

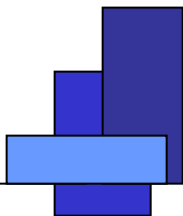


I'm Not New Anymore, But I Still Feel Lost!

Determining the Needs of Second-Year Students on Small College Campuses

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Background of Study

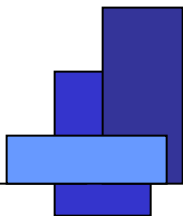
Characteristics

- Small, residential, highly selective liberal arts college in the Midwest
- 1500 students
- 13% of students are from Iowa, 10% are international, 77% other US states
- About 50% of students study abroad as juniors; second-year students inherit many leadership positions
- Housing is integrated by class; after first year students disperse throughout campus.

Why?

- Second year involves unique challenges
- Strategic plan proposed a Second-Year Retreat
- Not directly related to problems with retention

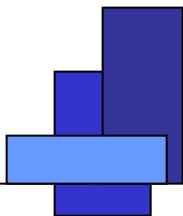
Purpose: Explore the needs and experiences of our second-year students.





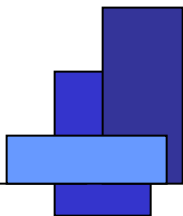
Relevant Research

- “Sophomore slump” (Freedman, 1956)
- Second year is a time of development confusion (Lemons & Richmond, 1987; Schaller, 2005)
- Sophomores are “between” in every aspect (Boivin, Fountain, & Baylis, 2000)
- Need assistance but find little outreach (Kramer,2000)





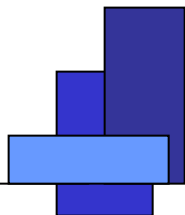
Methods

- 21 focus groups with 109 students
 - 10 with second- year students (N=54) and 11 with third year students (N=55)
 - Represents about 20% of each class
 - Used a non-standardized interview technique (Denzin, 1978)
 - Focus groups were audio-taped and transcribed
 - We reviewed data separately, coded data into specific categories, and then organized that data into broader themes (Maxwell, 1996)
 - Member checks were used to verify collected data and resulting interpretations
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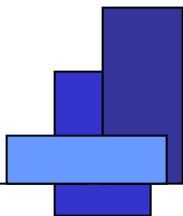
Student Demographics

Gender (%)	Student Body	Juniors	Second year
Male	45.3	41.2	25.9
Female	54.7	58.2	74.1
Ethnicity (%)* (domestic students)			
White/Caucasian	67	70.9	79.6
African American/Black	4.2	7.3	1.9
American Indian/Alaska Native	.4	1.8	1.9
Asian American/Asian	5.6	7.3	1.9
Hispanic	4.4	1.8	
Unknown	7.9	1.8	7.4
International Students (%)	10.4	7.3	7.4





Results

- Second year is markedly different than first and third years
 - The novelty of college has worn off and students no longer feel special: “...*now [second year] is real, it’s not camp anymore...*” (female, second year)
 - Focus on three areas: academic life, social interactions, and extracurricular activities
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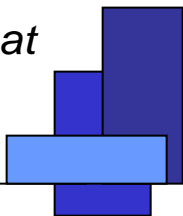
Academic Life

- Coursework becomes more rigorous
- Significant decisions: choosing a major, formal academic plan, study abroad, internships
- Question academic abilities related to choice of major
- Feeling “constrained” and “limited”
- Wrestle with larger questions: “What am I going to do with my life?”
- Less contact with faculty adviser

“My experience this year has been much worse than last year.... There is a lot more thrown at you. First year you were really eased into it and you do have Tutorial. But coming in second year and being told, ‘You have to start applying to do off-campus study ...and then you have to declare your major.’ You have to start thinking about all this stuff, and it just feels like so much, and you get stressed out a lot...” (female, second year)

“...in your second year you start getting really hard courses and then you are not performing as well as in your introductory courses and you start to realize, ‘Am I really fit for this major? Am I really stupid? What’s happening or is this just really hard?’ You kind of doubt yourself sometimes.” (male, junior)

“In the first year your adviser is there to give you more advice, but they stop doing that sophomore year. I could still use the advice!” (female, junior)



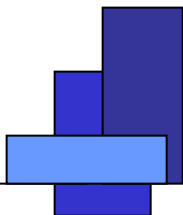


Social Relationships

- Friendships-of-Convenience: In the first year friendships typically form around residence hall floors or athletic teams (if involved).
- Friendships become more intentional: In the second year students disperse throughout campus, forcing students to invest more time developing and maintaining relationships.
- Students search for others who have common interests
- Student articulate a “window of opportunity” in which to connect with people.

“I made new and different friends sophomore year but I expected I would stay friends with those I met first year.” (female, second year)

“I found it to be not as good ‘cause freshmen year there are a lot of opportunities to meet people and everyone and make new friends and then sophomore year I [felt like] here’s all these people I haven’t met yet but they didn’t seem as open to making new friends. I sort of felt stuck.” (female, junior)



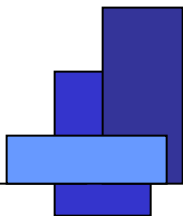


Extracurricular Life

- Continue with activities and out-of-class involvements
- Realize “I can’t do it all.”
- May pair back on some activities, focus on fewer.
- Accept leadership positions

“I think part of where my stress comes from this year, is I really LIKE all the classes I’m in, and all the extra-curriculars that I’m involved with, and I adore my friends, and I just don’t have time to give as much to all of those areas, and I wish I could.” (female, second year)

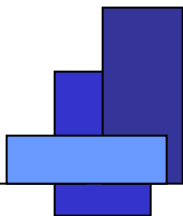
“You get a lot more responsibility [your second year] – you go from going to a meeting, to being the meeting...” (male, junior)





Other Findings

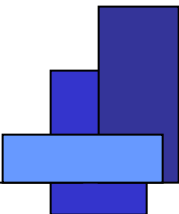
- Students were surprised by changes and challenges of second year; the *unexpectedness* made the experience more difficult.
 - *“I don’t think [the institution] can make [second year] easier, I just wish I would have known...”* (female, junior)
- Resources often are known but not utilized.
 - *“I just felt I had to work this out myself...”* (male, second year)
- For some students, the second year was the most stable.
 - *“I was no longer new but I still didn’t have to worry about what to do after Grinnell.”* (male, junior)
 - *“The first year was kind of a shock – I went into not knowing what to expect and we just really learned the routine by the second year. You learned how to study, you learn what you are leaning toward in terms of academics, socially. You’re just more experienced [sophomore year].”* (male, second year)





Limitations/Future Research

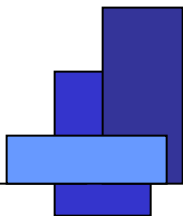
- Didn't interview all students
- Limited to Grinnell College
- Timing of interviews may have impacted students' perceptions and responses
- Focus on advising





Implications

- Make students aware of changes/expectations
- View New Student Orientation as a beginning, not an end.
- Continued support for effective advising.
- Examine the impact of residential life and housing system for second-year students.
- Evaluate the type of support and training for students in clubs/organizations.
- Work closely with faculty and administrators in developing the Second-Year Retreat.
- Other?





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