

2008

Analysis of First-Year Student Perceptions Regarding the Effectiveness of UVC 101 Classes on Academic Achievement, Social Success, and Personal Growth and Development Based on High School G.P.A.

Amanda Sue Hummel
Wright State University

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ANALYSIS OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENT PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE
EFFECTIVENESS OF UVC 101 CLASSES ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT,
SOCIAL SUCCESS, AND PERSONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT BASED
ON HIGH SCHOOL G.P.A.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

By

AMANDA SUE HUMMEL

B.A., Wright State University, 2006

2008

Wright State University

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

JUNE 10, 2008

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY AMANDA SUE HUMMEL ENTITLED ANALYSIS OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENT PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF UVC 101 CLASSES ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, SOCIAL SUCCESS, AND PERSONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT BASED ON HIGH SCHOOL G.P.A. BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

Charles W. Ryan, Ph.D.
Thesis Director

Scott Graham, Ph.D.
Department Chair

Committee on Final Examination

Charles W. Ryan, Ph.D.

Joanne Risacher, Ph.D.

Glenn Graham, Ed.D.

Lawrence Mrozek, M.A.

Joseph F. Thomas, Jr., Ph.D.
Dean, School of Graduate Studies

Abstract

Hummel, Amanda S. M.A., Department Of Educational Leadership, College of Education and Human Services, Wright State University, 2008. Analysis of First-Year Student Perceptions Regarding The Effectiveness of UVC 101 Classes On Academic Achievement, Social Success, and Personal Growth and Development based on High School G.P.A.

First-year experience initiatives have been underway in a variety of forms. Today, first-year seminar classes are popular transitional aids for new college students throughout the country. First-year seminars typically have common learning goals for new students. Academic achievement, social success, and personal growth and development were the learning goals assessed during this study.

The purpose and scope of this study was to analyze first-year student's perceptions regarding the effectiveness of UVC 101 classes on academic achievement, social success, and personal growth and development based on their self-reported high school grade point averages. Students at a large four-year public university were invited to complete an evaluation form of their UVC 101 class and self-report their high school G.P.A. on the form. Students generally agreed that UVC 101 classes were beneficial; however, there were no significant differences between students' grade point averages and their perceptions of academic achievement, social success, and growth and development.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express a sincere thanks to my thesis committee, Dr. Charles Ryan, Dr. Joanne Risacher, Mr. Lawrence Mrozek, and Dr. Glenn Graham for their guidance and support, as well as their encouragement for the completion of my thesis during some unfavorable conditions.

Gratitude is given to Mr. Doug Saul for helping me obtain the resources and materials to conduct this study.

Acknowledgment is given to my mother, Robin Watson who has given me the will power to take on challenging endeavors.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to a very special friend who has always believed in my abilities to undertake this challenging task - Mr. Daniel Dakin. It was through Dan's motivating encouragement that I was able to accomplish what I am most proud of thus far in my Masters program. His constant positive attitude and confidence and faith in my abilities were what pushed me to finish this project. Dan, I dedicate this thesis to you, for not giving me the option to quit. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

General Background

Colleges across the nation have taken part in some form of first-year experience initiatives (Hunter & Linder, 2005). These initiatives ranged anywhere from recruitment efforts, welcome week, common reading programs, and learning communities, to residence education initiatives, and first-year seminars (Hunter & Linder). According to Hunter and Linder, the transition from high school to college was difficult and usually not gracefully performed. In their study, first-year seminars were often found to be an effective aid in facilitating the transition from high school to college. Also frequently found, first-year seminars took on a variety of different course names and varied in structure, content, grading, and the number of credits. In general, they found that first-year seminars shared common goals and learning objectives, taught new students about the college or university and its policies and procedures, and provided academic support and opportunities for social integration.

According to Evans, Forney and Guido-DiBrito (1998) growth and development of students in an institution of higher education were one of several goals that college administrators strived for. Evans et al. agreed that the presence of certain aspects in the higher education environment might either help or hinder student development. First-year seminars according to Nevitt Sanford (1966) enabled students to be challenged, while being equally supported by their instructor and institution. First-year students with above average high school grade point averages should have felt challenged in these seminars to ensure their growth and development was not disrupted (House, 2006). However, at the

same time House discovered students with below average high school grade point averages needed to find support in their first-year seminar classes to guarantee the effectiveness of the seminar class and success for the student.

Significance of the study

Administrators in the field of higher education agreed overwhelmingly that the first-year experience was crucial for retention of students at any college or university (Crissman, Ishler & Upcraft, 2005). Assessment and evaluation were critical components to the college's decision making and planning process, for freshman programming (Schuh, 2005). First-year seminars proved to increase graduation rates, and one state university claimed that students who enrolled in their first-year seminar classes graduated at higher rates than those students who did not enroll in the seminar, by five to seven percent (Schuh, 2005).

Research indicated these first-year classes worked, but were the students with above average high school grade point averages being challenged enough in these classes to receive adequate gains in academic achievement, social success, and personal growth and development (Howard & Jones, 2000)? Conversely, were the students with average or below average high school grade point averages also finding support in their seminar classes beneficial to their academic achievement, social success, and personal growth and development?

This study sought to determine the effectiveness of UVC 101 classes at a large four-year public university and its impact on first-year student perceptions regarding academic achievement, social success, and personal growth and development based on individual high school grade point averages. Zwick and Sklar (2005) agreed that high

school grade point average was a factor that directly correlated with how students progressed in higher education.

At the participating institution, student affairs administrators had been conducting a needs assessment for UVC101 classes in survey form for several years, but had yet to consider high school grade point average when analyzing and interpreting the data. It was important for first-year programming administrators to justify the spending of university resources to hire, train and pay UVC 101 peer instructors, as well as ensure that all students, despite their high school academic achievement, were benefiting from UVC101 classes. It was anticipated that this study would enable student affairs practitioners to gain insight on how UVC 101 classes were perceived by first-year students enrolled in UVC 101 courses, based on self-reported high school grade point averages.

This study was not intended to be conclusive of all first-year students but rather a tool to gain awareness for first-year programmers of what the program is accomplishing. The study sought to include all first-year students enrolled in peer instructor taught UVC 101 seminars during the school year 2007-2008, at a large four-year public university.

Statement of the Problem

This study analyzed first-year student perceptions' regarding the effectiveness of UVC 101 classes on academic achievement, social success, and personal growth and development, based on individual high school grade point averages. With that uncovered, first-year seminars were able to be more successful at providing a positive first-year experience and retention to the second year (Crissman Ishler & Upcraft, 2005).

There were several variables that potentially affected how the students taking the courses perceived first-year experience seminars (Hunter & Murray, 2007). Student

affairs administrators had to be aware of how first-year students perceived the effectiveness of UVC 101 classes on academic achievement, social success, and personal growth and development, based on high school grade point averages, to ensure they were meeting the varying individual needs of students. Creating an equally challenging and supported academic environment was especially important for first-year students (Sanford, 1966). Student affairs in higher education practitioners were to encourage growth and development and therefore, needed to be sure that UVC 101 courses were beneficial for all students, regardless of high school grade point average (Hunter & Murray, 2007). With this knowledge, student affairs practitioners could either rest assured knowing that all students were benefiting from UVC 101 classes, or were able to make changes in the seminars to better accommodate all students.

