dimension One

Philosophy

Foundations Institutions approach the first year in ways that are intentional and based on a philosophy/rationale of the first year that informs relevant institutional policies and practices.

The philosophy/rationale is explicit, clear and is easily understood, consistent with the institutional mission, widely disseminated, and, as appropriate, reflects a consensus of campus constituencies. The philosophy/rationale is also the basis for organizational policies, practices, structures, leadership, and resource allocation.

Robert Fitzpatrick, Frost Faculty Center (Chapter Coordinator)

Contributors:

Kate Donahue, Social Science Faculty

The First-Year Council

The PSU Foundations of Excellence Taskforce

Dimension One

The Current Situation:

Plymouth State University does not currently have a written philosophy statement or rationale for the first year, nor was the taskforce able to find evidence of a written first-year philosophy statement among its academic or service departments.

Nevertheless, there is an implicit philosophy influencing current practice. Almost all campus members who have been at Plymouth for even a short period echo common themes indicating a high degree of agreement about the first-year experience. These themes include: a concern for retaining students until they graduate; creating a sense of community; responsibly introducing students to the academic life; assisting with social, academic, and social acclimation; engaging students intellectually; establishing community values; reducing stress points; making connections; developing a code of ethics; enabling student success; and helping student discover their own sense of fit.

Two members of the committee talked to a student focus group of about fifteen students. Part of the discussion included the topic of the first-year philosophy to see what that might look like from the student perspective. The students answered the questions “From your experience so far at Plymouth State University, what are the key issues the university is trying to make you aware of regarding your academic career?” and “What ideas or ideals do you feel the university is ‘pushing’?” The lack of mesh between the responses of our committee and those of the student focus group were distressingly apparent. Students stressed the university’s commendable efforts regarding social acclimation, but the mention of academic experience didn’t come up except in lamenting the uneven experiences they received in their *Introduction to the Academic Community* (IAC) first-year experience course. Students were generally positive about IAC, but not all were as positive regarding that particular course’s content.

Our efforts force us to conclude that while our unwritten philosophy appears to be well assimilated by seasoned faculty, and even more so by student services personnel; this philosophy is *completely foreign* to students.

Philosophy

Evidence:

A number of structures and policies support our contention that there is an implicit first-year philosophy, and this gives us hope that consensus on a written statement can be quickly effected.

This evidence includes:

- ***The Retention of Students in Plymouth State College*** [April 1982]
This aged document shows that Plymouth identified many of its current practices and concerns two decades ago. It's heartening to see that since that time, Plymouth's decisions have supported its many prescient recommendations.
- ***Plymouth State University Mission Statement***
The mission statement outlines many of our goals and aspirations for our students.
- ***General Education Taskforce Proposal***
The General Education program pays particular attention to the first-year student, and its design and execution embody much of our implicit philosophy.
- ***The First-Year Seminar***
The new First-Year Seminar, to be introduced this fall, requires faculty to introduce many of our implicit goals

Areas of Concern:

- There is no written first-year philosophy.
- There are no written departmental or unit statements supporting a first-year philosophy.
- There is no organized method of introducing a first-year philosophy to students, faculty, and staff.
- Our implicit philosophy is not always the basis for organizational policies, practices, structures, leadership, or resource allocation.

Dimension One

Recommendations:

- A first-year philosophy will require broad input and campus-wide discussion. The Foundations of Excellence Taskforce has drafted a philosophy statement to get the discussion started. The Council on the First-Year Experience has agreed to undertake the refinement of this statement.
- Using the final philosophy statement as a guide, all departments and units should write philosophy statements identifying specific approaches their departments will take to address the unique needs of first-year students.
- New faculty and staff should be exposed to, and have the opportunity to discuss, the philosophy as a regular part of their orientation.
- The philosophy statement should be published in the *Academic Catalog*, and faculty should discuss it as a required part of the first-year curriculum.
- We should recognize the philosophy statement as an important consideration in organizational policies, practices, structures, leadership, and resource allocation.

Dimension Two

Foundations Institutions create organizational structures and policies that provide a comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated approach to the first year.

These structures and policies provide oversight and alignment of all first-year efforts. A coherent first-year experience is realized and maintained through effective partnerships among academic affairs, student affairs, and other administrative units and is enhanced by ongoing faculty and staff development activities and appropriate budgetary arrangements.

Robert Fitzpatrick, Frost Faculty Center (Chapter Coordinator)

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Dimension Two

The Current Situation:

The university charges several groups with the organization of the first-year experience. It is also undergoing some significant positive changes relating to the first-year-experience course and to the general education program. The first-year experience also receives very significant attention and support from the university administration.

However, discussion with many involved faculty, committees, and student services personnel, reveals significant concern regarding organization. Additionally, despite our many efforts, the disappointing results of the National Survey of Student Engagement are not encouraging and may stem from our own organizational malaise.

The Residential Life division of the university has a well-coordinated and systematic structure for implementing and assessing first-year-experience activities. Their efforts to orient and acclimate first-year students are especially effective.

Our most notable organizational group is the First-Year Council. It is a model of university cooperation and partnerships. Its broad and enthusiastic membership is a recognized asset to the university. Despite its hard work and significant accomplishments, however, the group suffers from a lack of institutionally coordinated direction and a self-perceived lack of authority.

Most significantly, the university does not have a specific person, unit, or administrative structure with campus-wide multifunction responsibility for oversight of the first-year. The entire program suffers as a result. The Foundations of Excellence Taskforce sees little hope for improving the situation without some significant changes to our current organization.

Evidence:

Several structures support Plymouth's organizational efforts on behalf of the first-year experience. These are effective hardworking groups made up of faculty and staff who are dedicated to improving the first-year experience.

Organization

- **The First-Year Council**

President Donald Wharton originally appointed the First-Year Council in 1999, following the completion of the First-Year Experience Taskforce's report. It is a standing committee, which meets bi-monthly or monthly depending on its anticipated workload. Members of the council include: the associate vice-president for Undergraduate Studies; the dean of Student Affairs; the director of Residential Life; the coordinator of the First-Year Seminar; three other faculty, including a department chair, the diversity scholar, and the current chair of the council; a residence director; a first-year student; and a sophomore. The council reports to Vice-President and Provost Virginia Barry.
- **The Holmes Group**

The Holmes group is primarily involved with looking at business processes for first year students. Their primary goal is to discuss potential problems and find ways to improve processes that are in the best interest of the student. The Holmes Group includes staff from all university divisions and the faculty coordinator of the First-Year Seminar.
- **The Frost Faculty Center for Learning and Teaching Excellence**

The faculty center is charged with ongoing staff development. This newly formed entity is focusing on improving the first-year experience through a variety of faculty development programs
- **The General Education Implementation Team**

This group exists to ease the way for the new General Education Program. It primarily guides and advises procedures for implementing the program with special attention to clarifying or resolving ambiguities as they arise. They also plan workshops to facilitate the process. Membership includes the General Education Coordinator, the coordinator of the first-year seminar, the associate vice-president for Undergraduate Studies, the registrar, three faculty members who were on the taskforce that developed the new program, and the faculty of the General Education Committee.

Dimension Two

- **Orientation Steering Committee**

The Orientation Steering Committee discusses every aspect of student orientation. The sizeable membership includes representatives from every division of the university, and the group meets frequently throughout the year. It is one of the few campus groups that excels at assessing its efforts.

Areas of Concern:

- There is a lack of direction and coordination among the various committees and taskforces directly addressing the first-year experience.
- Despite the fact that we know which courses first-year students take, the organizational structure does not currently provide a mechanism to identify and place the most appropriate faculty into these classes. In fact, the data show a large number of adjunct faculty teaching these courses. The taskforce recognizes that in many cases these faculty may be the best, but we would like to see some sort of assessment to prove it.
- There is no mechanism to ensure that the syllabi of all first-year courses support our stated mission and goals for first-year students.
- The First-Year Council lacks a specific set of measurable goals and tends to get “hung up” on a few issues, such as choosing the common reading, to the neglect of other issues.

Recommendations:

- The Foundations of Excellence Taskforce sees the most urgent need for a Dean level coordinator of the first-year experience. This position must be empowered with the authority to coordinate all first-year activities, influence teaching assignments, review the syllabi of first year courses, and set and assess specific goals for various first-year committees and taskforces in both the Academic Affairs and Residential Life divisions of the university.

Organization

- The First-Year Council needs a specific mission and list of goals to be implemented and assessed annually.
- The Frost Faculty Center needs to assist all first-year committees and taskforces to raise awareness of the particular needs of first-year students.
- Funding of first-year initiatives needs to be more clearly aligned with documented assessment showing results that are in keeping with our stated mission and philosophy for the first-year experience.

Dimension Two

Dimension Three

Transitions

Foundations Institutions facilitate appropriate recruitment, admissions, and student transitions through policies and practices that are intentional and aligned with institutional mission.

Institutions improve the academic and social readiness of students to make the transition to higher education environments by communicating clear curricular and co-curricular expectations and providing appropriate support for educational success. They are forthright about their responsibilities to students as well as students' responsibilities to themselves and the institution. They create and maintain linkages and curricular alignments between faculty and secondary school teachers, and they communicate with guidance counselors, families, and other sources of support, as appropriate.

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Time Keefe, Dean of Students

Phil Lonergan, Art Faculty

Dimension Three

The Current Situation:

Plymouth does not do a good job of communicating academic expectations to first-year students. The incongruence between the values portion of our mission statement and our promotional literature is readily apparent. The taskforce examined; the admissions Web pages, particularly “Ten Reasons to Consider PSU” and “Frequently Asked Questions”; the view-book; and the Integrated Packet for references to the values expressed in the mission statement. We found frequent mention of experiential learning and faculty commitment to teaching but little attention to our expectation from students.

In the admissions materials we found little if any information regarding academic expectations. There is nothing on faculty expectations of students with regard to preparing for or engaging in classroom learning, neither do admissions materials mention expectations of academic performance or continuation standards. Our students’ first encounter with some of this information comes only with the *Academic Catalog* after admission and only if they choose to read it.

In striking contrast, the admissions materials offer a full and exciting view of student life in a variety of contexts. There is excellent information on student organizations, sports, and community service. We need to strike a balance between selling an enjoyable social life and an education.

The university frequently communicates with families in a variety of ways: a letter from the president’s office about five times a year, *Plymouth Magazine* four times a year, and a report from residential life to the parents of on-campus students twice each term. However, these communications mainly focus on “good news,” – university successes, activities, and events. They offer little information specifically designed to promote first-year student success. Curricular expectations are not readily apparent in our literature.

Orientation for parents, which about 65% of first-year parents attend, covers transition and developmental issues relating to first-year student success. A handout is provided, “How You Can Help Your College Students: A Guide for Parents,” with tips on supporting students in the

Transitions

first college year. The taskforce considered this sheet inadequate to the current needs of students and parents. The level of engaging parents needs to be considerably more substantive. Literature that is more appropriate would encourage parents to be on the lookout for signs of academic adjustment and give suggestions about how they can be active partners in encouraging academic success.

The Admission Office provides a newsletter to high-school guidance counselors twice each term and sponsors events on campus for counselors. Our admissions standards are prominent in these communications, but counselors don't get much else promoting Plymouth's ideas and expectations for student success.

Students have the opportunity to connect with faculty outside class in a variety of settings: required meetings with advisors or required departmental advising night; recognition and honors receptions; luncheons with students; departmental hikes; informal interactions in the weather lab, graphics lab, GIS lab, math activities lab, art studios and the like. The foreign language departmental skit night, and a multitude of student organizations with faculty advisors such as the student newspaper, the American Marketing Association, the Forensic Team, the Nicaragua Club, and the Student Senate offer more opportunities.

However, many of the activities outside of student organizations are, in fact, more available to students who have declared a major. They are not as readily available, if at all, to undeclared students. At any rate, only a few highly organized, promoted, or required activities ensure connections with faculty outside class.

Connections to upper-level students are most readily available in student organizations such as those named earlier (there are about one-hundred recognized student clubs and organizations), in the residence halls which blend first year and upper-level students, and in the central dining hall where all students gather. In addition, some academic departments have structured activities for majors and some have big brother or big sister arrangements for their majors. Nevertheless, interactions between first-year and upper-level students occur by chance and are not ensured for all, especially not for the many undeclared first-year students or for the relatively few first-year students not living off-campus.

Dimension Three

We believe the university works hard to ensure that first-year students are aware of campus services. The integrated packet has good information; most service offices such as Plymouth Academic Support Services, the Wellness Center, Women's Services and Gender Resources, and the United Campus Ministry have brochures and flyers available, and they actively promote their services to students in the student newspaper, mailboxes, and student union. In addition, first-year students receive early warning grades and those in academic difficulty get probation contracts with detailed assistance on support services available to them. In the recent past, all new students were required to take *Introduction to the Academic Community*, which included information on campus services, but this course, although it continues to exist as an elective, is no longer required.

All admitted students are invited to open houses on campus where students can attend classes, eat in the dining hall, attend presentations by financial aid and residential life, and participate in a panel discussion with current students.

The financial aid website has excellent information and links to important federal and related sites. In addition, each admitted student receives an email with links to the PSU financial aid website, instructions on filing FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Financial Aid), a link to the FAFSA site, and information on the university's priority filing deadline for aid. In addition, the integrated packet contains a four-page section on "Your Financial Path to Graduation" with information on cost, scholarships, grants, jobs, payment plans, tuition bills, and the like. Admissions materials include a brochure on financial aid.

During fall semester, all enrolled students get a financial aid letter in their college union mailbox with information on filing aid-forms for the next academic year. This letter also includes links to important financial aid resources. Again, there is little assessment of the awareness level on the part of students.

An examination of all of these activities indicates a serious need for more assessment. Clearly, we offer opportunities for students to understand curricular and co-curricular expectations, but are students getting this message?

Evidence:

Transitions

Despite our current poor performance at communicating clear curricular and co-curricular expectations, the taskforce found many existing structures that could play key roles in our success with this dimension. The following structures are among those that currently reinforce or could place more focus on reinforcing students' understanding of Plymouth's academic and behavioral expectations:

Academic Policies and Activities:

- Academic Advising
- Continuance Standards
- Honor Students -- President's List, Dean's List
- Talent Grant
- Scholars Program
- Transfer Student Policies

Admissions Activities:

- Admission Standards
- Admission Tours
- College Fairs
- Information Sessions
- Music/Theatre auditions, Criminal Justice interviews, and Art portfolios
- Recruitment Procedures
- Visits to High Schools/Private Schools

Offices, Committees, Departments:

- Academic Advising Committee
- Academic and Career Counseling Office
- Academic Standards Committee
- Admissions Policy Committee
- Bagley Center
- Financial Aid

Orientation Activities and Committees:

- Convocation
- Orientation
- Parents Weekend

Publications:

- Integrated packet
- ITS services brochure
- Letters of welcome from the residence halls
- *Live Better, Climb Higher* brochure
- *Plymouth State University Parents* newsletter
- Registration newspaper

Dimension Three

- *ResNet Guide*
- *Student Handbook*
- Student Newspaper (*The Clock*)
- University Mission Statement
- Viewbook
- Website

Areas of Concern:

- There is a lack of stress on academic expectations in recruitment and admissions materials.
- Unawareness on campus of information being provided to parents.
- Students rarely here a clear enunciation of academic expectations.
- There is a scarcity of information provided to parents to help make them partners in promoting first-year student success.
- There is an inconsistency of information to majors on departmental expectations.
- There is a lack of awareness and promotion of the university mission among faculty and first-year students.

Recommendations:

- Enhance academic expectations in recruitment and admissions materials.
- Improve direct assistance to parents on promoting first-year student success.
- Provide consistent information to enrolled students on academic expectations in the various majors.
- Improve coordination among administrative and academic offices of communications to students and faculty.
- Develop a systematic method of informing students of academic expectations via faculty advisors.
- The university needs to examine its policies with regard to academic continuance. At what point is it unlikely that a student will succeed? Are they adequately informed?

Dimension Four

Faculty

Foundations institutions elevate the first college year to a high priority for the faculty.

Chief academic officers, deans, and department chairs articulate expectations for substantial faculty interaction with first-year students, both inside and outside the classroom. The institutions' system of rewards supports these expectations.

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Wendy Palmquist, Psychology Faculty

Deb Tobine, Director of Undergraduate Advising

Jeannie Dubino, Diversity Scholar

Dimension Four

The Current Situation:

New-Faculty Development

The degree of interest among faculty regarding first-year students is very high. Plymouth offers frequent and varied sessions for new faculty that are geared specifically to new students. New-faculty introduction to the importance of the first-year experience is systematic, continually reinforced, and solid. These events are well attended. New faculty orientations emphasize first-year student developmental issues and suggest effective pedagogies. New faculty all belong to a common Reflective Practice group that meets throughout the semester and frequently addresses issues relating to the first-year.

Faculty Development

Unfortunately, most faculty only receive development information regarding first-year pedagogy (usually presented on faculty day or in departmental workshops the week before the semester begins) too late to incorporate it in their syllabi which are, of course, already prepared by this time.

Faculty Development as a Departmental Priority

Regardless of the attention the institution pays to new faculty and first-year students, the taskforce agreed that there is a general lack of support for first-year student concerns at the departmental level. Departmental attention to special approaches to the first-year students varies widely. The taskforce regarded this as a serious weakness that needs to be addressed seriously. Education was singled out as a model department that makes a special effort in this area. Some taskforce members expressed that their departments were active in this area, but they did acknowledge a distinction between mentoring the faculty in general and discussing first-year student needs specifically. All agreed a systematic departmental approach is needed.

Faculty Day

Faculty day has a high degree of participation. Non-supportive faculty are an easily identifiable minority. This past year has been exceptional in its focus on the first year. The 2003-2004 academic year witnessed the unusual confluence of a new general education program, a newly designed first-year seminar, the new Frost Faculty Center

Faculty

for Learning and Teaching Excellence, our involvement in the Foundations of Excellence project, the LAUNCH grant, and still more initiatives geared directly or significantly toward first-year students. The Foundations of Excellence taskforce is optimistic that these initiatives mark a turning point for Plymouth toward even more commitment to the special needs of first-year students and to the education of the campus to these special needs.

Pedagogy versus Content

Despite these initiatives, some members of the subgroup expressed concern that not all faculty or departments are fully invested in the importance of a special first-year pedagogy. These faculty or departments often express an emphasis on content over pedagogy. However, no one suggested this is an “either...or...” proposition. First-year pedagogy is not always appropriate for upper-level courses, and faculty need to make this distinction. Certainly, there are courses integral to a discipline in which content is of supreme importance. **Nevertheless, the taskforce easily reached a consensus that the most valuable role of an introductory course (i.e., many of the general education courses and many of the courses geared primarily to first-year students) is to engage and excite students about the subject – even at the expense of content.** The rationale for this was based on the taskforce’s perception of the value of creating lifelong interest in the subject in question. The goals of general education and the first-year experience are better served by offering courses designed to foster lifelong interest rather than a feeling of relief that an academic requirement has been met and need never be revisited.

Continuing Part-Time Faculty

Activities offered to continuing part-time faculty are similar to the activities for the continuing full-time faculty. However, all too often adjunct faculty are not even notified of development opportunities. We noted that some departments have adjunct faculty who teach large numbers of first-year students, and yet adjunct faculty receive little or no institutional or departmental support. How do we develop incentives to involve part-time? Often, due to other commitments, adjunct faculty are not as available for these activities as full-time faculty.

Dimension Four

Teaching Assistants

The number of graduate teaching assistants is small. The English Department is exemplary in its efforts to work closely with teaching assistants. Participation, therefore, is high among English Composition graduate assistants. However, this is an exception. In other disciplines, teaching assistants receive no comparable support. Since the faculty development efforts regarding graduate students are so varied, the taskforce identified a need for more specific policies regarding this group.

