

*Collegiate First Year Seminar Program,
Academic Learning -Assessment of a First
Year Seminar*

Presented by:
Shari Ann Summers Ed.D.
Institutional Planner, Division of
Student Affairs
UWSP



- ⌘ My Story and FYS
- ⌘ FYS Program Information
- ⌘ Research
- ⌘ Results
- ⌘ Limitations
- ⌘ Conclusions & Discussion
- ⌘ Recommendations & Discussion

Today's Presentation

- ⌘ Participants will be discuss the potential implications of study findings on UWSP's FYS program.
- ⌘ Participants will examine and discuss the relationship between assessment and learning.

Today's Presentation Outcomes

Background Information

{ My Story





3 credit -Themed Seminars

⊗ *Spring 2011*

⊗ 12 sections

⊗ enrollment capped at 20

⊗ 221 participants

⊗ Describe the importance of a liberal education and the ways in which academic study is structured at UWSP.

⊗ Describe the importance of critical thinking and information literacy and apply the associated skills.

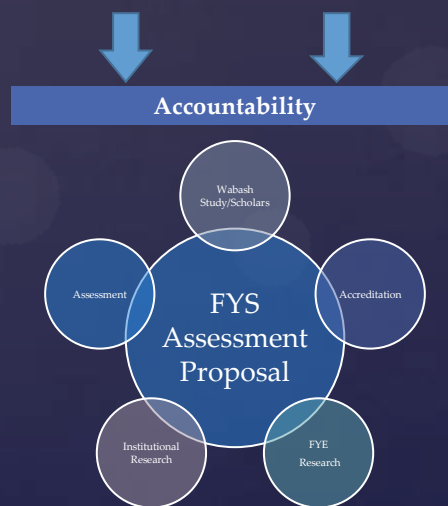
⊗ Identify and apply appropriate note-taking, test-taking, and time management strategies to their academic studies.

FYS Outcomes

- ↳ Describe the importance of co-curricular involvement and how it enhances their academic study at UWSP.
- ↳ Identify and utilize UWSP programs, resources, and services that will support their academic studies and co-curricular involvement.
- ↳ Develop a plan that demonstrates their responsibility for their own education, specifically how it relates to their interests, abilities, career choices and personal development.

FYS Outcomes

External Forces that Impacted Design of Study



Research

{ Study
Questions
Model
Design
Timeline

⌘ Utilize the institutional level survey, National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), focus groups of FYS participants to assess the achievement of UWSP First Year Seminar general education outcomes.

The Study



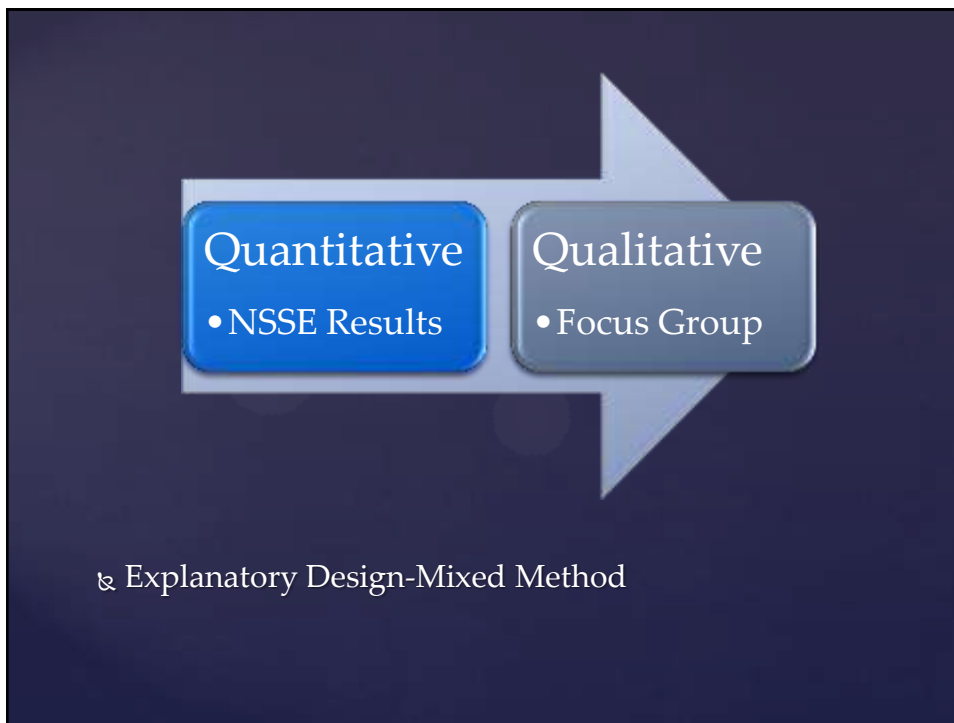
⌘ Does the UWSP First Year Seminar fosters attainment of the intended learning outcomes?

