

Assessment Cycle 2023-2024

First Year Experience

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Northwestern State Mission

Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

The Student Experience Mission

The Student Experience provides the University community with programs and services to support the academic mission of creating, disseminating, and acquiring knowledge through teaching, research and service while empowering a diverse student population to achieve their highest educational potential. The Student Experience creates a stimulating and inclusive educational environment that is conducive to holistic personal growth. The commitment to students initiates prior to entrance, sustains throughout the college experience, and continues beyond graduation. Enrollment Services provide equal access for education to potential students throughout the state and region and promote economic stability and financial access to citizens. Student Affairs enhances student development and broadens intellectual, social, cultural, ethical, and occupational growth. Student Experience works closely with faculty, staff, students, and the community to ensure graduates can promote economic development and improvements in the region.

Student Affairs Mission

The Division of Student Affairs prepares students to be productive members of society and to improve the quality of life of students. Student Affairs provides support services in career development and placement, advocacy and accountability, academic support, mental and physical health, disability accommodations, student activities and organizations, student union life, and opportunities in leadership, community service, and programs for new students. Through hands-on involvement in programs and services, Student Affairs promotes personal development in a student-centered environment, which delivers innovative practices in an environment of respect. Student Affairs encourages integrity, diversity, and collaboration with all members of the university community.

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First Year Experience & Leadership Development Mission

The Office of First Year Experience and Leadership Development, in collaboration with the University community, is committed to engaging, supporting, and empowering first-year students as they take ownership of their college experience. By providing programs, resources, and strategic services that meet the diverse needs of first-year students and families, we facilitate a successful transition to university life and set the tone for academic success, personal growth, and meaningful connections.

Methodology:

1. The First Year Experience and Leadership Development department is both service-oriented and focused on student learning. Therefore, both service and learning outcomes will be utilized. Assessment methods will be qualitative and quantitative, direct, indirect, and summative.
2. The Director is responsible for the assessment process.
3. The Director will share assessment results with both University and external stakeholders, and community agents.
4. Based on the sharing of data, revisions and recommendations for improvements will be made for the next assessment period.

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First Year Experience Service Outcomes

Service Outcomes:

SO 1. First Year Experience programs will create a climate that is inclusive, supportive, and respectful to all.

Measure 1.1. Ninety percent (90%) of students will respond, “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” on the First Year Involvement Challenge assessment that the program met the stated objectives. DATA: *Freshman Connection – Summer 2024*

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2022-2023 the target was not met. The First Year Experience team researched and implemented more effective programming and initiatives within the FYI Challenge that more appropriately addressed the service outcomes for creating a climate that is inclusive, supportive, and respectful to all students. Furthermore, the team edited this measure to align with the Freshman Connection evaluation nomenclature and added a new program to evaluate. The staff included data from the “To Be A Demon” program. This program met the goal to create a campus climate that is inclusive, supportive, and respectful. Out of the 86 students who completed the survey, only 65% said that the objectives were met. There was a low number of respondents for this survey compared to the number of students who participated in the challenge.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results, the staff made the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. The staff made the survey more understandable. There was not a question that specifically asks if we met the specific objectives of the FYI Challenge. The staff offered an incentive for survey participation. The staff improved the explanation of the FYI Challenge directions. Many open-ended question answers stated that students felt lost in their “first semester”.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2023-2024 the target was met. In AC 2023-2024, the First Year Experience staff and the Freshman Connection staff altered the First Year Involvement Challenge to include the requested changes from AC 2022-2023. These changes included the following: spreading the challenge throughout the space to allow for a better understanding of the experience; a better explanation of the event prior to the first semester; how to realistically set goals; and a shorter time frame for semester two. These changes allowed students to enjoy the experience more and understand the purpose of the event.

Decision:

In AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the staff will implement the following changes in AC 2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2024-2025, the staff will make requested changes to improve the program. We will better explain reality checks, introduce the First Year Involvement Challenge earlier in the Freshman Connection experience for a better understanding of what students are participating in, and train the volunteers participating in the experience on their characters in the experience. This will provide a more positive experience that promotes the goals of the event. These changes

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will improve the student's ability to set goals in their first year that are realistic and achievable.