Faculty Interaction with Students

An important aspect of the first year is personal connection with members of the university community. How do faculty interact with students on a social level and co-curricular level as opposed to a purely academic level? We can easily point to co-curricular efforts that include presenting papers at conferences, H.P.E.R. students who engage in a variety of activities, and some faculty who attend sporting events, gallery openings, performances, and other campus activities. However, attendance at such events has plummeted in recent years. For example, faculty are encouraged to attend convocation and commencement, but turnout is disappointingly low, particularly from the students' point of view.

Summer academic advising sessions present opportunities for out-of-class faculty and student interaction, but here again, the number of faculty participating in summer advising sessions is inadequate even for its specific advising goals. It is certainly inadequate for significant interaction between faculty and first-year students. There are many other examples of lost opportunities regarding faculty student interaction.

Individual departments encourage faculty-student social interaction, however, participation is minimal. While there are some remarkable exceptions, the taskforce determined that this element of the dimension was not encouraged. The taskforce observed that department chairs feel uncomfortable asking more of their faculty.

Expectations of New Faculty

During the hiring process, the provost makes a point of encouraging sound pedagogy and making personal connections with students, especially first-year students. Again, a question arises as to how the institution might further encourage this attitude across academic

Faculty

departments. New faculty often teach first-year courses, and many of them teach general education courses which are likely to have significant numbers of first-year students [See page 64]. However, the taskforce agreed that, during the hiring process, departments focus interview questions on how new full-time faculty will teach the major courses.

To what degree does Plymouth reward high levels of faculty interaction with first-year students through special awards, annual performance reviews, or promotion and tenure decisions?

Until this year, the annual report asked about interaction with students in general, but not with first-year students specifically. There is no incentive to do anything special for first-year students – there is no reward for advising, for example. There is no clear focus on rewards for special interaction with first-year students either in the annual performance review or in promotion and tenure decisions.

Evidence:

The institution clearly makes an effort regarding this dimension, and there are many policies and structures designed to assist these goals:

- First-Year Council
- Holmes Group
- Frost Faculty Center for Learning and Teaching Excellence
- First-Year Seminar
- General Education Program
- Introduction to the majors courses
- Annual Faculty Reports
- Office of Undergraduate Studies
- Student Affairs
- Academic Affairs

Areas of Concern:

- There was concern that focus on issues of the first-year may not be embraced at the departmental level. The taskforce considered this a major concern.
- Adjunct faculty are not as much of a part of faculty development as their important role requires.

Dimension Four

- There needs to be more organized notification of faculty development opportunities from the provost's office to all faculty, lecturers, and adjuncts.
- The issue of expressing expectation of faculty v. responsibilities of faculty needs to be examined
- There is not a clear focus on rewards for special interaction with first year students.

Recommendations:

- There needs to be a heightened awareness on the part of chairs to communicate to new faculty the importance of the first-year experience, and we need to start stressing the importance of first-year pedagogy in the departmental interviewing process.
- Have more workshops in Frost Faculty Center, and have a second Faculty Day before the spring semester to follow up on the issues presented during the fall Faculty Day.
- The use of adjunct faculty needs to be discussed.
- There needs to be a more specific policy regarding pedagogical development of new hires, continuing faculty, adjuncts, and graduate students.
- The annual faculty evaluation needs to be revised to better recognize faculty contributions to Plymouth's goals and aspirations.

All Students

Foundations institutions serve all first-year students according to their varied needs.

The process of anticipating, diagnosing, and addressing needs is ongoing and is subject to assessment and adjustment throughout the first year. Institutions provide services with respect for the students' abilities, backgrounds, interests, and experiences.

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Dimension Five

The Current Situation:

Getting information about services to students (and faculty) at the right time seems to be the determining factor as to whether such services can be effective. While we do an excellent job of orientation, it might be interesting to reevaluate the orientation experience at the end of the first semester. Undoubtedly, orientation exposes students to many services for which students cannot foresee a need, and for which they retain little or no memory when need arises.

This dimension focuses on “all students” in the sense that it addresses the needs of all students – not just the “average” student. In this dimension we specifically examined honors students, academically under-prepared students, and racial or ethnic minority students regarding a few specific issues. We believe these groups serve as a barometer of how we address “special” groups of any variety. The reader could read his or her own particular category of students into these comments, and we believe the conclusions will still be valid.

Academically Under-Prepared Students

The university does little to assess the needs of academically under-prepared students. Plymouth’s educational philosophy does not include remediation. Instead, professors are encouraged to address learning differences individually and to refer students to the appropriate resources. No mechanism assesses the effectiveness of this approach.

Honors students, however, *are* assessed as a group, informally and formally. The Honors Council systemically assesses data from students enrolled in specific honors classes through course evaluations, scrutiny of overall experiences, and through informal discussion at get-togethers and response forums. Honors faculty also participate in the evaluation process. Based on these evaluations, beneficial programmatic changes have been made to the honors program.

Plymouth does not specifically examine the needs of racial or ethnic minority students. Most often, this complaint raises the response, “but there are very few racial or ethnically diverse students at Plymouth.” When focus

All Students

groups with racially diverse students were run in the past, the students often commented about feeling targeted by virtue of being part of the focus group. The university should be committed to the success of “all students.” This includes providing and assessing special services or resources as needed. The specific issue of racial and ethnic diversity is more fully addressed in Dimension #7.

Student Resources and Services

Taskforce members felt that among undecided students we would also find the students most likely to be academically under-prepared. Undecided students are assigned to advisors at random, based on the advisors’ current load or the number of majors in their departments. The taskforce believes undecided students are less likely to try to make connections within the academic arena. There is an Undergraduate Advising Center where they can go, but many of these students don’t use that service in their first year. Academic support services such as tutoring and help with study techniques is available, but again, many first-year students do not use the service.

The Honors Council is specifically working to meet the needs of honors students. The decision to extend honors courses beyond the first year was made in response to suggestions by the first-year honors students. These students generally feel empowered academically and enjoy the connections made with honors faculty and fellow students.

There are individual administrators and faculty who try to act as mentors for racially or ethnically diverse students, but there are no specific offices of minority affairs or international students. Various offices have some support responsibilities, such as student groups in the Hartman Union Building or visa assistance through Human Relations, but generally, it would be difficult for first-year students to find such support without being connected to some pipeline of information.

The taskforce believes that there are many excellent services and resources, but it questions student awareness of them.

Assessing the Effectiveness of Resources and Services

The university offices and departments charged with providing services to under-prepared students assess those services regularly. Plymouth Academic Support Services

Dimension Five

(PASS) is funded in part by a federal grant designated to provide services for this population, and assessment is mandated. The Undergraduate Advising Center deals specifically with students in academic difficulty and makes an effort to track every student on WPS (Warning, Probation, or Severance) into successful academic recovery.

Programs and services for honors students are evaluated both formally and informally. Decisions about course offerings are based on much of this data.

There are no specific services for racially or ethnically diverse students.

The “Average” Student

The taskforce recognized resources and services for many students, but we are not sure how students actually access these services or how useful they find them when they do. We discussed the concept that if students *perceive* a lack of support they won't bother to seek it even though it may exist. Conversely, if students perceive a lot of support, the users, and even non-users, see the services as adequate or more than adequate.

Discussion often focused on the value of “just-in-time” orientation rather than front-loading all information during students' first few days on campus. The information should be provided in such a way that students could access it as their individual needs arise.

Evidence:

Overall, Plymouth has done an admirable job of creating structures and initiating policies for “anticipating, diagnosing, and addressing needs” and in providing “services with respect for the students' abilities, backgrounds, interests, and experiences.” Plymouth's strengths are evidenced by its many structures and policies for first-year students.

Structures:

- Academic Advising
Includes Academic Probation Contracts, Advising Help Sessions, Banner Self-Service, Academic Advising Committee, Career Counseling Center
- Counseling Center
- Financial Aid Office

All Students

- Hartman Union and Student Activities: programming for special interests is student initiated and administratively supported. Student Activities has strong relationship ties with student groups representing students with diverse interests and backgrounds
- Health Services
- Honors Programs
- The Honors Council
- Math Activities Center
- Plymouth Academic Support Services (PASS)
- Residential Life Programming
- University Writing Center
- Women and Gender Resources Center

Policies:

- Course Substitution Policy for Students with Disabilities
- Honor Students Early Registration Students with disabilities early registration
- Mid Term Grades for 1st semester 1st year students

Areas of Concern:

- What will happen to orientation services formerly provided by *Introduction to the Academic Community*?
- Academic advising, despite the attention it receives, is uneven.
- **The registrar estimates that up to 50% of first-year students do not receive mid-term grades despite university policy.**
- Communication with first-year students is uneven. Information is generally available, but students don't know how, or simply don't bother, to access it.
- There is a lack of organized concerted effort on behalf of racially or ethnically diverse students.

Recommendations:

- Identify students needing services and develop appropriate interventions that will allow for assessment and program modification.

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- Institute an evaluation of academic advising. If possible, examine a relationship between advising and student success and persistence.
- Determine where information that was part of the *Introduction to the Academic Community* course will go, *i.e.* Registration information, information regarding student support services, instruction in study skills and techniques, and introduction to technology and library skills, etc.
- Examine techniques to encourage faculty to submit mid-term grades. Educate faculty to the importance of mid-term grades for student success and persistence of at risk students.
- Establish an office responsible for international and/or racial/ethnic minority students.
- Examine the issue of student communication, and “just-in-time” information resources. What are the best ways to communicate important information to at-risk students? Should there be redundant communication techniques? Is orientation enough?
- Encourage the efforts of the Honors Program, and examine techniques that may work with other student populations.
- Develop some definite policies and processes for encouraging the retention and persistence of undeclared students.

Engagement

Engagement

Foundations institutions engage students, both in and out of the classroom, in order to develop attitudes behaviors, and skills consistent with the desired outcomes of higher education and the institution's philosophy and mission.

An explicit goal of first-year instruction across the curriculum, engagement promotes intellectual curiosity and excitement. Engagement is also the basis for out-of-class learning and development. Whether in or out of the classroom, engagement promotes critical thinking, lifelong learning, moral and spiritual development, and civic responsibility

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Dimension Six

The Current Situation:

First-Year Pedagogies of Engagement

The taskforce discussed at length what engagement might be and established a working definition. A pedagogy of non-engagement, for example, would be the traditional historical model of pure lecture – the choice of engagement being left entirely to the student. We ultimately defined pedagogies of engagement in a very general way: activities used in and out of class which require students to *act and reflect* on their actions.

The questions remain, how do we measure this? Would one professor's definition of active learning be the same as another's? It might be interesting to list some specific pedagogies of engagement and find a way to measure them. The experiences of our students are clearly quite varied. Judging from their responses, faculty generally believe themselves to be very engaging, but perhaps faculty were not the ones we should have asked.

We asked for input from four departments offering courses to large numbers of first-year students. The English Department, which has an active mentoring program for English Composition, states that pedagogies of engagement are “central to EN1200.” Given the structure and the culture of this course at Plymouth, this is highly likely.

Psychology also reports a high level of active learning citing such examples as oral presentation, group discussions, administering and discussing standardized instruments (e.g. depression scales, and sensation seeking scales), heuristic approaches, and polarization and classical conditioning exercises.

History, reports interesting approaches such as making students examine and analyze primary documents. One such exercise related to finding advertisements in newspapers from the 19th century in which men sought the return of their wives or announced that they were no longer responsible for the debts incurred by their wives. [Mainly to claim that the husband was no longer responsible for the debts run up.] Classes are dominated by a lecture format interspersed with discussion, itself a form of active learning.

The faculty teaching biology took exception to our excluding the required lab portion of the class from our

Engagement

rating scale, but the taskforce was trying to compare similar classroom experiences across disciplines. In support of pedagogies of engagement, they listed projects outside of class; in-class presentations; student-moderated discussions using examples from personal experiences; humor; willingness to carry discussions into uncharted territory; guest speakers; and references to the active learning taking place in labs.

Clearly, there was some disagreement about what constitutes active learning among disciplines. It became clear to the committee that what most faculty might intuitively regard as constituting active learning is not the same active learning described in the current literature on the subject. And, in most cases even faculty who embrace active learning use very few of the vast number of active learning techniques proven to enhance learning.

Departments rate themselves highly with regard to active learning pedagogies, but how do we reconcile faculty perception with student perception as shown on Plymouth's low engagement scores on the National Survey of Student Engagement?

Plymouth needs more discussion of active learning strategies among all departments; some faculty do engage students, some do not. Clearly, given the evidence for improved learning in classes using active learning strategies, there is ample reason to pursue the issue.

Out-of-Class Activities and Plymouth's Mission

Clearly, if the learning objectives are not clearly understood and embraced the chance of meeting them is lessened. The new first-year seminar goes a long way to describing specific learning goals (*i.e.*, critical thinking, research and technology skills, *etc.*), and perhaps this can be used as a point of departure for developing learning objectives that are known and accepted by the entire institution. A well-accepted first-year philosophy as discussed in Dimension One would be a natural location to promote these learning objectives.

Residential life has more to do with the dimension's "*lifelong learning, moral and spiritual development, and civic responsibility.*" Residential life focuses on maturational issues and civic responsibilities rather than specifically on classroom learning. Residential Life in conjunction with the Hartman Union offers a myriad of activities that may address the issues of engagement. The

Dimension Six

mere fact that Residential Life has an explicit mission statement addressing civic responsibility speaks well for this division.

Athletic activities inspire the participants' engagement in team spirit, time management, confidence building, and health, to list just a few. Thus, they are quite effective in engaging the students who participate as well as the students who attend athletic events. Student athletes also involve themselves in numerous outreach projects including the Cancer Walk, Homelessness Week, moving students into dorms on the first day of the semester, and many other service activities. On the larger scale, we believe the existence of intercollegiate athletics develops pride in the institution. These activities alone create engagement and allow students the opportunity to connect with other students, faculty, and staff in an out-of-the-classroom setting. The Athletic Policy statement in the *Faculty Handbook* speaks to this issue in greater detail.

The Harman Union, the Student Senate, and many of the clubs tied to specific academic majors promote many activities in the same way that intercollegiate athletics does, and they provide many activities to promote engagement. We can demonstrate institutional support and efforts at leadership training by specifically noting the Leadership Effectiveness and Development Seminar; the Nicaragua Club; more than \$40,000 spent to send students to professional development seminars across the country; service learning orientation offered to first-year students one week before classes begin; and much more.

In the past, cultural activities have received a fair amount of attention through the annual first-year themes. Speakers, exhibits, and other activities are numerous and last throughout the year. It is up to the faculty and the students whether they avail themselves of these. With the new General Education Program, there was some question as to how the first-year theme would be incorporated into future semesters.

Students and Civic Engagement

While there are internships that focus on providing structured opportunities for students to practice the habits of civic engagement, the taskforce felt this number was low in proportion to the number of students who are involved in career-oriented internships. While there are some classes

Engagement

providing excellent opportunities for students to practice the habits of civic engagement, they are not the norm. The co-curriculum, on the other hand, provides many opportunities for civic engagement: Alternate Spring Break, March-of-Dimes, Hunger and Homelessness Week, Angel Tree, and Pride and Service to the Community (PSC) Day are just a few. In addition, there are many on-going programs promoting civic engagement. Among these are Service Learning, a community service floor in a residence hall, the *Service Spotlight* publication, PSU Volunteers, Civic Scholars, AmeriCorps Education Award Program, and even work-study. More than 6,000 hours of community service were recorded last year alone. For our purposes it would be useful to know how many of these hours were clocked by first-year students.

Our New Hampshire location gives us the advantage, every four years, of having every presidential candidate visit the campus. In the area of co-curriculum many campus activities end events involve outreach to the community. Among these, we can name National History Day drawing students from all over the state; first-year education classes that include observation and participation in local classrooms and at our Child Development and Family Center; our national Medieval Forum involves many students and gives them the opportunity to interact with medieval scholars from across the country. Many students are involved in our very active theater programs, e.g. “Mail to the Chief” written by students.

Evidence:

The faculty believes itself to be honest, open, caring, and engaging. They report themselves to be open to change, committed to solid teaching, and willing to try new pedagogies. Most faculty care very much about teaching. Many believe they employ deliberate pedagogical techniques to engage students, and some believe they use less deliberate pedagogies which are not appreciably less engaging.

- Advising
- Annual Faculty Reports (first-year experience)
“How do we increase student engagement?”
- Athletics
- Campus Ministries

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- Community Service Learning Center
- Faculty Handbook on Athletics (page 110)
- Frost Faculty Center for Learning and Teaching Excellence
- HUB Programs and Activities, *e.g.*, PSC Day
- Lamson Library
- Medieval Forum
- Orientation activities covering civic responsibility
- Programs specific to academic departments
- Residential Life requires students to read and sign a document agreeing to the “civic” responsibilities of life on campus.
- Student Evaluations

Areas of Concern:

We recognize the need to involve our students in a discussion of the many communities they represent: dorm, university, community, national, and world. Plymouth would do well to support and encourage increasingly greater levels of learning in which students are given the chance to execute the process that experts use in the field of their interest. For example, science student should be given the opportunity to conduct the scientific method in a self-directed way. The degree to which any single course seeks to accomplish this should be influenced by the role that course plays in the entire degree program a student is in. In the same way Academic Affairs and Student Affairs need to work in cooperation toward specific, as yet unidentified, common goals to promote engagement of Plymouth’s students, faculty, and staff. The conclusion seems to be that we’re trying many initiatives to increase engagement, and yet we seem to be failing.

- Specific college-wide learning objectives are not clearly identified.
- There appears to be a lack of buy-in to the idea that every department needs to work toward common university goals.
- Active learning is not sufficiently understood or employed by many faculty. The campus needs an ongoing discussion of active learning and its advantages.

Engagement

Recommendations:

- Work on an institutional definition of engagement and give concrete examples to help students understand what to expect and help faculty know how to engage.
- Identify specific first-year learning objectives and ask all departments to subscribe to them. Find ways to get the entire campus to promote these learning objectives. Engage the campus in a discussion of the value of active learning practices.
- Find meaningful ways to reward students and faculty who model engagement
- Use the results of the National Survey of Student Engagement to plan for improvement.

Dimension Six

Diversity

Diversity

Foundations Institutions ensure that all first-year students experience diverse ideas, worldviews, and peoples as a means of enhancing their learning and preparing them to become members of pluralistic communities.

Whatever their demographic composition, institutions structure experiences in which students interact in an open and civil community with people different from themselves, reflect on ideas and values different from those they currently hold, and explore their own cultures and the cultures of others.

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Dimension Seven

The Current Situation:

There is agreement that the institution offers exposure to diverse world views, but the group's belief is that exposure is up to individual instructors. The lack of an organized approach to the issue may be what's holding Plymouth back in this area.

The new general education program requires six credits in "Self and Society." However, these are taken in the first two years and are therefore not strictly a first-year experience. The new general education program also requires a global element in the major, but this too is not required in the first year.

The diversity scholar and other faculty members program various events to raise awareness of diversity issues. This year these have included programs on "Globalization in the Arts," and "The New African Experience" series; a visiting artist-in-residence from Jamaica; a series of student focus groups with themes of race, ethnicity, disability, spirituality, gender and sexual orientation, and commuter and nontraditional students; several workshops; and numerous invited visits to individual classrooms. The diversity scholar and the President's Commission on Diversity each maintain a diversity webpage. The President's Commission on Diversity manages the diversity-window displays in the campus bookstore, handles diversity-related crises as they arise, sponsors diversity-related speakers, and so on.