Research Question



1. What are the FYS students' perceptions of their learning gains as related to FYS learning outcomes?
2. What are the learning experiences of the FYS participants as related to FYS learning outcomes?

Ancillary Research Question



Research

	Quantitative	Qualitative
Research Question	NSSE Analysis	FYS Participant Focus Groups Analysis
Does the UWSP First Year Seminar foster attainment of the intended learning outcomes?	X	X
What are FYS students' perceptions of their learning gains as related to FYS learning outcomes?		X
What are the learning experiences of the FYS participants as related to FYS learning outcomes?	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

Tell us about your UWSP experience
Complete the NSSE-National Survey of Student Engagement

You will receive an e-mail invitation in March from our Academic Affairs Office to take the NSSE survey. It takes only 15 minutes and you will help us improve UWSP.

In appreciation for participating, all students taking the survey will be entered into a drawing for eight cash prizes worth \$50.

<http://www.uwsp.edu>
800.4.A. Stevens
Associate Institutional Planner
715-246-2474
and f11@uwsp.edu

University of Wisconsin
Stevens Point

{ Why use NSSE?

⌘ NSSE

- ⌘ 184 students in FYS Spring invited to take NSSE
- ⌘ 110 FYS freshman took NSSE
- ⌘ 59% of total invited FYS participants

⌘ Focus Groups

- ⌘ Two Focus Groups
- ⌘ Eight Students in first Focus Group, Seven in second Section
- ⌘ 8% total FYS participants

Sample Size

NSSE FYS Outcomes Map

Foundation: Developing Fundamental Skills		NSSE Questions
First Year Seminar	Describe the importance of a liberal education and the ways in which academic study is structured at UWSP.	11 a,
	Describe the importance of critical thinking and information literacy and apply the associated skills.	1 d, i, 2 b, c, d, e, 11 e, f, m
	Identify and apply appropriate note-taking, test-taking, and time-management strategies to their academic studies.	1a, b, c, f 9a 11 j
	Describe the importance of co-curricular involvement and how it enhances their academic study at UWSP.	1 k, j, s 6 a, b, c, d, e, f 7 a, d, f 9 d 10 e, f Ccq 7
	Identify and utilize UWSP programs, resources, and services that will support their academic studies and co-curricular involvement.	8 c, 9 d 10 a, b, c, d, e, f, g 12 Ccq* 5, 10, 11
	Develop a plan that demonstrates their responsibility for their own education, specifically how it relates to their interests, abilities, career choices, and personal development.	7 a, b, c, d, e, f, g 11 b, j, k, n, Ccq 15, 16, 17, 18 1 l, m, n, o

NSSE Question mapped to FYS Outcome

FYS Outcome	NSSE Question #2
Describe the importance of critical thinking and information literacy and apply the associated skills.	<p>During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities?</p> <p>b. Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components .</p> <p>c. Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships.</p> <p>d. Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions.</p> <p>e. Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations</p>

Focus Groups

Focus Groups Questions

- Do you think or feel differently about the importance of pursuing a liberal education at UWSP after taking the FYS? How?
-
- Do you think that the FYS course made you better at thinking about topics and issues from different prospective?
- What specifically interested you in the FYS course?
- I am interested in your learning. What factors or aspects of the program contribute to or detract from you learning?
- How are you learning experiences in the FYS similar to what you have experiences in other courses? Different?
- Have you attended any campus events? How did they change your experience at UWSP?
 - How do you think they enhanced your experience?
 - What kind of involvement activities did you participate in as a part of this course?
- I would like to focus on FYS course you took. Please comment on; the format, scheduling, topic, and instruction.
- What are your plans for your education?
- Do you have a major or an idea about a career you would like to pursue?
- If you were in charge of the FYS program, and could change anything and everything, what would you change immediately and what is one thing you would not change?

