

**Freshman Seminar Pilot**  
**Process Management Team Report**  
**Spring 06**

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## **Background**

In the Spring 05 semester a process management team sponsored by Terry Cargan and David Hartleb, and led by Xavier Pelaez, addressed the issue of college readiness. The College Readiness team created a Student Success website and recommended that a college success video be produced (this video has recently become available). They also recommended that a team be formed to develop a Freshman Seminar\* pilot course for NECC:

We recommend that this foundation course be explored further by a future process management team, with the formation of a pilot course. We would like to see the course eventually explored as a required 3 credit course--offered both face to face and online for incoming freshmen; for high school students preparing to move on to college, and as a summer course for a combination of students.

Our reasons for choosing a 3-credit required course are as follows:

1. Our research has concurred with the chart below. Students who have completed college preparation courses have significantly more success than those who don't, with evidence of greater improvement as a result of 3 credit courses as opposed to those that are one or two credits.
2. A foundation course would offer students 3+ hours a week when, beyond the benefits of what the curriculum would offer, they'd have the opportunity to bond with classmates, and, most importantly, have the contact they've requested with a faculty or staff member who is acting in an advisory capacity as well.
3. A course could concentrate on necessary skills, concerns, problem-solving, and encompass interaction with campus resources.

\*A Freshman Seminar is a course intended to orient first-semester students to college life and provide them with skills and information that will enable them to make a successful transition to college. These courses are variously titled (e.g., first-year seminars, orientation courses, college success courses). In this report we use the term Freshman Seminar to refer to any course of this kind. However, we are not proposing to restrict our pilot course to first semester students.

Selected Success Rates of Students Taking On Course Programs

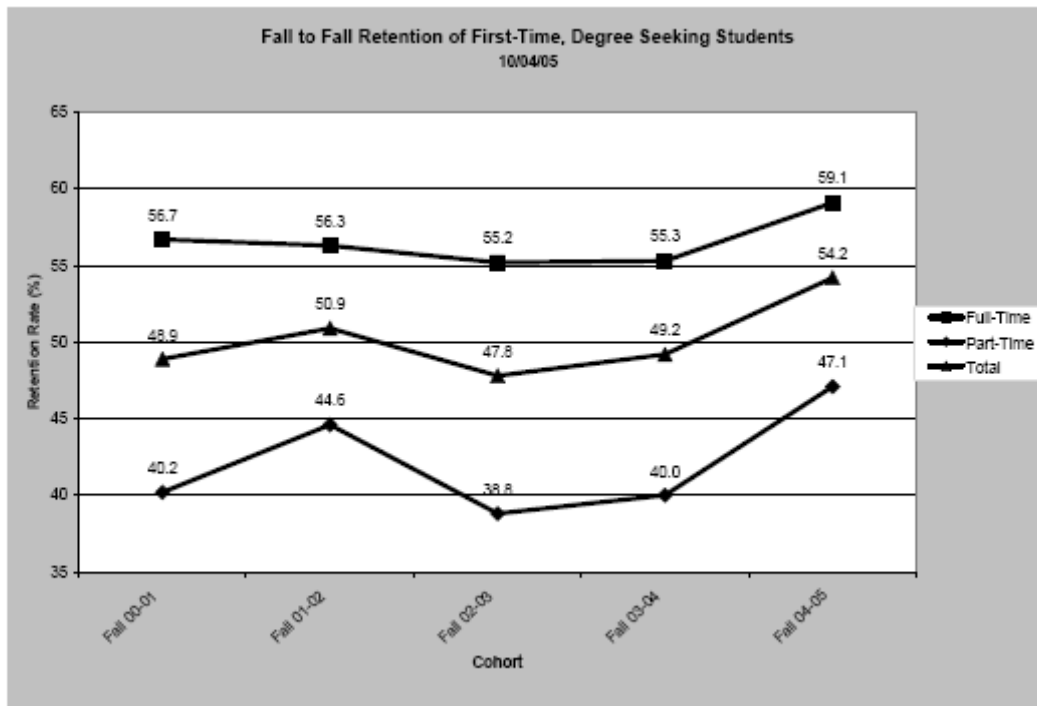
College/Timeline				
	Retention of All First-Year Students NOT In On Course Class	Retention of All First-Year Students In On Course Class	Improved Retention In On Course Class	
Mt. Hood Community College Fall 2004 to Spring 2005	53%	80%	27	
	Retention of Students In a Match Control Group	Retention of Students In On Course Learning Community	Improved Retention In On Course Learning Community	
Baltimore City Community College Fall 2000 to Spring 2001	50.50%	77.10%	26.60%	
	Retention of All Basic Skills Students NOT in the On Course Learning Community	Retention of all Basic Skills Students in the On Course Learning Community	Success in the On Course Learning Community	
Mission College (California) Fall, 2001	65%	87%	22%	
	Probationary students eligible to return to UNCG when the course provided instruction only in study skills	Probationary students eligible to return to UNCG after adopting the On Course text as well as addressing study skills	Improved retention of probationary students after adoption of On Course curriculum	
UNC Greensboro (North Carolina) Spring Semesters '00 vs '03	40%	57%	17%	
	Percent Passing English Prep without On Course class	Percent Passing English Prep with On Course Class	Improved Academic Success for On Course Students	
Brevard Community College (Florida) Spring 2003	65.10%	83.90%	18.80%	
	Other Basic Skills Students	On Course Basic Skills Students	Improvement In On Course Students	
Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College Fall 2004 Retention	73%	96%	23%	
	Retention Rates for all first time, full time	Retention Rates for students registered for On Course	Improvement of On Course Students	
Illinois Valley Community College 01 Fall to 03 Fall	30.80%	48.90%	18.10%	

*On Course* is a Freshman Seminar course developed by Skip Downing, international consultant in the field of faculty development and student success strategies ([www.oncourseworkshop.com](http://www.oncourseworkshop.com)).

Like the College Readiness project, our work reflects our strategic plan's emphasis on student success. Since the inception of the current plan, numerous efforts have been made to embody that overarching goal. Our project is one of those efforts. We believe that a Freshman Seminar type course can contribute to the success and perseverance of our students. The need for a Freshman Seminar course was also documented by a survey conducted by the ARTC process management team in Spring 2005.

<http://www.necc.mass.edu/ProcessManagement/pdf/AcademicResourceTutoringCenter.pdf>

In addition, NECC, like virtually every other community college, has been concerned for a long time with student retention. Institutional data shows that we retain approximately half of our students annually.



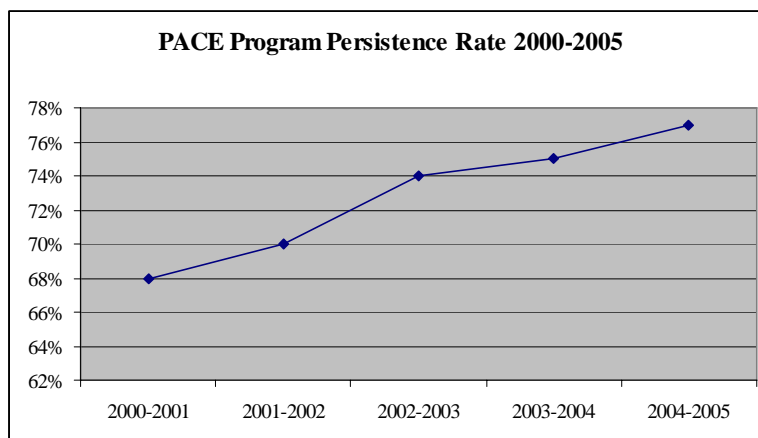
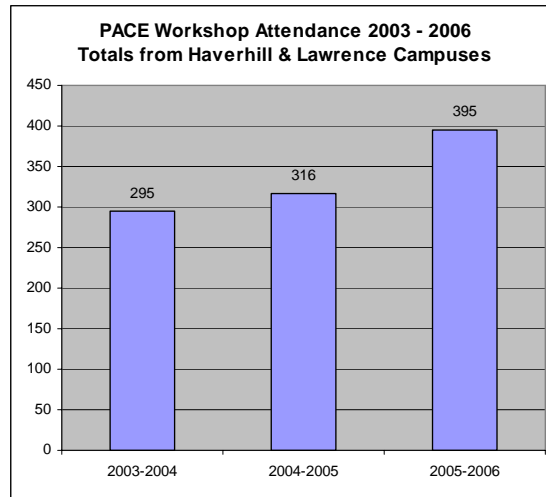
We know that there are a wide variety of reasons why students leave school prematurely. Can a Freshman Seminar course have a positive impact on student retention? National data suggests that indeed it can, presumably by providing students with information and skills that enable them to better cope with the demands and stresses of student life.