The Sidore Lecture Series frequently focuses on diversity issues, and the First-Year Council promotes an annual campus-wide theme relating to the "Global Mosaic." The intention is that this theme and a common reading will give the campus a diversity theme focus for the year. Every year the Foreign Language Department sponsors an international week. Unfortunately, these approaches are often sketchy and superficial, and they are directed to all students and not specifically to first-year students.

Most white first-year students could easily go through the year without talking with any people of color, whether they be peers or faculty or visitors to campus. In addition, the university does not currently work to highlight the kinds of diversity that we do have on campus, *e.g.*, socioeconomic

Diversity

background, sexual orientation, disability, *etc.*, and so in general, most first-year students are not encouraged to think about diversity during their daily interactions with others.

Though our first-year theme and common reading are sometimes the only guaranteed exposure to diversity during the first year, there is a lot of skepticism about how well these two programs work. Many of the theme events focus around food, which—in isolation as it is usually experienced—is a superficial and degrading way to deal with ethnicity. The way the common reading is haphazardly integrated into our one-credit first-year experience course (if it is integrated at all) ends up strengthening the idea that minority perspectives are an afterthought, not part of the real curriculum – just something to sprinkle in where time permits. In addition, the rhetoric of “celebration” officially invoked in much of our written press and at many of our events makes it difficult to find space to discuss uncomfortable issues such as power and prejudice. We spend too much time on the easy side of diversity: eating hummus, watching African drummers, or reading an excerpt from a book by a person from another culture. But we don’t have many institutionally-supported opportunities for talking to one another, debating, looking at privilege or racism or homophobia. In order to earn the celebrations, our community has to work a little harder and do more of the work; more of our programs should point us in this direction.

PSU needs a person whose job it is to coordinate all of the diversity-related programs on campus. In addition, all of the diversity-related groups should have a home, contact with the coordinator, and administrative support. We need to have a better institutional plan or protocol for how we teach diversity, as opposed to just having a bunch of different groups all with unrelated missions. The diversity scholar is a good start, but the position currently seems too undefined and its future too unstable to really define its expectations.

As a university, our best bet for working on this issue is to start with the curriculum. Instead of taking an “add women and stir” approach, we need to rethink our subjects from the ground up, placing diversity at the center of our methodologies and content. Perhaps the diversity scholar position could be more honed to work on this kind of

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curricular development. And perhaps the new general education program can be on the forefront of this kind of shift. Unfortunately, the “D” designation, in general education’s Connections component, runs the risk of placing diversity-related content into a few specific courses thus permitting the rest of the curriculum to evade the issue.

One of Plymouth’s great strengths in this area is the tidal wave of new energy being directed at this issue. There is a very active group of faculty aggressively working to develop and advance the university’s vision regarding diversity. Last year, a small group of faculty from the President’s Commission on Diversity worked to create a mission statement. Its key ideas were then incorporated into the new university mission. Tied in with that effort have been parallel efforts to increase programming, create new faculty positions, raise faculty awareness, increase opportunities for faculty development, police university procedure, and educate the campus. Despite the fact that this group of faculty is sometimes frustrated and disheartened by the amount of work to be done, they are an increasingly visible block, willing to take on leadership roles and effect a change in the climate. Combine this force with the force of our activist students, and it’s really quite exciting. Our student senate, gay and lesbian student group, newly-formed women’s advocacy group, and multicultural association are all active and committed to raising awareness regarding diversity. The general tone on campus is energetic, and many in our community are deeply committed to this issue.

The minority student population at PSU is 3%. The minority faculty population is even lower. Students can study abroad, but the percentage of those who choose to do so is small. Occasionally there are visiting speakers and faculty. Efforts to hire a more diverse faculty and to matriculate more diverse students are ongoing.

There aren’t scheduled, formal occasions at which students might reflect on their random diversity encounters. If there are events or crises, the institution sometimes sponsors a specific event to address the issue. A few classes may allow for occasions to talk and reflect.

We know of one assignment that allows students to explore their own culture in relation to others, but this class is taken only by education majors. Some composition instructors

Diversity

may encourage their students to explore their own cultures in relation to others, as may some courses in anthropology, history, literature, and sociology. However, there are no assurances that a significant percentage of students will have this opportunity.

Evidence for Diversity:

- Black History Month Activities
- The Diversity Scholar
- Equal Opportunity Laws
- International Students
- The President's Commission on Diversity
- The President's Commission on the Status of Women
- Sexual Harassment Training
- Women's History Month Activities
- Women's Services and Gender Resources Center
- AHANA and Latina/o Scholarships
- National Student Exchange
- Multicultural Student Society
- Multiple Exhibits and Talks Sponsored by the Karl Drerup Gallery
- The Task Force on Homophobia
- ALSO (Alternative Life-Style Organization)
- The International Students' Association
- Various Minor Programs: Women's Studies Council, Latin American Studies Council

Areas of Concern:

- There is no organization of exposure to diversity. There are many efforts, but there is no coordination. The lack of coordination hinders our progress.
- Our current efforts on diversity seem to focus on the interests of the faculty rather than the interests of the students.
- Is the faculty committed to this issue? How can we measure the extent to which faculty recognize the importance of this issue.\
- There is not enough minority representation on the faculty.

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Recommendations:

- First-Year Council or Dean of the First Year needs to examine the ways in which students are exposed to diversity.
- Examine the issues of diversity that students are interested in.
- Begin with encouraging in and out-of-class discussions about how our own individual students feel “different.”
- Faculty development programs are needed to give faculty ideas of where issues of diversity might be included in their courses
- Post materials that might be used in diversity on the diversity webpage.
- Continue efforts to hire minorities in the faculty.
- Continue efforts to enroll minorities in the student population. Increase the involvement of faculty in student recruitment efforts.

Roles and Purposes

Foundations Institutions promote student understanding of the various roles and purposes of higher education, both for the individual and for society, and support the development of relevant personal goals.

First-year students are provided opportunities to examine their motivation and goals with regard to higher education in general and to their own college/university. They are exposed to the value of general education as well as to the value of more focused, in-depth study of a field or fields of knowledge (i.e., the major). In general, institutions help students realize a variety of balance points: for example, learning for personal enrichment; learning to prepare for future employment; learning to prepare for citizenship, and learning to serve the public good.

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Dimension Eight

The Current Situation:

Introduction to the Academic Community

Until recently, Introduction to the Academic Community (IAC), the one-credit first-year experience course was the primary vehicle for conveying the concept of educational roles and purposes. Discussion of the roles and purposes of higher education was a mandatory part of the syllabus, but there was no mechanism for assessing the results. The examination of personal goals and the motivation for pursuing higher education were also on the syllabus for IAC, but the practice was variable here too.

Academic Advising

It has not been on the agenda of the faculty advisors, a second possible vehicle, to discuss the roles and purposes of higher education. The immediate need of registering students often takes precedence over other concerns. The consensus of the taskforce was that some advisors, particularly those dealing with undecided students, devote a considerable amount of time to the subject. But, with no means of assessment, it's not possible to comment on the extent to which advisors discuss the roles and purposes of education with their advisees.

Orientation

The Student Affairs Division offers four orientation sessions regarding residential life, technology, financial aid, and co-curricular activities, however the focus is not scholarly. The role of faculty in orientation needs to be emphasized and articulated. It should be an expectation that faculty be available to assist in the June orientation programs. Currently, it's a challenge to secure enough faculty participation from each department to coordinate the schedule planning and registration of new students. Likewise, the emphasis of academic life (roles and purposes) is only minimally covered in orientation. Perhaps a new program element needs to be created to address some of those "readiness" and "why are you here" questions. In any event, for faculty to be on board, the message is going to need to come from the highest level of the administration. Unfortunately, the current orientation process only reinforces the university's promotional literature which makes very little mention of academic expectation.

Roles and Purposes

Co-Curricular Programming

Co-Curricular programming, particularly the LEADS (Leadership Effectiveness and Development Seminar) focuses on skill building for students who want this experience. The taskforce believes the opportunities for examining the roles and purposes of education are present in a wide variety of forms in co-curricular programming, but the extent to which students take advantage of them is unknown.

The taskforce has reservations regarding the future of providing opportunities for first-year students to explore the rationale and to understand the structure of general education. This is an important area in need of very special attention.

Evidence:

- Academic Achievement Reception
- Academic Advising
- Communication with students via departments
- Convocation (especially the keynote speaker)
- Courses
 - Courses in the Major
 - First-Year Seminar
 - Introduction to the Academic Community
 - Introduction to the major courses
 - Pre-Professional Courses
- General Education Program
- The Integrated Packet
- The Mission Statement
- Orientation
- Summer Orientation Motivational Speakers
- White Mountain Wellness Orientation

Areas of Concern:

- The enthusiasm for general education has waned in the past twenty years. Discussion of the roles and purposes of education are no longer the focus they once were. However, there is hope and an opportunity for renewal with the new general education program
- There is little or no assessment of student thought in this area.

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- The structures that are in place for discussing the issue seem to be ineffective.

Recommendations:

- A letter of welcome to potential majors and to those who declare a major. Departments might keep track of newly declared majors and send them a letter of welcome similar to the letter sent to majors in the summer. A “reflection sheet” prepared for each major that would cause students to reflect on the role of education in their department.
- Ongoing assessment of the new general education program with regard to the discussion of the roles and purposes of education.
- Include in the syllabi of general education courses the general education goals that the course is meeting.
- Find ways to keep this discussion concerning the importance of roles and purposes going among faculty.
- Find ways to bring extra-curricular and curricular activities closer together in order to have Academic Affairs and Student Affairs speak with one voice about education, especially during the orientation process.
- Find ways to communicate the importance of the roles and purposes of higher education to undecided students.

Improvement

Foundations Institutions conduct assessment and maintain associations with other institutions and relevant professional organizations in order to achieve ongoing first-year improvement.

This assessment is specific to the first year as a unit of analysis—a distinct time period and set of experiences, academic and otherwise, in the lives of students. It is also linked systemically to the institutions' overall assessment. Assessment results are an integral part of institutional planning, resource allocation, decision making, and ongoing improvement of programs and policies as they affect first-year students. As part of the enhancement process and as a way to achieve ongoing improvement, institutions are familiar with current practices at other institutions as well as with research and scholarship on the first college year.

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Patrick May, Social Science Faculty
Alice Staples, Lamson Library Faculty

Dimension Nine

The Current Situation:

How does Plymouth place students in appropriate courses?

We have two campus-wide initiatives wherein baseline data are used to determine course placement. The Admission Office has a formula for ranking students into quartiles. The honors program invites students from the upper quarter of admitted students. In this way, we are using high school grade point averages, and SAT scores among other measures in order to “place” students in the honors program. The other example where we use baseline data is the placement of students in MA 107-108 (Introduction to College Algebra) who did not enter the institution with the required three years of high school mathematics. There are several examples where baseline data are used by individual departments for the purpose of placing students appropriately. For example, the Art Department and Music Department require portfolio reviews and auditions. These departments use this information (in some cases) to determine placement “levels.” Likewise, the Foreign Language Department uses high school transcripts to determine foreign language placement. The Education Department requires a writing test of all of its majors. The department uses a writing assessment instrument to determine placement in special section of composition that include special attention and mandatory visits to the University Writing Center.

How do we meet students’ needs for out-of-class academic support?

We do not collect baseline data to determine need for academic support. We do offer services to students, but we rely on students to “self-report.”

We use the NSSE results to get information as to whether we are meeting students’ needs for out-of-class academic support or personal needs. Regarding academic support, last year we conducted an advising survey. Additionally we have an early warning system for first year students (six-week grades).

How do we meet student’ needs for out-of-class personal support?

We do a good job in the personal support area, as Student Affairs has several assessment practices. Although they administer most of their survey instruments to all students, first-year data can be separated. Student Affairs

Improvement

participates in the American College Health Association (ACHA) health questionnaire, the Educational Benchmarking, Inc. (EBI), the CORE alcohol and drug survey. Additionally, Residential Life uses several locally developed needs assessment instruments.

How do we measure first-year outcomes for cognitive development and personal development?

We do track the achievement of each entering class by monitoring grade point averages. However, we have no formal direct assessment of critical thinking or reading and writing skills. Nevertheless, the many surveys listed previously in this document (NSSE, CSXQ, CSEQ, CORE, ACHA, etc.) provide indirect assessment of skill and knowledge attainment. Electronic portfolios and required juried activities provide some evidence of specific program assessment of cognitive development.

How do we use assessment findings to confirm or improve first-year practice?

While we could have more ongoing assessment activities, we make good use of the data that we do collect. We used NSSE results and a General Education Survey to assist in developing and redefining our General Education program. Additionally, we used the NSSE results exclusively (particularly the first-year data) to write a grant funded by the Davis Educational Foundation for Project LAUNCH. This grant helped establish the faculty development center which has been charged with investigating ways to improve the first-year experience, specifically for undeclared students. Student Affairs routinely bases its planning activities on results from the surveys listed above as well as from national research data.

We contribute to the national database by our participation in several national studies, but we have not presented at any conferences or published our findings. Royce Robertson and Irene Cucina will make a presentation on the use of electronic portfolios at the SCT Banner conference this year.

Evidence:

- Standardized Tests
 - American College Health Association (ACHA) health questionnaire
 - Educational Benchmarking, Inc. (EBI)

Dimension Nine

- Core Alcohol and Drug Survey NSSE
- The College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ)
- The College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ)
- Noel/Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory
- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
- Committees
 - Assessment Advisory Group
 - Taskforce on Assessment
 - College Planning Committee
- Departmental Efforts
 - First-Year-Student Surveys
- Policies
 - Early Evaluation (six week grades)
 - General Education Evaluation
- Office of Institutional Research

Areas of Concern:

In general, we are in the early stages of developing a culture of assessment on this campus. Assessment of the first year experience is no different.

One thing we discovered in our conversations was that even in the areas where we are assessing and using the data to make improvements, we are not doing a very good job of disseminating the information. In general, Student Affairs shares the results of their surveys and other assessment activities with pertinent student affairs staff. The same can be said for academic assessment activities. It is not common, for these two groups to share results with each other. We appear to be missing an important link. Student affairs staff certainly have a great effect on students in their academic development, just as faculty are involved with students in their personal development.

Recommendations:

- PSU must develop the assessment procedures for general education. Specifically:
 - Develop a means of measuring development of critical thinking in First-Year Seminar (pre-post test).

Improvement

- Assessment of skills (reading, writing, critical thinking, technological skills)
- We recommend a stronger stance be taken in requiring faculty to submit the “early-warning” six-week grades. This requires a commitment to adequately assess students prior to the sixth week of the semester. Additionally we recommend development of a mechanism that requires advisors to meet with students who appear to be in academic difficulty following six-week grade reports. Perhaps this could coincide better with pre-registration advising.
- We must create a culture of evidence on this campus. Currently assessment is not an “... integral part of institutional planning, resource allocation, and decision making.” Planning activities must begin with evidence of mission or goal achievement.
- We recommend the university institute “Assessment Day.” The Assessment Advisory Group should make recommendations regarding this new requirement. Assessment Day should be mandatory for all students and faculty and should take place approximately in April of each year. Students could report in the morning for general assessment activities which would likely include general education. The afternoon would be reserved for program specific assessment. Academic programs currently struggling to determine how to coax students into participating in program assessment activities can take advantage of this opportunity. Programs may well require annual assessment to demonstrate progress.
- We must create a systematic means of disseminating assessment findings on campus. Additionally, we should formalize educational opportunities to connect Student Affairs and Academic Affairs in this process.

Dimension Nine

Defining First-Year Student Sub-Groups

This report defines PSU's first-year students as all degree-seeking students attending college for the first time in Summer 2002, Fall 2002, Winterim 2003, and Spring 2003; all degree-seeking transfer students attending PSU for the first time in those terms who had fewer than 24 credits earned at their first census date in fall or spring or at the end of the term in summer or Winterim; and all readmitting students in Fall 2002 and Spring 2003 with fewer than 24 credits earned at the census date.

New students and readmits are officially admitted only in fall or spring but may attend prior to that as non-degree-seeking students. Almost all of our first-year students enter in a fall or spring semester. In 2002-2003, no newly admitted first-year student in fall attended first in the previous summer, and only one newly admitted first-year student in spring attended first in the previous Winterim. So, for all practical purposes, new first-year students enter only in fall or spring terms.

Students are counted as officially entering for fall or spring semesters. Their entry status for a particular semester is first-year (1), transfer (2) or readmit (3).

For IPEDS enrollment reports: First-year is "A student who has completed less than the equivalent of one full year of undergraduate work; that is, less

than 30 semester hours (in a 120-hour degree program)..." Similarly, a first-time student is "A student attending any institution for the first time at the undergraduate level, including students enrolled in academic or occupational programs. [The definition] also includes students enrolled in the fall term who attended college for the first time in the prior summer term, and students who entered with advanced standing (college credits earned before graduation from high school). (IPEDS Glossary)

For IPEDS completion reports and graduation rate calculations and for Student Right to Know reporting: the cohort for graduation rate reporting is defined as first-time, full-time degree-seeking students in a fall term. This is essentially the same definition Information Resources uses for Plymouth State retention studies, (IPEDS excludes students withdrawn by the first census date; the university retention study includes these, but this inclusion is under review.)

Effective fall 1998 the number of credits that defined a first-year student decreased from fewer than 30 to fewer than 24. Additionally, we use this number to determine whether a student must enroll in IAC (Seminar). If a transfer student enters with more than 24 credits, they are exempt from taking this course.

This report covers 2002-03 first-year students. The total is 1,215.

