CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY CHANNEL ISLANDS
FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE (FYE)
PROGRAM PROPOSAL

Presented by the FYE/SYE Task Force
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Charge to the FYE/SYE Task Force:

The Task Force will submit to the Provost and the Vice President for Student Affairs a plan for a First-Year Experience which will incorporate a common intellectual experience for students. The Goals of the First-Year Experience program will be to provide curricular and co-curricular components that will aid students in their transition to the University, and will help the University retain those students. The Task Force will also submit a plan for a Second-Year Experience, the goal of which will be to help students continue to feel a strong connection to the University, and to aid the University in retaining those students.
MISSION:

The mission of the First Year Experience is to provide programs that meet the developmental, intellectual, cultural, and social needs of first year students as they make the transition from high school to CSU Channel Islands\(^1\).

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

- Introduce first year students to the programs, resources, and services available at CSU Channel Islands with the guidance of University faculty, staff, and peer mentors.
- Provide a smooth transition from high school.
- Build identification with CSUCI and campus programs
- Increase time students spend on campus
- Increase involvement with on-going advisement
- Provide the support and stimulation of a learning community of peers
- Help students discover the “relevance” of academic experiences
- Build a student community that connects students to life on campus through various events and activities.
- Increase CSUCI’s first year to second year retention rate

Many institutions offer successful retention-related strategies associated with successful retention programs. In order to accomplish successful retention programs, institutions should develop a more organized, systematic, coordinated plan to improve student life and learning. According to Dr. Vincent Tinto “the evidence of effective programs is clear, namely that the route to successful retention lies in those programs that ensure, from the very outset of student contact with the institution, that entering students are integrated into the academic community of the college and acquire the skills and knowledge needed to become successful learners in those communities. In short, improvements in the quality of student life and learning, not retention, should be the goal of all retention initiatives.”

The shortcomings of typical first year programs are well documented (see “Student Retention” by Joe Cueseo and “The First-year Experience” by Betsy Barefoot). From an administrative point-of-view, the primary problem a first year program needs to address is attrition. From the faculty’s perspective, student learning deficiencies need attention. Students have informed us of a number of problems they perceive in their first year on campus, including isolation from peers, disconnection from campus, lack of direction from authorities, irrelevance of their education, external demands and financial

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\(^1\) Note: This program is designed for first-time freshmen; one goal for future development is to create and implement a program for entering transfer students.
responsibilities. No program will solve all these problems, but any program implemented at CSUCI ought to include goals intended to address, if not solve, the problems. The success of any such program will depend on commitment from all the stakeholders, especially students.

The National Resource Center for First Year Experience and Students in Transition lists the following goals for FYE programs:

- Increase student-to-student interaction
- Increase faculty-to-student interaction
- Increase student involvement and time on campus
- Link the curriculum and the co-curriculum
- Increase academic expectations and level of academic engagement
- Assist students with insufficient academic preparation

In 2003, The Policy Center on the First Year of College gave an award for excellence to 13 institutions for their FYE programs. In their award criteria, the Policy Center looked specifically for FYE programs that spanned curricular and co-curricular initiatives, not those based solely in Student Affairs or solely in Academic Affairs. This proposal takes note that best practices take this cross-Divisional approach; the program outlined below involves full cooperation of the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs Divisions. See appendix A for a full discussion of the Policy Center’s definition of Best Practices, and how this proposal meets them.

CSUCI’s FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. HIRE A COORDINATOR OF FYE/SYE PROGRAMS
   - The FYE/SYE Coordinator will head the Office of FYE/SYE, which will be housed in Academic Advising
   - The Coordinator will coordinate and promote the First Year/Second Year Experience programs.
   - The Coordinator will work with the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs Divisions to coordinate curricular and co-curricular elements of FYE.
   - The Coordinator will work directly with students in the FYE program
   - The Coordinator will be responsible for packaging and promoting FYE
   - The Coordinator will carry out and publish ongoing assessment of the FYE and SYE programs
   - The Coordinator will chair the Campus Reading Celebration Task Force
   - The Coordinator will make regular reports to the Enrollment Management and Student Success committee, apprising that committee of the status of the FYE and SYE programs
   - A Faculty Advisor to the FYE program should also be identified, whose duties would include:
     i. Researching best practices in first-year seminars
ii. Assessing our current seminars and recommending changes if warranted
iii. Serving as a liaison to ensure faculty participation in the program (research shows that faculty buy-in is an essential part of any successful FYE program)