## **Project Statement**

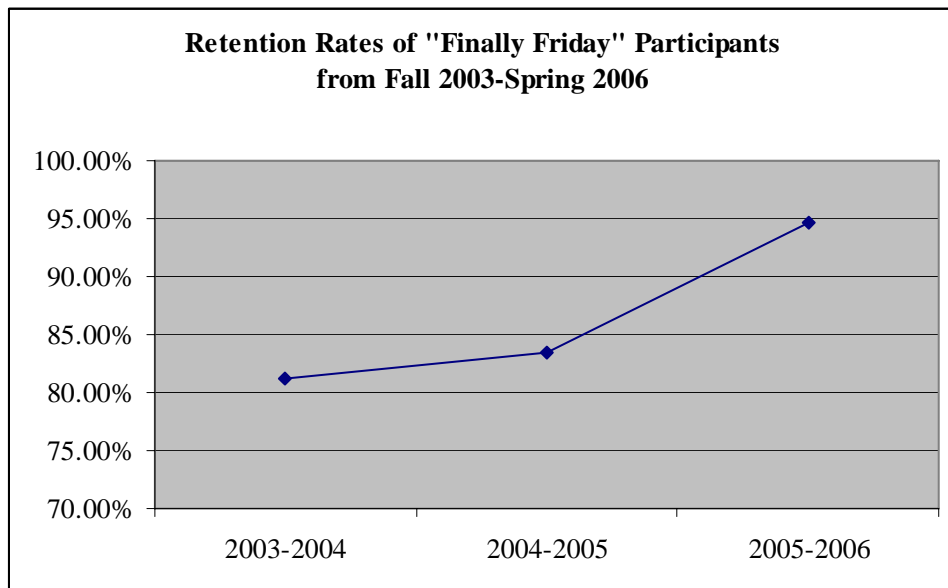
Our goal this semester has been to develop a pilot Freshman Seminar course to begin in the Spring 07 semester, and to make recommendations regarding the assessment, continuation, and possible growth of this course.

## Current Activities

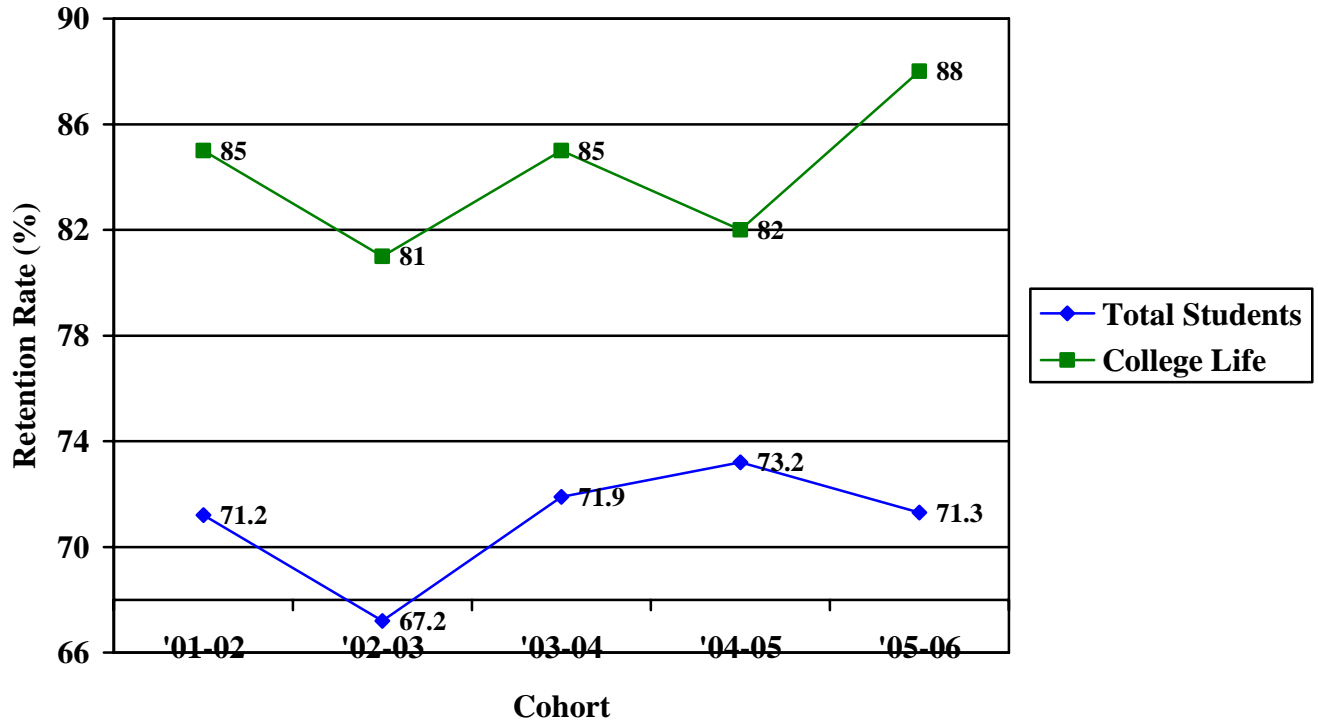
Though NECC currently has no course of this type, the college has been providing analogous instruction and support to some of our students for many years through several retention initiatives. The PACE project, for example, offers a weekly Student Success Seminar "which is designed to enhance student retention and collegiate development." Workshop topics include learning styles, personality type, library research, time management, study skills, and more. The weekly, voluntary workshops are well-attended, averaging 20 students per session. (See Appendix A for a more complete description of PACE's Student Success Seminar.) The PACE project has a documented history of success.



Similar endeavors have been made by the Women's Network, the Career Planning Office, and College Life. Career Planning offers a wide array of services for students. They include career counseling, job placement, cooperative education, internships, directed practice and work study placements, community service learning, Women's Network, Men Talk, and the Student Leadership Development Program. A variety of workshops are offered to assist students in determining career direction, assessing career interests, preparing resumes and portfolios, developing communication, interviewing, and leadership skills, searching for jobs, and learning about cultural diversity and work ethics. Additional workshops cover study skills, stress and time management, self esteem, coming to college, and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. During the past three years more than 8000 students have attended workshops/presentations by Career Planning. The Women's Network and Men Talk provide weekly informal support groups to help students begin, remain, and succeed at college.



**Fall to Spring Retention of First-Time, Degree Seeking Students  
and College Life program participants**



These services evidence both the needs of our students for this type of instruction and support, and the favorable impact it has upon student success. In addition, the college's learning communities initiative has collected data indicating the positive impact of learning communities on the retention of first year students. Learning communities have some of the same advantages of a Freshman Seminar course. They increase student-faculty contact time and help students develop a support network on campus.

