

Assessment Cycle 2024-2025

First Year Experience

Prepared by: Mary Katherine Horton

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Approved by: Dr. Yonna Pasch

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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 promotes 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 have the capability to 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

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” and “Agree” on the First Year Involvement Challenge assessment that the program met the stated objectives. DATA: *Freshman Connection – Summer 2025*

Finding: Target was met/not met.

Analysis.

In AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

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.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the staff made the following changes in AC 2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement.

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

As a result of these changes, in AC 2024-2025 the target was not met.

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The target was shy of 90% with 84.4% of attendees stating the objectives were met. 13.5% of respondents were neutral in their response to this question. While changes were made to the program this year, our survey respondents have suggestions for the program that they feel will assist us in making the objectives clearer. One valuable response to this question included providing more valuable service project options that reflect our student interest at NSU.

Decision:

In AC 2024-2025 the target was not met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, the staff will implement the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of improvement.

We have a valuable opportunity to make improvements given the survey results from this year. While we did not have the survey turnout we had hoped for (96 respondents out of over 400 student attendees with this program), we feel that the input we received was valuable. In AC 2025-2026, we will continue to spread the experience throughout the Student Union. At Session 2, most participants responded that the space was too small for the challenge. This was due to sharing the space with a summer camp. For next year, we will work to find a different space to assist with the feeling of being too cramped. A second change we wish to make is to add more booths that reflect our current students. Students gave ideas, such as a campus clean up and more updated reality checks. We will reevaluate these experiences prior to the next FYI Challenge.

These changes will improve the student's ability to make decisions and set goals in their first year while having options that reflect the current student's interests and ideals.

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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 2025; Convocation RSVPs Fall 2025; Inferno T-Shirts at Pep Rally*

Finding: Target was met/not met.

Analysis.

In AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

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 80.8%. 920 students registered to attend the program.
- The Inferno: 17.8% (188 of 1056) of entering first-year students participated in The Inferno Run at the first home football game.
- Convocation & President's Picnic: 63.5% (671 of 1056) of first-year students attended New Student Convocation.
- Color Chaos: There were 1089 students at the annual Color Chaos event.
- First Pep Rally – 381 students attended the first pep rally of the Fall term. We had challenges with swiping students into this event due to not having barricades.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the staff made the following changes in AC 2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement.

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 Mongoose 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.

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As a result of these changes, in AC 2024-2025 the target was met.

- Freshman Connection: There were 882 students out of 1075 who attended the summer Freshman Connection programs, which is 82.04%. 920 students registered to attend the program.
- The Inferno: 25.11% (270 of 1075) of entering first-year students participated in The Inferno Run at the first home football game.
- Convocation & President's Picnic: 69.9% (752 of 1075) of first-year students attended New Student Convocation.
- Color Chaos: There were 1190 students at the annual Color Chaos event.
- First Pep Rally – 632 students attended the first pep rally of the Fall term.

Decision:

In AC 2024-2025 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, the staff will implement the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of improvement.

The Office of First Year Experience will utilize the new campus involvement program called Suitable to help drive student engagement. Suitable allows us to import all NSU students into the app upon class registration and then send them push notifications about events. By utilizing Suitable in its full capacity by registering all events, sending push notifications, and logging attendance, the Office of First Year Experience can continue to drive engagement at on-campus events. FYE will continue to mail a Demon Days mailer to all first-year students and utilize Mongoose texting service to notify students of upcoming events to assist them with planning.

These changes will improve the student's ability to plan their engagement in advance and get acquainted with on-campus apps ahead of moving onto campus.

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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 2025*

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

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 received from parents and students, and more staff members were involved in presenting to parents.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the staff made the following changes in AC 2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement.

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 continue to improve the realm of programming offered to parents at Parent Connection and the email communication offered 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. We will also continue to develop more personalized breakout sessions. Throughout the summer, we altered the schedule to meet the needs of parents as they were attending sessions in the summer and providing live feedback.

These changes will improve the parents' ability to prepare for their session of choice and feel at ease with their decision of Northwestern State.

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

This year 98.96% of survey respondents stated that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the programs and services offered through Parent Connection in Summer

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2025. Other areas that saw improvement in satisfaction were breakout sessions, pre-session communication, and the student panel offered at Parent Connection.

Decision:

In AC 2024-2025 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, the staff will implement the following changes in AC 2025-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement.

To continue the cycle of improvement, the First Year Experience staff will work to improve the session schedule to better fit the needs of the parents. Some parents suggested reducing the schedule, while others requested to increase the number of breakout rotations. A focus group of parents could be beneficial to determine how to improve the sessions. We will also ensure the spaces we select to host these sessions are appropriate for the environment.

These changes will improve the student's ability to assist their parents in the transition to college and educate them with the appropriate materials for a successful transition.

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

Measure 3.1. At least 100 students will volunteer to participate in the selection process for orientation leaders understanding only 30 are selected. *DATA: Fall 2025 Freshman Connector Informational Meetings/Applications/Interviews*

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2023-2024 the target was not met.

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

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the staff made the following changes in AC 2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement.

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.

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As a result of these changes, in AC 2024-2025 the target was met.

In AC 2024-2025, there were 53 students who applied to fill 22 spots on the Freshman Connection team.

Decision:

In AC 2024-2025 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, the staff will implement the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of improvement.