II. PACKAGE ELEMENTS ALREADY IN PLACE
CSUCI already has in place a number of elements which are considered part of FYE on other campuses. These elements will be packaged and promoted as part of FYE, through brochures, websites, and other media:
- Island View Orientation
- University 100
- University 110
- Academic Advising
- Learning communities (linked courses in the Composition program)
- Campus Reading Celebration
- FYE website (not currently in use, but developed in 03-04); the FYE website should be easily accessible to current and prospective students

III. REVAMP FRESHMAN CURRICULUM
A core element of the First Year Experience is a common intellectual experience. There are three venues for providing this: University 100, University 110, and the Campus Reading Celebration.
- University 110: When this class was originally conceived, it was conceived as a graduation requirement; however, that proposal was not approved by the Academic Senate. The issue could now be re-visited, with University 110: Critical Thinking in an Interdisciplinary Context, proposed as a required 3-unit course which fulfills the A3 category; the course would return to its original proposal, in which not only critical thinking, but also the interdisciplinary nature of this University, are addressed.
- University 100: University Life and College Success Seminar. This is currently a 1-unit class, and those instructing the class believe it should be expanded to 2-units, with the campus reading celebration being made part of the course. The FYE Coordinator and the Faculty Liaison are charged with exploring this option.
- The FYE Coordinator and Faculty Liaison will work with the Director of Composition and the coordinator of the University 100 sections to explore the possibility of linking the Univ. 100 sections to sections of English 102-103 and 105, thus creating a learning community. In this way, 90% of the Freshman class (the percentage which enrolls in Freshman composition) would be a part of FYE. University 100 also might be designated as a GE category E course.

IV. REINSTITUTE THE PEER MENTORING PROGRAM
• Sophomores will be chosen to serve as mentors for Freshman; this service will be part of the Second-year Experience, and may be paid.
• Peer mentors will receive extensive training under the direction of the FYE Coordinator.

V. DEVELOP A FACULTY/STAFF MENTORING PROGRAM
• This program will be coordinated by the FYE Coordinator
• Students will self-select into this program
• Mentors will meet with students two to three times each semester
• Mentors will attend social events and send emails and correspondence to students

VI. EXPAND MANDATORY ADVISING
• Currently freshmen receive mandatory advising as part of Island View orientation. This practice will be maintained.
• Add mandatory advising for the second semester of the first year. This requires additional advising staff.

VII. SPONSOR FYE FORUMS
• Students participating in FYE would need to attend a designated number of FYE forums. Students in University 100 and/or 110 might also be required to attend forums.
• Forums might address such topics as service learning, academic writing, learning communities, college expectations, career opportunities, housing, the campus reading celebration
• Hold a Club Fair emphasizing academic clubs & opportunities for FYE & SYE students

VIII. EXPAND ISLAND VIEW ORIENTATION
• Expand the orientation to 3 or 4 days, and include a group bonding experience such as an excursion to the Channel Islands or a work project beautifying a building or area on campus, or developing a performance piece, etc.
• Send the Campus Reading Celebration text to students before Orientation, then hold discussions with peer leaders and forums with faculty during Orientation
• Conclude Orientation with students learning to use the computer labs on campus to write a first draft of a response to the Reading Celebration book; forward those drafts to the student’s composition instructors.

IX. DEVELOP LEARNING COMMUNITIES THROUGH LINKED COURSES
• Link lower-division courses to form learning communities. This is something that has been proposed, and tried on a small scale. It requires a
great deal of coordination in scheduling. It also requires assigning instructors to courses far enough in advance to allow them to plan.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT:
It is necessary to put into place assessment mechanisms for the FYE program to ensure that its goals are being met. Assessment instruments should be developed by the FYE Coordinator in conjunction with the appropriate campus assessment officers.

RATIONALE:
Items 1-9 above describe an ideal, fully-formed FYE Experience. In a best-case scenario, the Task Force recommends instituting 1-6 immediately, and phasing in 7-9. In a less-than-ideal scenario, the Task Force recommends instituting 1-4 immediately, and phasing in the rest.