<b>Fall to Spring Retention: All students versus Learning Communities</b>									9-Jun-04
<b>Group</b>	<b>Fall 2001 to Spring 2002</b>			<b>Fall 2002 to Spring 2003</b>			<b>Fall 2003 to Spring 2004</b>		
	<b>Original Cohort</b>	<b>Returning</b>	<b>Retention</b>	<b>Original Cohort</b>	<b>Returning</b>	<b>Retention</b>	<b>Original Cohort</b>	<b>Returning</b>	<b>Retention</b>
All students	6,372	4,237	66.5%	6,622	4,300	64.9%	6,301	4,194	66.6%
All FT, FT, DS	686	534	77.8%	805	599	74.4%	694	531	76.5%
All First-time, DS	1,234	880	71.3%	1,460	981	67.2%	1,117	773	69.2%
<b>All First-time</b>	1,661	1,033	<b>62.2%</b>	1,882	1,139	<b>60.5%</b>	1,526	930	<b>60.9%</b>
All LC	104	78	75.0%	134	99	73.9%	70	51	72.9%
<b>All First-time LC</b>	65	47	<b>72.3%</b>	93	69	<b>74.2%</b>	44	34	<b>77.3%</b>
LC Section Size			20.8			22.3			11.7
					<i>Draft #1</i>			<i>Draft #1</i>	
Full-time = > 11 credits									
First-time = Null or 0 attempted credits and Null or 0 earned credits									
Degree seeking = not Unclassified (0999)									

## Across the Country

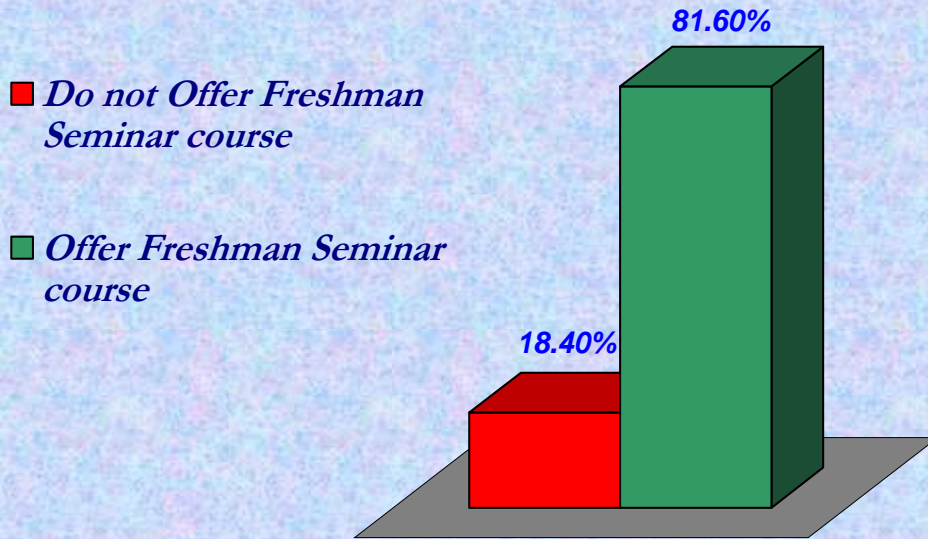
Freshman Seminar courses have been around for a long time, and have been well-researched for at least twenty years. The National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience began conducting national surveys on Freshman Seminar programs in 1988. Their survey is conducted every three years. The data from the 2003 survey indicates that most colleges and universities offer a course of this type, and that it usually carries graduation credit. The data further suggests that most of the schools in the survey believe that the course yields tangible benefits, including a positive impact on student retention.

- 81.6% of the schools responding to the survey reported that they offer a Freshman Seminar course
- 89.3% indicated that their Freshman Seminars earn graduation credit
- 46.8% require their Freshman Seminar for all first-year students
- 46.2% administer their seminars directly through the office of Academic Affairs
- 24.8% report linking Freshman Seminars to other courses (Learning Communities)
- 23.7% report including service-learning as a part of their Freshman Seminar
- 30.4% offer sections in which the instructor is also the students' academic advisor
- 39.3% offer team-taught Freshman Seminars
  
- 58.9% report increased persistence to sophomore year
- 58.4% report improved student connections with peers
- 51.2% report increased use of campus services
- 50.6% report increased student satisfaction with the institution
- 45.0% report increased out-of-class faculty/student interaction
- 26.7% report improved GPAs

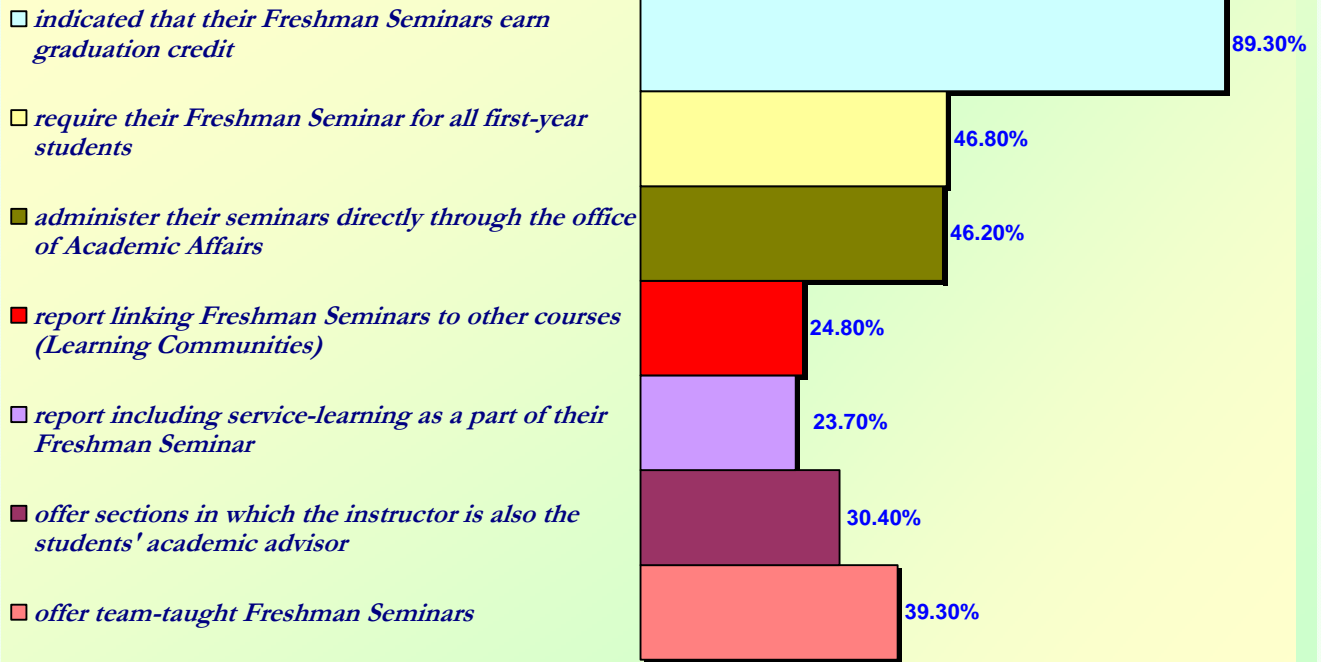
Source: *The 2003 National Survey on First-Year Seminars*, Ed. Barbara Tobolowsky. Published by the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition, University of South Carolina, 2005.

See Appendix B for additional national data.