Independent and Dependent Variables

There was one independent variable tested in this study. The independent variable was the self reported high school grade point averages in classification categories: 3.0 and above, 2.0 –2.99, and below 2.0.

There was only one dependent variable, student perceptions of the UVC 101 classes in regards to: social successes, academic achievements, and personal growth and development.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were operationally defined for this study:

Independent Variable – Self-reported high school grade point average classification categories: 3.0 and above, 2.0 –2.99, and below 2.0.

College Success Components – Material UVC101 peer instructors were required to teach their UVC 101 classes, which included topics on academic achievement, social success, personal growth and development, diversity, and the university’s policies and procedures.

Dependent variable – Student perceptions: First-year student opinions on areas in UVC 101 class specifically their acquired social successes, academic achievements, and personal growth and development. (As measured by questions 1, 3, and 4 on the first-year seminar evaluation)

UVC 101 – A class at the large four-year public university that new students could enroll in for pass or fail credit, and did not affect their G.P.A.

High School Grade Point Average (G.P.A.) – A first-year student’s cumulative high school grade point average on a scale from 3.0 and above, 2.0 to 2.9, and 1.9 and below, that students were required to self-report on the first-year seminar evaluation form.

First-Year Student –A student who enrolled at the university for the first time.

Peer Instructor – A currently enrolled student at the university who was hired to teach UVC 101 classes. Instructors were trained to teach the same college success material.

Student Perceptions – First-year student opinions on areas in UVC 101 class, specifically their acquired social successes, academic achievements, and personal growth and development. (Questions 1, 3, and 4 on the first-year seminar evaluation)

First-Year Seminar – Generalized classes that new students at any university could enroll in for pass or fail credit, and does not affect their G.P.A.

Above Average G.P.A – A cumulative high school grade point average of a 3.0 and above.

Average G.P.A – A cumulative high school grade point average of a 2.0 to 2.99.

Below Average G.P.A – Was a cumulative high school grade point average of a 1.9 and below.

Research Questions/Hypothesis

The following questions were developed to focus this study:

- RQ1. What differences in perceptions will occur among the three grade point average groups as related to academic achievements, social successes, and personal growth and development?
- RQ2. What group of students based on the three G.P.A. categories who have completed the First-Year Seminar Evaluation form, will most likely recommend UVC 101 to future students?

The research hypothesis stated that there would be a difference in perceptions regarding the effectiveness of UVC 101 classes on academic achievement, social success, and personal growth and development between the students with above average high school grade point averages and the students with average and below average high school grade point averages.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were identified and accepted in this study:

1. All students were given the same set of instructions prior to filling out their seminar evaluations.
2. All students self-reported grade point averages were an accurate reflection of their true high school cumulative G.P.A.
3. All students received the same common college success components.

4. All students who did not fill out the evaluation form are similar to or do not differ significantly, from those who did fill it out.
5. All students answered honestly about their perceptions on the evaluation.

Scope and Limitations

The following scope was identified in this study and defined to include first-year students enrolled in UVC 101 classes that were peer taught, at a large four-year public university.

The following limitations were identified as impacting this study.

The study was only conducted at one large four-year public university and high school grade point average was self-reported on first-year seminar evaluation forms. Also, the study was conducted utilizing one quarter of UVC 101 classes and the researcher could not control for differences in teaching styles of peer instructors. In sum as a descriptive study, the data could only suggest that X causes Y.

Summary

Today, many first-year students are enrolling in UVC 101 courses regardless of their high school grade point averages with the understanding that the course offers great benefits to each student. The purpose and scope of this study sought to determine if first-year student's perceptions regarding the effectiveness of UVC 101 classes on academic achievement, social success, and personal growth and development differed based on their self-reported high school grade point averages.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

First-Year Seminars

According to Hunter and Murray (2007) first-year programming started with initiatives in the late 1970's and today is flourishing at colleges and universities around the country. Hunter and Murray proclaimed that Thomas Jones, President of the University of South Carolina, created a first-year seminar in 1972 to respond to a campus riot, that has paved the way for the first-year experience movement. Jones believed that first-year students needed assistance in transitioning from high school into college, and hence created a course to support students in their collegiate endeavors (Hunter & Murray, 2007).

Typically the courses were offered to first-year students enrolled at a participating institution, and covered topics such as: academic achievement, social success, and personal growth and development (Hotchkiss, Moore & Pitts, 2006). Theorists have suggested that engaging students within a small community, and allowing them to interact socially with peers, would enhance confidence, and aid in retention (Hotchkiss et al., 2006). The structure of the seminars vary greatly, but often mirror other institutions in regards to common components such that, most offer credit hours towards graduation and are typically graded pass or fail (Hunter & Murray, 2007). The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) first-year seminars were all taught by regular, full-time faculty with at least three years of teaching experience and class sizes for these seminars were limited to twenty students and each class's content varied, to accompany the academic

program to which it was related. (Dooris & Blood, 2001). The means in which first-year seminars were taught usually have been known to vary as well (Hunter & Murray, 2007).

Hunter and Murray (2007) found that first-year seminars could be taught by varying types of instructors. In their study they determined that colleges have been known to utilize full time faculty members, graduate students, peer instructors, and student affairs practitioners as instructors. However, mostly they found that universities selected instructors that were currently professionals with a Master's degree but the idea of peer educators was a rising trend. Allowing students or graduate students to teach or co-teach was comforting to new students because more than likely, their instructor could better relate and understand certain current student issues (Hunter & Murray, 2007).

The reason for varied types of first-year seminar class approaches as determined by Pascarella (2005) was to adequately serve diverse student populations. According to Pascarella, the national undergraduate student population has become more diverse in the areas of culture, background, race, economic status, and academic preparation, just to name a few. Administrators feared that before long, freshman seminar classes would no longer be as beneficial as they are currently perceived, because the needs of the students were rapidly changing (Pascarella, 2005).

Schuh (2005) argued that colleges and universities are more than ever required to show documentation of effective programming and asserted that assessment of first-year programs, such as freshman seminars was unavoidable. Higher education institutions alike have addressed whether their first-year seminars were facilitating academic achievements, social networking, and individual growth and development (Schuh, 2005). Generally speaking, first-year seminars were found to be beneficial but institutions

needed to ensure their effectiveness, making certain those students' needs were being met (Hunter & Murray, 2007)

While most research affirmed that first-year seminars were valuable, some professionals questioned the unintended consequences of freshman seminar classes (Jaffee, 2007). According to Jaffee, peer cohorts were the most considerable unintended consequence. He also found that while peer collaboration was crucial in student development, first-year seminars that were formed based on common characteristics could have the tendency to create cliques, which may mirror high school socialization. Students who maintained a closeness to a peer group, in which all members shared common characteristics, were more likely to engage in disruptive behavior, excessive socializing at inappropriate times and places, and misconduct (Jaffee, 2007).

Jaffee (2007) concluded that new college students in first-year seminars were not as likely to leave the comfort of their established group of friends and mingle with more mature upperclassmen, essentially hindering personal growth and development. Jaffee wanted educators to realize the potential harmful effects of first-year experience programs on freshman. He recommended being aware of the unintended outcomes and embracing inevitable collisions with possible teachable moments. While there may always be unintended consequences, he stressed that first-year seminars were rewarding for not only incoming students, but also faculty and administrators at any higher learning institution.

