

5 Tips for

Improving First Year Experience/ College Success Course Outcomes



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A shocking reality: 40% of first-time college students in the U.S. will not return to the same institution for their second year¹. Here are **five easy-to-implement tips** from First Year Experience and Retention and Curriculum expert, Vance Gray, PhD, that College Success/First Year Experience programs can utilize to support student engagement in ways that ultimately help improve student retention.



Take
Attendance



Create Consistency
in Scaling Student
Engagement



Utilize a Variety
of Question
Types



Gather
Immediate
Feedback



Use
Insights
for Early
Intervention

1 Take Attendance



Class attendance is one of the earliest predictors of student success². You cannot engage students who are not physically present, so the first step is getting students to show up. One way to ensure that students attend class is to track attendance.

ENCOURAGE ATTENDANCE BY:

- **Explaining to students why you are tracking attendance** and the positive correlation between class attendance and course grades.
- **Giving students credit for attendance** rather than penalizing them for missing class.
- **Providing students with a way to track their own attendance** so that you and your students are always on the same page.
- **Taking attendance at the beginning of class and again at the end** to ensure that students are present for the duration of class. Or, end class with a polling question and give credit for answering it—and check for understanding on key content covered during the class session.

HOW MACMILLAN LEARNING CAN HELP:

- **Use iClicker's attendance functionality to automate attendance tracking.** Set the date, time, and location of your course and students will be reminded to “check in” 15 minutes before class begins.
- **Enable iClicker's geolocation option** to ensure students are physically in class when they “check in.” For online class sessions, disable this option.

2

Create Consistency in Scaling Student Engagement



With many College Success/First Year Experience courses taught by adjuncts or faculty that are primarily responsible for courses in other disciplines, effective teaching methodologies that can be quickly scaled across multiple teachers is critical to delivering engaging and meaningful learning experiences.

SCALE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT CONSISTENTLY BY:

- **Outlining clear expectations** regarding the importance of delivering learning experiences that foster student engagement.
- **Identifying quality, vetted resources** that can be accessed and easily incorporated into the course by teachers with varying degrees of familiarity with the course content.
- **Providing resources that can be implemented with little or no modifications**, yet are easily customizable should instructors want to tailor to meet the needs of their students.

HOW MACMILLAN LEARNING CAN HELP:

- **Designed Learning Experiences (DLEs)** provide College Success instructors with ready-to-use, step-by-step active learning lesson plans and resources for the [most commonly-taught topics](#) in FYE/College Success courses.
- **DLEs minimize prep time to accommodate last minute teaching assignments**, while allowing instructors the flexibility to use as is or customize as needed and work regardless of whether class in-person, online, or anything in between.

3

Utilize a Variety of Question Types to Create Multimodal Learning Opportunities



Research indicates that students' attention declines throughout the course of a lecture.³ Incorporating multimodal learning can improve student engagement and provide opportunities for deep learning as students are required to become active participants in their learning, rather than passive 'recipients' of knowledge.

USE VARIETY OF QUESTION TYPES BY:

- **Enlisting at least 2-3 different active learning experiences** (i.e. Think-Pair-Share, small group discussions, synthesis exercises) in each class session.
- **Utilizing short-answer and target questions** that require students to engage with content beyond guessing answers to multiple-choice style questions.
- **Giving points** for each question answered to motivate every student to participate, whether they respond correctly or not.

HOW MACMILLAN LEARNING CAN HELP:

- **Deliver a variety of question types with a click of a button with iClicker.** iClicker's diverse question types (i.e. anonymous, short answer, target) support multimodal teaching that has been shown to improve engagement⁴ and foster deep learning.
- **Utilize the pre-created active learning activities available in Designed Learning Experiences (DLEs)** to quickly incorporate content-specific peer-to-peer learning, small group discussions and other instructional strategies in your College Success course.

4

Gather Immediate Feedback on Muddiest Points



Learning research suggests that awareness of learning enhances it⁵. So asking closing questions can be a simple, but effective cognitive tool to support deeper learning. Because closing questions illustrate how well students understand the concepts covered in class, you have an opportunity to clarify or provide additional resources where necessary.

GATHER IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK BY:

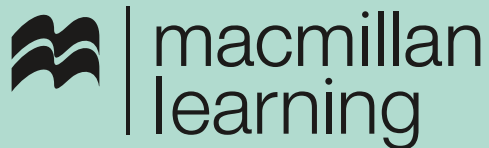
- **Finalizing the class session** by asking a question about a key concept covered.
- **Assigning participation points** for answering the closing question to encourage students to reflect on their learning—and stay until the end of the class session.
- **Reviewing a summary of student responses** and use them to inform any review or content coverage for the next class session.
- **Using discussion board or announcement features** to clarify any common misconceptions revealed by students' answers to the closing question.

HOW MACMILLAN LEARNING CAN HELP:

- **Deploy an exit poll with a single click in iClicker.** iClicker's exit polling feature asks students to rate their understanding of the content covered in class, giving you immediate insight into students' perceptions of their own understanding.

5

Use Insight to Make Timely & Meaningful Interventions



Research indicates that college students' early experiences during their first year significantly impact their success.⁶ The earlier student support advocates can identify gaps in students' experiences and conduct meaningful interventions, the greater the likelihood of positively impacting student outcomes and retention.⁷

USE INSIGHT TO MAKE MEANING INTERVENTIONS BY:

- **Administering a readiness survey** prior to the start of the term to identify where access may present challenges for students.
- **Deploying check-in surveys** early in the term to identify which students may need additional support, as well as the focus on interventions that will have the greatest impact on student access and retention.
- **Conducting summative, outcomes-focused assessments** that provide insights into the impact of methodologies and programming utilized during the term. Results of these outcomes assessments can be used to guide decision-making for future classes.

HOW MACMILLAN LEARNING CAN HELP:

- **Prevent survey fatigue** with short, targeted micro-assessments that focus interventions based on the most impactful non-cognitive influencers of student retention like sense of belonging, financial insecurity, and resilience.
- **iClicker Insights empowers student success professionals** to efficiently administer short, research-based surveys; access easy-to-understand insights that identify and prioritize interventions, early in the term; and enact targeted student outreach based on clear, data-informed recommendations.

For more on how iClicker, iClicker Insights and Macmillan Learning's College Success solutions can help you scale student retention efforts in your College Success or First Year Experience courses, visit: <https://go.macmillanlearning.com/fye2020>

References

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