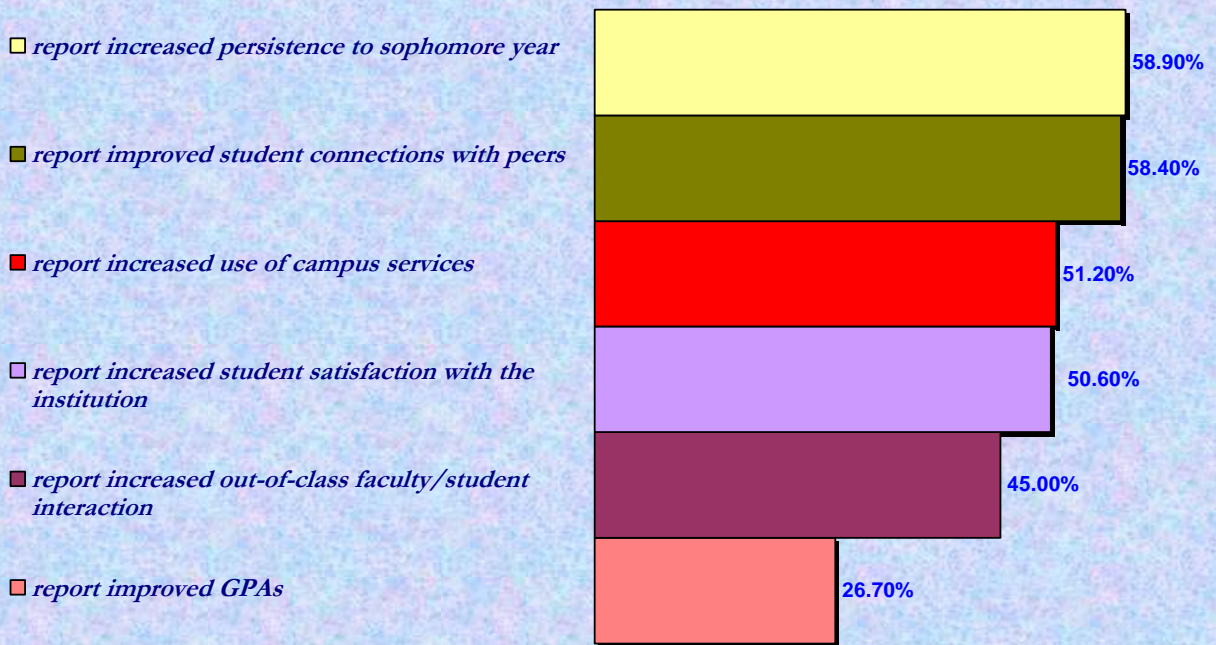
# Schools Responding to Survey



# Freshman Seminar Formats



# Positive Outcomes



The University of Colorado has a highly successful Freshman Seminar course. The University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, one of four campuses in the University of Colorado system, is a public four-year institution with 7,800 undergraduate and graduate students. Approximately 900 students are residential. Nearly two-thirds of UCCS students are female, and almost 23% percent are minorities, including 8% Hispanic, 5.2% Asian American, 3.6% African American, 3.4% unknown, 1.5% international, and 1% Native American. Only 20% of first-time, first-year students are "traditional" students. In a carefully designed study, they report better retention and GPA for students taking the course.

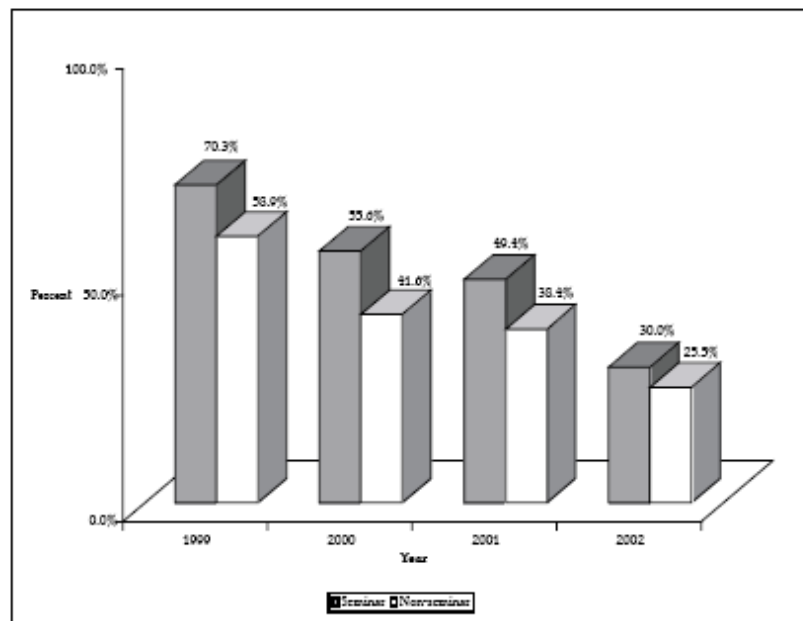


Figure 1. First-Year Seminar Student Persistence in College, 1998 Cohort. Seminar participants persisted at significantly higher levels in 1999 and 2000 ( $p < .05$ ) and in 2001 and 2002 ( $p < .01$ ).

## Massachusetts Community Colleges

By contacting colleagues at other Massachusetts community colleges and visiting the colleges' websites, our team attempted to learn what we could about Freshman Seminar courses within the Massachusetts community college system. As far as possible, we sought answers to the following questions:

How many credits does the course carry? Do they count towards graduation?

Are they transferable?

Who takes the course? Is it required of some students?

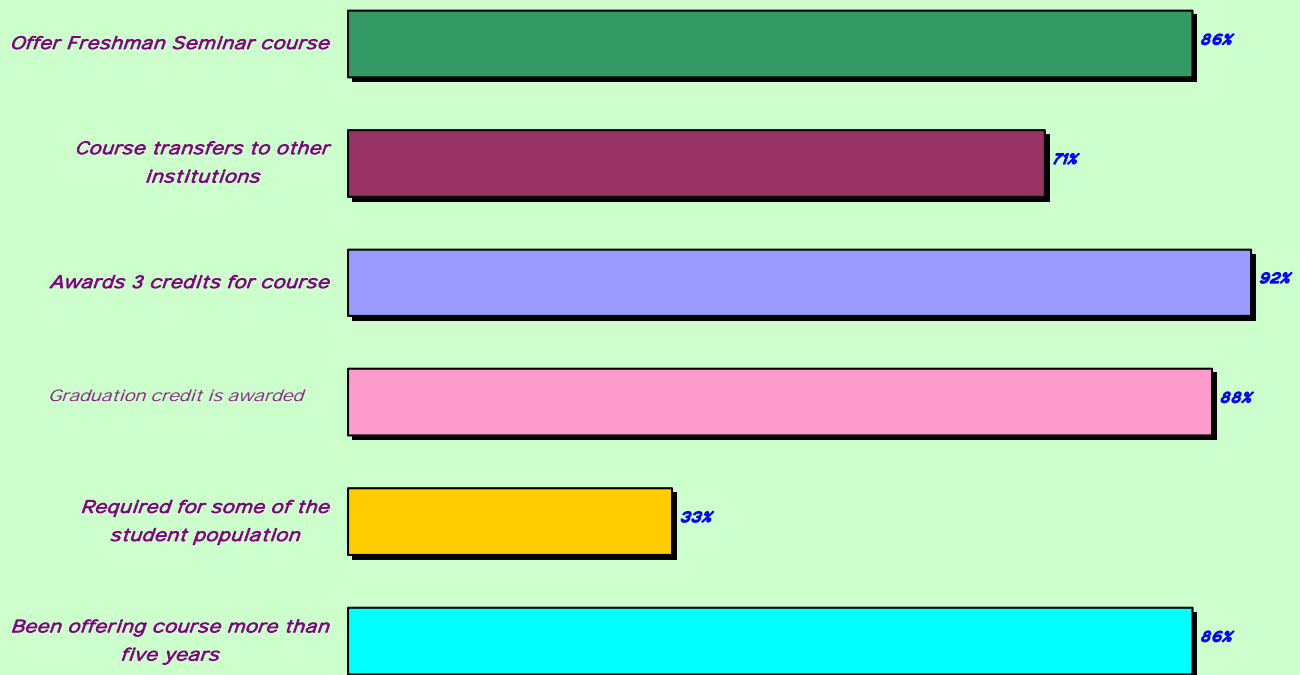
Who teaches the course?