Grade Point Average

Guskey (n.d.) determined that curriculum in high schools varies immensely across the country; therefore, establishing a single standard for grading was not feasible. The

Ohio Department of Education (2008) noted that each state utilized a *Board of Education*, where standards were listed for not only curriculum for the individual state, but also standards for the teaching profession. *Standard three*, for the Ohio Standards fell under a larger assembly known as *The Focus of Teaching and Learning* and within standard three, was housed assessment (Ohio Department of Education, 2008). Standard three, required teachers to know and engage in various assessments that enabled teachers to evaluate and ensure students were learning. While this did not require teachers to grade uniformly, it allowed for some standardization in terms of grading. In addition, the American Federation of Teachers has recognized the need for homogeneous grading at the state and school level (Gordon, 2006).

Grade point average has been labeled an appropriate indicator in evaluating student performance (Zwick & Sklar, 2005). However, for high school graduates could it be an accurate indicator of college success, especially, when there were no standards for grading? Pollio (n.d.) suggested grade point average was a poor gauge for forecasting future academic performance. Zwick and Sklar, (2005) argued that college admission requirements have routinely accepted high school grade point averages as strong indicators of college success and determined if grade point average was a poor gauge, then admissions policies would need to be evaluated.

Therefore, research on high school grade point average as an indicator for college success was mixed (Guskey, n.d.). The question remained, has individual high school grade point average affected students enrolled in first-year seminars and their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of UVC 101 classes on academic achievement, social success, and personal growth and development?

Academic Achievement

Before a student could attain academic achievement Chickering and Reisser (1993) suggested that students would need to move through seven vectors of development, specifically the first vector, *Developing Competence*. Intellectual competence was the foundation in assuring students academic achievement (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Academically, students begin making choices regarding practices and habits in their first year of classes, which will affect the rest of their academic career (Keup, 2006). According to Keup, students beginning college are academically under prepared. He suggested implementing first-year seminars and fostering student engagement in the classrooms to enhance academic experiences.

Gardener and Jewler, (2006) explained that freshman seminar classes strive to help students achieve academic achievement by providing tools on academic honesty, time management, study habits, critical thinking skills, and how to effectively read, listen and take notes. Reason, Terenzini, and Domingo (2006) discovered that the first two years of college were a critical time because students learn between 80% and 95% of their English, science, and social studies skills, when compared to the latter two years. The same was true of students' mathematics skills by 63% (Reason, et al., 2006). Therefore they discovered that student learning was at its peak during the first year, and the foundation of students' persistence was also mostly exerted in the first year of college. Reason et al. (2006) conducted a study to determine influences on student learning during the first year of college. They found that faculty and instructors should provide students with opportunities to engage in cognitive activities such as analysis, judgment, synthesis, and application of information. The study also found that students

should be active learners in the classroom and should be submerged into unfamiliar cultures, diverse ideas, and people, for a holistic academic development.

Wimshurst, Wortley, Bates, and Allard (2006) warned that there were several factors keeping students from obtaining academic achievement. They mentioned that not only are there student factors of risk for failure, but there are institutional factors as well and undoubtedly, students have arrived at college with their own risks that ranged from being academically unprepared, to financially unsecured. During college, the institutional risks, compounded with the student factors, proved to be too much to handle for students, and inevitably academic achievement was lost (Wimshurst et al., 2006). They realized it was important for student affairs practitioners, as well as faculty, to combat these risks for failure, head on, to help ensure retention. Wimshurst et al. suggested that the first step to preventing these risks for failure was to identify the problem areas and then create a plan to help students overcome the identified possible risks. One of their goals for students involved in an institution of higher education was academic achievement, and practitioners needed to ensure this goal was met to carry out the mission of their college or university.

Social Success

Relationships formed during the college years are necessary for development in Chickering's seven vectors (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Chickering's established vectors helped incoming college students develop a strong sense of personal identity. His theory of identity development stated, "That not all students would move through the seven vectors at the same time, and some vectors may need to be revisited for total development" (p.38). The fourth vector described the journey to holistic identity through

“Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships,” which stressed the importance of relationships in self-development. Chickering argued that the focal point of developing relationships was to create long healthy friendships, while accepting and appreciating individual differences.

For years the research regarding college success has been centered on cognitive and intellectual development (Evans et al., 1998). Social growth and the out of classroom experiences were also stepping stones in college success (Graham & Cockriel, 1996). Crissman Ishler (2004) stated that when first-year students arrived at college they were forced to leave old friendships and build new ones. He determined that if the transition from high school was not smooth and students did not find a new social network or adjust to college quickly, then the college or university would have a harder time retaining the student. Astin (1993) inferred, “the student’s peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years” (p. 398). Relationships helped students form support groups, establish self-identity, and interact outside of the classroom in a social manner (Graham & Cockriel, 1996).

Schlossberg’s Marginality and Mattering Theory (1989) suggested that if students did not find support, then they might begin to feel as if they did not matter, and hence college success would be hindered because of a lack of caring. *Friendsickness* as mentioned by Graham and Cockriel (1996) was unavoidable and student affairs practitioners should be aware that first-year students are leaving a comfortable circle of friends to arrive at college and find themselves friendless.

Programming should be established to aid in this transition and currently colleges everywhere are attempting to assist students in forming new social networks through

first-year experience programs (Graham & Cockriel, 1996). First-year seminars were benefiting students in that they were providing out-of-class opportunities for students to form social ties in the classroom, as well as out of the classroom (Graham & Cockriel, 1996). Could it be true that there was a lot to gain socially, through first year seminars? Based on students' high school grade point average, how are these seminars really perceived by incoming first-year students regarding social success?

Personal Growth and Development

First-year seminars have allowed students to learn about who they are as individuals and their abilities as a student (Hunter & Linder, 2005). Keup (2007) realized that incoming students were aware of the fact that college was the time to grow and develop into mature and talented young adults. Students beginning college for the first time still needed to learn who they were in several dimensions of their being (Keup, 2007).

Evans et al. (1998) determined that several student affairs theorists could define individual growth and development at the college level. According to Evans et al., there were multiple theories that could explain student growth and development. The theories that helped define this concept were Nevitt Sanford's Challenge and Support Theory, Nancy Schlossberg's Marginality and Mattering Theory, and Alexander Astin's Involvement Theory.

The Challenge and Support Theory was crucial in student development because this theory required students to receive a balanced amount of support, while maintaining a balanced amount of autonomy (Sanford, 1966). Sanford determined that if students were not challenged enough then they would not be forced to naturally grow and develop.

However, he also realized if students did not receive enough support then they could fail, which is why first-year seminars are imperative for growth and development.

Astin's Theory of Involvement (1984) aided in student growth and development through a series of involvement factors. Astin discovered that development and growth would occur if a student were actively engaged in his or her environment. He found that students should expect to grow and develop proportionally to the amount and quality of their involvement in a program. Getting students involved begins in first-year seminars through many different opportunities such as, service learning, and co-curriculars or out-of-class experiences (Graham & Cockriel, 1996).

Schlossberg (1989) proclaimed that students should feel a sense of importance when entering college, as it was vital for growth and development for students to know that they matter. She warned that marginality could occur if students did not feel as if someone cared about them. The small class sizes for first-year seminars could counteract the large general requirement classes, with hundreds of students (Chickering and Reisser, 1993). In extremely large classes it is easy for students to become a number; however, first-year seminars are comforting in that they give students a sense of being noticed (Chickering and Reisser, 1993).