First Year Demographics

General Statistics:

- Students who are participants in any intercollegiate athletic team: 141 – 11.6%
- Students who live on campus: 1010 – 83.1%
- Students by gender:

Female	566	46.6%
Male	649	53.4%
- Students by racial/ethnic groups, as appropriate for your campus:

American Indian, Alaskan Native	5	0.4%
Black, non-Hispanic	12	1.0%
Asian or Pacific Islander	12	1.0%
Hispanic	7	0.6%
White, non-Hispanic	1,084	89.2%
Not recorded or would not respond	95	7.8%
- Students receiving financial aid: 948 – 78%
- Students who are enrolled full-time: 1,203 – 99%
- Students who are first-generation college students (“neither parent having earned a college degree” and “no data available on parental enrollment in college”): 675 – 55.6%
- Students who are over the age of 25: 23 – 1.9%

Admission Statistics:

- Number of applicants: 3,667
- Number admitted: 2,586
- 952 paid
- Residency: 485 in-state / 467 out-of-state
- High school academic preparation:
 - 97% have completed Algebra I, II, and Geometry
 - Entering students have taken an average of 2.6 years of a foreign language
- SAT
 - average verbal score: 482
 - average math score: 481
- High School Class Percentile: 54%

Selection of Majors

- Selection of Majors:

Art	33	Health, PE, and REC	88
Business	126	Interdisciplinary	59
Computer Science	23	Mathematics	11
Education	111	Music, Theatre and Dance	31
English	21	Natural Science	46
Foreign Language	4	Philosophy	1

Psychology	35		
Social Science	31		
Social Work	15		
Undecided	316	Lacrosse	44
• Expressed Extra-Curricular Interests		Publications, Literary	115
Baseball	53	Skiing	60
Basketball	56	Soccer	62
Cheerleading	79	Softball	41
Dance	105	Student Government	124
Dramatics, Theater	154	Swimming and Diving	19
Field Hockey	23	Tennis	19
Football	79	Vocal Music	180
Ice Hockey	53	Volleyball	21
Instrumental	159	Wrestling	19
Intramural Athletics	395		

Frequently Taken Courses

- Fine and Performing Arts **54%** took one of six courses:

AH111-10%	AH112-10%	AR120-7%
MU131-10%	TH160-10%	TH272-7%
- Global **54%** of first-year students took one of three courses

AO221-26%	GE102-16%	PO260-12%
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- Historical **65%** of first-year students took one of two courses

HI112-38%	HI113-27%
------------------	------------------
- Literary **65%** of first-year students took **EN130** (Intro to Lit)
- Philosophical **65%** of first-year students took **PY101**
- Quantitative Reasoning **81%** of first-year students took one of two courses

MA220-38%	MA230-43%
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- Scientific **73%** of first-year students took one of four courses

BI101/102-35%	BI211/212-38%
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- Social and Psychological **67%** of first-year students too one of two courses

AO222-21%	PS201-46%
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- Technological **91%** of first-year students took **CS110**

Average Section Size in Introductory Courses

Taking “Introductory” to mean all courses at the 1000-2000 level and excluding sections with enrollments less than 3 (to exclude private lessons, individual enrollments, and the like), the average section size is 22 (rounded from 21.9)

First Year Demographics

In Fall 2003, there were thirty-one courses in which a total of at least fifty first-year students were enrolled on November 6. Here are the courses in order of number of first-year enrolled:

Enrol	Course	Title			
971	IS-1010	Intro to the Academic Comm	79	CD-2000	Introduction to Childhood Stud
590	EN-1200	Composition	78	HI-1130	USHist: Colonial Per - Civ War
324	PS-2010	Introduction to General Psych	74	PS-2050	Life-Span Developmental Psych
234	MA-1500	Mathematics and the Humanities	72	MA-2010	Prob Solvng Algebra Using Tech
225	EN-1300	Introduction to Literature	70	MA-2200	Finite Mathematics
219	CS-1100	Intro to Comps & Their Apps	63	HE-2560	Personal Wellness
164	BU-2450	Principles of Marketing	63	PE-2550	Foundations of Physical Ed
143	SO-2220	Introduction to Sociology	61	HI-1110	Civilization: Ancient & Medievl
124	BU-2480	Business Law	60	GE-1010	The Physical Environment
101	AH-1110	Survey of Art I	59	AR-1100	Drawing I: Object
100	AN-2210	Cultural Anthropology	55	CS-2010	Foundations of Computer Sci
99	BI-2110	Human Anatomy and Physiology I	55	MA-2110	Math in Our World
99	HI-1140	USHist: Recon Era to Present	54	BI-1030	General Biology I Lab
98	BI-2130	Human Anatomy and Phy Lab I	53	BI-1010	General Biology I
95	PY-1030	Thinking Intelligently	51	MA-1800	College Algebra
91	PY-1010	Introduction to Philosophy			

There were 271 sections of these courses with a named primary instructor. Of these 271 sections, tenured faculty taught 80 sections and non-tenured faculty taught 191 sections. **Full-time faculty taught 122 sections and part-time faculty taught 149 sections.**

Including all 1000-2000 level without regard to enrollment:

Taught by tenured:	250	(33%)
Taught by non-tenured:	491	(67%)
Tenure track:	53	
Not tenure track:	438	
Taught by Full-time:	380	(51%)
Taught by Part-time:	361	(48%)

4 YEARS AGO (FY98)		3 YEARS AGO (FY99)		2 YEARS AGO (FY00)		1 YEAR AGO (FY01)		CURRENT YEAR (FY02)	
FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT

NUMBER OF FACULTY

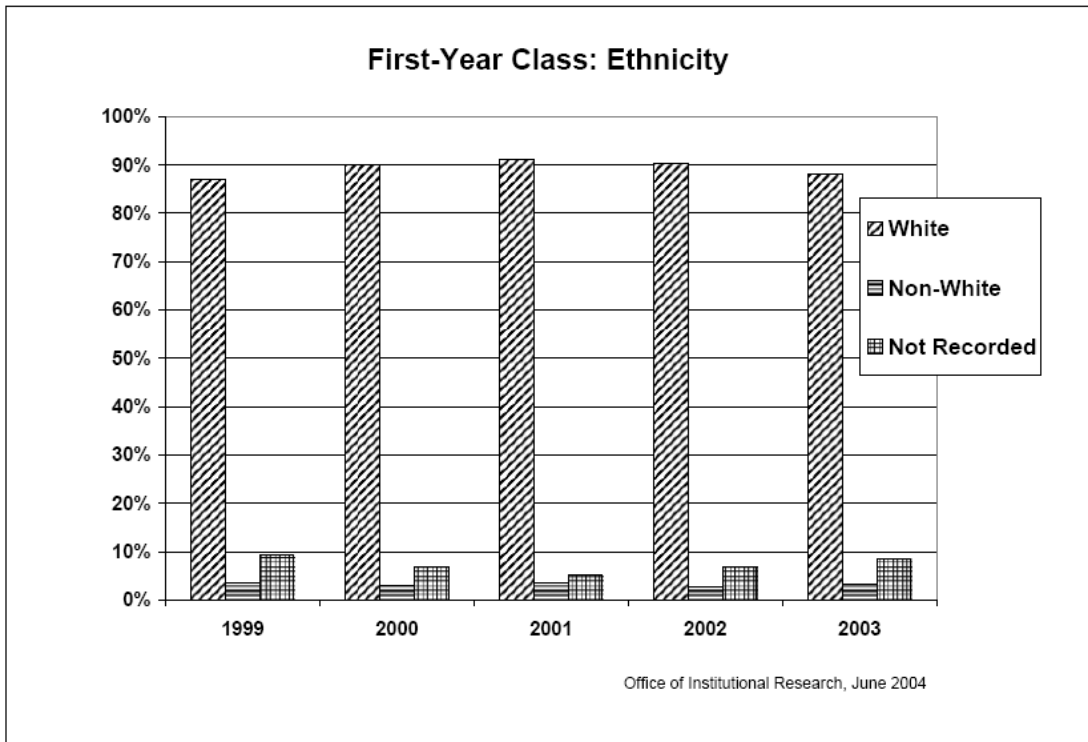
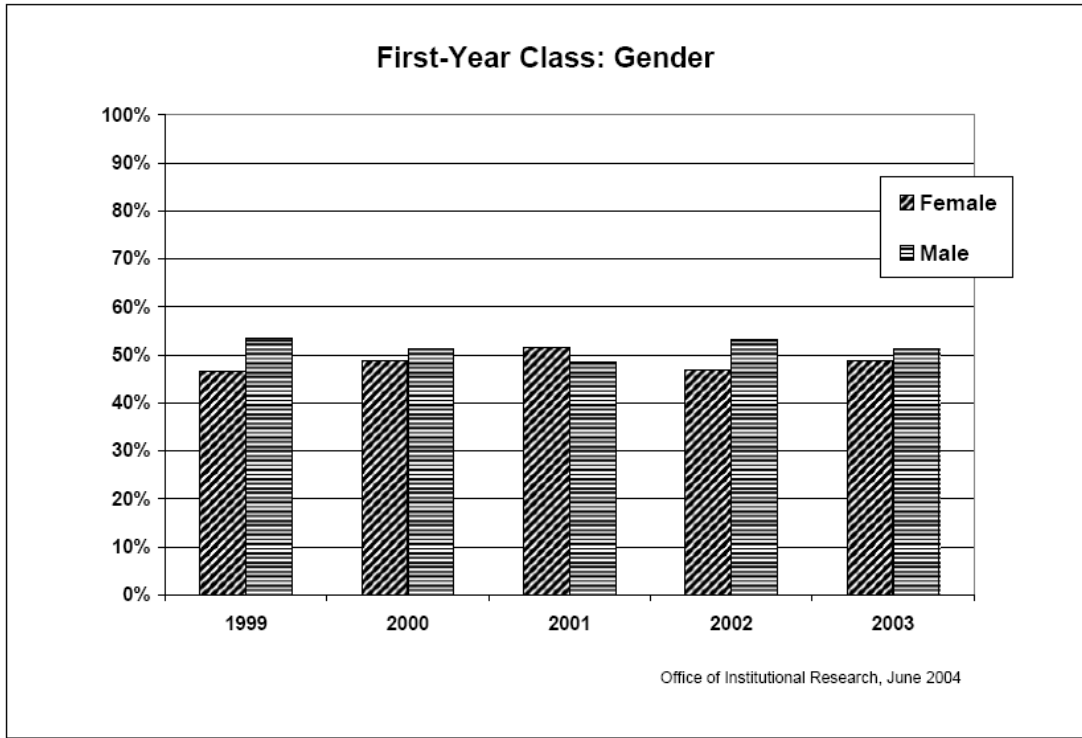
Professor	69		73		71		73		73	
Associate	58		54		54		56		59	
Assistant	25		25		24		24		25	
Instructor	7		4		4		2		0	
Other	8	120	8	133	7	133	9	137	14	134
TOTAL	167	120	164	133	160	133	164	137	171	134

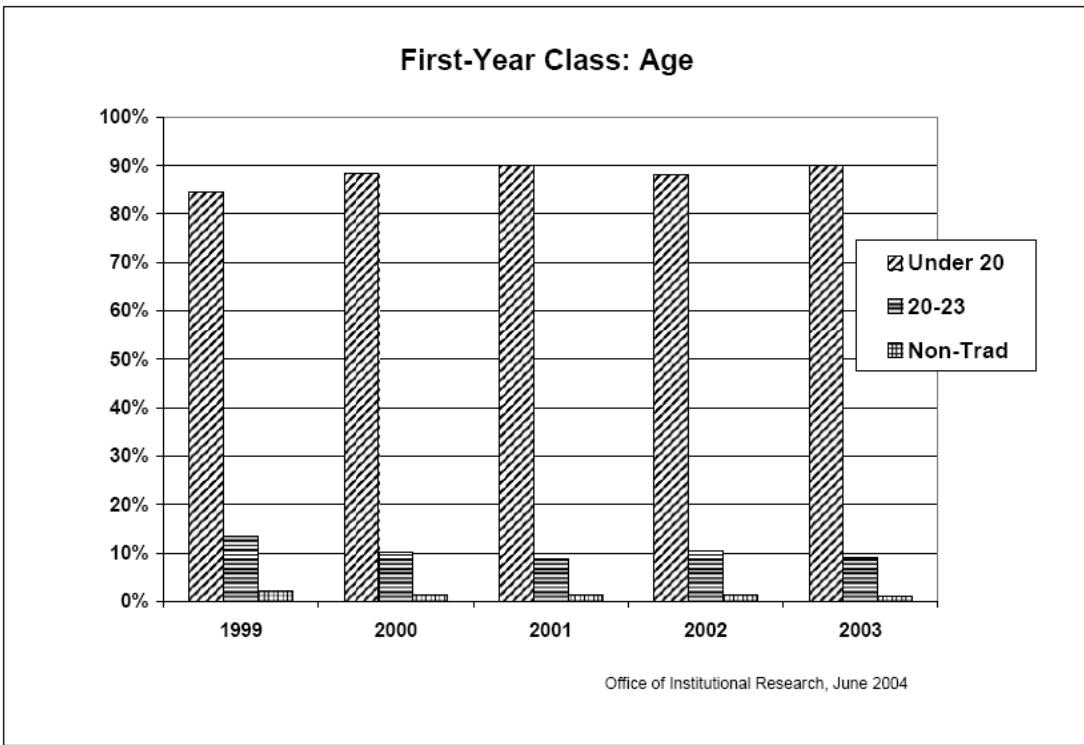
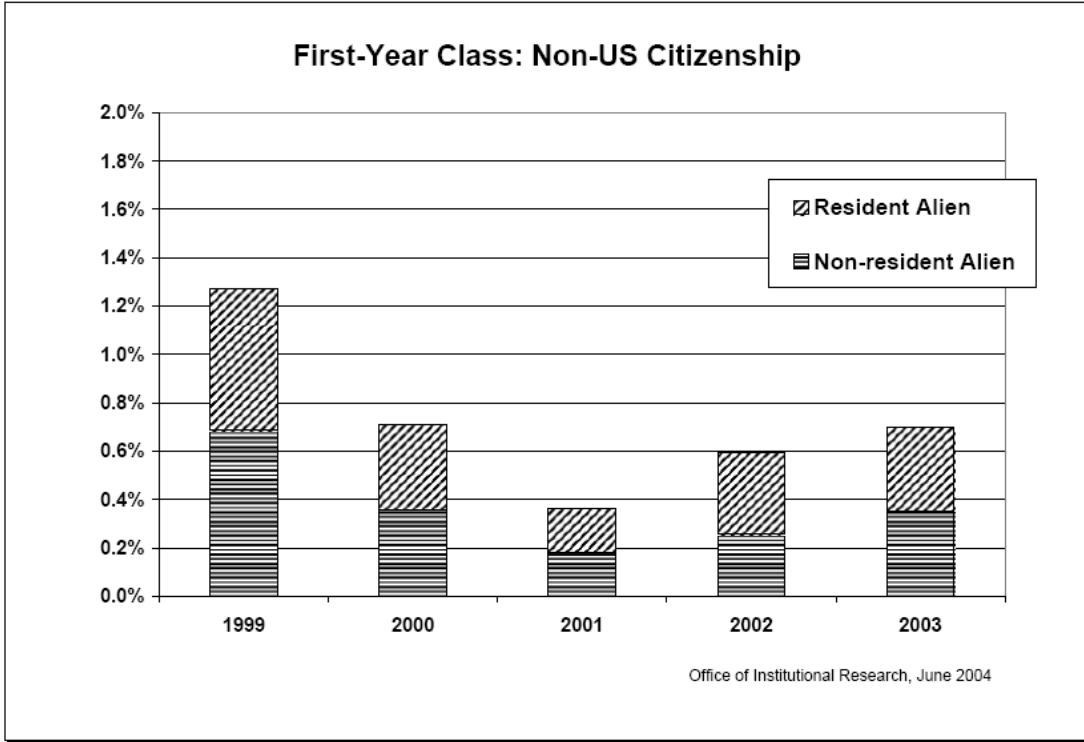
Honor Students

5.5% of the first year students were honor students.

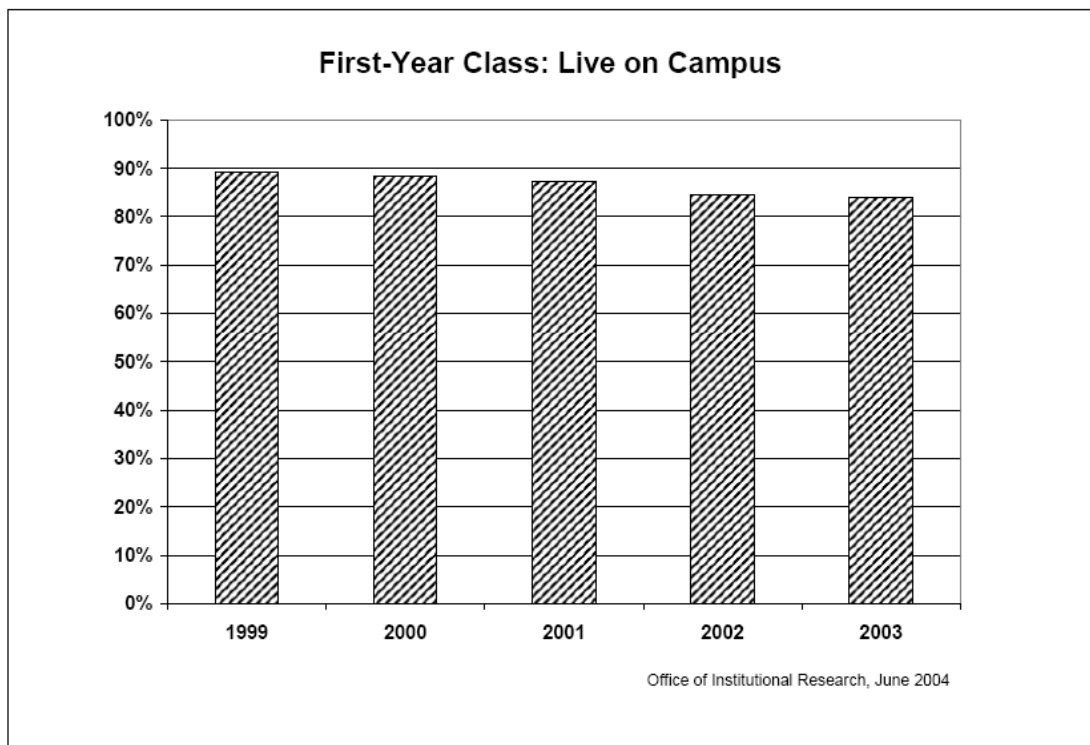
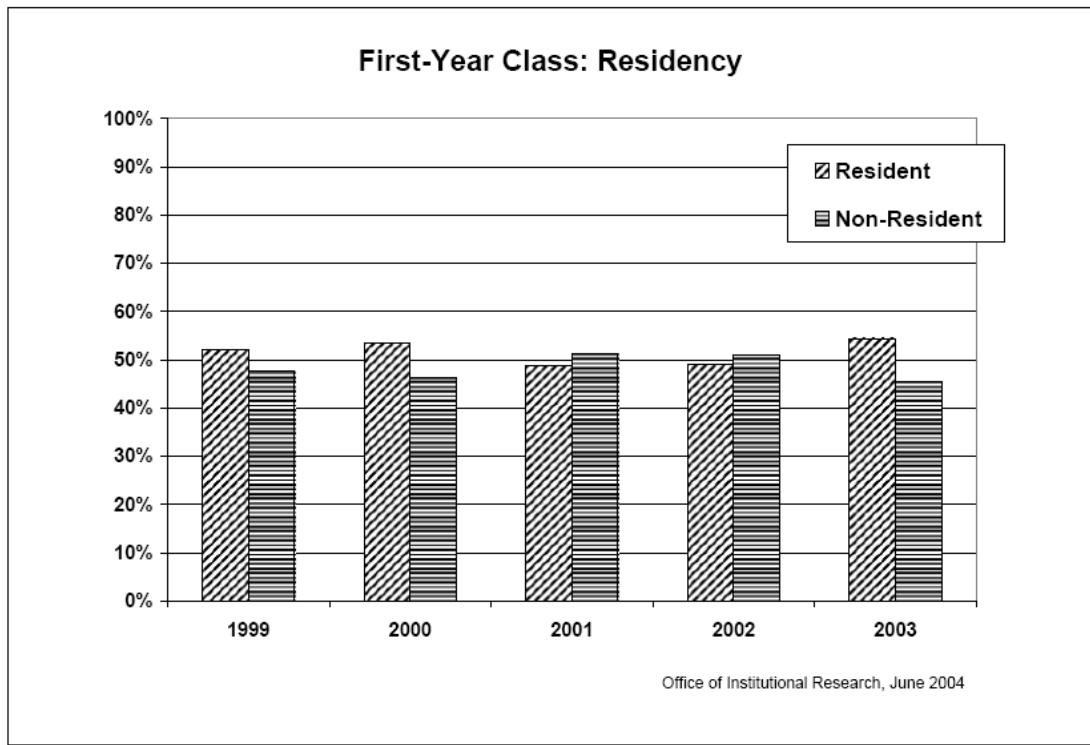
[Prepared by Nick Mathis, Office of Institutional Research November 7, 2003]