Has any data been collected regarding the impact of the course?

What is the curriculum?

We found that 12 of 14 of our sister community colleges offer a course of this type. Most give graduation credit for the course (there is only one that we know of who doesn't). Most are for 3 credits; those who offer only a one credit course are hoping to transition to a 3 credit course in the near future. Though few have collected substantive data, most of the people we spoke with felt that their course was of significant value to their students. (See Appendix C for a table of our findings).

## Freshman Seminars at Massachusetts Community Colleges n = 14



Many schools across the country have published data indicating the positive influence of their Freshman Seminar course. In Massachusetts, Quinsigamond Community College reports an increase in persistence and grades for students in their ORT110 (aka Freshman Seminar) course.

**Baseline Data FA '01 Cohort Contrasted with Pilot Section FA '02**

<b>Baseline Persistence FA '01</b>	<b>71.1%</b>	
<b>ENG 091 Persistence</b>	<b>78.6%</b>	<b>+ 10.5%</b>
<b>ENG 096 Persistence</b>	<b>77.9%</b>	<b>+ 9.6%</b>
<b>MAT 099 Persistence</b>	<b>80.5%</b>	<b>+13.2%</b>
<b>ORT 110 Persistence</b>	<b>89.7%</b>	<b>+26%</b>

**Grade Performance Comparisons FA '02**

<b>Experimental/Treatment Group</b>	<b>Pilots (ENG 091, ENG 096, MAT 099)</b>	<b>63.9% "C" or higher</b>
<b>Control Group</b>	<b>Non-Pilots (ENG 091, ENG 096, MAT 099)</b>	<b>58.2% "C" or higher</b>

Bristol Community College reports a variety of positive results from their College Success Seminar:

Survey results in 2001 indicate that 98% of students reported that they practiced college study skills in CSS and used them in other classes. Ninety-four percent began to understand college expectations, and 97% began to examine career goals. More than 62% used the tutoring center or other academic support center at least once, and 75% used the Internet or an online database for research.

Students reported in 2003 that they gained confidence in asking for help (89%), became acquainted with students whose backgrounds were different from their

own (78%), and began to understand the general education curriculum (94%).  
*Despite the many high-risk students enrolled in CSS, the 2003 cohort returned at a statistically significant higher rate (86%) than those students who did not take CSS (75%,  $p < .05$ ).*

### **Student Focus Groups**

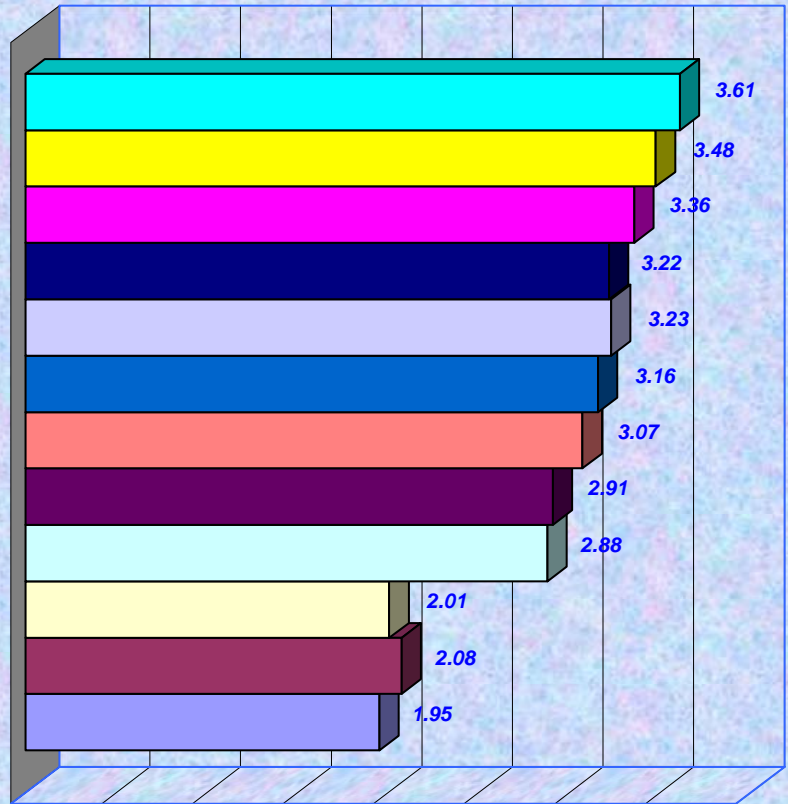
This spring, we recruited student volunteers from the student leadership program to conduct focus groups in seven sections of English Composition. We wanted to solicit student input regarding their first semester experience, and to find out what they thought contributed to student success, especially for beginning college students. (See Appendix D for the questionnaire we used in the focus groups).

The students' responses indicate that many students lack confidence as they start their college work at NECC. The responses to question 2 ("On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest, how well-prepared were you when you started college?") averaged 6.52. On question 3B, ("What word or words would you use to describe your first few weeks in college?"), a significant proportion of the students responded that they felt nervous, scared, overwhelmed, and/or confused.

Students ranked study skills, time management, identifying your learning style, and career information and counseling as especially important to success (using a 0-4 ranking scale). Responses to question 6 ("We are planning a new College Success [orientation] course for NECC. How valuable would a course like this be to new students?") were overwhelmingly positive, ranging from "good for younger students" to "incredible!"

# Overall Average By Students

- 1 study skills
- 4 time management
- 5 identifying your learning style
- 11 career information and counseling
- 8 stress management
- 10 self-knowledge and self-esteem
- 7 critical thinking
- 2 connecting with teachers and staff
- 6 learning about college resources and policies
- 3 making friends
- 9 physical fitness
- 12 finding out about clubs and activities



### **Sample of Student Responses to Question 6**

"It is very intimidating to start in a new school, having orientation is a great tool to answer basic college questions."

"It's important to be goal-oriented when in college, sometimes I'm not sure what I'm working so hard for."

"It would have to be credit or no one would take it, but I would love some useful help."

"It would probably be helpful to some who feel like they need it."

"Considering that most dropout 1/2 way though semester because they are unprepared I think it would be good."

"Incredible, sounds like a great course that should be a prerequisite."

"Should be in every student's orientation."

"I think every student should take this course or at least the college should give students a guide on how to succeed."

"It would be great because it will help new students be more prepared for NECC."

"If it is done properly, extremely valuable. I think it is a great idea."

"Very valuable ... let's get the ball rolling."

## **Improvement Theory**

We make the following recommendations to begin the implementation of a Freshman Seminar Course at NECC:

1. Offer a pilot Freshman Seminar course in the spring 07 semester.
2. Schedule one section of the pilot course in Haverhill and one in Lawrence, both during day hours.
3. Authorize current process management team to:
  - continue in the fall to oversee the implementation of the pilot.
  - recruit enthusiastic instructors for the pilot (we recommend that both sections be team-taught).
  - consult with Tom Fallon and Ellen Wentland to develop an assessment plan for the pilot sections.
  - develop the special topics proposal for Fall 07.
  - survey students and faculty.
  - coordinate the recruitment of students to register for the pilot sections.
  - continue to examine alternate versions of the course.