Measure 1.2 Thirty percent (30%) of on-campus students participate in the Demon Days (42 total) program activities, specifically Freshman Connection, The Inferno, Color Chaos, Convocation, President's Picnic, and First Pep Rally. *DATA: Freshman Connection Registrations Stats 2024; Convocation RSVPs Fall 2023; Inferno T-Shirts at Pep Rally*

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2022-2023 the target was met.

The First Year Experience team utilized ID swipers for all event, work with student and faculty/staff focus groups to evaluation programming initiatives and increase marketing strategies such as the utilization of Mongoose texting, Presence event creation, and submitting advertisement space in The Gavel Newsletter. The First Year Experience team utilized the ID swipers for more accurate data of attendees for survey purposes, increased first-year programming on off-campus instructional sites, and increased marketing strategies such as Mongoose texting. Each event sent a text message to first-year students with a promotional graphic and event information.

- Freshman Connection: There were 882 students out of 1029 who attended the summer Freshman Connection programs, which is 80.8%. 911 students registered to attend the program.
- The Inferno: 12.2 % (115 of 945) of entering first-year students participated in The Inferno Run at the first home football game.
- Convocation & President's Picnic: 49% (467 of 945) of first-year students attended New Student Convocation. The picnic had a larger attendance than New Student Convocation with over 500 attendees.
- Color Chaos: There were a total of 1198 students at the annual Color Chaos event.
- First Pep Rally – 400 students were in attendance for the first pep rally of the Fall term.
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Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results, the staff made the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. The First Year Experience staff utilized ID swipes in a larger capacity. To have an exact count of first-year students, we began swiping at each event hosted by this office. The staff worked to advertise our events more through social media, videos, Mongoose texting, and paper publications.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

- Freshman Connection: There were 888 students out of 1056 who attended the summer Freshman Connection programs, which is 84.09%. 920 students registered to attend the program.
- The Inferno: 15.8% (163 of 1029) of entering first-year students participated in The Inferno Run at the first home football game.
- Convocation & President's Picnic: 64.8% (667 of 1029) of first-year students attended New Student Convocation.
- Color Chaos: There were 1032 students at the annual Color Chaos event.
- First Pep Rally – 750 students attended the first pep rally of the Fall term.

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Decision:

In AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the staff will implement the following changes in AC 2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2024-2024, the First Year Experience staff plans to implement new events in the Demon Days schedule to attract a variety of different student populations to the events. Following 2023-2024, the staff hosted a listening session with Demon Days staff to gather new ideas for the next cycle. Those ideas were vetted and will be implemented in the new cycle. As with previous cycles, the staff will advertise events through the Moongoose texting system, student emailing, flyers, social media postings, and strategic initiatives at events prior to the next event. These changes will improve the student's ability to plan their semester in advance and create an ideal vision for their student experience and campus involvement plan.

SO 2. Parents participating in the University's First Year Experience will be satisfied with the program and services offered.

Measure 2.1 Ninety percent (90%) of parents will be very satisfied with program and services stating, "Very Satisfied" or "Satisfied" as measured by a satisfaction survey.

DATA: Parent Connection Evaluations Summer 2024

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2022-2023 the target was met. This measure was edited to include the survey responses to include "satisfied" as well as "very satisfied" as both indicate positive feedback. The survey was also edited to include a question in terms of overall satisfaction of the programs and services offered during the Freshman Connection program. The staff will collect information regarding the parent's satisfaction within each category. In 2022-2023, parents responded to the question regarding overall satisfaction with 97.47% of respondents either very satisfied or satisfied with the programming offered. There were comments left on the open-ended portion to the survey requesting specific breakout sessions, such as a Scholars' College Parent Interest Session. There was also a request to have a map for the Ask BIG Questions Browse to help ease the confusion of where certain departments would be located during that browse.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results, the staff made the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. While the target was met, there is room to grow in specific areas. Due to the requests from the surveys, the staff improved the Parent Connection programming by adding new aspects next year to fit parents' needs. Improvement to the Parent Connection schedule made by providing a diverse breakout sessions and the staff followed the schedule in a timely manner. The staff also worked to provide more accommodations to parents, such as a map for browses.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2023-2024 the target was met. 95.8% of parents noted that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the resources, services and programs provided at Parent Connection in the Summer of 2024. Parents were satisfied with communication before, during, and after the program as well. Communication began sooner, programming was altered based on suggestions

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received from parents and students, and more staff members were involved in presenting to parents. This year, we increased communication to parents by beginning the cycle sooner than previous years. Communication began in April rather than in May, and parents seemed to enjoy that aspect.