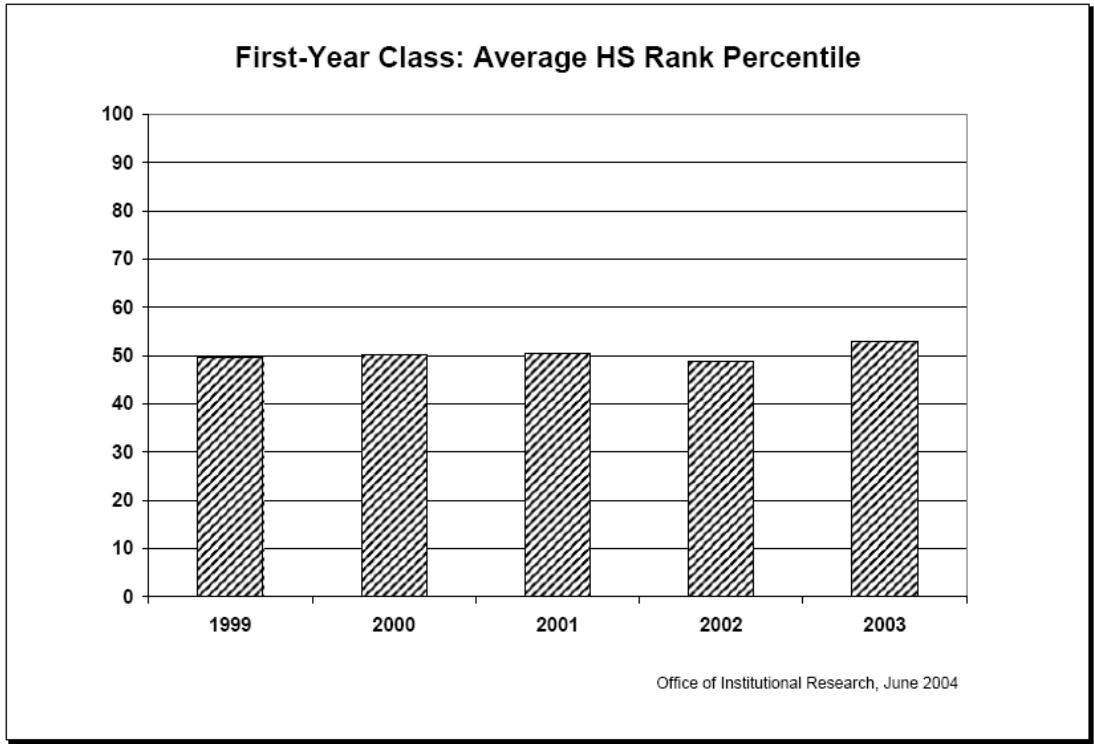
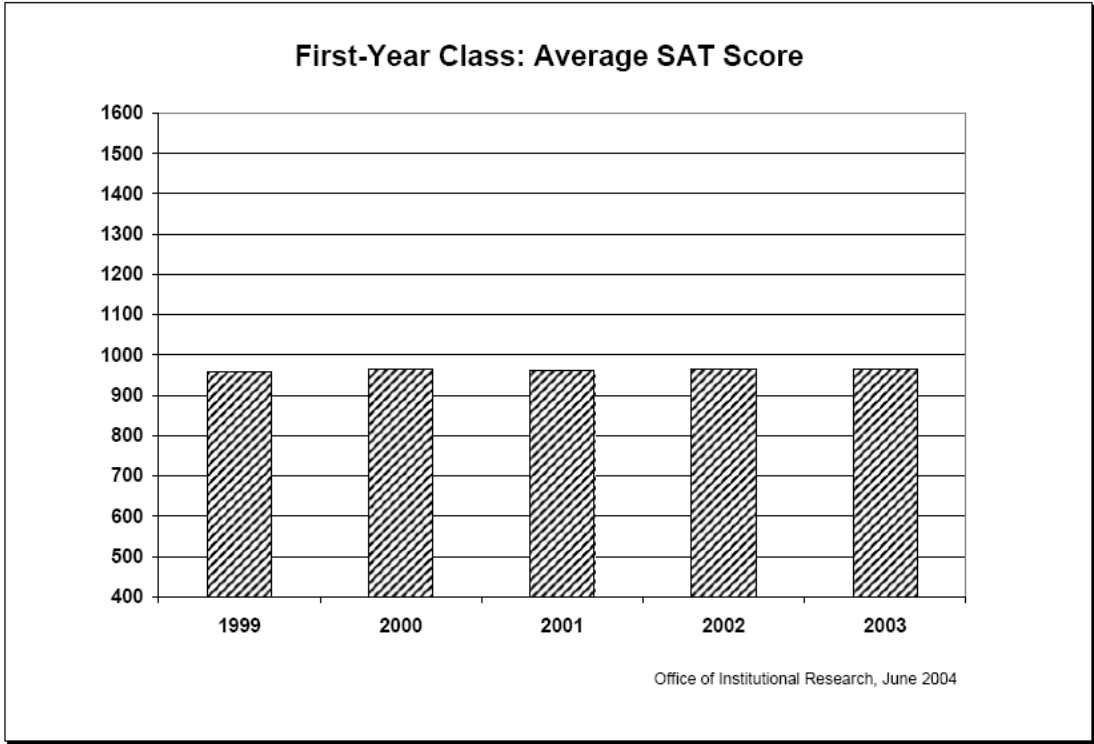
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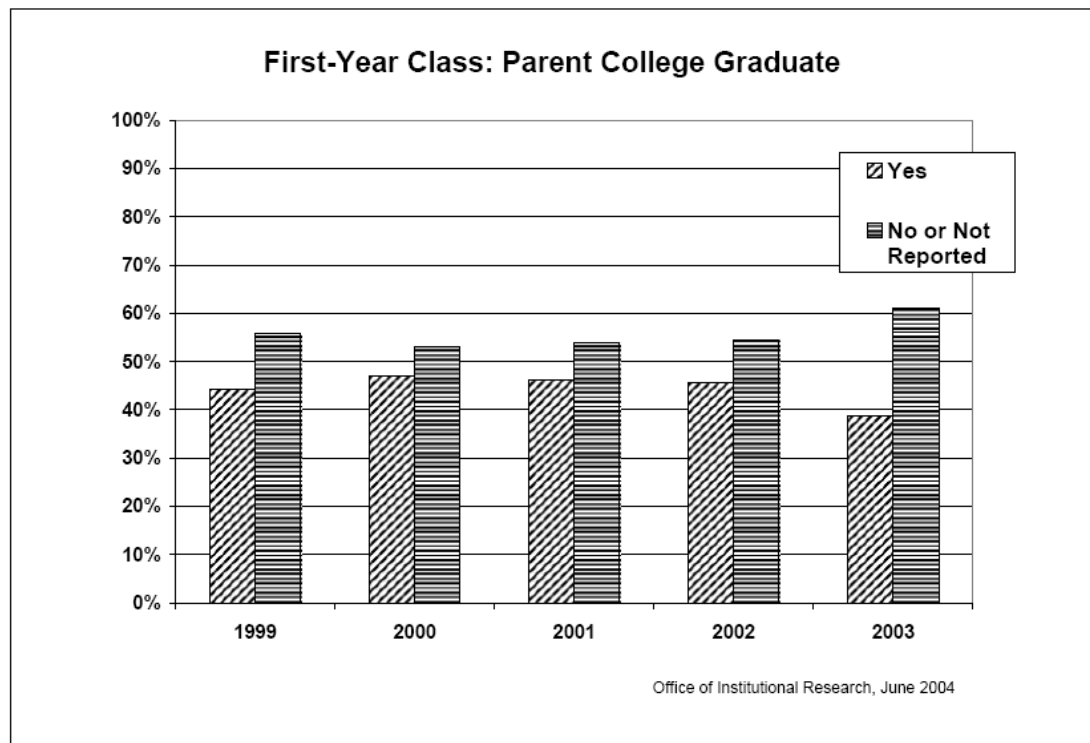
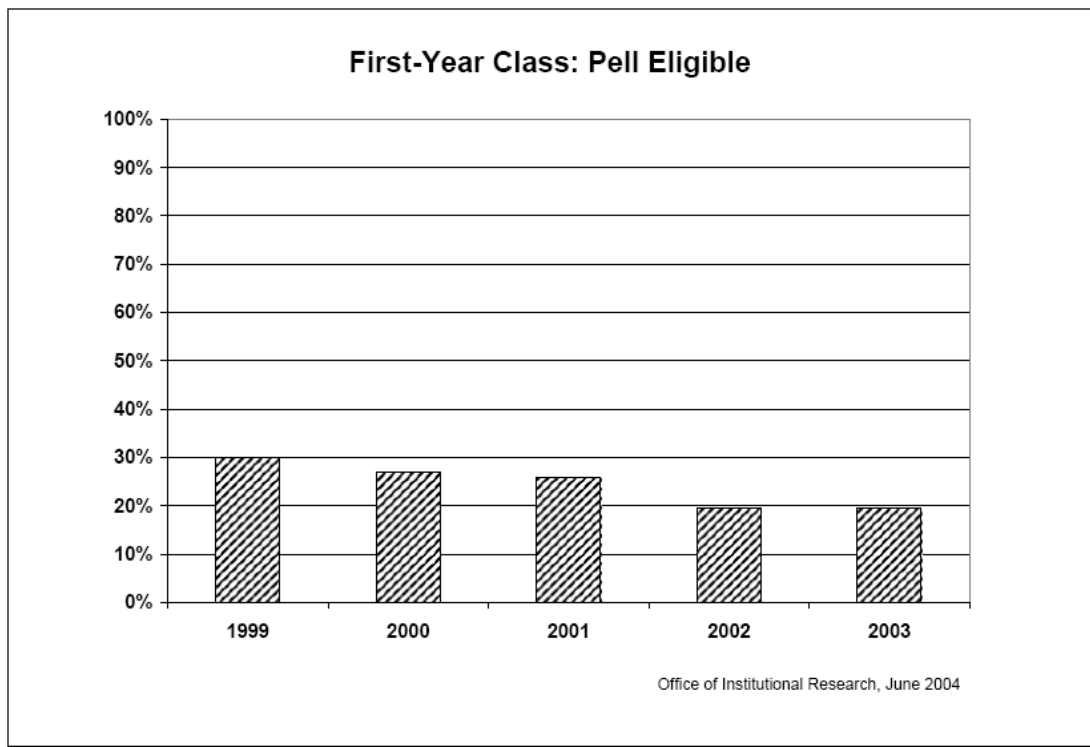


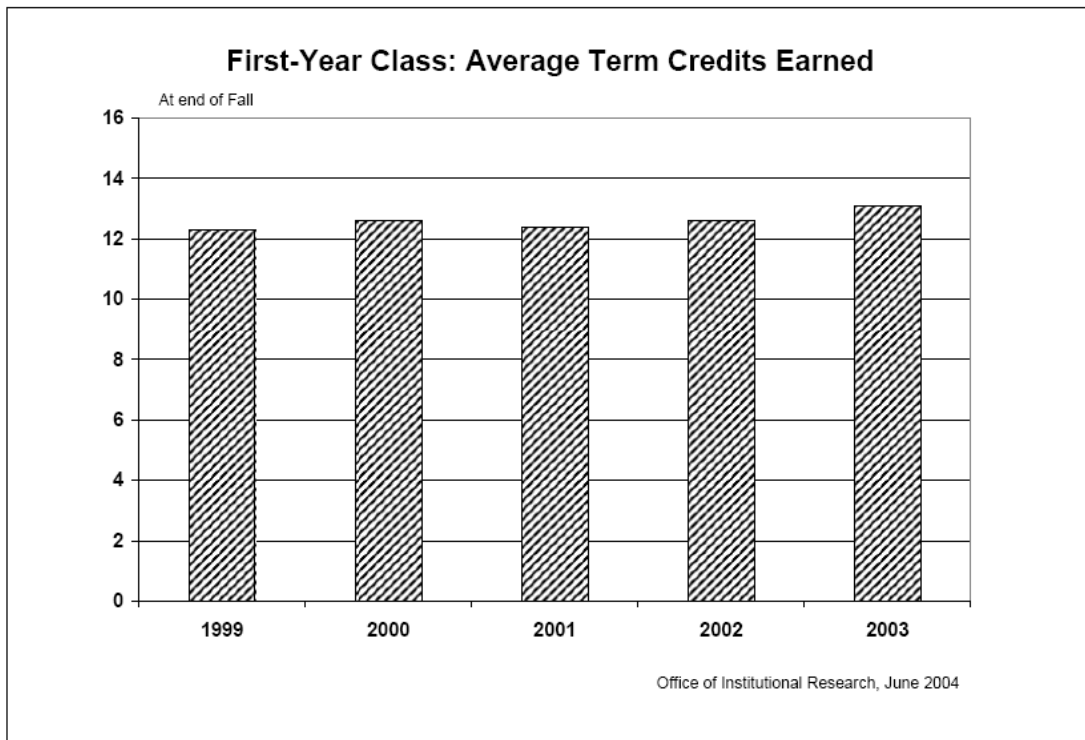
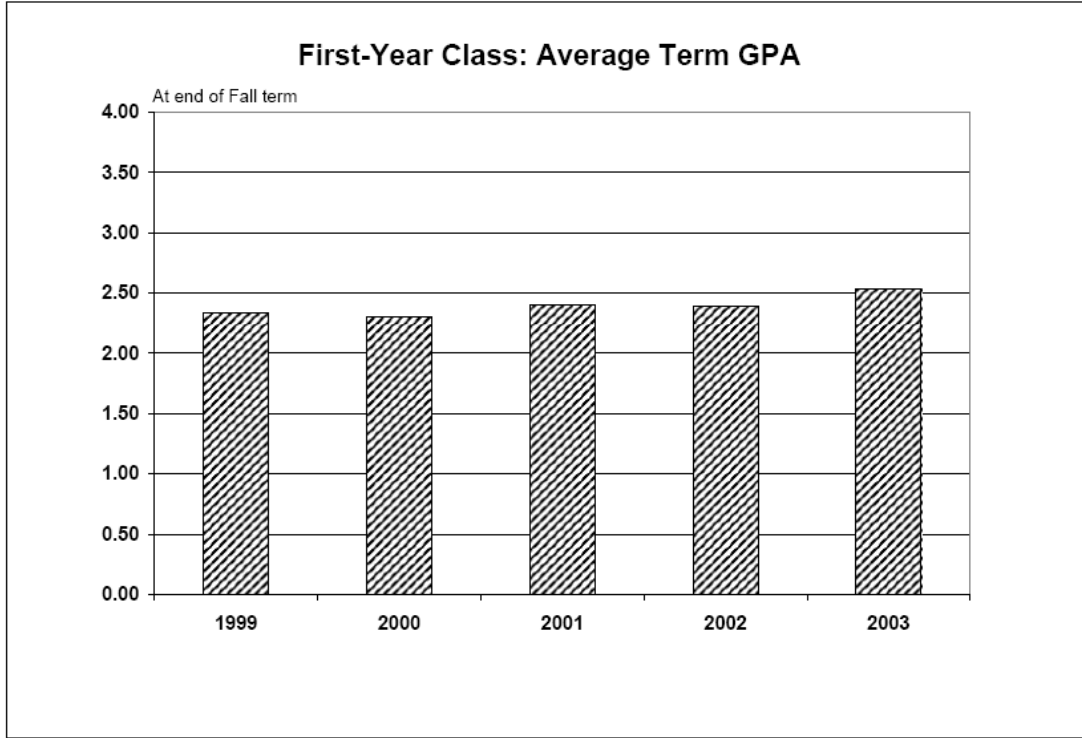
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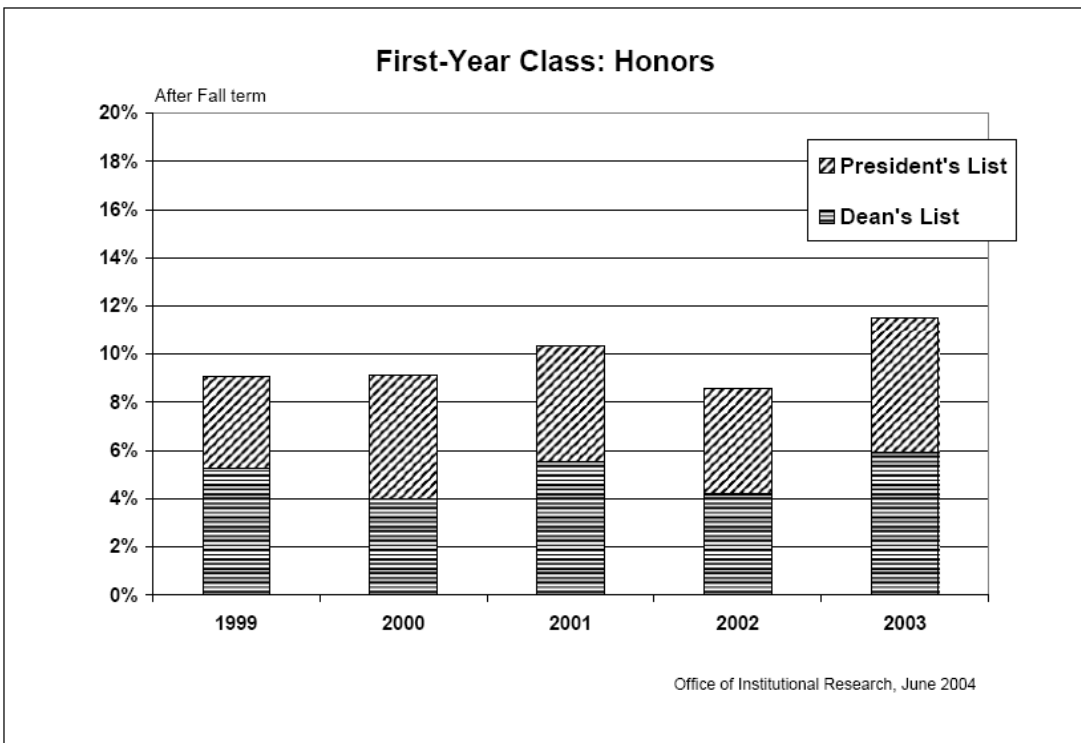
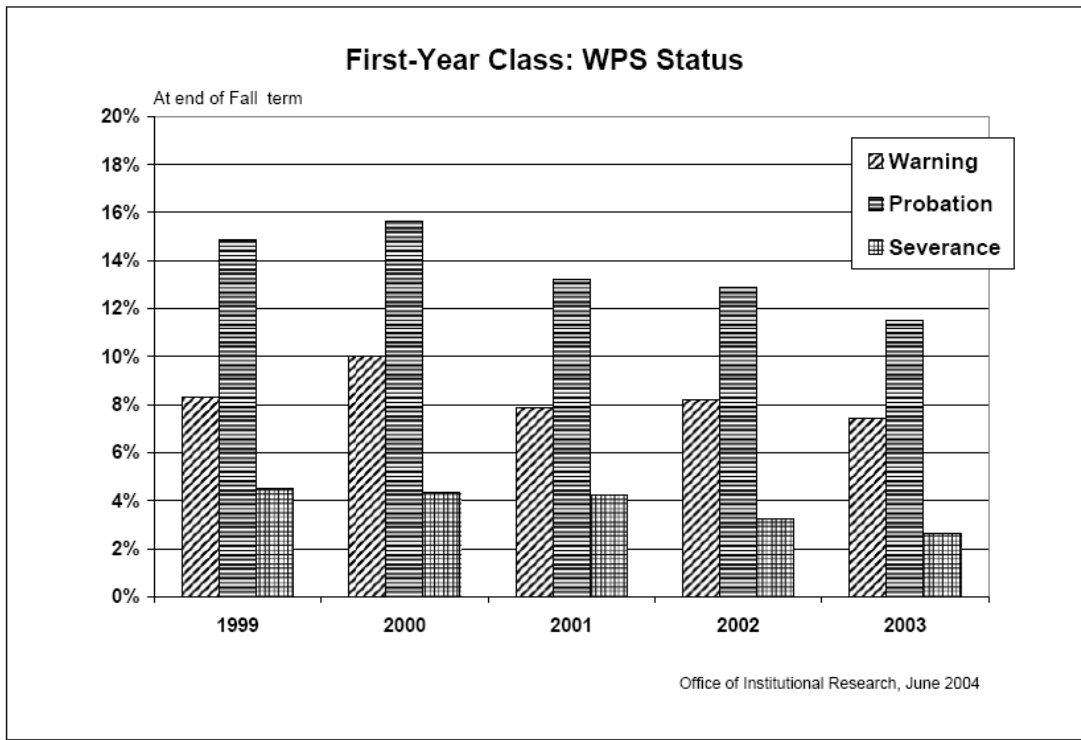