First-year seminars helped students grow and develop by allowing them to achieve a self-concept as well as self-esteem. Astin, Sanford, and Schlossberg's theories (Evans et al, 1998) identified that personal growth and development were significant accomplishments acquired during college that were necessary for academic, and social success.

Summary

First-year initiatives have existed for over a hundred years in American higher education and were created to strengthen academic and social involvement while fostering personal growth and development (Crissman Ishler & Upcraft, 2005). These intimate class sessions should be regularly assessed to ensure effectiveness while incorporating a variety of variables, such as grade point average. First-year seminars in the late 1970's were without doubt a dynamic initiative for student affairs practitioners in assisting freshmen with adjusting to college. However, it was important to be sure that each student was getting their individual needs met while achieving success academically, socially, and independently growing and developing.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND DESIGN

Target Population

Data were collected from first-year students enrolled in UVC 101 courses taught by peer instructors at a large four-year public university. Currently enrolled students, who accepted a peer instructor position, were all required to teach the same fundamental learning objectives to the students enrolled in 32 sections of UVC 101 classes. Instructors were obligated to: help students adjust to college, help students achieve academic achievement, help students develop and grow personally, and help students explore career development.

Instrument

Upon completion of the UVC 101 class, all students were invited to fill out an evaluation of the course. For the purpose of this study students were also asked to self-report their cumulative high school grade point average by filling in the corresponding grade point average category. The categories were listed as 3.0 and above, 2.0-2.99, and below 2.0. This study utilized the data from four questions: question 1) “Being in a First Year Seminar my first quarter has enhanced my social success as a new college student by helping me to meet new friends;” question 3) “Being in a First Year Seminar my first quarter helped me to achieve academic achievement in my college courses;” question 4) “Being in a First Year Seminar my first quarter helped me develop and grow personally, to better understand myself and others, and to adjust to the new responsibilities of college life;” and question 8) “I would recommend being in a First Year Seminar to future new

students.” The evaluation used a Likert scale that ranged from 1, *strongly disagree* to 5, *strongly agree*.

Sample

The sample included first-year students who were enrolled in UVC101 class sections taught by peer instructors, who attended class the day the evaluation was administered and chose to participate. The sample was limited to sections taught solely by peer instructors, at one large four-year public university, during one quarter. Sections taught by peer instructors were utilized because peer instructors were required to uniformly teach students the same college success material that focused on academic achievement, social success, and growth and development. There were a total of 503 students who completed evaluations and self-reported a high school grade point average. Since there were only two students who reported that their grade point average was less than 2.0, this group was too small for the grade point average analysis and therefore the sample size for this study was reduced to 501 student participants.

Data Collection

Data were collected from 32 sections of UVC 101 classes taught by peer instructors. Annually the data were collected for the Office of First-Year Experience to assess first-year seminars and therefore, the data analyzed were pre-existing. Peer instructors administered the evaluations and invited students to complete course evaluations.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed quantitatively and a descriptive report on the general findings for each of the four identified questions, as well as a description of the general findings of

the grade point average groups. The questions utilized had a frequency breakdown of the responses on the Likert scale for each grade point average category. Chi Square was also used to determine if significant differences existed. The probability value to establish a significant difference was compared to $\leq .05$.

Summary

Students enrolled in UVC 101 classes were studied by utilizing first-year seminar evaluation forms to learn students' perception of their UVC 101 classes in regards to academic achievement, social success, and personal growth and development, while considering their self-reported high school grade point average. The findings were reported quantitatively.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether high school grade point average was a factor that determined student perceptions regarding the effectiveness of UVC 101 classes on academic achievement, social success, and personal growth and development. This study was designed as an introductory investigation to determine whether high school grade point average was an indicator for success in UVC 101 classes on the three common learning goals of the seminars, and was not intended to be conclusive of all UVC 101 sections taught at the large four-year public university.

Research Question 1

What differences in perceptions will occur among the three grade point average groups as related to academic achievements, social successes, and personal growth and development?

To determine whether grade point average was a factor that attributed to student perceptions regarding the effectiveness of first-year seminars on social success, academic achievement, and growth and development, grade point average ranges were compared. The results revealed that 503 students from the peer taught sections of UVC 101 had completed and self-reported their high school grade point average on the evaluation forms. Out of the 503 students that responded from the 32 peer-taught UVC 101 sections, only 2 students reported that their high school grade point average was below a 2.0. Therefore, the data for those under a 2.0 grade point average could not be analyzed because the N was too low. There were 328 students that reported their high school grade point average was 3.0 or greater, and 173 students reported that their grade point average

was 2.0-2.99. The questions utilized on the evaluation dealt with student perceptions regarding the effectiveness of UVC 101 seminars on social success, academic achievement, personal growth and development, and were utilized to answer research question 1. The following are questions from the evaluation form that were utilized for this study:

Q1: “Being in a First Year Seminar my first quarter has enhanced my social success as a new college student by helping me to meet new friends.”

Q3: “Being in a First Year Seminar my first quarter helped me to achieve academic achievement in my college courses.”

Q4: “Being in a First Year Seminar my first quarter helped me develop and grow personally, to better understand myself and others, and to adjust to the new responsibilities of college life.”

Q8: “I would recommend being in a First Year Seminar to future new students.”

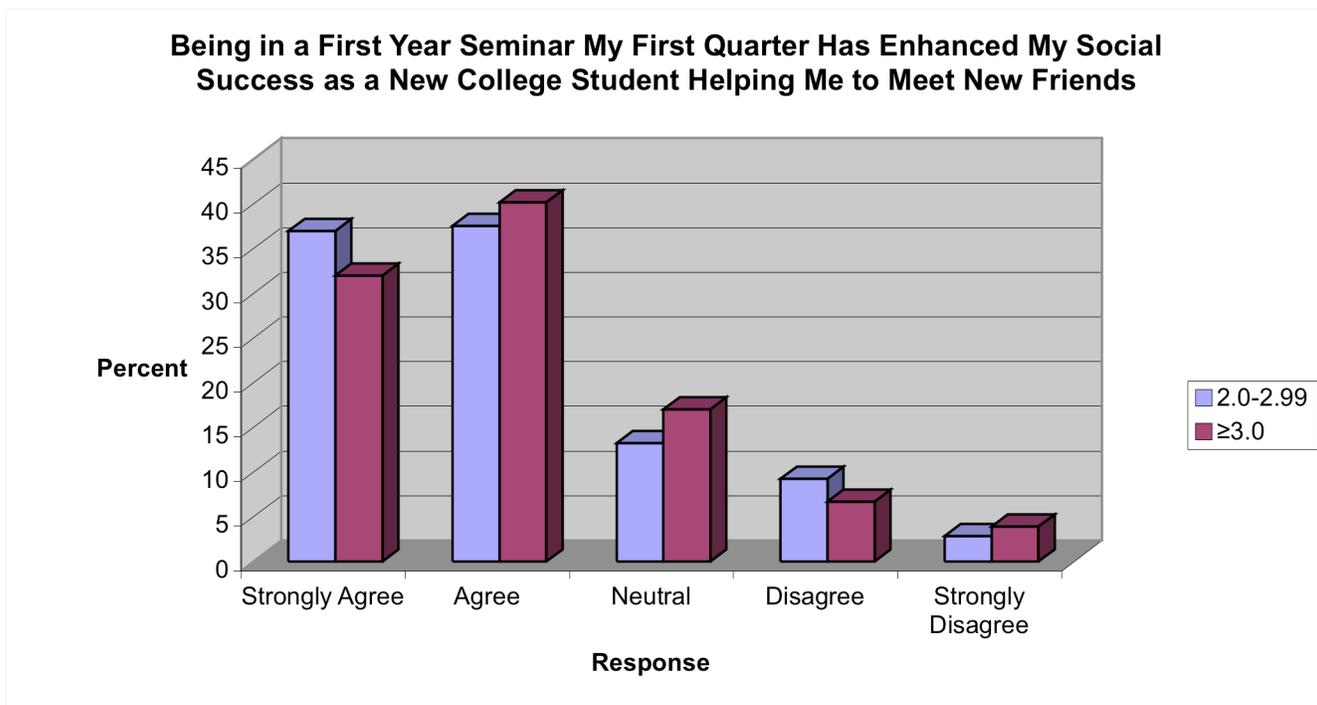


Figure 1. Student responses for question 1 on UVC 101 course evaluation form, categorized by grade point average.

