

University of Connecticut
Office of First Year Programs & Learning Communities

First Year Experience Highlights



Fall 2008

<http://fye.uconn.edu>

First Year Experience INTD 1800/1820 Classes

The mission of the First Year Experience classes is to assist new students with the transition to college and engage them with the intellectual, social and cultural dimensions of the University of Connecticut as early as possible in their academic careers.

Guiding Principles:

- Success in the first year is critical to a successful academic career
- First year students are not aware of campus resources
- Effective study skills and time management can be learned
- Successful planning for majors and careers begins in the first year.
- Students who are involved on campus are most likely to persist to graduation.
- Student development requires opportunities for self-assessment and introspection
- Technology is critical to their educational experience
- Students who form meaningful relationships with faculty/staff report the greatest satisfaction with their college experience
- Healthy lifestyles are usually established in the first year.
- Fostering understanding and respect for diversity begins in the first year

Enrollment

This fall a larger, academically stronger, and more diverse entering class arrived at UConn. First Year Experience class sections filled up before the end of Summer Orientation and a Wait List was maintained. New sections were added so that students on the wait list could be enrolled. Around 80% of the entering class, including athletes, honor students, transfers, and students in the CAP/SSS programs, enrolled in First Year Experience classes.

Fall 2008 Statistics Summary (Storrs Campus)	
Total First Year Enrollment	3604
Student Enrollment in FYE Courses*	2883
Total number of FYE sections	176
Total FYE Instructors	164
Total FYE Mentors	96

* Numbers reflect enrollment totals. An individual taking multiple INTD courses would be accounted for twice in the totals.

FYE Fall 2008 Fact Sheet

<i>Total Fall 2008 FYE Enrollment, University-Wide</i>	3,658
Total INTD 1800 Enrollment	2,626
Storrs Campus	1,857
Regional Campuses	769
Total INTD 1820 Enrollment	702
Storrs Campus	696
Regional Campuses	6
Total INTD 1784 Enrollment	330
Storrs Campus	330

<i>Total Fall 2008 FYE Instructors, University-Wide</i>	199
Total INTD 1800 Instructors	125
Storrs Campus (Includes co-instructors and instructors who taught more than 1 section)	94
Regional Campuses	31
Total INTD 1820 Instructors	52
Storrs Campus (Includes co-instructors and instructors who taught more than 1 section)	50
Regional Campuses	2
Total INTD 1784 Instructors	22
Storrs Campus	22

Percentage of Students Enrolled In INTD 1800/1784 Course	
Storrs Campus	60.7%
Regional Campuses	61.0%
University-Wide Enrollment	60.8%

** Based on Storrs First-Time Freshman 4-year Enrollment of 3,604 and Regional Campus Enrollment of 1,254 and university-wide enrollment of 4,858*

Percentage of Students Enrolled In INTD 1820 Courses	
Storrs Campus	19.3%
Regional Campuses	0.4%
University-Wide Enrollment	19.4%

** Based on Storrs First-Time Freshman 4-year Enrollment of 3,604 and Regional Campus Enrollment of 1,254 and university-wide enrollment of 4,858*

Percentage Of Students Enrolled In Any INTD Course	
Storrs Campus	80%
Regional Campuses	61.8%
University-Wide Enrollment	75.3%

** Based on Storrs First-Time Freshman 4-year Enrollment of 3,604 and Regional Campus Enrollment of 1,254 and university-wide enrollment of 4,858*

Non-Residential Learning Communities	
CAP/SSS	Transfer Students
Animal Science	Pre-Teaching Students
Pathobiology & Veterinary Science	Athletes
Economics Majors	

Residential Learning Communities	
Community Service	Nursing (2 sections)
Connecting with the Arts	Pre-Pharmacy (3 sections)
Fine Arts	Social Justice in a Global Community
Global House (4 sections)	Women in Math, Science, and Engineering
Leadership, Learning & Life @ UConn	

Undergraduate Student Mentors	
Number of FYE Undergraduate Student Mentors	120
Number of FYE Undergraduate Students in EPSY 3020 or HDFS 3080	87

Affiliation of Instructors on Storrs Campus (per section)	
Academic Affairs	10
CANR	5
Alumni Relations	2
Audit, Compliance and Ethics	1
Education	1
Enrollment Planning, Management and Resources	11
Fine Arts	3
Grad Students (HESA, NEAG, Counseling)	14
Liberal Arts and Sciences	14
University Libraries	5
Multicultural and International	11
Friend of UConn (not employed by UConn, but part of campus community)	6
Public/Environmental Safety	2
School of Engineering	2
School of Nursing	2
School of Pharmacy	5
Student Affairs	27
Undergraduate Education	62
Total	182

Content Development

First Year Experience instructors are encouraged to introduce students to the many resources available on campus. One way is to invite speakers from various UConn programs to present information about the services they provide; another way is to take the students on a “field trip” and visit museums and cultural centers. This year, twenty-five programs gave presentations to 486 sections of FYE courses, reaching approximately 9,273 individuals.

