

UALR Assessment Report

2007 FYEC Report: Student Learning in 2006

Survey Administration

This survey was conducted on the campus of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR). In Fall 2006, eleven sections of the freshman seminar, which included 251 undergraduate students, were invited to participate in the FYI study. Of these eleven sections, ten 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 168 surveys were completed from the eleven sections yielding a 67% response rate.

Changes in Course Offerings. Unlike previous years, five sections of PEAW 1300 were offered as linked courses, meaning that students were required to complete this course if they were enrolled in any developmental course. The other five PEAW sections were offered as non-linked courses. For the purposes of this study, *Overall Course Effectiveness* will be evaluated to include all PEAW courses – linked or non-linked.

Student Learning Goals & Core Competencies Addressed. Fifteen learning goals, or factors, were evaluated. These goals and the core competencies addressed 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

Demographics for the 168 students who participated in the Fall 2005 FYI survey are listed as follows:

Gender:	Female	69%
	Male	31%
Ethnicity:	African American	61%
	White Non-Hispanic	35%
	Multi-racial/Other	3%
	Hispanic American	0%
Hours Worked per Week (paying job):	Do not work	29%
	1-10 hours	9%
	11-20 hours	17%
	21-30 hours	21%
	31-40+ hours	24%
Current Residence:	Campus residence halls	39%
	Off-campus w/family	46%
	Off-campus w/o family	13%
High School GPA	Mostly A	9%
	A and B, Mostly B	51%
	B and C, Mostly C	40%
	Lower than C	0%
Highest ACT/SAT Score:	19 or lower	70%

	20-26	25%
	27 or more	1%
	N/A	5%
Current Academic Performance at UALR:	Mostly A	8%
	A and B, Mostly B	56%
	B and C, Mostly C	33%
	Lower than C	2%

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 2006 are as follows: Factor 14 (Course Included Engaging Pedagogy), Factor 9 (Course Improved Managing Time & Priorities), Factor 12 (Usefulness of Course Readings), Factor 3 (Course Improved Critical Thinking), and Factor 4 (Course Improved Connections with Faculty,

These factors are listed in preceding order beginning with Factor 14 (Course Included Engaging Pedagogy), which has a *high impact* on *overall course effectiveness* and is the top predictor in determining *overall course effectiveness*. Subsequently, Factors 9 (Course Improved Managing Time & Priorities), 12 (Usefulness of Course Readings), 3 (Course Improved Critical Thinking), and 4 (Course Improved Connections with Faculty, were found to have a moderate impact on *overall course effectiveness*. For all of these top priority factors, UALR's performance was rated as 'Good.'

The remaining factors were found to have 'No Impact,' meaning that they were not predictors of overall course effectiveness. Aside from Factor 6 (Course Increase Out-of-Class Engagement), all of the remaining non-impact factors received a performance rating of 'Good.'

Table 1 - Longitudinal Comparison of Factors for Fall 2006

	Impact on Overall Satisfaction	Statistical Level	% Difference from previous Year
Top Priority for Fall 2005 (Performance Rating)			
Factor 14. Course Included Engaging Pedagogy (Good)	High Impact	***	6.9% decrease
Factor 9. Course Improved Managing Time & Priorities (Good)	Moderate Impact	No Diff	-----
Factor 12. Usefulness of Course Readings (Good)	Moderate Impact	*	5.6% decrease
Factor 3. Course Improved Critical Thinking (Good)	Moderate Impact	***	7.7% decrease
Factor 4. Course Improved Connections with Faculty (Good)	Moderate Impact	*	6.2% decrease
Monitor			
Factor 1. Course Improved Study Strategies (Good)	No Impact	*	5.1% decrease
Factor 2. Course Improved Academic & Cognitive Skills (Good)	No Impact	No Diff	-----
Factor 5. Course Improved Connections with Peers (Good)	No Impact	No Diff	-----
Factor 6. Course Increased Out-of-Class Engagement (Fair)	No Impact	No Diff	-----
Factor 7. Course Improved Knowledge of Campus Policies (Good)	No Impact	No Diff	-----
Factor 8. Course Improved Knowledge of Academic Services (Good)	No Impact	*	6.5% decrease
Factor 10. Course Improved Knowledge of Wellness (Good)	No Impact	*	6.9% decrease
Factor 11. Sense of Belonging & Acceptance (Good)	No Impact	No Diff	-----
Factor 13. Satisfaction with College/University (Good)	No Impact	No Diff	-----
Dependent Variable: Overall Satisfaction			
Factor 15. Overall Course Effectiveness	-----	***	6.9% decrease