## **College Success Seminar**

Freshman Seminar courses come in many shapes and guises. We saw lots of attractive and exciting models offered at schools across the country. One of our challenges was to make a recommendation for the pilot course that we believed was appropriate for our college. We understand that other versions may ultimately prove to be equally viable, or superior, to our initial offering. We believe that it is important for NECC to launch a pilot course as soon as possible, and to proceed with data collection on the pilot and the gathering of more input from our students, staff and faculty, so that the best possible course for NECC will emerge over time.

We are proposing a three credit course, to be titled College Success Seminar. (Our proposal has successfully gone through the college's approval process). A three credit course is needed to deliver the extensive amount of important material that should be included in the course. Virtually all of the colleagues we spoke with at other schools expressed a preference for three credits for this reason. When their schools had a one credit offering, they were either in the process of proposing or implementing a three credit course, or wishing they were. Betsy Barefoot, in the foreword to the monograph on *The 2003 National Survey on First-Year Seminars*, remarks: "A disturbing percentage of seminar courses continue to carry one hour of credit or 14 contact hours... While I could argue that 14 hours is better than nothing, it is unreasonable to expect maximum impact from a minimal experience."

There are practical reasons to prefer three credits as well. At NECC, most of our course offerings are three credits; it is clear that students prefer them and that they are more easily scheduled. The first semester student looking for a fourth course in order to be full-time will almost certainly be seeking a three credit course.

We are proposing that the course credits count towards graduation. This is both the national and state norm. 89.3% of the schools in the 2003 survey give graduation credit for their course. Clearly, students don't want to take courses whose credits don't count.

The course that we are proposing is an academic course which incorporates reading and writing assignments, tests, and critical and conceptual thinking. We believe our students deserve graduation credit for doing this course work.

We are also proposing that the pilot course not be required for any students. We believe, based on conversations with students, faculty and staff (including advising staff), that we will be able to populate two sections through advising recommendations.

The pilot course curriculum revolves around the theme of student initiative. We believe that, in addition to certain knowledge and skills, students need to perceive that their success results from their own initiative. The course curriculum divides into three large units: foundations for success, career and life planning, and information literacy. The first unit includes traditional orientation to college curriculum: getting to know the college, study skills, and time management. The second unit will include personality and learning styles assessments to help the students develop academic and career goals that are consistent with their interests, abilities, personalities, and learning styles. The third unit will provide instruction in the fundamentals of information literacy, which is essentially about finding and evaluating relevant information.

The course description and learning outcomes are as follows (See Appendix E for syllabus and proposal rationale):

*Course Description:* This course explores the ways to take the initiative for personal, professional, and academic success. The focus is on techniques and resources to improve self-understanding, information literacy, and critical and creative thinking skills, and to foster teamwork and community building.

*Outcomes:*

- Define and explore the concept of success.
- Proactively participate in their own learning experience.

- Demonstrate an understanding of the college's resources and policies as related to student success.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the basic concepts of learning styles, identify individual learning styles and develop individual learning plans.
- Consistently use appropriate learning skills directly related to academic success, such as notetaking, test taking, critical reading.
- Participate constructively in problem-based and collaborative learning.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the basic concepts of personality typing, and identify individual personality types and their relevance to self-understanding and academic and career choices.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the process of career and life planning.
- Demonstrate an appreciation of diversity and the capacity to work with others despite differences.
- Develop realistic time management plans.
- Demonstrate a basic proficiency in the use of a computer for research purposes.
- Identify, locate, and evaluate information from appropriate sources; apply that information toward the development of their own work and correctly cite the sources.
- Produce written work and develop presentations that reflect critical and creative thinking.

We want to emphasize the importance of flexibility to our course. The course will succeed if the instructor(s) directly address the needs of the students in their sections. Our team has discussed the role of mentoring in the course--we are hoping that the course instructors will see themselves as mentors for their students. We also prefer for the sections to be team-taught. Team-teaching brings two different perspectives into the classroom and expands the students' support network. In addition, we envision the instructors inviting guest speakers (including successful, experienced students) into the class with some frequency. This again will expand the students' support network while increasing their knowledge of campus resources.

## **Costs**

Projected costs for the pilot study are minimal. If the sections are taught by one instructor, the costs will equal two adjunct faculty salaries. These costs will be offset by the tuition retained from the sections, and potentially, from gains in student retention. For example, if each section retains two additional students for two additional semesters of full-time (twelve credit) study, the college would receive an additional \$5040 in tuition and fees.

If the courses are team-taught, the expenditures will presumably be equal to four adjunct salaries. The actual cost will depend upon who teaches the sections, how workload is determined (if full-time instructors are involved), and, if full-time faculty are involved, who teaches the replacement sections of their courses. Thus, the salary cost ranges from \$4,782 to \$11,568.

Indirect costs include guest speakers' time and normal use of college resources (classrooms, library). Also, some cost unit will have to be assigned the responsibility for the course's graphics expenses (e.g., copying syllabi).

### **Studying Course Results**

In the fall, the Freshman Seminar team will determine how to best assess the value of the course. They will consult with Tom Fallon, Ellen Wentland, and other appropriate administrators to develop a credible assessment plan. This assessment should continue for several semesters, informing the curriculum from semester to semester until the curriculum is stable.

### **Engrafting Improvements**

Every course needs a home. Ultimately, the course will have to be assigned to a department or office of the college, or to a permanent committee overseeing its operation. One possibility is for the course to be housed under Liberal Arts. The current Liberal Arts Coordinator, Bill Heinemann, has indicated his support for the course, and the course appears to match up well with the Liberal Arts learning outcomes. However, we did not undertake any formal process this semester to determine whether or not the Liberal Arts faculty would welcome the course as one of their own.

Our team, however, does not want this decision to be made prematurely. For the moment, we want the course to “belong” to the entire college, until it finds its natural home.

## *Gantt Chart for Project Implementation*

	<i>Fall 06</i>	<i>Spring 07</i>	<i>Fall 07</i>
<i>Recruit instructors for SP 07 sections</i>			
<i>Conduct faculty and student surveys</i>			
<i>Develop assessment plan for SP 07 sections</i>			
<i>Develop ST proposal for Fall 07</i>			
<i>Coordinate registration for Spring 07</i>			
<i>Consider alternative versions of course</i>			
<i>Spring 07 sections run</i>			
<i>Spring 07 sections assessed</i>			
<i>Develop ST proposal for Spring 08</i>			
<i>Recruit instructors for Fall 07</i>			
<i>Coordinate registration for Fall 07</i>			
<i>Fall 07 sections run</i>			
<i>Fall 07 sections assessed</i>			
<i>Develop ST proposal for Fall 08</i>			
<i>Recruit instructors for Spring 08</i>			
<i>Coordinate registration for Spring 08</i>			

## **Thanks**

Mary Ellen Ashley

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Sue MacAvoy

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## Appendix A. PACE Student Success Seminar

### PACE Student Success Seminar

**Seminar Design:** The PACE Program completes a holistic needs assessment of each participant in academic, financial, technical and personal areas. The PACE Student Success Seminar is designed to strengthen students' knowledge in these areas and follows a student development model. The PACE Project provides a weekly Student Success Seminar which is designed to enhance student retention and collegiate development. Workshops are one hour in length and run in both Haverhill and Lawrence and meet throughout the fall and spring semesters. The workshops are very well attended, with an average of 20 students present for each workshop.