For the purpose of this study, strongly agree and agree were combined, neutral was left alone, and strongly disagree and disagree were combined to interpret an overall analysis of the data.

Figure 1 illustrated that 74.5% (N=501) of students who reported a grade point average of a 2.0-2.99, agreed that being in a first year seminar had enhanced their social success. There were 12.1% of students who reported a grade point average of a 2.0-2.99 who disagree that 1st year seminars enhance their social success. 13.2% of the students with a grade point average of a 2.0-2.99 answered neutral to question 1.

Students who reported a ≥ 3.0 grade point average also agreed (72.2%) that first-year seminars enhanced their social success as a new college student. 10.6% of students

who reported a ≥ 3.0 grade point average disagree that 1st year seminars enhance their social success, and 17% reported they were neutral.

For Q1 the grade point average comparison groups 2.0-2.99 and 3.0 > were evaluated for significant differences, and using $\alpha \leq 0.05$ level of significance, analysis revealed that there were no statistically significant differences, $\chi^2(4, N= 501) = 3.39, \rho = 0.4945$. See Figure 1.

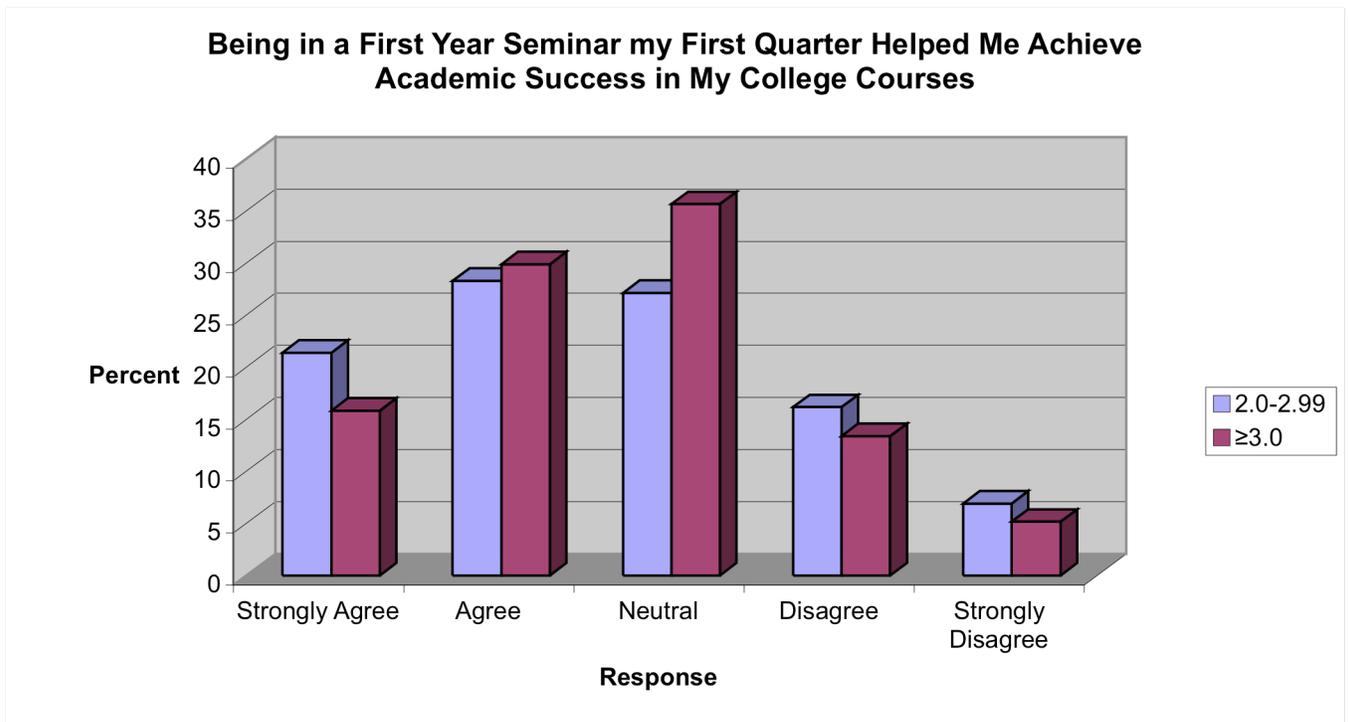


Figure 2. Student responses for question 3 on UVC 101 course evaluation form, categorized by grade point average.

For the purpose of this study, strongly agree and agree were combined, neutral was left alone, and strongly disagree and disagree were combined to interpret an overall analysis of the data.

Figure 2 illustrated that 49.7% (N=501) of students who reported a grade point average of a 2.0-2.99, agreed that being in a first year seminar had helped them attain academic achievement. 23.1% of students who reported a grade point average of a 2.0-2.99 disagreed that being in a first year seminar had helped them attain academic achievement. 27.1% of the students with a grade point average of a 2.0-2.99 answered neutral to question 3.

Students who reported a ≥ 3.0 grade point average also agreed (45.7%) that first-year seminars had helped them attain academic achievement. 18.5% of students who

reported a ≥ 3.0 grade point average disagreed that first year seminars had helped them attain academic achievement, and 35.6% reported they were neutral.

For Q3 the grade point average comparison groups 2.0-2.99 and 3.0 > were evaluated for significant differences, and using $\alpha \leq 0.05$ level of significance, analysis revealed that there were no statistically significant differences, $\chi^2(4, N= 501) = 5.7537, \rho = .2183$. See Figure 2.