- ⌘ Females were over represented in NSSE-FYS population
- ⌘ Higher proportion of high school rank below 50 suggesting greater academic need
- ⌘ Hispanic/Latino population is under-represented in NSSE-FYS

FYS NSSE Characteristics



- ⌘ Enrolled in the FYS course at the study institution in the Spring of 2011
- ⌘ First-year standing, meaning they cannot have in excess of 30 earned credits at the time they were enrolled in the FYS
- ⌘ Participated at least through the eighth week of the course
- ⌘ Enrolled at the study institution for less than two semesters

Focus Group Participant Characteristics

Findings

{ NSSE
Focus Groups

{ NSSE Quantitative

- ⊗ T-test: No significant difference of means between FYS and Non-FYS participants
- ⊗ Chi-square: No significant difference between response frequencies between FYS and Non-FYS participants

{ Qualitative

- ⊗ Majority of students responded that this topic was discussed
 - ⊗ *"Once it was defined, it didn't change my perception, but I saw how classes I wouldn't give a crap about made sense for me to take."*
- Four other students smiled and nodded as this was said.

Learning Outcome I: Importance of Liberal Education

{ NSSE Quantitative

- ⌘ T-test: No significant difference of means between FYS and Non-FYS participants
- ⌘ Chi-square: No significant difference between response frequencies between FYS and Non-FYS participants

{ Qualitative

- ⌘ Majority of students responded that this topic was discussed
- ⌘ *"It was cool it made you research something you don't know. It was cool to know so much about one thing. I thought that was one cool thing. I can find myself doing research on just one thing, and I realized how much time it took to become and expert at something."*

Learning Outcome II: Critical Thinking and Information Literacy

{ NSSE Quantitative

- ⌘ T-test: No significant difference of means between FYS and Non-FYS participants
- ⌘ Chi-square: No significant difference between response frequencies between FYS and Non-FYS participants

{ Qualitative

- ⌘ Majority of students responded that this topic not was discussed
- ⌘ One student said they were given handouts on test-taking/several other concurred
- ⌘ No direct student responses on this outcome

Learning Outcome III: Identify Appropriate Study Skills

{ NSSE Quantitative

- ⌘ T-test: Non-FYS participants were significantly *more likely* to have participated in spiritual activities and practicums or internship.
- ⌘ Chi-square: No significant difference between response frequencies between FYS and Non-FYS participants

{ Qualitative

- ⌘ Majority of students responded that this topic was discussed
- ⌘ Experiences ranged from prescribe course to encouraged
- ⌘ the class got to vote on a piece of art that was to be displayed on campus and *"that was cool."*

Learning Outcome IV: Co-curricular involvement and academic study

{ NSSE Quantitative

- ⌘ T-test: FYS participants expressed a higher quality of relationship with administrative personnel and offices
- ⌘ FYS participants had lower mean scores on one item: hours spent participating in co-curricular activities
- ⌘ Chi-square: No significant difference between response frequencies between FYS and Non-FYS participants

{ Qualitative

- ⌘ Majority of students responded that this topic was discussed
- ⌘ Experiences ranged from prescribe course to encouraged curricular learning.
- ⌘ Some students reported that it was a class assignment. One student reported that, *"we took a test the first week, and we took a test at the end. It opened my eyes to the resources around campus."*

Learning Outcome V: Identify and utilize campus resources

{ NSSE Quantitative

- ⌘ T-test and Chi-square: FYS participants more likely to participate in internship or practicum

{ Qualitative

- ⌘ "...convinced me I was in the right major."
- ⌘ student stated that she felt "*at ease*" now that she had a plan for the future that would allow her to finish even though she had a really "*hard major*"

Learning Outcome VI: Develop academic plan



Additional Findings

{ FYS Course Experience Theme Results

- ↳ Garnered the most student comments
- ↳ Students' awareness and appreciation of the use of more innovative learning and teaching practices not found in the typical freshman courses.