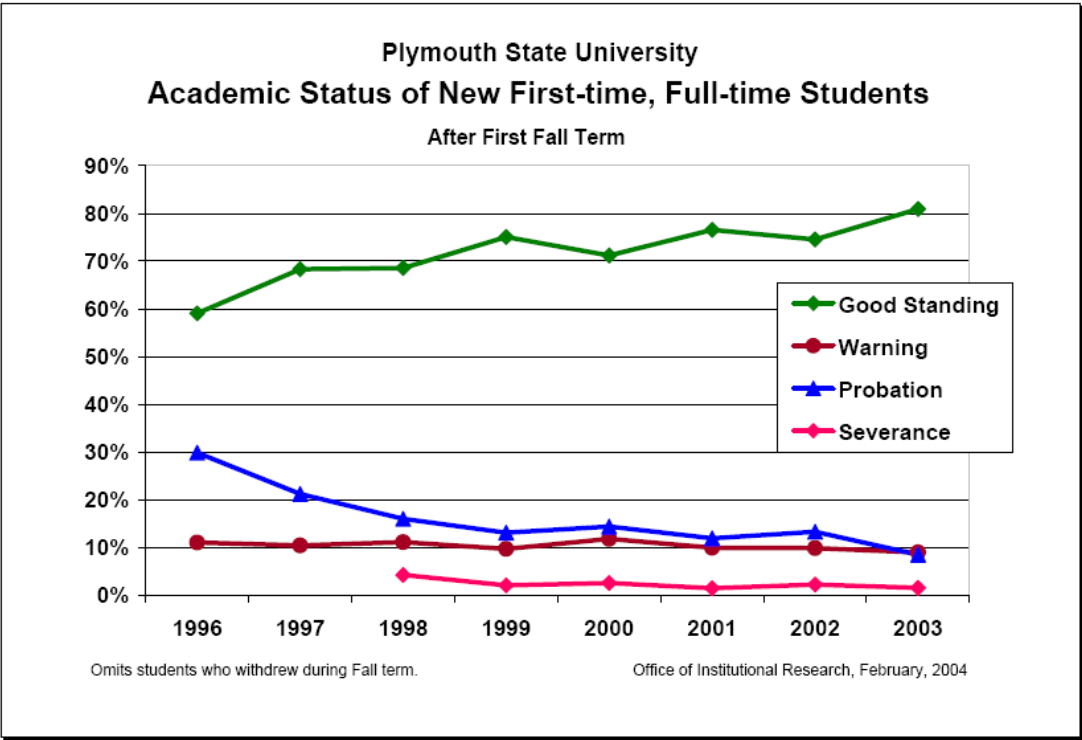
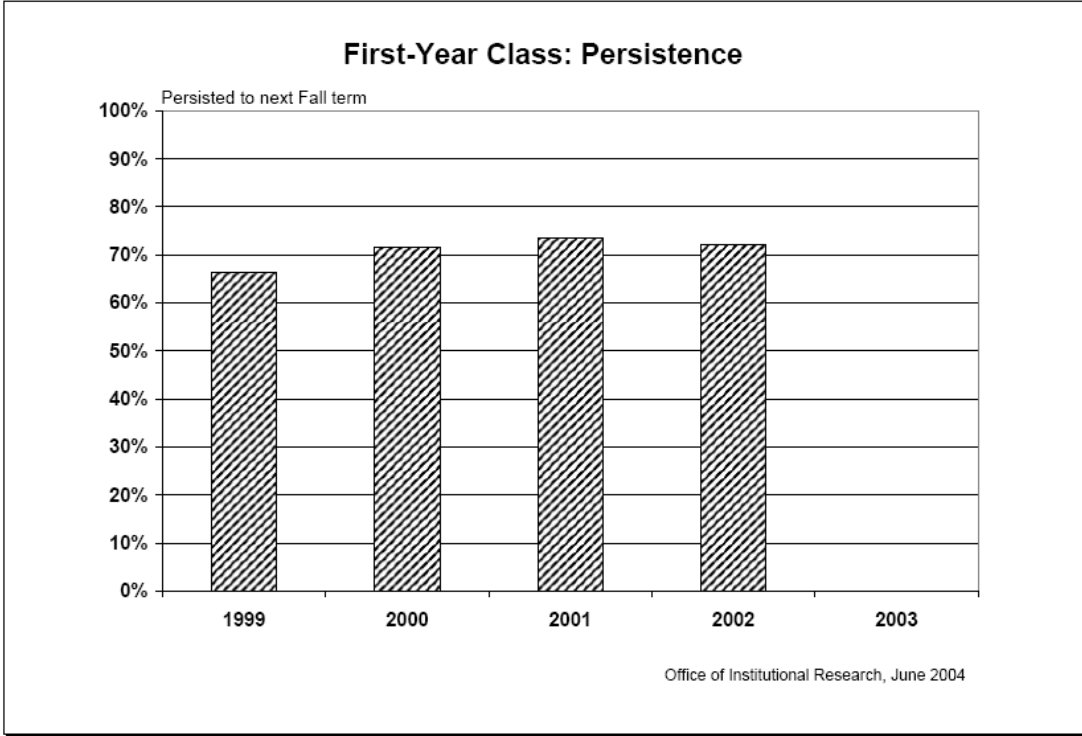
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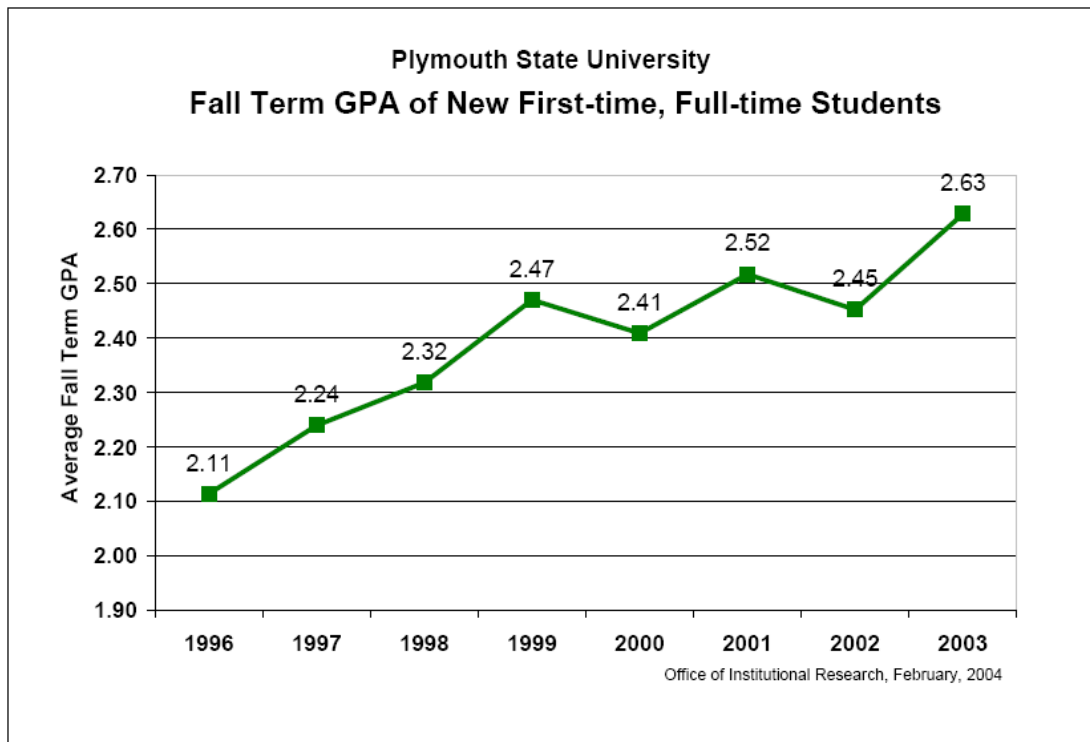
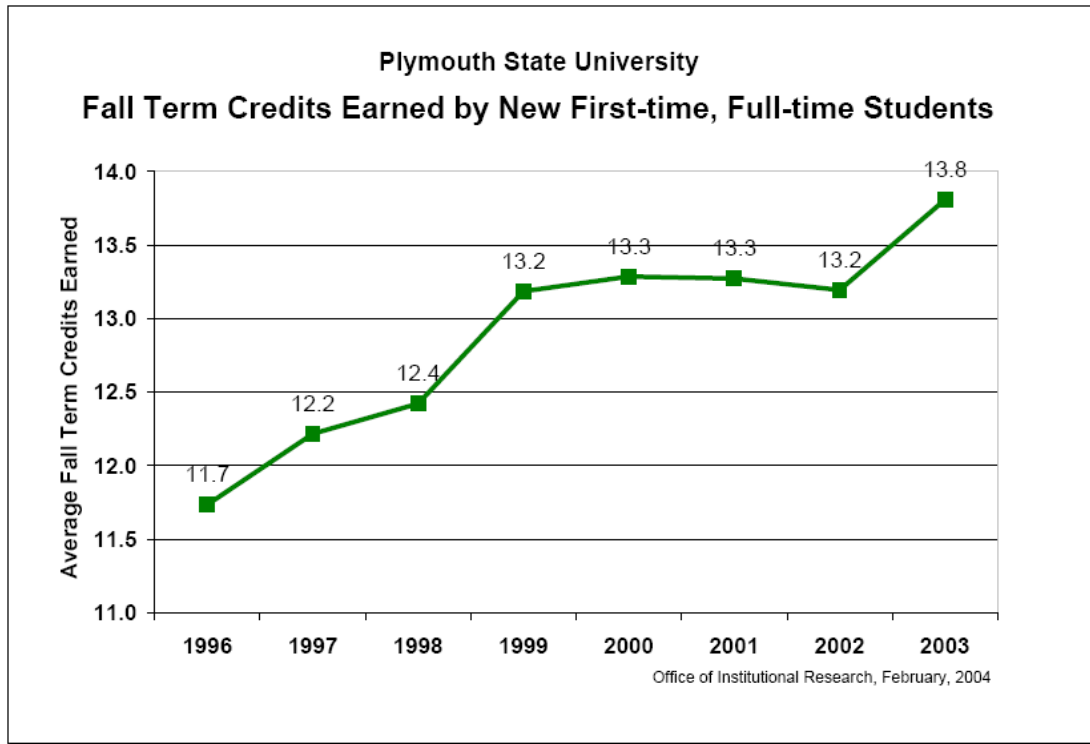


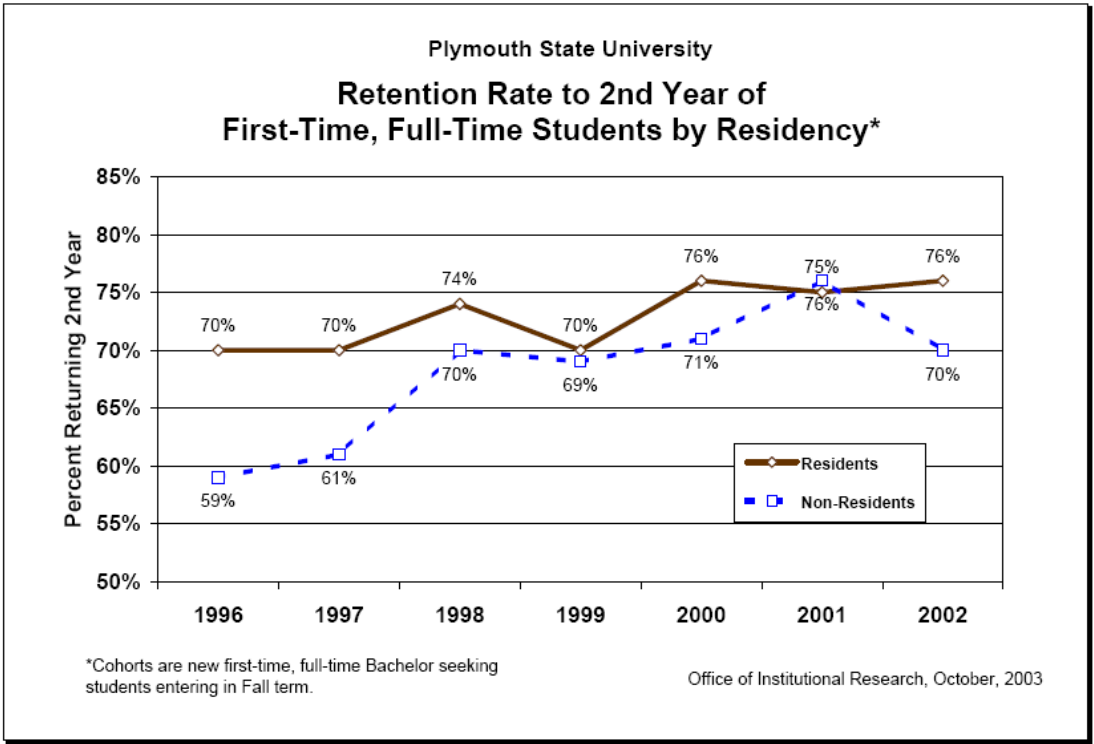
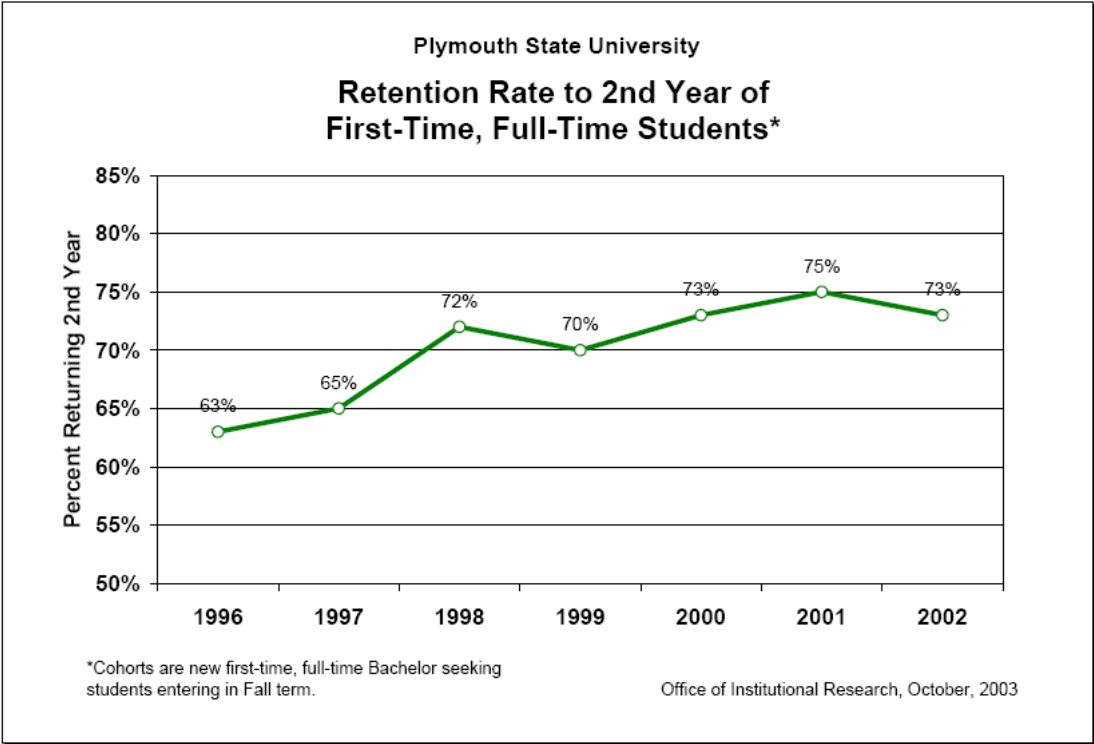
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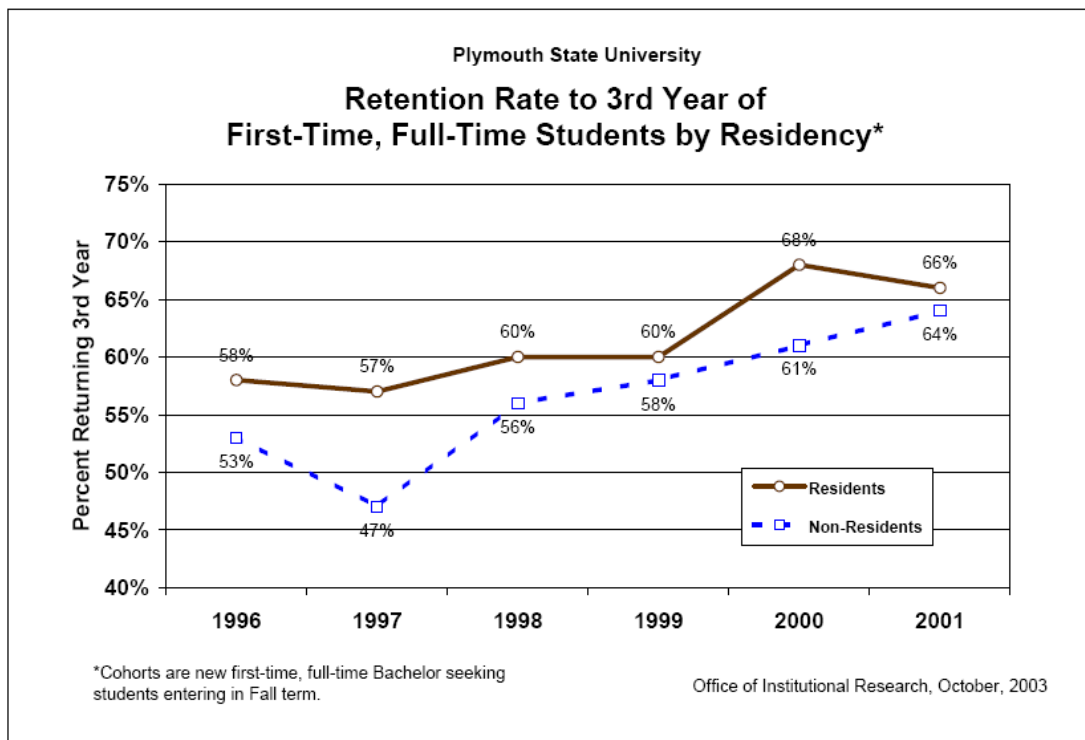
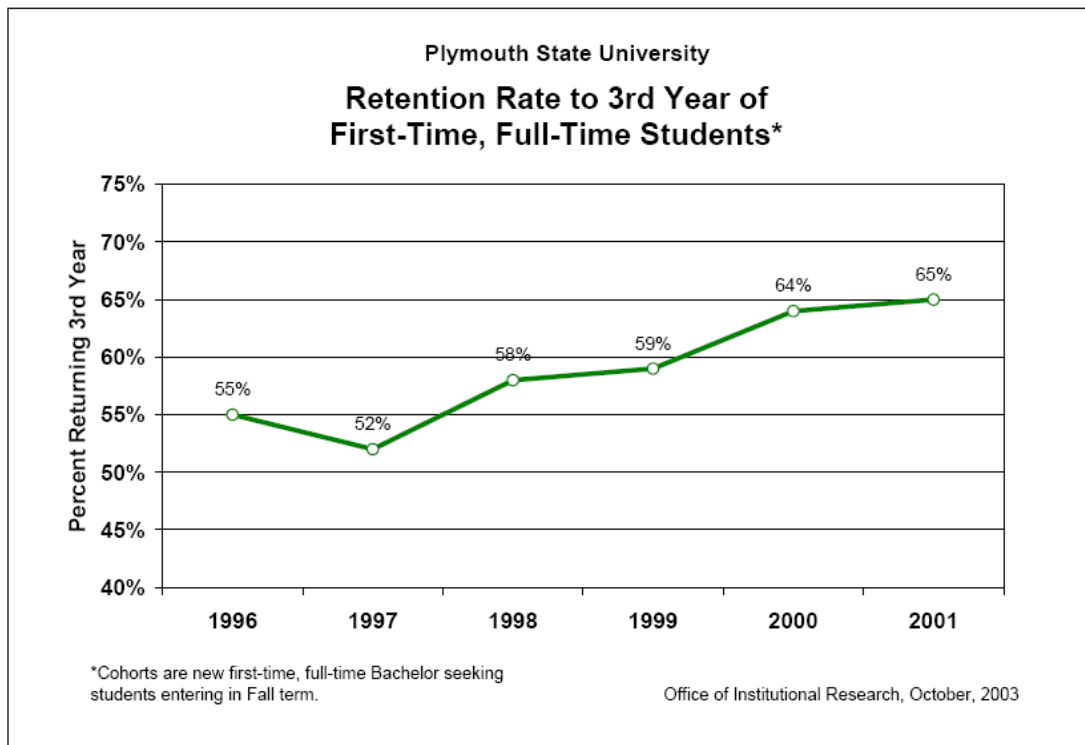