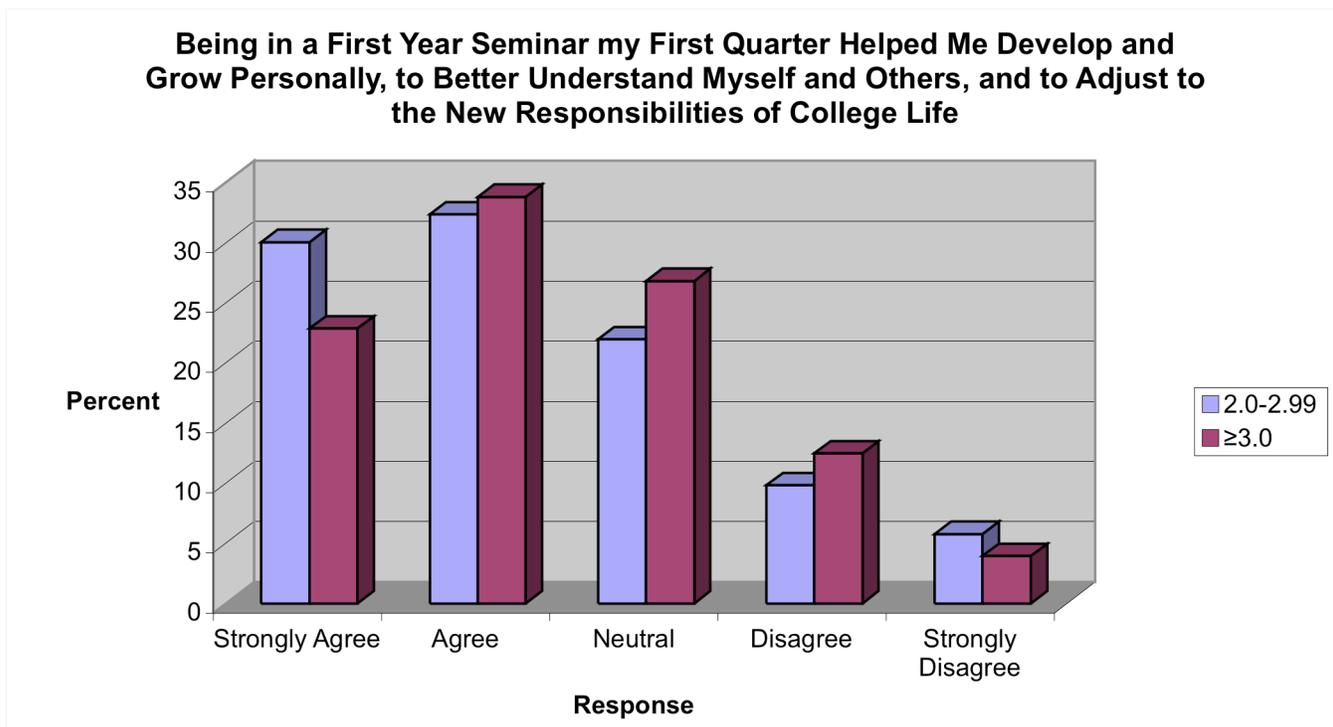


Figure 3. Student responses for question 4 on UVC 101 course evaluation form, categorized by grade point average.

For the purpose of this study, strongly agree and agree were combined, neutral was left alone, and strongly disagree and disagree were combined to interpret an overall analysis of the data.

Figure 3 illustrated that 62.4% (N=501) of students who reported a grade point average of a 2.0-2.99, agreed that being in a first year seminar had helped them grow and develop personally. 15.6% of students who reported a grade point average of a 2.0-2.99 disagreed that being in a first year seminar had helped them grow and develop personally. 21.9% of the students with a grade point average of a 2.0-2.99 answered neutral to question 4.

Students who reported a ≥ 3.0 grade point average also agreed (56.7%) that being in a first year seminar had helped them grow and develop personally. 16.4% of students who reported a ≥ 3.0 grade point average disagreed that being in a first year seminar had helped them grow and develop personally, and 26.8% reported they were neutral.

For Q4 the grade point average comparison groups 2.0-2.99 and 3.0 > were evaluated for significant differences, and using $\alpha \leq 0.05$ level of significance, analysis revealed that there were no statistically significant differences, $\chi^2(4, N= 501) = 4.9638, \rho = 0.2910$. See Figure 3.

Research Question 2

What group of students based on the three G.P.A. categories who have completed the First-year Seminar Evaluation form, were most likely to recommend UVC 101 to future students?

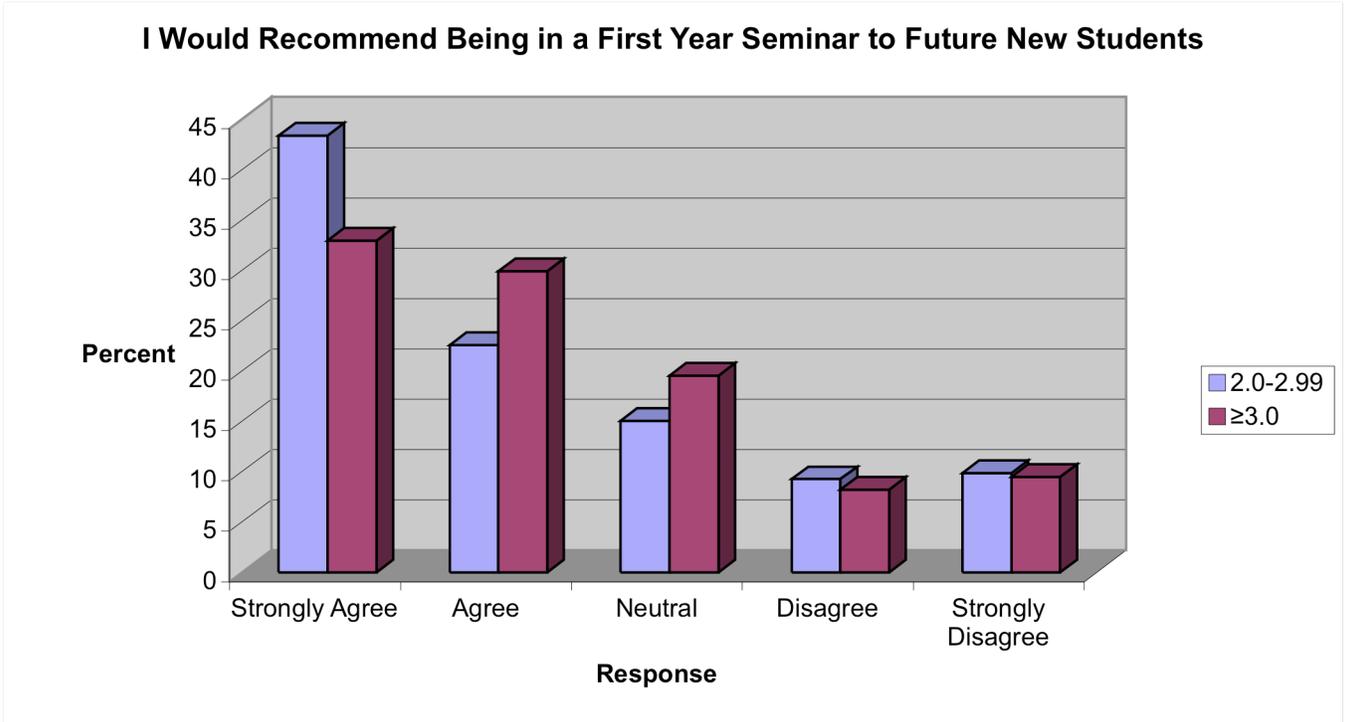


Figure 4. Student responses for question 8 on UVC 101 course evaluation form, categorized by grade point average.

For the purpose of this study, strongly agree and agree were combined, neutral was left alone, and strongly disagree and disagree were combined to interpret an overall analysis of the data.

Figure 4 illustrated that 65.8% (N=501) of students who reported a grade point average of a 2.0-2.99, agreed that they would recommend first year seminars to new students. 19% of students who reported a grade point average of a 2.0-2.99 disagreed that they would recommend first year seminars to new students. 15% of the students with a grade point average of a 2.0-2.99 answered neutral to question 4.