The staff will continue to host at least three informational sessions to continue to drive the application process for the Freshman Connector positions. While the applications landed at 53, there were 102 applications to service as a Demon Volunteer in Progress with many having the intention to apply to serve as a Freshman Connector the following year in AC 2025-2026. The staff will continue to build our volunteer program to drive the Freshman Connector application process positively. The application process will also be two months long, rather than one month. This will allow students more time to process the decision to apply, as well as more time to ask questions and understand the application process.

These changes will improve the student's ability to understand the application process, decide if they want to apply, and ask questions if necessary. By hosting informationals, extending the application deadline, and enhancing our volunteer program, more students will be educated on the Freshman Connector role.

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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 2023-2024 the target was met.

This 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.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the staff made the following changes in AC 2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement.

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.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2024-2025 the target was met.

The Office of First Year Experience removed unnecessary training dates from the program to make the program less of a chore and more of a desired role. Students were able to meet the requirements with ease, rather than feeling it was a burden. Class time was utilized to meet expectations and program requirements which eliminated the extra programming. In January 2025, the Freshman Connector team had 24 students. One Connector left the team due to a family emergency in March 2025 and was replaced by the next student with the highest score from interviews. In April 2025, a Connector and the Director made the mutual decision to part ways due to failure to meet obligations of the team. Beginning May 2025, 92% of Connectors began the summer program for Freshman Connection. In July 2025, 100% of those 92% have successfully completed the requirements and expectations of the program.

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Decision:

In AC 2024-2025 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, the staff will implement the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of improvement.

The Director will continue to program in intentional ways and remove out-of-class assignments and programming as much as she is able. This will remove the barrier for specific majors to participate in the program, such as Creative and Performing Arts students, because of their out-of-class requirements. The programming will also be intentional and programmed for the specific team, rather than the same programming each year.

These changes will improve the student's ability to participate in programming regardless of major or interest. The time commitment will be doable and manageable.

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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 2025-2026. These changes are based on the knowledge gained through the AC 2024-2025 results analysis.

Commented [YP1]: Copied from Analysis section after "Based on the analysis...."

SO. 1:

1.1: The target was shy of 90% with 84.4% of attendees stating the objectives were met. 13.5% of respondents were neutral in their response to this question. While changes were made to the program this year, our survey respondents have suggestions for the program that they feel will assist us in making the objectives clearer. One valuable response to this question included providing more valuable service project options that reflect our student interest at NSU.

1.2: 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: This year 98.96% of survey respondents stated that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the programs and services offered through Parent Connection in Summer 2025. Other areas that saw improvement in satisfaction were breakout sessions, pre-session communication, and the student panel offered at Parent Connection.

SO. 3:

3.1: In AC 2024-2025, there were 53 students who applied to fill 22 spots on the Freshman Connection team.

3.2: The Office of First Year Experience removed unnecessary training dates from the program to make the program less of a chore and more of a desired role. Students were able to meet the requirements with ease, rather than feeling it was a burden. Class time was utilized to meet expectations and program requirements which eliminated the extra programming. In January 2025, the Freshman Connector team had 24 students. One Connector left the team due to a family emergency in March 2025 and was replaced by the next student with the highest score from interviews. In April 2025, a Connector and the Director made the mutual decision to part ways due to failure to meet obligations of the team. Beginning May 2025, 92% of Connectors began the summer program for Freshman Connection. In July 2025, 100% of those 92% have successfully completed the requirements and expectations of the program.

Plan of action moving forward.

Commented [YP2]: Copied from Decision Section after "staff will implement the following changes"

SO. 1:

1.1: We have a valuable opportunity to make improvements given the survey results from this year.

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While we did not have the survey turnout we had hoped (96 respondents out of over 400 student attendees with this program), we feel that the input we received was valuable. In AC 2025-2026, we will continue to spread the experience throughout the Student Union. At Session 2, most participants responded that the space was too small for the challenge. This was due to sharing the space with a summer camp. For next year, we will work to find a different space to assist with the feeling of being too cramped. A second change we wish to make is to add more booths that reflect our current students. Students gave ideas, such as a campus clean up and more updated reality checks. We will reevaluate these experiences prior to the next FYI Challenge.

1.2 The Office of First Year Experience will utilize the new campus involvement program called Suitable to help drive student engagement. Suitable allows us to import all NSU students into the app upon class registration and then send them push notifications about events. By utilizing Suitable in its full capacity by registering all events, sending push notifications, and logging attendance, the Office of First Year Experience can continue to drive engagement at on-campus events. FYE will continue to mail a Demon Days mailer to all first-year students and utilize Mongoose texting service to notify students of upcoming events to assist them with planning.

SO. 2:

2.1: To continue the cycle of improvement, the First Year Experience staff will work to improve the session schedule to better fit the needs of the parents. Some parents suggested reducing the schedule, while others requested to increase the number of breakout rotations. A focus group of parents could be beneficial to determine how to improve the sessions. We will also ensure the spaces we select to host these sessions are appropriate for the environment.

SO. 3:

3.1: The staff will continue to host at least three informational sessions to continue to drive the application process for the Freshman Connector positions. While the applications landed at 53, there were 102 applications to service as a Demon Volunteer in Progress with many having the intention to apply to serve as a Freshman Connector the following year in AC 2025-2026. The staff will continue to build our volunteer program to drive the Freshman Connector application process positively. The application process will also be two months long, rather than one month. This will allow students more time to process the decision to apply, as well as more time to ask questions and understand the application process.

3.2: The Director will continue to program in intentional ways and remove out-of-class assignments and programming as much as she is able. This will remove the barrier for specific majors to participate in the program, such as Creative and Performing Arts students, because of their out-of-class requirements. The programming will also be intentional and programmed for the specific team, rather than the same programming each year.