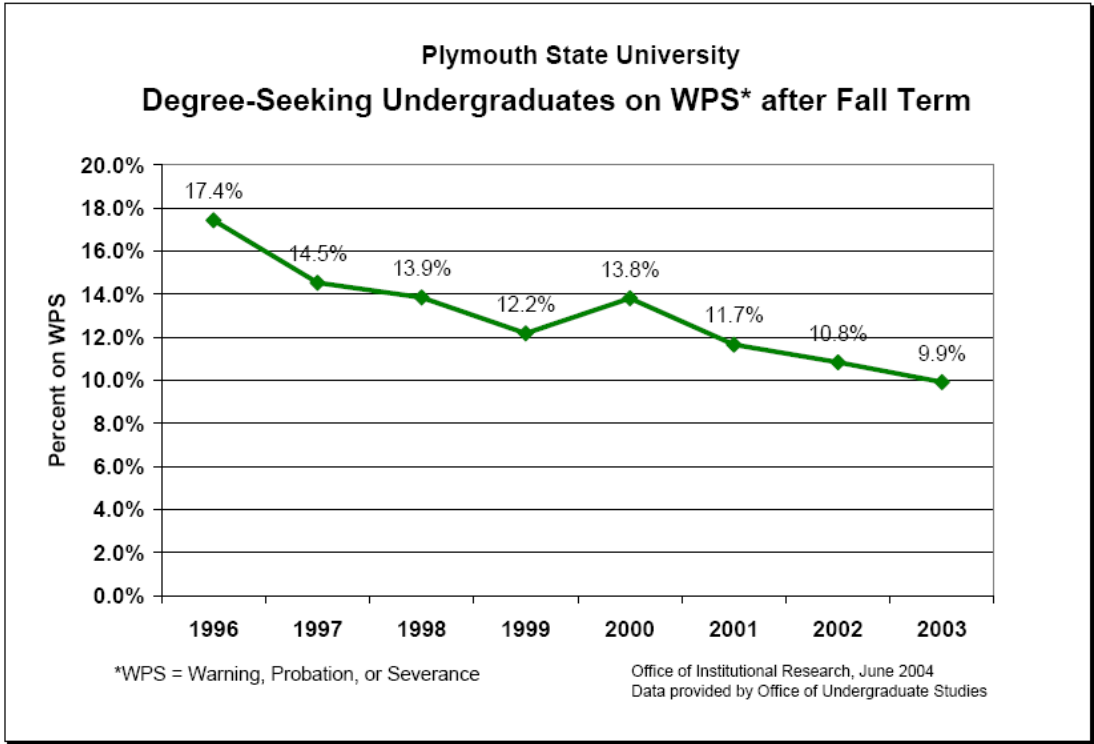
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Graphs





First Year Assessment

This is a list of data sources and past assessment efforts that have been conducted over the past three years as sources of evidence about the level of achievement of the Foundations of Excellence.

Pre-Enrollment. Information is generally collected from a prospective student's first contact through initial matriculation to the campus. Example course: admissions office, departmental recruiting, SAT/ACT profile data, *etc.*

- Auditions to be admitted to BA Music, BS Music Education, and BA Theatre Arts.
- Portfolio to be admitted to BA Art, BS Art Education, BFA.
- Faculty interview or essay to be admitted to BA Criminal Justice

Pre-Term. Between the point of formal acceptance to the institution and the first day of class, data might be collected in the form of placement testing, roommate preference surveys, and other new student surveys. Sources: orientation office, residential life, placement, advising, *etc...*

- CSXQ fall 2003- will follow-up with CSEQ spring.
- Education Department Writing Assessment, done during New Student Orientation.
- Foreign Language placement exams, done in September before classes start.
- Mathematics Placement exams for students who must take Calculus in their major, done during New Student Orientation
- Evaluation of Transfer Credits sent to student after admitted and each time a new transcript is received.
- AP credit processed prior to their enrollment.
- The orientation program does not send out any surveys pre-term. The only thing that we attempt to do is collect evaluations from each orientation program to make improvements for the following year. We have much better success in collecting useful data in June than at any other time, mostly because the parents fill out the surveys. We get very few completed student surveys, even with incentives, like being entered into a raffle for a \$50 certificate at the bookstore, or \$50 of flexcash. Matt is going to look into making it mandatory to fill out a survey by including it in the on-line registration process - your class schedule won't be submitted until you complete the survey.

- The CORE Drug and Alcohol Use Survey was developed to measure alcohol and other drug usage, attitudes, and perceptions among university students at two and four year institutions. Students attitudes, perceptions, and opinions about alcohol and other drugs, their own use and the consequences of use, as well as demographic and background characteristics are measured. We have administered the CORE

biennially since 1992. We randomly select classes in which to administer the twenty-minute survey, surveying 700 students to obtain a statistically relevant sample. Having these statistics helps us to plan needed substance abuse prevention activities and guides our alcohol and other drug education programming. The data has also been very valuable in helping us to obtain a significant grant in the past.

First Year. During the first year of college, data are regularly collected and added to student records automatically or are collected through surveys, focus groups, portfolios, and other data collection methods. Example sources: assessment office, registrar's records, first-year seminars, academic department, student affairs, *etc...*

- NSSE 2001-2003 (three years of data) - will continue. Based on the results of NSSE, we wrote the Davis grant. As we develop the new Gen Ed program, we are keeping those results in mind.
- IAC is evaluated through course evaluations in all sections, with the data turned over to UGS. That data was used to tweak the course some, and did for the last several years ask about the common reading as an essay question (therefore no quantitative summary).
 - The Introduction to the Academic Community course is assessed each year. Instructors used both qualitative and quantitative methods in doing so. The common reading, the course instructor, the material

learned, the usefulness of the course to the student were all assessed.

- CSEQ proposed for spring 2004.
- In a broader sense IAC was assessed as is any academic program here, with a review by external reviewers after a self assessment. That was when Betsy Barefoot came.
- In addition to the Writing Assessment, the Education Department faculty review student portfolios during the first year. Students begin portfolios in their Intro to Childhood Studies or Intro to Early Childhood Studies class taken in the first year and set goals for what they would like to accomplish. Faculty members review the portfolios

First Year Assessment

and the goals.

- Last year we conducted an assessment of the “provisional math acceptance (students required to take MA 107-108) [supports 4.4% of the FY students.]. Academic achievement of students taking MA 107-108 in subsequent math courses was assessed. From these results, a new course has been developed and will be piloted this spring.
- The Honors Council has a focus group with Honors students to discuss their experiences.
- Res life participates in Educational Benchmarking Inc (EBI). From the results several changes have been made in the area of Housing and Dining
- Early evaluation grades

Subsequent Years. To understand what happened in the first year often requires data collection at later points. For example, data on retention, ultimate choice of major, or various learning outcomes must be collected at points after the first year. Sources: registrar’s records, enrollment management records, assessment office, *etc.*

- Gen Ed assessment
- HPER has a continuing portfolio
- For continuance in the Social Work major, there is a Student Essay and a Faculty Interview. 2). As part of the qualitative component of our program assessment, students complete a Portfolio. There are six components completed in stages over 4 years, including the first-year and the last semester. 3). As a result of our Geriatric Enrichment in Social Work Education project, we ask first-year students in SW2220 (and graduating seniors in the SW Seminar) to complete a survey regarding knowledge of aging and interests in gerontology



Goals for 2004-2005

<p><i>First Year Council</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first-year philosophy will require broad input and campus-wide discussion. The Foundations of Excellence Taskforce has drafted a philosophy statement to get the discussion started. The Council on the First-Year Experience has agreed to undertake the refinement of this statement. • The First-Year Council needs a specific mission and list of goals to be implemented and assessed annually. • Find meaningful ways to reward students and faculty who model engagement (also listed under first-year council) • First-Year Council or Dean of the First Year needs to examine the ways in which students are exposed to diversity. This supports the frequent number of times in this study that the taskforce recognized the need for a coordinator or dean of the first year experience. • Find ways to keep this discussion concerning the importance of roles and purposes going among faculty.
<p><i>Faculty and All Departments</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the final philosophy statement as a guide, all departments and units need philosophy statements identifying specific approaches their departments currently take or will take in order to address the unique needs of first-year students. • Provide consistent information to enrolled students on academic expectations in the various majors. • There needs to be a heightened awareness on the part of chairs to communicate to new faculty the importance of the first-year experience, and we need to start stressing the importance of first-year pedagogy in the departmental interviewing process. • Examine techniques to encourage faculty to submit mid-term grades. Educate faculty to the importance of mid-term grades for student success and persistence of at risk students. (This is also listed under administration) • Work on an institutional definition of engagement and give concrete examples to help students understand what to expect and help faculty know how to engage. • Identify specific first-year learning objectives and ask all departments to subscribe to them. Find ways to get the entire campus to promote these learning objectives. Engage the campus in a discussion of the value of active learning practices. • Initiate letter of welcome to potential majors and to those who declare a major. Departments might keep track of newly declared majors and send them a letter of welcome similar to the letter sent to majors in the summer. A “reflection sheet” prepared for each major that would cause students to reflect on the role of education in their discipline. • We recommend a stronger stance be taken in requiring faculty to submit the “early-warning” six-week grades. This requires a commitment to adequately assess students prior to the sixth week of the semester. Additionally we recommend development of a mechanism that requires advisors to meet with students who appear to be in academic difficulty following six-week grade reports. Perhaps this could coincide better with pre-registration advising. (Also listed under Administration)
<p><i>New Faculty</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New faculty should be exposed to, and have the opportunity to discuss, the philosophy as a regular part of their orientation.

<p><i>First-Year Seminar and General Education</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The philosophy statement should be published in the <i>Academic Bulletin</i>, and faculty should discuss it as a required part of the first-year curriculum. (This is also listed under publications) • Ongoing assessment of the new general education program with regard to the discussion of the roles and purposes of education. • Include in the syllabi of general education courses the general education goals that the course is meeting. • Find ways to communicate the importance of the roles and purposes of higher education to undecided students.
<p><i>Administration</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We should recognize the philosophy statement as an important consideration in organizational policies, practices, structures, leadership, and resource allocation. • The Foundations of Excellence Taskforce sees the most urgent need for a dean level coordinator of the first-year experience. This position must be empowered with the authority to coordinate all first-year activities, influence teaching assignments, review the syllabi of first year courses, and set and assess specific goals for various first-year committees and taskforces in both the Academic Affairs and Residential Life divisions of the university. • Funding of first-year initiatives needs to be more clearly aligned with documented assessment showing results that are in keeping with our stated mission and philosophy for the first-year experience. (This is also listed under administration) • The university needs to examine its policies with regard to academic continuance. At what point is it unlikely that a student succeed? Are they adequately informed? • The use of Adjunct faculty needs to be discussed. • The annual faculty evaluation needs to be revised to better recognize faculty contributions to Plymouth’s goals and aspirations. • Examine techniques to encourage faculty to submit mid-term grades. Educate faculty to the importance of mid-term grades for student success and persistence of at risk students. (This is also listed under faculty.) • Establish an office responsible for international and/or racial/ethnic minority students. • Find meaningful ways to reward students and faculty who model engagement (This is also listed under First-Year Council) • Continue efforts to hire minorities in the faculty. • We recommend a stronger stance be taken in requiring faculty to submit the “early-warning” six-week grades. This requires a commitment to adequately assess students prior to the sixth week of the semester. Additionally we recommend development of a mechanism that requires advisors to meet with students who appear to be in academic difficulty following six week grade reports. Perhaps this could coincide better with pre-registration advising. (This is also listed under faculty.)
<p><i>Frost Faculty Center</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Frost Faculty Center needs to assist all first-year committees and taskforces to raise awareness of the particular needs of first-year students among all faculty. • Have more workshops in Frost Faculty Center, and have a second Faculty Day before the spring semester to follow up on the issues presented during the fall Faculty Day. • There needs to be a more specific policy regarding pedagogical

Goals for 2004-2005

	<p>development of new hires, continuing faculty, adjuncts, and graduate students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty development programs are needed to give faculty ideas of where issues of diversity might be included in their courses.
<i>Assessment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding of first-year initiatives needs to be more clearly aligned with documented assessment showing results that are in keeping with our stated mission and philosophy for the first-year experience. (This is also listed under administration) • Use the results of the National Survey of Student Engagement to plan for improvement. • We must develop the assessment procedures for general education. Develop a means of measuring development of critical thinking in First-Year Seminar (pre-post test). • Assessment of skills (reading, writing, critical thinking, technological skills) • We must create a culture of evidence on this campus. Currently assessment is not an "... integral part of institutional planning, resource allocation, and decision making." Planning activities must begin with evidence of mission or goal achievement. • We recommend the university institute "Assessment Day." The Assessment Advisory Group should make recommendations regarding this new requirement. Assessment Day should be mandatory for all students and faculty and should take place approximately in April of each year. Students could report in the morning for general assessment activities which would likely include general education. The afternoon would be reserved for program specific assessment. Academic programs currently struggling to determine how to coax students in to participating in program assessment activities can take advantage of this opportunity. Programs may well require annual assessment to progress in their program. • We must create a systematic means of disseminating assessment findings on campus. Additionally, we should formalize educational opportunities to connect student affairs and academic affairs in this process.
<i>Orientation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve direct assistance to parents on promoting first-year student success. • Identify students needing services and develop appropriate interventions that will allow for assessment and program modification. • Determine where information that was part of the <i>Introduction to the Academic Community</i> course will go, <i>i.e.</i> Registration information, information regarding student support services, instruction in study skills and techniques, and introduction to technology and library skills, <i>etc.</i> • Find ways to bring extra-curricular and curricular activities closer together in order to have Academic Affairs and Student Affairs speak with one voice about education, especially during the orientation process.
<i>Communication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve coordination among administrative and academic offices of communications to students and faculty. • Examine the issue of student communication, and "just-in-time"

	<p>information resources. What are the best ways to communicate important information to at-risk students? Should there be redundant communication techniques? Is orientation enough?</p>
<i>Advising</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a systematic method of informing students of academic expectations via faculty advisors. • Institute an evaluation of academic advising. If possible examine a relationship between advising and student success and persistence. • Develop some definite policies and processes for encouraging the retention and persistence of undeclared students. • Find ways to communicate the importance of the roles and purposes of higher education to undecided students. (This is also listed under First-Year Seminar)
<i>Academic Success</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the efforts of the Honors Program, and examine techniques that may work with other student populations.
<i>Diversity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the issues of diversity that students are interested in. • First-Year Council or Dean of the First Year needs to examine the ways in which students are exposed to diversity. This supports the frequent number of times in this study that the taskforce recognized the need for a coordinator or dean of the first year experience. • Begin with encouraging in and out-of-class discussions about how our own individual students feel “different.” • Faculty development programs are needed to give faculty ideas of where issues of diversity might be included in their courses. (This is also listed under Frost Faculty Center.) • Post materials that might be used in diversity on the diversity webpage. • Continue efforts to hire minorities in the faculty. (This is also listed under Administration)
<i>Admissions and Publications</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue efforts to enroll minorities in the student population. Increase the involvement of faculty in student recruitment efforts. • The philosophy statement should be published in the <i>Academic Bulletin</i>, and faculty should discuss it as a required part of the first-year curriculum. • Enhance academic expectations in recruitment and admissions materials.

Directory

The following directory lists the people, policies, and services with which anyone dealing with first-year students should be familiar. The descriptions don't list all of the services provided by these departments or people. If you have additions you'd like to see added to this list please contact to the First-Year Council.

Departments:

- **Academic Affairs:**
 - **Purpose:** The office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs reports directly to the president and works in concert with department chairs, faculty, and appropriate department and university communities, the provost and vice president for Academic Affairs: oversees and is responsible for the instructional program of the university; encourages, supports, and coordinates academic planning and the development of quality teaching;
 - **Contact:** Vice-President and Provost Virginia Barry, ext. 2230
- **Admissions**
 - **Purpose:** Provides introductory PSU information to students exploring college; gives in-depth information on PSU programs; fosters communication from initial contacts to follow-up calls with prospective students; interacts with students and high school counselors updating them on campus developments.
 - **Contact:** Gene Fahey, Senior Associate Director, ext. 2437
- **Institutional Research**
 - **Purpose:** Office of Institutional Research oversees the university online *Factbook*; files our IPEDS reports; responds to surveys from publications; assists in departmental and university assessment; and provides a variety of information to administrators, faculty, staff, students, and the public. Of particular relevance to all first-year students are the retention and graduation rates and the *Student Right to Know* report prepared by the office and its activities relating to the NSSE and FSSE surveys.
 - **Contact:** Director of Information Resources, Nick Mathis x 2100
- **Student Affairs:**
 - **Purpose:** The Division of Student Affairs is responsible for all undergraduate admissions including first-year transfer and readmission students as well as the non-traditional student populations. This division has responsibility for: undergraduate recruitment publications; advertising; and promotion; the new student orientation program (while delegating operational responsibility to the Director of Hartman Union and Student Activities); conferences with parents regarding the adjustment of students at the University; coordination of residential life staff, dining personnel, University Police, Women's Services & Gender Resources, and Counseling in the promotion of the general health and welfare of the students.
 - **Contact:** Vice-President Richard Hage, ext. 2241
- **Undergraduate Studies:**
 - **Purpose:** This office oversees and directs the registrar's office, advising, student academic conflicts, transfer student issues, and many other academic services.
 - **Contact:** Associate Vice-President for Undergraduate Studies Julie Bernier, ext. 2235

Committees:

Many committees include the first-year experience as important elements in their missions. This list will help you find appropriate contacts for your suggestions or concerns.