<i>Program</i>	<i>Sections Visited</i>	<i># Students</i>
Advising	25	475
African American Cultural Center	6	114
Alcohol and Other Drugs	65	1235
Asian American Cultural Center	18	342
Benton	30	570
Career Services	25	475
Dodd Center Tour	2	38
Health Education	89	1691
Individualized Majors	6	114
MBTI - Personality Types	6	114
Nutrition and Wellness	23	437
Personality Types	4	76
Police	38	722
Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center	6	114
Rainbow Center	6	114
Registration	7	133
Stress Management	8	152
Student Activities	10	190
Study Abroad	19	361
Study Skills	5	95
Transportation	6	114
University Libraries	28	532
Writing Center	54	1026
Total	486	9273

Assignments

This fall semester, FYE instructors were encouraged, but not mandated, to include two assignments in their sections: a Writing Assignment and a Résumé Assignment.

Writing Assignment. Instructors were encouraged to integrate writing into their FYE class. For the second year, First Year Experience collaborated with the Writing Center on campus and created a one-page assignment that includes a short description of the project, straightforward instructions on how to complete the project and a grading rubric. The project combined attendance at Human Rights, Cultural Center, and Fine and Performing Arts events with a writing assignment and tutorial help in the Writing Center on campus. About 50% of the FYE 1800 sections, and over a thousand students, participated in this assignment.

Résumé Assignment. Career Services, in collaboration with First Year Programs, is offering a résumé writing assignment for FYE classes this fall. Though typically associated with upper-class students, Career Services strongly believes first year students benefit from creating this document early in their college career. Just under 25% of the FYE 1800 sections, and 475 students, participated in this assignment.

Communication with Instructors

First Year Experience is committed to communicating with the volunteers who comprise the FYE class instructors. Several LISTSERVS devoted to FYE communication are maintained; one for current instructors, and the other for faculty, staff, and graduate students who have served as an current or past instructors and anyone who has expressed an interest in the program. Periodic announcements and programmatic changes are communicated using this technology.

During the fall semester, FYE publishes an electronically delivered *Weekly Digest* to all current FYE instructors and mentors. The publication consists of a time-sensitive Director's thoughts in which David Ouimette provides the wider picture for instructors. He shares anecdotes from his classes and reminds instructors of upcoming milestones, i.e., mid-term exams; student reactions to changes in lifestyle, the first trip home, and academic deadlines. Another section provides information about resources and programming available for classes. Special Events on campus are listed in another section so that instructors can encourage students to explore cultural and intellectual offerings on campus.

Around mid-term of the semester, the Registrar's office releases *Early Warning Reports*, which lists students who have received a grade of C- or below. In an attempt to ensure academic success, FYE instructors are notified of students in their section who are on the list and may be struggling with the difference between high-school and university examinations. Tutoring, workshop, and study skills coaching resources are listed in the notification so that instructors can steer students to assistance.

And after the semester ends, FYE instructors are notified of their students who have made the Dean's List of their respective Schools and Colleges and are encouraged to contact them and offer congratulations. On the other side of the spectrum, FYE instructors are also notified of their students who have received academic warnings or have been put on academic probation. This notification is done with the hope that instructors will reach out to their students and offer assistance.

Encouraging Student Communities

First Year Programs utilizes HuskyCT to create a first-year community called *First Year Interactive* that encourages dialogue/discussions among first year students and also serves as a bulletin board. A second site, *UConn Interactive*, provides the same service to sophomores, juniors, and seniors. To provide an idea of the breadth of the student community participating in UConn Interactive, since the academic year began at the end of August until March 31, over 100,800 sessions, with an average of 461 per day (522 per weekday), have been initiated.

Training

First Year Programs offer many training opportunities to instructors in the form of workshops, roundtables, HuskyCT training, and class strategy and planning.

May: New instructor training orients volunteers to the mission, goals, and processes of the INTD 1800/1820 courses. Template redesign released with a fresh look and navigation menus; all sections of INTD 1800/1820 have the template applied (although some 1820 instructors have developed HuskyCT sites specific to their seminar topics and are encouraged to keep their designs). All instructors are given access to their HuskyCT sites, so they can plan their activities and prepare student materials and develop discussion topics. HuskyCT classes are offered to new and returning instructors over a period of three weeks. Since HuskyCT underwent an upgrade to version 4, these sessions gave returning instructors an opportunity to try out the new and revised features in the course management program and experiment with them over the summer.