In any case, the Task Force urges the necessity of hiring a Coordinator of First Year/Second Year programs. In 2003-04, when a very modest version of a First-Year Experience was implemented, centering on mentoring groups, it took a nearly full-time effort by a Student Affairs staff member to coordinate. There is currently no staff member available to assign to FYE, so only by hiring someone in this capacity can a program operate.

The FYE Task Force also recommends the creation of an FYE/SYE Advisory Board to work with the Coordinator of FYE/SYE. Its membership should be similar to that of the FYE/SYE Task Force: faculty (especially those from the Composition, Math, and University programs), a representative from Advising, a student, and representatives from Student Affairs staff, including representatives from the areas of Student Communication, Leadership and Community, Housing and Residential Education, Enrollment Services, Outreach, and the Office of the Vice President.

BUDGET PROPOSAL:
Attached are two versions of a budget proposal. Option A lists what would be needed to start a program under a best-case scenario. Option B lists what would be needed to implement a “bare bones” program. In the absence of significant funding, only recommendation II, to package existing elements through creating a brochure, could be implemented.

The most important item in the budget is a Coordinator for the FYE program. Coordinating this program is at least a full-time job. There is currently no staff or faculty member available who has the expertise, interest, and most of all, time to dedicate to the program; therefore hiring someone into the position is vital. In the “bare bones” budget version, this position is half-time. We recommend that if only a halftime hire is possible,
that the position be made a 1-year contract, as a full-time, permanent person in this position needs a set of skills and expertise which may make a half-time position unattractive to the right person for the permanent position. The ideal permanent full-time person would be knowledgeable in the extensive research on FYE, and who would want to participate in the development of that knowledge through developing and documenting CI's programs.

In the full-fledged budget there is also reassigned time for a faculty advisor to the FYE program. That person’s duties, outlined above, are also both vital and extensive, and beyond the scope of any faculty member’s workload without having reassigned time devoted to those duties. In the “bare bones” budget this position does not exist; the lack of this position would hinder curricular coordination and development efforts.
RESOURCES


National Resource Center for First Year Experience and Students in Transition. www.sc.edu/fye/

Note: this document draws heavily on work done by Bob Mayberry and Sue Saunders. The Task Force acknowledges their leadership in this effort.
Appendix A

The elements that 'The Policy Center on the First Year of College found in reviewing the nominees for its award for excellence in the First Year Experience as follows, with explanations of how CSUCI’s program fits:

"Valuing the first year and being accountable": Top leadership at CI is firmly behind developing effective FYE and SYE programs in order to best serve our student population.

"Leadership on multiple levels": The Provost and VPSA take an interest in these programs; faculty, academic advisors and Student Affairs staff are all involved in the program.

"Cultures that encourage ideas and innovation": The proposal for a program includes a FYE/SYE advisory committee which will continue to steer this program; the task force has operated in a mode of idea generation and free interchange; these practices should continue.

"Achieving a critical mass of student participation": Through enrollment in the University 100 and Composition courses, 90% of the freshman class will be involved in the FYE program. The Center identifies 75% as a critical mass for student participation.

"Direct involvement of faculty": Faculty are involved in the program through the University 110, University 100, Composition, and learning community courses, and through the Faculty/Staff mentor program.

"Attention to pedagogy in first year courses": CI's innovative composition program, and innovative University 110 have already gone to extraordinary lengths in this regard. Creating an integrated, intentional FYE program will extend these efforts further.

"Clarity of mission; respect for students": The mission of the FYE/SYE program grows out of the University's mission; CI identifies itself in its mission as a student-centered institution, which creates a climate of respect for students.

"Improving continuously through assessment": Ongoing assessment is a built-in part of the FYE/SYE program.

"Creative acquisition and judicious use of resources": This proposal requests that the university dedicate resources to this program in order to demonstrate its commitment to first-year students. The proposal is for a modest, but essential, dedication of resources.

"Willingness to learn from and share with others": Participants in the task force have done research in published materials, attended a conference, and looked at models on other campuses. Ideally, the Coordinator will prepare reports on the nature and success of the FYE/SYE program.
"Valuing partnerships": This program is built on a cooperation between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs; as service learning and civic engagement elements are added to the program, it will build community partnerships as well.

See attached document for the Center’s description of “Foundational Programs.”