- **Academic Advising Committee**
 - **Mission:** This committee serves as an advisory body to the Associate Vice

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- President for Undergraduate Studies; reviews the philosophy, goals, general responsibilities and delivery of academic advising; creates means of educating faculty members to be effective academic advisors; and develops and interprets evaluation instruments for the purpose of assessing the effectiveness of current advising practices.
 - **Contact:** Deb Tobine, Undergraduate Studies, ext. 2685
- **Academic and Career Counseling Office** (Bagley House)
 - **Mission:** The Bagley Center makes presentations at new student orientation; meets with students and family members during open houses; makes presentation to guidance counselors participating in the NE university tour; manages Choices (computerized guidance system involving career exploration and information, on-line assessments for interests, skills and values, scholarship information etc.); walk-in advising to all students on any issues related to above; manages the semester abroad program for 15-20 first-year students (University Limerick, Ireland)
 - **Contact:** Director of Career Development Stephen Lambert, ext. 2336
- **Academic Standards Committee**
 - **Mission:** The **Academic Standards Committee** evaluates the impact of all University-wide policies and their implementations which affect academic standards or quality; considers policy and procedural recommendations directly concerned with academic standards; periodically informs the faculty or makes recommendations to the faculty on matters concerning academic standards; and acts as the hearing panel for cases of alleged violations of the Fair Grading Policy and, in the case of finding that a violation has occurred, guides in the finding of a solution; convenes the Panel on Academic Integrity in cases of violations of academic integrity.
 - **Contact:** Bonnie Epstein, ext. 2426.
- **Admissions Policy Committee**
 - **Mission:** Regularly monitors admission procedures; informs the faculty concerning admission procedures and calls attention to significant changes in the standards and procedures; and formulates policy with the consent of the president and the faculty concerning admissions.
 - **Contact:** Paul Rogalus, ext. 2392
- **Assessment Advisory Group**
 - **Mission:** Advises the campus on assessment structure and goals; provides input to the General Education committee regarding assessment of that program including first year students.
 - **Contact:** Associate Vice-President for Undergraduate Studies Julie Bernier, ext. 2235
- **The First-Year Council**
 - **Mission:** The council oversees and advises all programs and activities affecting first-year students, coordinates the selection of a common reading and brings related speakers, art exhibits, and performing arts events. The council reports to Provost and Vice-President Virginia Barry.
 - **Contact:** Robert Fitzpatrick, ext. 2626
- **The General Education Implementation Team**
 - **Mission:** This group exists to ease the way for the new General Education Program. It primarily guides and advises procedures for implementing the program with special attention to clarifying or resolving ambiguities as they arise. They also plan workshops to facilitate the process.
 - **Contact:** Robert Miller, ext. 2953
- **The Holmes Group**
 - **Mission:** The Holmes group is primarily involved with looking at business processes for first-year students. Their goal is to discuss potential problems and find ways to improve

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- processes that are in the best interest of the student. The Holmes Group includes staff from all university divisions and the faculty coordinator of the First-Year Seminar.
- **Contact:** Vice-President for Financial Affairs William Crangle, ext. 2550
- **The Honors Council**
 - **Mission:** The Honors Council oversees all aspects of honors programs at the university.
 - **Contact:** Associate Vice-President for Undergraduate Studies Julie Bernier, ext. 2235
- **Orientation Steering Committee**
 - **Mission:** The Orientation Steering Committee discusses every aspect of student orientation. The sizeable membership includes representatives from every division of the university, and the group meets frequently throughout the year.
 - **Contact:** Director of the Hartman Union Terri Potter, ext. 2376
- **University Planning Committee**
 - **Mission:** **University Planning Committee** periodically develops a set of plans for the University's future, to evaluate the effectiveness of such plans as they are carried out, and to deliver reports to the University community. It submits all its reports and its recommendations to the Executive Council and the University faculty.
 - **Contact:** Vice-President for Financial Affairs William Crangle, ext. x2550

Courses:

This list includes some of the courses or programs likely to have a particular impact on first-year students.

- **First-year courses: numbered 1000 to 1999:** Introductory courses for the general student population. No prerequisites are required.
- **First-Year Experience Component:**
 - EN 1200 Composition, Math Foundations, and First-Year Seminar must be completed in the first semester. First Year Seminar will begin in 2004; other components are already in place.
 - **Contact:** Wendy Palmquist, ext. 2527
- **First-Year Seminar**
 - **Mission:** This course will introduce students to the concepts of general education and the academic community and to the skills educated people use to generate and address important questions. Using critical thinking skills and basic tools of gathering and evaluating information, students and the instructor will together engage in a meaningful exploration of a specific "Question." The "Question" will vary across sections of the course.
Contact: Wendy Palmquist, ext. 2527
- **General Education "Directions" Courses**
 - **Mission:** "Directions" [part of the General Education Program] courses are accessible to first-year students. They are 1000 level courses and require no prerequisites. Students are encouraged to take as many Directions courses during the first year as possible, and the rest during the second year. The program aims for the first-year experience component (3 courses), 5 (of 8) Directions courses, and 2 major courses (one each semester) during the first year. Undecided students may conceivably fill their first-year schedules with Directions courses taking as many as seven out of eight the first year.
 - **Contact:** Robert Miller, ext. 2527
- **Honors Programs**
 - **Mission:** To satisfy Strategic Plan Goal 2 and 2a: Increase the Overall Quality of the Student Body; Increase the number of students entering PSC who rank in the top half of their high school class to total two-thirds of the entering class. Forty-five entering

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students are invited to enter the program. Among business students, 75 first and second year students, identified as among the best in their class, participate in a college-wide Honors Experience program. Each semester these students enroll in an honors section of one or more of their General education courses. Students choose from among four or five possibilities, and typically take two honors sections one semester and one the other. Students completing three honors sections during the academic year and achieving a 3.00 overall grade point average received the transcript designation “First Year Honors” and/or “Second Year Honors.”

- **Contact:** Associate Vice-President for Undergraduate Studies Julie Bernier, ext. 2235
- **Introduction to the Academic Community**
 - **Mission:** Start date 1985; will continue as a limited availability optional course offered the first seven weeks of the semester. Many sections (particularly undecided and major sections) have the instructor also serve as the students' adviser. Non-traditional students returning to school sometimes take advantage of summer and fall special sections.
 - **Contact:** Wendy Palmquist, ext. 2527
- **Introduction to the Major courses**
 - **Purpose:** To give entering students a special introduction to the discipline.
 - **Contact:** Department Chairs

Academic Policies and Activities:

- **Mid Term Grades for 1st semester 1st year students**
 - **Purpose** This is used as an early evaluation system so that students may determine whether or not they should continue in a given course. These students are afforded an extended drop period for the term only to the eight week of the term. All other students may drop only within the first two weeks. Mid term grades provide early evaluation for first-semester, first-year students, at the end of the first six weeks of classes, instructors of full-semester courses submit grades on these students' performance.
 - **Contact:** Vice-President for Academic Affairs & Provost Virginia Barry, ext. 2230

Services:

Academic Services:

- **Academic Advising**
 - **Mission:** Most members of the University faculty will be asked to serve as faculty advisors, and the success of the academic affairs program hinges on the extent to which these faculty advisors carry out their responsibilities. The advising process should involve those faculty members who have the knowledge, experience, and interest in developing communication with students that is genuine, sincere, and confidential. Faculty advising of individual students involves being available to assist students in a variety of their life activities while at Plymouth State University. Recognizing that students differ in terms of the variety and urgency of their need for help, advisors should be particularly interested in the academic planning, scholastic achievement, career planning, and social adjustment of their assigned students. Such counseling should be based on the evaluation of skills and abilities and the identification of personal priorities. Advising responsibilities relate to all aspects of registration and program advising, scholastic achievement, and social adjustment.
 - **Contact:** More detailed information can be found in the *Academic Advisors' Handbook* which is available from the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

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- **The Frost Faculty Center for Learning and Teaching Excellence**
 - **Mission:** The faculty center is charged with ongoing staff development. This newly formed entity is focusing on improving the first-year experience through a variety of faculty development programs.
 - **Contacts:** Robert Fitzpatrick x2626 and Richard Hunnewell x2546
- **Information Technology Services (ITS)**
 - **Mission:** To provide all students, on-campus or off-campus, part-time or full-time, continuing education or degree-seeking, with access to appropriate technological resources.
 - **Contact:** Chief Information Officer Dwight Fischer, ext. 2443
- **Lamson Library**
 - **Mission:** One of the goals of the library's mission is: "Through our services, including reference and library instruction, we will foster and develop student competence and confidence in finding, using, and critically evaluating print, media, and electronic information resources. Our goal is not only to assist students with their immediate needs but also to empower them with the skills and enthusiasm necessary for lifelong learning."
 - **Contact:** First-Year Experience Librarian Alice Staples, ext. 2961
- **Math Activities Center**
 - **Mission:** The Math Activities Center is a hub for extra-class activities involving mathematics. Students, during operating hours, may use the center for completing assignments, forming study groups, and receiving group and/or individual tutorial services.
 - **Contact:** Math Activities Center Director John Barry, ext. 2819
- **Plymouth Academic Support Services**
 - **Mission:** PASS is a federally-funded program designed to provide individualized academic assistance to students enrolled at Plymouth. Assistance is available for students in time management, exam preparation, note taking, and other study techniques. Academic tutors are available in most introductory level courses. Counselors are available to work with students with documented disabilities.
 - **Contact:** Director of Academic Support Services Pat Hage, ext. 2269
- **Residential Life**
 - All undergraduate students who do not commute from their own homes or live with immediate relatives are expected to live in the University Residence Halls.
 - **Contact:** Director of Residential Life and Dining Service Frank Cocchiarella, ext. 2260
- **Undergraduate Advising Center**
 - **Mission:** Service include Academic Probation Contracts, Advising Help Sessions, Banner Self-Service, Academic Advising Committee, Career Counseling Center
 - **Contact:** Deb Tobine, ext. 2685
- **University Writing Center**
 - **Mission:** The Writing and Reading Center of Plymouth State University provides help in reading and writing for all interested PSU students. The Center provides help in all aspects of writing and encourages students to come in at any stage of the writing process. The emphasis is on showing them how to improve their writing rather than doing it for them.
 - **Contact:** Roy Andrews, ext. 2831

Financial Services

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- **Financial Aid**

- **Mission:** The Financial Aid Program at Plymouth State University is intended to assist qualified students who are unable to meet their entire educational expenses from their own and their family's resources. The three basic forms of assistance available are grants/scholarships, loans, and work opportunities.
- **Contact:** Director June Schlabach, ext. 2338

Health and Safety Services

- **Campus Police:**

- **Mission:** In partnership with students, faculty, staff and surrounding communities, the Plymouth State University Campus Police Department will work to create a safe and secure environment for education and work that enhances and promotes the mission and overall success of the University. Working in a manner that is professional, sensitive to campus values, accountable to the community, and respectful of individuals, the campus police will seek to maintain a high standard of safety and to support all members of the University community.
- **Contact:** Chief of Campus Police John E. Clark, ext. x2331

- **Counseling Center and Human Relations Center**

- **Mission:** Meeting one-on-one with a counselor gives you a professional and confidential relationship in which to discuss problems and feelings that are important to you. Some areas of concern that we often work with students on include: Coping with grief, loss, and crisis; depression; anxiousness; eating disorders; study problems; loneliness; adjusting to family changes; sexuality; substance abuse & chemical dependency; and self-esteem. In addition, we address concerns regarding relationships with parents, friends, teachers, partners, and roommates. We also work with students to help them better manage the many stressors that college students face.
- **Contact:** Director Michael Fischler, ext. 24

- **Health Services**

- **Mission:** Baker Health Services offerings include: sports clearance (physicals) for athletes; sports clinic for injuries; referrals to physical therapy; sick clinics (i.e.: bronchitis, flu, and all other '-itis' illnesses); chronic clinics (i.e.: diabetes), reproductive health (male and female) services; cold clinics; flu shot clinics; a psycho-pharmacology clinic (to assist those students who are coded and need medication, i.e.: depression, attention deficit syndrome). The infirmary is available to all full-time and part-time students. Both outpatient and in-patient services are available. In an emergency the student should seek assistance from his or her Residence Director or any member of the University staff.
- **Contact:** Supervisor of Nurses Edna Merrill, ext. 2350

Co-Curricular, Social, Recreational, and Support Opportunities:

- **Campus Ministries:**

- **Mission:** Campus Ministry is a service to the University community provided by the local churches. It includes Protestant, Catholic, and Evangelical chaplains. Its aim is to provide sources of discussion, counseling and community, while helping in all areas of campus life where needed. The Ministry encourages students, faculty, and staff to think about religion and faith in both personal and academic ways and provides assistance in doing so through discussion forums, counseling, and community outreaches. The ministry oversees an emergency loan fund, drug and alcohol education fund, and grant fund.
- **Contact:** Rev. Yvonne Miloyevich, ext. 2327

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- **Hartman Union and Student Activities:**
 - **Mission:** The Hartman Union Building (HUB) is the center for student activities and leisure time recreation programs on campus. Administrative staff at the Hartman Union are a source of information and assistance regarding scheduling and planning a wide variety of social events and campus activities. To schedule a room, date, and time for any non-academic activity, you must contact the Administrative office in the Hartman Union. There are over 80 recognized organizations on campus. Volunteer involvement in these organizations will allow you to pursue your interests, develop friendships and provide you with opportunities to develop leadership skills.
 - **Contact:** Director Terri Potter, ext. 2376
- **Women's Services and Gender Resources Center**
 - **Mission:** The Women's Services and Gender Resources is a source of education, resources and services for students, faculty and staff at Plymouth State University. The Center's goals are to raise awareness of and challenge gender and power inequities, as well as offer programs and leadership opportunities to empower women. We provide a full range of services to victims/survivors of sexual assault, harassment, and relationship violence as well as support for their family and friends. Services are available for men, women, and people of all sexual orientation.
 - **Contact:** Director Delilah Smith, ext 2387

Publications:

- **Academic Catalog:**
 - **Purpose:** The Academic Catalog describes academic programs and courses as well as academic policies, procedures and resources. Information is also provided regarding admission, tuition and fees, financial aid and student life. A directory of administrators and faculty, the academic calendar for two years and a campus map are included. All new students are given an Academic Catalog at New Student Orientation. Frequently their parents request a copy for themselves. If students fail to bring their Catalog when they enroll, they may obtain another copy from the Undergraduate Studies Office. The Academic Catalog states the requirements for graduation (General Education, majors, options, minors) and all academic policies such as Academic Integrity, Fair Grading, and academic continuance. It is used by faculty and staff who advise students as well as the Degree Auditor who verifies students for graduation. It is a primary source in representing the University.
 - **Contact:** The Registrar's Office, ext. 2345
- **Integrated packet**
 - **Purpose:** The integrated packet was developed to provide students and parents with one comprehensive mailing (provided after admission) that answers just about every question parents and student have (or provides the resource information to find the answer). Previously, parents and prospective students received several mailings (one from Res. life, one from Admissions, one from the Bursar, and one from Orientation staff...etc. These products have been combined into one comprehensive packet.
 - **Contact:** Vice President for Student Affairs Dick Hage
- **Live Better, Climb Higher brochure**
 - **Purpose:** for residential students describing room assignments, special interest housing, room furnishings, cable television, computers, internet access & phone services, liability and insurance, descriptions of all residence halls, food services options, related phone numbers.
 - **Contact:** Vice-President for Student Affairs Dick Hage
- **Plymouth State University Parents newsletter**

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- **Purpose:** The *PSU Parents* newsletter is published six times a year out of the Institutional Advancement Office (writer/editor Kathy Henderson) as a means for the president to communicate important and/or interesting information to the parents and families of our students. It is a one-page front and back self-mailer, professionally printed on a special *Plymouth State University Parents* masthead with the University seal. It is all text, no graphics or art work. It features headlined news items, usually one to three paragraphs in length.
- **Contact:** Kathy Henderson, ext. 2775
- **Registration Newspaper**
 - **Purpose:** Each term a registration newspaper is compiled and published by the Office of the Registrar. The paper itself may be broken down into the following two main content areas. 1. Notices and Information: deadlines and dates important to the campus community; college policy; departmental notices and information; Web registration detailed instructions; final exam schedules; 2. Schedule of Classes: special course offerings and descriptions; and courses satisfying General Education requirements. A copy of the paper is provided to each student.
 - **Contact:** The registrar's office, ext. 2345
- **ResNet Guide**
 - **Purpose:** (This is the flip booklet.) The ResNet guide is our key student resource. The booklet is given out at June and Fall Orientation, again as needed during move-in weekend and is available to walk-in customers at the Help Desk. It is meant to be a year-long resource for students on how to access technology services and information. We provide them with enough information to get them started with self-installations and configurations for services such as voice mail and the ResNet network. Then we point them to additional online information. Finally, this guide services as a reminder to them that policies exist governing the use of technology at PSU.
 - **Contact:** Frank Cocchiarella
- **Student Handbook**
 - **Purpose:** "The Student Handbook, provided primarily in an electronic format, provides all students, faculty and staff information regarding student rights and responsibilities. Policies and rules that students are held responsible for are explained in detail. Student Services are outlined and information on critical issues such as alcohol and drugs, health and wellness, women's services and gender resources, student governance structures are included. The Handbook also fulfills federal compliance requirements such as the Campus Crime Reports, FERPA and Drug Free Schools Act.
 - **Contact:** <http://www.plymouth.edu/stulife/handbook/handbook.html>
- **Website**
 - **Purpose:** www.plymouth.edu is the public website for Plymouth State University. In the public domain the main target audience for the website is prospective students and the site serves secondary audiences including current students, faculty and staff, and alumni. There over 100 sub-sites each owned and maintained by the individual departments. Working for Institutional Advancement in the Office of Public Relations, the Web Administrator oversees the entire domain and assists the sub-site owners.
 - **Contact:** Webmaster Tina Newberry, ext. 3057

Assessment Instruments:

- **American College Health Association (ACHA) health questionnaire**
 - **Purpose:** **The National College Health Assessment (NCHA)** is a national, non-profit, research effort organized by ACHA to assist health service providers, health educators, counselors, and administrators in collecting data about the health of their students. Developed by an interdisciplinary team of college health professionals, the NCHA was

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pilot tested in 1998-1999 and systematically evaluated with reliability and validity analyses comparing common survey items with national studies such as the National College Health Risk Behavior Survey (CDC).

- **Contact:** Dean of Students Tim Keefe, ext. x2206
- **Educational Benchmarking, Inc. (EBI)**
 - **Purpose:** The purpose of the ACUHO-I/EBI Assessment is to assist colleges and universities in assessing their housing programs in support of continuous quality improvement objectives.
 - **Contact:** Dean of Students Tim Keefe, ext. x2206
- **The College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ)**
 - **Purpose:** Adapted from the CSEQ, the *College Student Expectations Questionnaire* (CSXQ) Second Edition assesses new student goals and motivations. New students hold important expectations about how and with whom they will spend their time in college. These expectations provide clues about how they will interact with peers and faculty members, behaviors that directly affect achievement and satisfaction with college. Institutions also have expectations for student performance. When paired with the CSEQ, which can be administered as a posttest measure toward the end of the school year, the institution can assess the degree to which student and institutional expectations are met
 - **Contact:** Associate Vice-President for Undergraduate Studies Julie Bernier, ext. 2235
- **The College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ)**
 - **Purpose:** The *College Student Experiences Questionnaire* (CSEQ) Fourth Edition is a versatile tool that assesses the quality of effort students expend in using the resources and opportunities provided by the institution for their learning and development. Quality of effort is a key dimension for understanding student satisfaction, persistence, and the effects of attending college. The more students engage in educational activities the more they benefit in meaningful ways in their learning and development.
 - **Contact:** Associate Vice-President for Undergraduate Studies Julie Bernier, ext. 2235
- **Noel/Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory**
 - **Purpose:** The Student Satisfaction Inventory was the first survey of its kind to measure student satisfaction **and** the importance of campus issues to students. It has helped hundreds of campuses identify where they need to focus their retention efforts to improve student retention.
 - **Contact:** Associate Vice-President for Undergraduate Studies Julie Bernier, ext. 2235
- **National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)**
 - **Purpose:** The National Survey of Student Engagement(NSSE) is designed to obtain, on an annual basis, information from scores of colleges and universities nationwide about student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. The results will provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college. Survey items on *The College Student Report* represent empirically confirmed "good practices" in undergraduate education. That is, they reflect behaviors by students and institutions that are associated with desired outcomes of college.
 - **Contact:** Associate Vice-President for Undergraduate Studies Julie Bernier, ext. 2235

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