

# UALR Assessment Report

## 2006 FYEC Report: Student Learning in 2005

### Survey Administration

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This survey was conducted on the campus of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR). In Fall 2005, ten sections of the freshman seminar, which included 245 undergraduate students, were invited to participate in the FYI study. Of these ten sections, nine were PEAW 1300 courses and one was a PEAW 1124 course. The FYI survey was distributed to the students enrolled in the course. The survey was given prior to the completion of the freshman course (one week before the Thanksgiving Holiday). A total of 156 surveys were completed from the ten sections yielding a 64% response rate.

In Fall 2005, fifteen factors were evaluated. They are listed as follows:

1. Course Improved Study Strategies
2. Course Improved Academic/Cognitive Skills
3. Course Improved Critical Thinking
4. Course Improved Connections with Faculty
5. Course Improved Connections with Peers
6. Course Increased Out-of-Class Engagement
7. Course Improved Knowledge of Campus Policies
8. Course Improved Knowledge of Academic Services
9. Course Improved Managing Time/Priorities
10. Course Improved Knowledge of Wellness
11. Sense of Belonging/Acceptance
12. Usefulness of Course Readings
13. Satisfaction with College/University
14. Course Included Engaging Pedagogy
15. Overall Course Effectiveness

### Respondent Demographics

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Demographics for the 156 students who participated in the Fall 2005 FYI survey are listed as follows:

<b>Gender:</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>65%</b>
	Male	35%
<b>Ethnicity:</b>	<b>African American</b>	<b>52%</b>
	White Non-Hispanic	42%
	Multi-racial/Other	6%
	Hispanic American	0%
<b>Hours Worked per Week (paying job):</b>	<b>Do not work</b>	<b>39%</b>
	1-10 hours	6%
	11-20 hours	20%
	21-30 hours	18%
	31-40+ hours	16%
<b>Current Residence:</b>	Campus residence halls	30%
	<b>Off-campus w/family</b>	<b>46%</b>
	Off-campus w/o family	25%
<b>High School GPA</b>	Mostly A	13%
	<b>A and B, Mostly B</b>	<b>56%</b>
	B and C, Mostly C	29%
	Lower than C	3%
<b>Highest ACT/SAT Score:</b>	<b>19 or lower</b>	<b>46%</b>
	20-26	37%
	27 or more	5%
	N/A	12%
	<b>Current Academic Performance at UALR:</b>	Mostly A
<b>A and B, Mostly B</b>		<b>56%</b>
B and C, Mostly C		27%

It is important to note that this survey is based on a different pool of students every year. Such variability in a dependent variable would seem to decrease the reliability of the data; however, for this particular situation, this is not the case. Just as the makeup of the student body is ever changing, so are their requirements for overall course satisfaction. The tracking of this kind of data allows for the documentation of almost real-time trends in the requirements for overall course satisfaction.

## Priority Matrix

The Priority Matrix is a statistically based analysis involving t-tests and regression analyses. Upon the interpretation of this matrix, one can determine the degree to which these factors are predictors of overall satisfaction. The value, calculated as Cronbach's Alpha, provides a reliability coefficient for each factor.

The major predictors (impact factors) have the greatest impact on overall course effectiveness, while the minor predictors (no impact factors), regardless of their performance, are unlikely to have an impact on the predictability of overall course effectiveness. The prioritization of each factor should be assigned accordingly. The Priority Matrix Table (see Table 1) below denotes which factors should be improved and which should be monitored.

The top priority factors, which were found to have the most impact on the student's overall course satisfaction, for Fall 2005 are as follows: Factor 4 (Course Improved Connections with Faculty), Factor 13 (Satisfaction with College/University), Factor 12 (Usefulness of Course Readings), Factor 7 (Course Improved Knowledge of Campus Policies), and Factor 1 (Course Improved Study Strategies). These factors are listed in preceding order beginning with Factor 4 (Course Improved Connections with Faculty), which is the top predictor of overall course effectiveness.

Of these factors, the top three factors – 4 (Faculty Connections), 13 (College/University), and 12 (Course Readings) – were found to have a 'High Impact' on the overall course effectiveness, while the latter two factors – 7 (Campus Policies) and 1 (Study Strategies) – were found to have a 'Moderate Impact' on the overall course effectiveness. The remaining factors were found to have 'No Impact,' meaning that they were not predictors of overall course effectiveness. For all of the top priority factors, UALR's performance was rated as 'Good.' Factor 11, which is not a predictor of overall course effectiveness, was rated as 'Excellent,' while all of the remaining non-impact factors were rated as 'Good.'

Since UALR's performance in all of the top priority factors were equally rated as good, to achieve the greatest impact on course effectiveness, efforts to improve the program should focus on the top predictor first, Factor 4 (Faculty Connections), followed by the remaining predictors. Improving the other factors (i.e. the 5<sup>th</sup> predictor – Factor 1 (Study Strategies)), will yield nominal results if performance for the top predictor, Factor 4 (Faculty Connections) is not improved first.

Factor 11 (Belonging/Acceptance) was rated as 'Excellent,' but has little of any impact on overall course effectiveness. For this reason, it is not a priority and efforts should only be maintained for this factor.