Students who reported a ≥ 3.0 grade point average also agreed (62.8%) that they would recommend first year seminars to new students. 17.6% of students who reported a ≥ 3.0 grade point average disagreed that they would recommend first year seminars to new students, and 19.5% reported they were neutral.

For Q8 the grade point average comparison groups 2.0-2.99 and 3.0 > were evaluated for significant differences, and using $\alpha \leq 0.05$ level of significance, analysis revealed that there were no statistically significant differences, $\chi^2(4, N= 501) = 47.0191$, $p = 0.1349$. See Figure 4.

Summary

The results of this study showed an overall positive perception of UVC 101 courses. There were no statistically significant differences in grade point average comparison groups for the four questions analyzed on the evaluation form. While the researcher was able to discuss general findings for the sample size, it should be noted that the findings could not apply to all sections of UVC 101 classes. The limitations encountered in this study may define why the results were not statistically significant and will be discussed in the forwarding chapter.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & SUMMARY

Introduction

College administrators as early as the late 1970's, realized a need for transitional ease for new college students arriving from high school (Hunter & Murray, 2007). The birth of first-year initiatives offered new support services to first-year college students and today seminar classes are offered to first-year students enrolled at a participating institutions, and cover topics such as: academic achievement, social success, and personal growth and development (Hotchkiss et al., 2006).

Student affairs practitioners need to understand the effectiveness of these seminars to determine if they are aiding students in their transition from high school into college, and therefore the seminars need to be assessed regularly (Schuh, 2005). Wilkie and Kuckuck (1989) have determined that first-year seminars are a tool that enables first-year students to benefit in college.

Howard and Jones (2000) conducted a study that investigated the effectiveness of a freshman seminar in enhancing students' perceptions on several indicators. They hypothesized that first-year seminars would prove most beneficial to those students who were under prepared for college. Howard and Jones (2000) found that high school grade point average was not a factor that affected student's perceptions on varied indicators. Rather, their data suggested, "that there was a pervasive positive impact of the course, regardless of prior preparation" (Howard & Jones, 2000, p. 4).

The current study provided positive feedback for the field of higher education in the same regards as the Howard and Jones study. The data indicated that student perceptions regarding the effectiveness of UVC 101 classes on academic achievement, social success, and personal growth and development were overall positive, in that they agreed with the four questions analyzed on the evaluation form. When comparing grade point averages, no significant differences were found.

Conclusions

This study has indicated that new students enrolled in UVC 101 classes perceive the seminars as being a positive experience.

Students in both grade point average categories overwhelmingly agreed that their UVC 101 classes had enhanced their social success as new students. Students who reported a grade point average of 2.0-2.99 agreed (74.5%) more than disagreed (12.1%) that their social success was enhanced. Those students with grade point averages of ≥ 3.0 also agreed (72.2%) more than disagreed (10.6%) that their social success was enhanced because of the UVC 101 classes.

Overall, students responded positively to whether or not their UVC 101 class aided in student attainment of academic achievement. More students with a grade point average of 2.0-2.99 agreed (49.7%) that their UVC 101 class had helped them attain academic achievement, than those students who disagreed (23.1%) in the same grade point average group. The same showed true for students with a grade point average of ≥ 3.0 . More students agreed (45.7%) that UVC 101 classes helped them attain academic achievement than those students who disagreed (18.5%) in the same grade point average category.

The students in both grade point average categories indicated that their UVC 101 class had helped them grow and develop. Students reporting a grade point average of 2.0-2.99 agreed (62.4%) more than disagreed that they were helped with individual growth and development. Once again, the same showed true for those students with a grade point average of ≥ 3.0 . More students agreed (56.7%) than disagreed (16.4%) that their UVC 101 class had helped them with personal growth and development.

Generally speaking it is apparent in this study that the students felt their UVC 101 class provided them with a positive experience and would recommend this class to new students. More students who reported a grade point average of 2.0-2.99 agreed (65.8%) that they would recommend first year seminars in the future to new students than disagreed (19%). The same showed true for students with a reported grade point average of ≥ 3.0 , in that more students agreed (62.8%) that they would recommend first year seminars to new students than those that disagreed (17.6%).

Despite the overwhelmingly positive experiences from the students who were enrolled in the peer taught UVC 101 classes, the Chi Square analysis confirmed that there were no significant differences among the grade point average comparison groups. Overall, after analyzing the percentages for each evaluation form question, the majority of students in both grade point average range groups agreed more than disagreed that first-year seminars were benefiting them in social success, academic achievement, and personal growth and. This was not conclusive to all UVC 101 sections but does demonstrate a strong positive gain for the director of first-year experience for peer taught sections.

Limitations

Grade point average ranges- The researcher prior to the start of the study did not anticipate this would be a limitation. The results from the evaluation proved that the ranges might have been too large to provide significant differences. Upon obtaining the data, it was observed that only two students had reported a grade point average below a 2.0, and therefore no analysis could be run on this group because of such a small number. It was also observed that there were 328 students who self-reported a 3.0 or above, providing a very large number of students in a ten-point range, 3.0 - 4.0.

Self-reported grade point averages- Students were expected to self-report their high school grade point average to the best of their knowledge. Students may not have been honest in reporting their high school grade point average or might not have remembered.

Teaching styles of peer instructors- The study as previously mentioned could not control for differences in teaching styles of peer instructors and therefore, it was assumed that all students who completed the evaluation were taught the same college success materials. It was impossible to control the ways in which individual peer instructors taught their students.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – It is suggested that a future study with smaller grade point average ranges for students to self-report their high school grade point averages be conducted. The minimum requirement to get into college is usually not lower than a 2.0. Therefore, there were not a large number of students who self-reported in the 2.0 and

below group. There might have been significant differences if the ranges were broken down into smaller comparison groups

Recommendation 2 – It is suggested that student affairs practitioners continue to assess their first-year seminar classes to ensure that the students are obtaining the necessary information in the first quarter, to achieve college success. Continued research on the changing needs of students is crucial for first-year experience directors. Individual students vary greatly from each other and therefore, have special needs that ought to be addressed. Understanding student development will allow for effective first-year seminar classes.

Recommendation 3 – It is suggested that further research be conducted on other types of first-year experience initiatives such as welcome week or first year experience initiatives in residence halls, to determine how effective they are perceived by students in regards to academic achievement, social success, and individual personal growth and development.

Summary

First-year seminars are especially valuable to new incoming college students. Determining whether different factors alter students' perception of the effectiveness of these classes should be investigated to ensure that all students are benefiting from these classes. The transition from secondary education to post-secondary education can prove challenging and first-year experience initiatives promise to provide a smoother transition, despite various factors, such as grade point average.

This study was designed to analyze first-year students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of UVC 101 classes on academic achievement, social success, and personal

growth and development based on their self-reported high school grade point averages. Upon completion of the study, it is reaffirmed that first-year seminars offer rewarding outcomes in terms of college success. While high school grade point average did not prove to be a factor that affected student perceptions on academic achievement, social success, and personal growth and development, students generally agreed that they were benefiting from first-year seminars.

Understanding the need to evaluate and carry out assessments for the support services offered by student affairs practitioners is the most important thing to be taken from this study. Realizing that the needs of students are continuously changing and that as administrators it is our job to know how and why students grow and develop the way that they do. With this information first-year experience directors can tailor first-year seminars to better meet the needs of the incoming new students in ways that will engage and enhance student development. House (2006) determined that continuous investigation into factors that affect students' perceptions of first-year seminar classes has proven necessary and will only help practitioners in higher education to continue to serve students effectively.