Decision:

In AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the staff will implement the following changes in AC2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement. In the upcoming year, the Freshman Connection staff will improve the realm of programming offered to parents at Parent Connection and the email communication offered to parents. We will also develop more personalized breakout sessions. Throughout the summer, we will alter the schedule to meet the needs of parents. These changes will improve the parents' ability to prepare for their session of choice and feel at ease with their decision of Northwestern State.

SO 3. Training of select students will allow them to coordinate, lead, and facilitate First Year Experience activities.

Measure 3.1. At least 50 students will volunteer to participate in the selection process for orientation leaders understanding only 30 are selected. *DATA: Fall 2023 Freshman Connector Informational Meetings/Applications/Interviews*

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2022-2023 the target was not met. First Year Experience staff outreached to students through social media, the Gavel Newsletter, use of the Mongoose texting service and began the outreach and promotion at the FYE Demon Days events during the Fall term. There were 62 applicants to serve on the 2023 Freshman Connector team.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results, the staff made the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. The First Year Experience staff decreased our goal of 100 applicants for the Freshman Connector interview process to reflect our current enrollment trends. For AC 2023-2024, we set a goal to see 50 students apply to be Freshman Connectors. In a typical year, between 40% and 50% of applicants are selected to serve as Freshman Connectors; therefore, setting a lower goal will be more attainable and realistic. With decreased enrollment trends, the Office of First Year Experience does not expect to see 100 students applying for a leadership role in the Freshman Connection program for AC 2023-2024. Our recruitment for the application process consisted of speaking to students about the process, more informational meetings, and social media pushes. The Office of First Year Experience traditionally hosts two informational meetings for those students interested in serving as Freshman Connectors. The staff increased this number to three or four meetings to meet the needs of more students and their different schedules. They were hosted on a variety of days of times. The staff conducted social media pushes with previous Connectors to show what the experience of serving as a Connector is like.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2023-2024 the target was met. In 2023-2024, there were 50 students who applied to serve in 21 spots on the Freshman Connection team. Beginning in AC 2024-2025, the First Year Experience team will begin setting

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our goal to have 50 applications to serve on the Freshman Connector team.

Decision:

In AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the staff will implement the following changes in AC 2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement. In 2024-2025, the goal will be that 50 students will apply to serve as Freshman Connectors with the understanding that no more than 30 will be selected. The staff will host informational meetings to drive the awareness of the program and the application process. We will also utilize the 2024 Freshman Connector team to assist with outreach to students about the process and the Mongoose texting system to provide information on the application process. Printed applications will be available in the First Year Experience Office for students who would like assistance with the process. These changes will improve the student's ability to find assistance with the application process and see the potential that they have the ability to apply for the Freshman Connector team to gain experience with interviewing.

Measure 3.2. Ninety-five percent (95%) of volunteers will attend the required activity training. *DATA: Orientation Leader Training (OR 1100), Retreat Evaluations, and Orientation Leader Outcomes Pres and Post Test.*

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2022-2023 the target was met. The First Year Experience team reviewed all existing programs and services for new students and implemented revised training and development programs for all volunteers and staff. The volunteers began to utilize a customized event planning guide to successfully host Freshman Connection, Parent Connection, Kid Konnection, and Demon Days events from a volunteer perspective. All orientation leaders and student coordinators participated in a series of team building activities ranging from January 2023 to May 2023. These activities encouraged participation in required activities and promoted morale surrounding required activities. Student leaders in the First Year Experience Office were trained by outside facilitators on a variety of topics to enhance their competency levels.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results, the staff made the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. In the upcoming year, the Director of First Year Experience provided more intentional programming at the spring retreat to promote teambuilding. Through current programming on campus like Leadership NSU, the Freshman Connectors provided opportunities to grow in their leadership skills to better prepare them to serve on the orientation team.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2023-2024 the target was met. The Office of First Year Experience became more strategic with the trainings, outcomes, and leadership opportunities provided to the orientation team during AC 2023-2024. In January 2024, the team had 25 students. In July 2024, the team has 23 students due to one student not fulfilling obligations and one student taking a summer internship. The retention of the Freshman Connection team for AC 2023-2024 is 92% in July 2024; however, all 25 students completed 100% of the necessary trainings and evaluations; therefore, the target was met.