**Table 1 - Longitudinal Comparison of Factors for Fall 2005**

	Impact on Overall Satisfaction	Statistical Level	% Difference from previous Year
<b>Top Priority for Fall 2005</b>			
Factor 4. Course Improved Connections with Faculty	High Impact	No Diff	-----
Factor 13. Satisfaction with College/University	High Impact	No Diff	-----
Factor 12. Usefulness of Course Readings	High Impact	No Diff	-----
Factor 7. Course Improved Knowledge of Campus Policies	Moderate Impact	**	8.1% increase
Factor 1. Course Improved Study Strategies	Moderate Impact	*	6.6% increase
<b>Maintain or Improve</b>			
Factor 11. Sense of Belonging & Acceptance	No Impact	No Diff	-----
<b>Monitor</b>			
Factor 2. Course Improved Academic & Cognitive Skills	No Impact	*	7.1% increase
Factor 3. Course Improved Critical Thinking	No Impact	**	8.9% increase
Factor 5. Course Improved Connections with Peers	No Impact	No Diff	-----
Factor 6. Course Increased Out-of-Class Engagement	No Impact	*	10.8% increase

Factor 8.	Course Improved Knowledge of Academic Services	No Impact	**	9.4% increase
Factor 9.	Course Improved Managing Time & Priorities	No Impact	*	6.3% increase
Factor 10.	Course Improved Knowledge of Wellness	No Impact	**	10.4% increase
Factor 14.	Course Included Engaging Pedagogy	No Impact	**	8.4% increase
<b>Dependent Variable: Overall Satisfaction</b>				
Factor 15.	Overall Course Effectiveness	-----	No Diff	-----

\*\*\* = p<0.001, \*\* = p<0.01, \* = p<0.05

Though significant increases were found in 9 of the factors, a look at the table above (see Table 2) indicates that only two of these factors were deemed to have an impact on overall course effectiveness. Regardless of the score increases for the aforementioned priority factors, prioritization of these factors should be based on the overall performance rating (i.e. excellent, good, fair) of each factor, and on its level of impact on course effectiveness. Keeping this in perspective provides the most direct route to better impact the overall course effectiveness.

## PEAW 1300 and PEAW 1124

In summation, the First Year Initiative Survey was completed by 156 students taking PEAW 1300 and PEAW 1124. In this survey, students ranked their level of satisfaction in fifteen different categories, or factors. These factors were assessed in 70 questions. The factor means for the University were statistically compared to the average factor means of a peer group ('Select Six'), of structurally similar schools ('Carnegie Class'), and of all the participating institutions ('All Schools'). A statistical analysis of the factors also provides a longitudinal comparison since Fall 2001, which is when the First Year Initiative Assessment began. An analysis of the data obtained from this study presents the results of the overall course effectiveness, factors with the greatest impact, areas to maintain and monitor. Overall Course Effectiveness (Factor 15) was the dependent variable.

In Fall 2005, the average PEAW student had the following characteristics:

Gender:	Female (65%)
Ethnicity:	African American (52%)
Hours Worked per Week (paying job):	Did not work (39%)
Current Residence:	Off-campus w/family (46%)
High School GPA	A and B, Mostly B (56%)
Highest ACT/SAT Score:	19 or lower (46%)
Current Academic Performance at UALR:	A and B, Mostly B (56%)

The top priority factors which produce the greatest impact in overall course effectiveness and student satisfaction and its ratings are listed as follows:

### Top Priority for Fall 2005

Factor 4.	Course Improved Connections with Faculty	Good
<b>Factor 13.</b>	<b>Satisfaction with College/University</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Factor 12.</b>	<b>Usefulness of Course Readings</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Factor 7.</b>	<b>Course Improved Knowledge of Campus Policies</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Factor 1.</b>	<b>Course Improved Study Strategies</b>	<b>Good</b>

Since Fall 2001, the results of this study indicate that UALR's Freshman Experience course has not had any significant increase or decrease in its 'Overall Course Effectiveness' (Factor 15), though the course has maintained, if not slightly improved its performance, in areas of impact from the previous year.

The data suggests that research should be initially focused on methods to 'Improve Connections with Faculty' (Factor 4) since any improvement in this area will create the greatest impact on the overall course effectiveness. Efforts should then focus on increasing 'Satisfaction with College/University' (Factor 13), followed by 'Usefulness of Course Readings' (Factor 13), 'Course Improved Knowledge of Campus Policies' (Factor 7), and 'Course Improved Study Strategies' (Factor 1). These aforementioned factors are listed in the order of which they are a predictor.

A look at the data indicates that the program and its performance are relatively standardized. To move the performance of these impact factors from 'Good' to 'Excellent,' UALR should consider providing a more tailored approach to determining the educational demands of the unique set of students that enroll in this course. This can be done by obtaining student recommendations, via a focus group or other more interactive method.

Additionally, Gateway Communities consisting of linked courses are being implemented in 2006 to provide a more integrative learning process with the same cohort of twenty students. Some sections of PEAW 1300 will be linked with either READ 0310 (College Reading) or RHET 0310 (Composition Fundamentals), both of which are developmental classes. The data from these students may provide additional insight into which approaches are more effective for this subgroup.

For more information about this study, please contact Dr. Thea Zidonowitz Hoefft at 501.569.8686 or [tmhoeft@ualr.edu](mailto:tmhoeft@ualr.edu).