

Getting a Good Start: Rethinking the First Year of University

Aarhus University

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Premise:

Success in the first-year is the foundation upon which success in the University is built.

Conceptual Frame:

First year is a year of transition during which new students seek to adjust to the academic and social demands of the university.

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Student engagement and academic and social integration are essential to an effective first-year program.

Building an Effective First Year of University

Strategies: Different types of first year actions

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- ✓ **Academic and Social Support Programs**

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- ✓ Peer Mentoring

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- ✓ Academic and Social Support Programs
- ✓ Peer Mentoring
- ✓ **Distinct First Year College within the University**

Designing the First Year of University:

Principle of Backward Curriculum Design:

“If you don’t know where you are going, its hard to get there.”

Designing the First Year of University:

1. Determine the goals for the first year.
2. Define those goals in ways that can be measured.
3. Determine the modes of assessment needed to determine if the goals are met.
4. Beginning with the first day of the year, determine what needs to occur to achieve the goals of the first year (e.g. what should be taught, how should it be it should taught, how should it be organized inside and outside of class to engage students and promote academic and social integration).

Designing the First Year of University:

1. Form groups of five – sit with people with whom you typically do not work.
2. Assign a time keeper and a note taker who will report what the group did.
3. Take a minute or two to write down for your thoughts about a first year.
4. Share your thoughts and work to reach some agreement about the essential elements of a redesigned first year of university.
5. Report your conclusions.

Resources: Designing the First Year of University

- Re-Imagining the First Year of College @ <http://www.aascu.org/RFY/>
- Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education @ <https://www.jingi.org/>
- National Resource Center for the First Year Experience @ <http://www.sc.edu/fye/>