June, July: Offered one-on-one training sessions geared to instructor's skill level. Also offered office hours when any instructor could stop by for HuskyCT instruction without making an appointment.

August: In the beginning of August, held several FYE Training sessions focusing on Course Development for new and returning instructors. As the beginning of classes approached, two full days were devoted to mentor training. During the training period, instructors were invited to join their mentors during a 2-hour lunch that included a Keith Barker presentation. Another luncheon brought together LC instructors and Residential Life staff for discussions about their communities before students arrived on campus.

Fall semester: Roundtable discussions held for instructors to discuss triumphs and issues they encounter in the first month of their classes. A second series of roundtable discussions are held near mid-terms. One-on-one training sessions in HuskyCT continued and expanded to mentors. In conjunction with the Writing Center, FYE offered a brown-bag session on how to grade papers in FYE classes.

EPSY Overview

EPSY 3020 was created to support FYE mentors as they work with their first year students. This course concentrates on continuing each mentors self awareness and development in areas such as leadership, diversity, facilitation, classroom management, lesson planning and mentoring. Each mentor is placed in a TA group where they reflect on their experiences and share ideas with other mentors. The TAs who lead these groups have been through the mentor process and play a vital role guiding the mentors through the semester and any issues they may face. For TAs who would like to stay involved, we offer a Super TA position. Super TAs are responsible for working with the TAs and assisting in course development. In creating the TA and Super TA positions, we have created a career track for students

who want to remain involved in FYE and continued to challenge them by increasing the responsibility and autonomy as they move higher up in position. New in the summer of 2008 we added a summer training component to the EPSY course. Students return to campus the week before classes begin and participate in two days of training. This training provides an opportunity to interact with mentors, TAs, Super TAs, FYE instructors, and EPSY instructors as well as attend sessions on topics to prepare them for their work in the classroom. As a result, mentors reported they felt comfortable and prepared as they began mentoring this past fall.

Evaluation

At the end of the semester, First Year Experience instructors and mentors were encouraged to participate in surveys gauging satisfaction with their experience. The surveys are also used in developing training sessions and workshops for both instructors and mentors.

The **Instructor** survey provides feedback for the First Year Programs office to make the program, training sessions, and support better and better. Out of 144 instructors on the Storrs campus, 70 responded to the survey. In a section asking about the mentor, instructors responded overwhelmingly that mentors greatly enhance their teaching experience. Not surprisingly, the trip to the Dairy Bar was the most popular “field trip” at 81.7 percent. In response to the question, *What reasons(s) did you have for teaching an FYE class this semester?*, the majority of instructors responded, “I like interacting with students” or “I want to make a difference in the lives of students.” Interesting responses were 44.3 percent for “I feel it puts me in touch with the real customer of UConn” and 45.3 percent for “Planning classes expands my awareness of the services UConn offers undergraduates, thereby making me more effective in my current position at UConn.”

The **Mentor** survey focuses on the objectives of the EPSY 3020 class to determine if students are meeting them in regards to the Instructor/Mentor relationship. Out of 96 mentors, 52 took the survey. The mentor’s assessment of five objectives associated with the instructor encouraging the mentor to participate in planning classes, participate/lead class discussions, and giving feedback to the mentor on his or her performance resulted in responses of *agree/strongly agree* of 82.7 percent. The survey also showed that over 50 percent of the instructors relied on their mentors to manage the HuskyCT site for the class. Overall, 91.3 percent of the mentors responded with at least an *agree* to a statement that asked if the mentor achieved his or her goals for the class.

Research Collaboration

Because of the number of first-year students enrolled in INTD courses, many researchers are interested in using this population for conducting research and distributing surveys.

Dr. Crystal Park’s research focuses on stress, coping, and adaptation, particularly on how people's beliefs, goals, and values affect their ways of perceiving and dealing with stressful events. She developed a survey and asked FYP to distribute it among first-year students.

As part of their comprehensive alcohol prevention program, the Alcohol and Other Drug Services (AOD), Student Affairs, asked FYE instructors to encourage their students to complete an on-line survey/education course so that students will be able to make well-informed, safe decisions about alcohol.

Another UConn program, the Center for Health, Intervention, and Prevention, used FYE classes to present a survey that tracks risky health behaviors. Many instructors encouraged students to participate by making “taking the survey” one of the requirements for a grade in the class and the researcher reported 39 students participated.