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Decision:

In AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the staff will implement the following changes in AC 2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Office of First Year Experience will prioritize the trainings that occur inside the classroom rather than increasing work outside the classroom for orientation leaders. Also, there will be a Demon Volunteers in Progress training day that encompasses customer service, event planning, teamwork, and team bonding. These changes will improve the student's ability to effectively serve on a team and execute an event.

Comprehensive Summary of Key evidence of improvement based on the analysis of results. The following reflects all the changes implemented to drive the continuous process of seeking improvement in AC 2023-2024. These changes are based on the knowledge gained through the AC 2022-2023 results analysis.

SO. 1:

1.1: The staff made the survey more understandable. There was not a question that specifically asks if we met the specific objectives of the FYI Challenge. The staff offered an incentive for survey participation. The staff improved the explanation of the FYI Challenge directions. Many open-ended question answers stated that students felt lost in their "first semester".

1.2: The First Year Experience staff utilized ID swipes in a larger capacity. To have an exact count of first-year students, we began swiping at each event hosted by this office. The staff worked to advertise our events more through social media, videos, Mongoose texting, and paper publications.

SO. 2:

2.1: The staff improved the Parent Connection programming by adding new aspects next year to fit parents' needs. Improvement to the Parent Connection schedule made by providing a diverse breakout sessions and the staff followed the schedule in a timely manner. The staff also worked to provide more accommodations to parents, such as a map for browses.

SO. 3:

3.1: We set a goal to see 50 students apply to be Freshman Connectors. In a typical year, between 40% and 50% of applicants are selected to serve as Freshman Connectors; therefore, setting a lower goal will be more attainable and realistic. With decreased enrollment trends, the Office of First Year Experience does not expect to see 100 students applying for a leadership role in the Freshman Connection program for AC 2023-2024. Our recruitment for the application process consisted of speaking to students about the process, more informational meetings, and social media pushes. The Office of First Year Experience traditionally hosts two informational meetings for those students interested in serving as Freshman Connectors. The staff increased this number to three or four meetings to meet the needs of more students and their different schedules. They were hosted on a variety of days of times. The staff conducted social media pushes with previous Connectors to show what the experience of serving as a Connector is like.

3.2: In the upcoming year, the Director of First Year Experience provided more intentional

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programming at the spring retreat to promote teambuilding. Through current programming on campus like Leadership NSU, the Freshman Connectors provided opportunities to grow in their leadership skills to better prepare them to serve on the orientation team.

Plan of action moving forward.

SO. 1:

1.1: The staff will make requested changes to improve the program. We will better explain reality checks, introduce the First Year Involvement Challenge earlier in the Freshman Connection experience for a better understanding of what students are participating in, and train the volunteers participating in the experience on their characters in the experience. This will provide a more positive experience that promotes the goals of the event.

1.2: The First Year Experience staff plans to implement new events in the Demon Days schedule to attract a variety of different student populations to the events. Following 2023-2024, the staff hosted a listening session with Demon Days staff to gather new ideas for the next cycle. Those ideas were vetted and will be implemented in the new cycle. As with previous cycles, the staff will advertise events through the Moongoose texting system, student emailing, flyers, social media postings, and strategic initiatives at events prior to the next event.

SO. 2:

2.1: The Freshman Connection staff will improve the realm of programming offered to parents at Parent Connection and the email communication offered to parents. We will also develop more personalized breakout sessions. Throughout the summer, we will alter the schedule to meet the needs of parents.

SO. 3:

3.1 The goal will be that 50 students will apply to serve as Freshman Connectors with the understanding that no more than 30 will be selected. The staff will host informational meetings to drive the awareness of the program and the application process. We will also utilize the 2024 Freshman Connector team to assist with outreach to students about the process and the Mongoose texting system to provide information on the application process. Printed applications will be available in the First Year Experience Office for students who would like assistance with the process.

3.2: The Office of First Year Experience will prioritize the trainings that occur inside the classroom rather than increasing work outside the classroom for orientation leaders. Also, there will be a Demon Volunteers in Progress training day that encompasses customer service, event planning, teamwork, and team bonding.