**Syllabus:** The Syllabus for the seminar is based on a series of self assessments which increase students' awareness about their unique skills and learning styles. Topics include learning styles, work personality type, Library research workshops; time management, study skills, short and long-term memory, test anxiety, etc. See page 2 for a complete list of the self assessments administered during the seminar. The seminar also includes an overview of key services and support personnel, i.e. library, transfer, financial aid and internships at NECC are included.

**Topics:** Seminar topics are strategically placed throughout the semester. For instance, the orientation to key offices would take place at the beginning of the fall semester. The scholarship workshop is held at the time the scholarship application is available in the spring semester. MBTI Personality type and temperament style are in the spring semester as they are more advanced topics for discussion.

**Flexibility:** A unique feature of the Seminar design is that it integrates a series of modules which are effective individually as well as collectively. This allows students to attend individual sessions based on time and interest, without having to commit to attending every Monday for a whole semester. However, it is important to emphasize that many students are faithful to attending most, if not all sessions, during a given academic year. Here is the attendance for the Seminar series over the past three years:

2003-2004:	295
2004-2005:	316
2005-2006:	395

Attendance has been steadily climbing with 2005-2006 showing a 33% increase over 2003-2004.

#### **Benefits of the Student Success Seminar:**

The benefits of the Seminar fall within three general categories: academic skills, support systems and adjustment to collegial environment. The following lists the most often cited benefits of the seminar based on student evaluation and feedback:

- Fosters identification with faculty, support staff, and other students;
- Informs students of available services, scholarships, etc;
- Improved study skills, test taking;
- Increases self awareness of students' unique learning styles and skills;
- Teaches applied skills tailored to the results of their self assessments;
- Provides a network of peer and professional support which extends beyond the workshops;
- Minimizes isolation;
- Fosters assimilation and integration of the student within the college environment.

**PACE Student Success Seminar offers the following assessments and assists students in applying the results to improve academic performance and life management.**

**eLASSI:** electronic Learning And Study Strategies Inventory- this measures students' strengths and weaknesses in ten sub-groups of strategic learning that include

- Skill (Information Processing, Selecting Ideas and Test Strategies),
- Will (Attitude, Motivation and Anxiety)
- Self-Determination (Concentration, Management, Self-Testing and Study Aids).

**eLASSI modules:** used in conjunction with the eLASSI to further explore the ten sub-groups of strategic learning. They can be done online, are interactive and can be printed out.

**Learning Styles:** an online inventory is used to measure visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning styles.

**MBTI:** Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is used to identify personality type.

**Keirsey Temperament Sorter II:** This is an online inventory that helps students identify their temperament type, based on the MBTI. They receive the Classic Temperament Report and the Learning Styles Report, based on their temperament.

**PEEK:** This is an assessment tool designed to help identify student's Perceptions, Expectations, Emotions and Knowledge about college. PEEK categories measure expectations about academics, personal and social areas.

**Appendix B. National Data**

(Source: National Resource Center for First-Year Seminars;

[www.sc.edu/fye/research/surveyfindings/surveys/survey03.html](http://www.sc.edu/fye/research/surveyfindings/surveys/survey03.html)

3,258 Survey invitations distributed  
771 surveys completed (23.7% response rate)  
629 schools responded that they offer first-year seminars (81.6%)

**\*\*Note. All data below reflects only those schools that are non-proprietary and offer a first-year seminar.\*\***

#### **Types of Seminars (N=621)**

65.2% indicate that they offer extended orientation seminars (n=405)  
27.4% indicate that they offer academic seminars with generally uniform content across sections (n=170)  
24.3% indicate that they offer academic seminars on various topics (n=151)  
14.2% indicate that they offer pre-professional or discipline-linked seminars (n=88)  
20.0% indicate that they offer basic study skills seminars (n=124)  
8.2% indicate that they offer some "other" type of first-year seminar (n=51)

These "other" courses were primarily hybrids of two or more types of seminars.

\*Note. Percentages add up to more than 100% because several schools offer more than one type of seminar for first-year students.

### **General Seminar Characteristics (across all seminar types)**

#### **Course Objectives (N=621)**

Respondents were asked to identify the three most important course objectives of their first-year seminar. The three most frequently reported objectives were:

1. Develop academic skills (n=394, 63.5%)
2. Provide an orientation to campus resources and services (n=370, 59.6%)
3. Self-exploration/personal development (n=247, 39.8%)

#### **Course Topics (N=621)**

Respondents were asked to identify the five most important topics that comprise the content of the first-year seminars. The five most frequently reported topics were:

1. Study skills (n=390, 62.8%)
2. Campus resources (n=382, 61.5%)
3. Time management (n=371, 59.7%)
4. Academic Planning/Advising (n=361, 58.1%)
5. Critical Thinking (n=325, 52.3%)

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#### **Academic Credit (N=618)**

89.3% of schools indicate that their first-year seminars are offered for academic credit (n=552)

Of those 522 schools whose seminars count for academic credit:

49.5% offer seminars carrying 1 semester/quarter hour of credit (n=273)  
13.2% offer seminars carrying 2 semester/quarter hours of credit (n=73)  
31.2% offer seminars carrying 3 semester/quarter hours of credit (n=172)  
9.2% offer seminars carrying 4 semester/quarter hours of credit (n=51)  
1.3% offer seminars carrying 5 semester/quarter hours of credit (n=7)  
2.5% offer seminars carrying more than 5 semester/quarter hours of credit (n=14)

\*Note. Percents add up to more than 100% because some schools offer varying levels of credit for their seminars.

#### **Application of Credit (N=522)**

57.3% of schools allow seminar to apply towards general education requirements (n=316)  
42.0% of schools allow seminar to apply as an elective (n=232)  
6.0% of schools allow seminar to apply towards major requirements (n=33)

#### **Grading (N=620)**

78.9% indicate that seminars are graded using a letter grade system (n=489)  
18.5% indicate that seminars are graded pass/fail (n=115)  
2.6% indicate that seminars are not graded (n=16)

### Appendix C. Freshman Seminars at Massachusetts Community Colleges

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Course Name</u>	<u>Cr</u>	<u>Grd Crdt?</u>	<u>Who are students</u>	<u>Rq Crse</u>	<u>Tnsfr?</u>	<u>Who Teaches</u>	<u>Crse Age?</u>	<u>Data? Other</u>
GCC	College Success HUD 114 2 Secs as of 9/06	3	y	Stand Alone and in Learning Communities	n	poss?	Sharon Roth since 2000 and Diane O'Hearn in 9/06	6 yrs	
Quinsig	ORT110 Strategies for College and Career	3	yes	Required for General Studies students, recommended for all developmental students.	yes	Yes to U Mass Amherst, not sure about others	Open to all but psych, soc, and developmental eng teach most of the sections	Pilot was in 2001	Taught in
NSSC	College Success Seminar	3	Yes Open free elect	Any student can register, but recruit 1st semester They give out brochures at orientation and build into advising program. Student must assess into 2nd level College reading & writing or higher	Not required but staff looks at assessment scores and advises students to register	Yes	Recruited full time experienced prof who related to students and well respected; different disciplines; believe connection more important than content; specialized sections; 350 enrolled fall 05 & 100 spring 06; faculty selects texts and format	10 yrs	Followed grades & h
MSSST	College Experience	3	y	Rqrd for students w/2 or more dev. courses ; also rec. for nontraditional + students doing poorly	y		Varies, often English	A few years	
<u>Institution</u>	<u>Course Name</u>	<u>Cr</u>	<u>Grd Crdt?</u>	<u>Who are students</u>	<u>Rq Crse</u>	<u>Tnsfr?</u>	<u>Who Teaches</u>	<u>Crse Age?</u>	<u>Data? Other</u>
STCC	<b>FRES-160 - COLLEGE SUCCESS SEMINAR</b>	3	Yes	Students referred from entry process, trying to have the school dictate course entrance from these tests	?	?	James Andersen ASST Prof Success Dept.	?	<a href="http://www.s">http://www.s</a>