↳ *"our prof took inventory halfway through the semester of what we liked, or what we liked and disliked. And he changed his teaching because of what we told him."*



High Impact Learning Practices



- ↳ The enthusiasm for the great variety of meaningful seminar topics offered through the FYS courses.
- ↳ *"It's good that you can pick from the topics of the classes so you can pick one that holds your personal interest."*
- ↳ *"I would take one of these courses every semester if I could!"*

Meaningful and Interesting FYS Topics

- ⌘ Some students thought that the course descriptions did not adequately describe the course, and this led to some dissatisfaction.
- ⌘ They thought they were going to be taking more of a *“how-to course”* than a science course, but it turned out to be primarily based in a discipline.
- ⌘ The few required discipline-specific papers seemed *“out of place”* and incongruent.

Course Expectations

- ⌘ Strong relationships developed amongst the faculty and students in the smaller FYS courses.
- ⌘ Faculty’s willingness to share information about themselves seemed to be important for the students, and it often resulted in students expressing that this opened the way for students to share more of their own ideas and form stronger relationships with other students.
- ⌘ *“He said that every day we are teaching him as much as I am teaching you.”*

Forged Relationships That Fostered Learning

Conclusions

{ Outcomes and FYS Program Themes

- ⌘ The NSSE was designed to capture student engagement, those experiences that foster student learning and success. This may not be translatable to assessing achievement of learning outcomes. However, the instrument was redesigned in 2013 with the intent of being able to measure more learning experiences.
- ⌘ The actual survey may not be a concise enough instrument to capture information about learning at the course level. Recommend repeating the analysis in 2014.



NSSE

- ⌘ The overall conclusion was that the FYS did foster the attainment of the majority of FYS learning outcomes.
- ⌘ The outcome that was not obviously attained was the **study skills outcome**.

Qualitative Conclusions of Learning Outcomes

- ⌘ This could be due to several factors inherent in the *pilot program*.
 - ⌘ Limited experience teaching to outcomes may have translated into inconsistent coverage of the outcomes or the lack of declared intent to the students about specific outcomes.
 - ⌘ Too many outcomes for FYS 3 credit course!
 - ⌘ Course was still a designated General Education course with content expectations.

Discussion

- ⌘ High Impact Learning Practices
- ⌘ Meaningful and Interesting Topics (ownership in learning)
- ⌘ Course Expectations
- ⌘ Relationships

Qualitative Conclusion: FYS Course Experience

- ⌘ Reproduce FYS NSSE analysis in future.
- ⌘ Ensure multiple assessment methods of FYS continues.
- ⌘ Incorporate qualitative assessment and reflection into FYS course.
- ⌘ Incorporate seminar like experiences into more traditional courses.

Implications for Practice

- ⌘ Mindful of time between intervention/or learning and corresponding assessment.
- ⌘ Include faculty in gathering and analysis of qualitative assessments.
- ⌘ Include faculty and students in the process of reflection and assessment.

Recommendations:

- ⌘ Increase the continuity of teaching to the learning outcomes between sections of the FYS course.
- ⌘ Revisit the FYS learning outcomes and rewrite them to eliminate multiple goals within one outcome.
- ⌘ Reduce total number of FYS learning outcomes or encourage focus on several.
- ⌘ Delegate some of the FYS outcomes to other support programs and first-year interventions that have expertise in these areas, such as time management and study skills.

Recommendations for FYS Program

- ⌘ Include and provide support to have FYS instructors in student based assessments.
- ⌘ Incorporate more opportunities for small group experiences and other HIPs in larger courses.
- ⌘ Develop a method for instructors to share their effective practices with other instructors.

Recommendations for FYS Program



- ⌘ Majority of FYS participants are from second semester and are not true first semester students.
- ⌘ NSSE administration is 2nd semester which only captures successful students.
- ⌘ Student population incoming characteristics.
- ⌘ Researcher bias.

Limitations of the Study

- ⌘ Where does this type of institutional programmatic assessment belong in the assessment process? Does it?
- ⌘ Intersection of accountability and assessment-how should this look for our campus?
- ⌘ If of value, what type of support should administration offer to encourage this type of program assessment?



Pause for Thought

“As time goes on, it will just get Better and Better, I would recommend to anyone.”

FYS Spring 2011 Participant

{ Final Quote



Thank you.