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Appendix A



First Year Seminar Evaluation

2007

MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

- Use a No. 2 pencil or Blue or Black Ink Pen.
- Do not use pens that SOAK through the paper.
- Fill the response completely.
- Erase cleanly any marks you wish to change.
- Make no stray marks on this form.

CORRECT: ● INCORRECT: ⊗ ⊘ ⊙

DIRECTIONS:

Please mark your **ClassID** and **Section Number** to the right.

Below, select "one" response for each of the statements 1 - 11.

Finally, turn the page over and complete the five "short-answer" questions.

Thank you for your time and effort.

COURSE INFORMATION

Class ID	University College - UVC 101..... U	Section Number	Example 0 0
	Liberal Arts - LA 101..... L		2 - 02 1 1
	Science and Math - SM 198..... S		2 2 2 2
	University Honors - UH 101..... H		3 3 3 3
			4 4 4 4
	5 5 5 5		
	6 6 6 6		
	7 7 7 7		
	8 8 8 8		
	9 9 9 9		

Female Male Resident Commuter

High School Cumulative GPA: Below 2.0 2.0 - 2.99 3.0 & above

Responses

	STRONGLY AGREE 5	AGREE 4	NEUTRAL 3	DISAGREE 2	STRONGLY DISAGREE 1
1. Being in a First Year Seminar my first quarter has enhanced my social success as a new college student by helping me to meet new friends.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Being in a First Year Seminar my first quarter helped me better adjust to college and made my transition from high school to college easier.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Being in a First Year Seminar my first quarter helped me achieve academic success in my college courses.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Being in a First Year Seminar my first quarter helped me develop and grow personally, to better understand myself and others, and to adjust to the new responsibilities of college life.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Being in a First Year Seminar my first quarter helped me explore career opportunities and reflect upon my interests.	5	4	3	2	1
6. Being in a First Year Seminar my first quarter helped increase my awareness and understanding of the diversity of people at WSU and/or in the world.	5	4	3	2	1
7. Being in a First Year Seminar my first quarter helped increase my knowledge of college in general and the student clubs and campus resources at Wright State in particular.	5	4	3	2	1
8. I would recommend being in a First Year Seminar to future new students.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I would recommend my First Year Seminar instructor to next year's new students.	5	4	3	2	1

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Appendix B

Being in a First Year Seminar my first quarter has enhanced my social success as a new college student helping me to meet new friends

The FREQ Procedure

Frequency Expected Percent Row Pct Col Pct	Table of Response by GPA			
	Response	GPA		Total
		2.0- 2.99	3.0 or greater	
	Strongly Agree	64 58.357 12.77 37.87 36.99	105 110.64 20.96 62.13 32.01	169 33.73
	Agree	65 68.026 12.97 32.99 37.57	132 128.97 26.35 67.01 40.24	197 39.32
	Neutral	23 27.279 4.59 29.11 13.29	56 51.721 11.18 70.89 17.07	79 15.77
	Disagree	16 13.122 3.19 42.11 9.25	22 24.878 4.39 57.89 6.71	38 7.58
	Strongly Disagree	5 6.2156 1.00 27.78 2.89	13 11.784 2.59 72.22 3.96	18 3.59
	Total	173 34.53	328 65.47	501 100.00

Statistics for Table of Response by GPA

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	4	3.3918	0.4945
Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square	4	3.3954	0.4940
Mantel-Haenszel Chi-Square	1	0.4822	0.4874
Phi Coefficient		0.0823	
Contingency Coefficient		0.0820	
Cramer's V		0.0823	

Sample Size = 501

Appendix C

Being in a First Year Seminar my first quarter helped me achieve academic success in my college courses

The FREQ Procedure

Frequency Expected Percent Row Pct Col Pct	Table of Response by GPA			
	Response	GPA		Total
		2.0- 2.99	3.0 or greater	
	Strongly Agree	37 30.733 7.39 41.57 21.39	52 58.267 10.38 58.43 15.85	89 17.76
	Agree	49 50.76 9.78 33.33 28.32	98 96.24 19.56 66.67 29.88	147 29.34
	Neutral	47 56.631 9.38 28.66 27.17	117 107.37 23.35 71.34 35.67	164 32.73
	Disagree	28 24.862 5.59 38.89 16.18	44 47.138 8.78 61.11 13.41	72 14.37
	Strongly Disagree	12 10.014 2.40 41.38 6.94	17 18.986 3.39 58.62 5.18	29 5.79
	Total	173 34.53	328 65.47	501 100.00

Statistics for Table of Response by GPA

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	4	5.7537	0.2183
Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square	4	5.7508	0.2185
Mantel-Haenszel Chi-Square	1	0.0964	0.7562
Phi Coefficient		0.1072	
Contingency Coefficient		0.1066	
Cramer's V		0.1072	

Sample Size = 501

Appendix D

Being in a First Year Seminar my first quarter helped me develop and grow personally, to better understand myself and others, and to adjust to the new responsibilities of college life

The FREQ Procedure

Frequency Expected Percent Row Pct Col Pct	Table of Response by GPA			
	Response	GPA		Total
		2.0-2.99	3.0 or greater	
	Strongly Agree	52 43.854 10.38 40.94 30.06	75 83.146 14.97 59.06 22.87	127 25.35
	Agree	56 57.667 11.18 33.53 32.37	111 109.33 22.16 66.47 33.84	167 33.33
	Neutral	38 43.509 7.58 30.16 21.97	88 82.491 17.56 69.84 26.83	126 25.15
	Disagree	17 20.028 3.39 29.31 9.83	41 37.972 8.18 70.69 12.50	58 11.58
	Strongly Disagree	10 7.9421 2.00 43.48 5.78	13 15.058 2.59 56.52 3.96	23 4.59
	Total	173 34.53	328 65.47	501 100.00

Statistics for Table of Response by GPA

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	4	4.9638	0.2910
Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square	4	4.9209	0.2955
Mantel-Haenszel Chi-Square	1	1.2955	0.2550
Phi Coefficient		0.0995	
Contingency Coefficient		0.0990	
Cramer's V		0.0995	

Sample Size = 501

Appendix E

I would recommend being in a First Year Seminar to future new students
 The FREQ Procedure

Frequency Expected Percent Row Pct Col Pct	Table of Response by GPA			
	Response	GPA		Total
		2.0-2.99	3.0 or greater	
Strongly Agree	75 63.192 14.97 40.98 43.35	108 119.81 21.56 59.02 32.93	183 36.53	
Agree	39 47.307 7.78 28.47 22.54	98 89.693 19.56 71.53 29.88	137 27.35	
Neutral	26 31.078 5.19 28.89 15.03	64 58.922 12.77 71.11 19.51	90 17.96	
Disagree	16 14.848 3.19 37.21 9.25	27 28.152 5.39 62.79 8.23	43 8.58	
Strongly Disagree	17 16.575 3.39 35.42 9.83	31 31.425 6.19 64.58 9.45	48 9.58	
Total	173 34.53	328 65.47	501 100.00	

Statistics for Table of Response by GPA

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	4	7.0191	0.1349
Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square	4	7.0401	0.1338
Mantel-Haenszel Chi-Square	1	0.9312	0.3346
Phi Coefficient		0.1184	
Contingency Coefficient		0.1175	
Cramer's V		0.1184	

Sample Size = 501