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

Additionally, although significant decreases were found in 7 of the factors, only four of these factors were identified as having an impact on overall course effectiveness. Regardless of the score decreases 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. That said, it is important to keep watch on the overall decline in compared to the rest of the sample population. If these categories continue to decline in subsequent years, then more attention should be focused on the decline in performance for these factors. Keeping this in perspective provides the most direct route to better impact the overall course effectiveness.

Given that 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 14 (Course Included Engaging Pedagogy), followed by the remaining predictors. Improving the other factors (i.e. the 5th predictor – Factor 4 (Course Improved Connections with Faculty), will yield nominal results if performance for the top predictor, Factor 14 (Course Included Engaging Pedagogy) is not improved first. It is also important to note that this is the second year that Factor 12 (Usefulness of Course Readings) has been identified as a *Top Priority* factor. If enhancements are made to the program addressing Factor 14 (Course included Engaging Pedagogy), a high impact factor, subsequent efforts should focus on addressing Factor 12 (Usefulness of Course Readings).

PEAW 1300 and PEAW 1124

In summation, the First Year Initiative Survey was completed by 168 students enrolled in 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 2006, the average PEAW student had the following characteristics:

Gender:	Female (69%)
Ethnicity:	African American (61%)
Hours Worked per Week (paying job):	31-40+ hours (24%)
Current Residence:	Off-campus w/family (46%)
High School GPA	A and B, Mostly B (51%)
Highest ACT/SAT Score:	19 or lower (70%)
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 2006		
Factor 14.	Course Included Engaging Pedagogy	Good
Factor 9.	Course Improved Managing Time & Priorities	Good
Factor 12.	Usefulness of Course Readings	Good
Factor 3.	Course Improved Critical Thinking	Good
Factor 4.	Course Improved Connections with Faculty	Good

The data further suggests that research should be initially focused on methods to 'Include Engaging Pedagogy' (Factor 14) since any improvement in this area will create the greatest impact on the overall course effectiveness. Efforts should then focus on improving 'Managing Time & Priorities' and the 'Usefulness of Course Readings,' followed by improving 'Critical Thinking' and 'Improving Connections with Faculty.'

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. The data from these students may provide additional insight into which approaches are more effective for this subgroup.

Since Fall 2001, the results of this study have consistently indicated that UALR's Freshman Experience course has

benchmarked relatively well when compared to programs run throughout the nation. A look at the previous data for UALR's PEAW Course further indicates that the program and its performance have been relatively standardized. This year, the course experienced a significant drop in performance relative to previous years, only placing UALR in the top quartile of schools that were included in the sample pool.

This decrease in overall performance may be attributed to several changes which occurred in 2006. They are noted as follows:

Implementation of the Gateway Communities. In 2006, the Gateway Communities, which consisted of linked courses, was implemented. This program provides a more integrative learning process with the same cohort of twenty students. Five sections of PEAW were linked to READ 0310 (College Reading) or RHET 0310 (Composition), both of which are developmental classes. This is the first year that the program has been implemented, and as with any program, there is a learning-curve that is associated with this implementation process. Decreases in initial performance are not preferred, but are likely in the first year. Concerns should only mount if significant performance declines are experienced in subsequent years.

Initiation of a Full-Time UALR PEAW Instructor. For Fall of 2006, a full-time instructor was hired to solely teach PEAW classes. It is probable that the instructor is experiencing a learning-curve, especially given that this is her first time teaching a course at UALR. Again, decreases in initial performance are not preferred, but are likely in the first year. Concerns should only mount if significant performance declines are experienced in subsequent years.

Unlike the significant gains that UALR's PEAW course has experienced in previous years, this years decline in overall performance, will provide the PEAW course with another opportunity and reason to further enhance the program.

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