HCC	IDEAS SSN120 3 Sections	3	yes	Stand alone and in learning communities	no	Has trans to certain clgs	Adjunct	8 years	
MDSX CC First Try	Freshman Seminar	1 8wk	Yes	Open to all Students	no	Yes	Faculty drawn from var. div.s	10 yrs	
MDSSX CC 2nd try	"DNA & Gene Scene" "It's a Small World" etc.	3	Yes	Within discipline elective students	No	Yes	Science, Humanities, Business	4 yrs	Disco
MDSSX Current plan	Combined with Gateway Courses	3	Yes	2 developmental req	Yes	Yes	Science, Humanities, Bus	New	
RCC	college survival seminar*	1*	Yes	all students	Yes	?	Variety	10 yrs	
Bristol	College Success Seminar*	1*	Yes	Variety of placements	No	No	Varies, often English	5 yrs	
Mt. Wachusett	College Success Seminar	3	no	developmental placement	Yes	no			
Berkshire	Project Connect	3							
Bay state Bunker Hill Cape Cod	College Success no course no course	3							

\* Roxbury  
and Bristol  
and  
transitioning  
to 3 credits

## Appendix D. Focus Group Questionnaire

### College Success Course Focus Group Questions

1. How important are each of the following to success in college? Please rank the importance of each of the following on a 0-4 scale, as follows:

0 = not important      1=of little importance      2=of some importance  
3= fairly important      4=very important

- \_\_\_\_\_ study skills
- \_\_\_\_\_ connecting with teachers and staff
- \_\_\_\_\_ making friends
- \_\_\_\_\_ time management
- \_\_\_\_\_ identifying your learning style
- \_\_\_\_\_ learning about college resources and policies
- \_\_\_\_\_ critical thinking
- \_\_\_\_\_ stress management
- \_\_\_\_\_ physical fitness
- \_\_\_\_\_ self-knowledge and self-esteem
- \_\_\_\_\_ career information and counseling
- \_\_\_\_\_ finding out about clubs and activities
- \_\_\_\_\_ other (please name one other important skill/factor): \_\_\_\_\_

2. On a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being the highest), how well-prepared were you when you started college? \_\_\_\_\_

3A. What semester are you currently in (first, second, third, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

3B. What word or words would you use to describe your first few weeks in college?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Please continue to questions on back**

4. What skills and knowledge related to college success do you have now that you wish you had when you started?

5. What do you know now about NECC (for instance, college resources, policies) that you wish you had known when you started?

6. We are planning a new College Success (orientation) course for NECC. How valuable would a course like this be to new students?

## **Appendix E. Syllabus and Proposal Rationale**

**SYLLABUS notes:** The following syllabus should be read as a generic or template syllabus, which will be modified by whoever is teaching the course in the spring. It is important to understand that this course's curriculum must remain somewhat flexible so that it can adapt to the style of the instructor and the needs of the students in each section. The course is trans- or super-disciplinary, meaning that the curriculum is relevant, potentially, to students of all majors, and that the academic content may be drawn from a variety of disciplines. We favor a team-taught course, and envision the instructors as inviting in guest speakers with some frequency.

### **Syllabus: College Success Seminar**

**CSS101**

#### **Course Description:**

**This course explores the ways to take the initiative for personal, professional, and academic success. The focus is on techniques and resources to improve self-understanding, information literacy, and critical and creative thinking skills, and to foster teamwork and community building.**

**Required Text:** TBA (focus of text—success) Master Student/Learning Success, etc.)

#### **Outcomes**

**Students progress will be measured by their ability to:**

- Define and explore the concept of success.  
Proactively participate in their own learning experience.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the college's resources and policies as related to student success.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the basic concepts of learning styles, identify individual learning styles and develop individual learning plans.

- Consistently use appropriate learning skills directly related to academic success, such as notetaking, test taking, critical reading.
- Participate constructively in problem-based and collaborating learning
- Demonstrate an understanding of the basic concepts of personality typing, and identify individual personality types and their relevance to self-understanding and academic and career choices.

Demonstrate an understanding of the process of career and life planning.

- Demonstrate an appreciation of diversity and the capacity to work with others despite differences.
- Develop realistic time management plans.
- Demonstrate a basic proficiency in the use of a computer for research purposes.
- Identify, locate, and evaluate information from appropriate sources; apply that information toward the development of their own work and correctly cite the sources.
- Produce written work and develop presentations that reflect critical and creative thinking.

#### **Methods of Instruction:**

Discussion, lecture, collaborative learning & team projects, guest speakers, exercises/applications, student presentations

#### **Grading:**

- Attendance
- Contribution/participation
- Journals/[Portfolios?]

- Papers & presentations
- Quizzes

### **Course Outline:**

Weeks 1 and 2: Orienting for Success  
college resources (website, offices, publications)  
building a support network  
professor's expectations  
Defining success & thinking critically about what it means  
Connections between personal, professional, and academic success.

Weeks 3 and 4: Tools for Classroom Success/  
time management—for current studies; for future career  
taking notes  
preparing for tests/ stress management

Weeks 5 and 6: Exploring self and others/ working as part of a team  
motivation  
personality type  
learning style  
group dynamics/diversity

Weeks 7 and 8: Majors and Career Exploration/  
choosing a major  
learning about careers  
Informational interviews

Week 9 & 10: Community  
Importance of community  
Changing concepts of community  
Responsibly participating in community.

Weeks 11 - 14: Information Please  
Defining information needs  
Learning where to look for reliable information  
Evaluating information sources critically  
Making effective use of information

## Citing information properly

### Week 15 Student presentations

#### Proposal Question 10

NECC's strategic plan revolves around the theme of student success. This proposal is an attempt to address that theme with a course that is explicitly concerned with empowering students with some of the skills and knowledge that contribute to student success. The course is also an outgrowth of the college's process management initiative. In the spring of '05, a PM team worked on a proposal regarding student readiness. They created the college's student success website and subsequently a related video. One of the recommendations of that team was that another team pursue the idea of a Freshman Seminar course and develop a pilot version of that course. This spring, a PM team has researched FS courses and developed this proposal.

Most colleges and universities surveyed around the country offer a similar course, and there is a substantial amount of data indicating that this type of course has a positive impact on student persistence and achievement. We (the PM-FS team) believe that an academically rigorous course which orients students to the college, provides them with some basic study skills, helps them develop long-term goals, and introduces them to information literacy will have a similarly beneficial impact at NECC.

We recognize that this is only a beginning; that there are many questions still to be answered; and that the course is likely to evolve and mutate over its first few semesters. We hope you will support this proposal and agree that there is potentially much to be gained by offering a course of this type to our students.

#### Question 11

Courses of this type are offered at two and four year institutions all across the U.S. FYE (First Year Experience), a national clearinghouse for Freshman Seminar courses, provides extensive data regarding these courses. According to their 2003 survey, 81.6% of the schools responding to the survey (these include both two and four year schools) replied that they offer a Freshman seminar course (629 of 771 survey respondents). 89.3% of these courses carry graduation credit.

In Massachusetts, our Freshman Seminar team has discovered that 12 of our 14 sister community colleges offer a similar course. We know of only one that does not give graduation credit for the course. Almost all offer or are transitioning to a 3-credit course.

Transferability is a more complex question; we have not yet seen much data on transferability. Assumedly, the course will transfer if the accepting institution offers a similar course. Our impression so far, based on anecdotal responses, is that some of these

courses have transferred successfully and others have not. Presumably, the institutions involved and the curricula are the determining factors.