

45TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON THE

FIRST-YEAR

EXPERIENCE

Seattle, Washington
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NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

explore (a) how to design an effective self-reflection activity, (b) strategies for integrating reflection into existing FYE initiatives, and (c) additional ways to incorporate reflection and feedback to strengthen FYE efforts.

CI - Design Thinking as Part of a Holistic First Year Model

Room 601: Hoh; Sixth Floor

Zoë Mertz
Dani Wall
Rachel Rea

University of Colorado Boulder

Discover how our First Year advising team brings design thinking to life in our first-year seminar, inspired by Stanford's D.School. Through hands-on exploration, ideation, and prototyping, students actively design their college journey. We'll share how our "Designing Your Leeds" course integrates with a holistic First Year Experience model, empowering advisors and FYE staff to support student agency and purpose. Attendees will engage in sample activities and collaborate on ways to embed design thinking into their own FYE programs. Join us to delve into practical tools, fresh ideas, and a renewed vision for the first year.

CP - Not Just a Bridge, But a Launchpad

Room 602: Nooksack; Sixth Floor

Nicholas Freeman
Diamond Boston

Florida State University

Florida State University's Summer Bridge Program (SBP), facilitated by the Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement (CARE), supports first-generation and underrepresented students through intentional academic and holistic development. This session highlights the integration of SLS 1131 (Transitioning into College for Special Populations) for participants and HUM 4924/SLS 3606 (Engage 100 Peer Instruction & Transitioning Beyond College for Special Populations) for peer leaders. By embedding metacognitive strategies, mentoring, and identity-informed practices, SBP cultivates belonging, leadership, and academic success. Attendees will explore this dual-track model as a scalable framework for designing student-centered summer programs that launch students and leaders from day one.

CT - C the Difference: Grassroots to Manifestation of a University 101

Room 604: Skykomish; Sixth Floor

Alison Lee
Ashley Dodson
Craig Benson

University of Missouri

Over the past decade, a grassroots initiative at the University of Missouri-Columbia (Mizzou) evolved into Mizzou 101, a core first-year course designed to support student success and transitions. Initially created to assist undeclared students with major and career exploration, the course expanded through collaborative partnerships, strong campus champions, and evidence of positive student outcomes. By Fall 2025, the course had grown to 42 sections spanning multiple departments across campus. Guided by the 5C approach (Collaborating, Cultivating, Coordinating, Creating, and Co-opting), the course balances standardized learning outcomes with customization, offering a scalable model for first-year experience courses nationwide.

CI - Living and Learning in Community: A Successful Model for FYE

Room 605: Snohomish; Sixth Floor

Daniel Super
Jeremy Logsdon
Holli Drummond
Kirsten Hooks

Western Kentucky University

Western Kentucky University's Living Learning Community (LLC) initiative advances first-year student success through intentional integration of academic and residential life. Serving nearly 800 students annually, LLCs are organized by major, identity, or interest and they foster belonging, academic engagement, and retention. A rigorous assessment strategy using propensity score matching (PSM) demonstrates statistically significant retention gains for first-generation, Pell-eligible, and underrepresented students. The program is sustained through faculty professional learning communities, cross-divisional collaboration, and purpose-built infrastructure. This session will share WKU's approach and offer attendees practical strategies to implement, assess, and scale similar efforts within their own campus contexts.

CT - Bridging Promises: From Community to Campus Partnerships

Room 606: Twisp; Sixth Floor

Dariana Zermeno
Richmond Promise

Ana Maciel
Contra Costa College

To combat high attrition rates among first-year Richmond Promise scholars at Contra Costa College, a strong partnership was formed in 2017 between Richmond Promise and the college's First Year Experience (FYE) Program - rooted in grant-funded innovation and shared commitment. This session will explore the evolution of this collaboration, the holistic support services developed to meet students' academic and personal needs, and the strategies used to institutionalize these efforts. Attendees will gain insight into how intentional partnerships can foster belonging, persistence, and long-term success for underserved student populations.

FD - Rethinking Readiness: Assessments, Remediation, and Resilience-Building Among Community College Students

Room 607: Wishkah; Sixth Floor

Rebecca Todd
Hillsborough Community College

Community colleges face persistent challenges in first-year retention, particularly when student readiness is narrowly defined through placement exams or remedial sequences. This interactive session reframes readiness as a shared institutional responsibility that extends beyond remediation to include academic recovery, mental health and wellness, and resilience-building supports for non-traditional and first-generation students. Participants will engage in facilitated discussion to examine evolving experiences with readiness assessments, redesigns of developmental education, and cross-unit collaborations between academic and student affairs. Together, attendees will exchange strategies and co-create actionable ideas to promote equity, persistence, and success among their unique student populations.