

**UALR Assessment Report
2008 FYEC Report: Student Learning in 2007**

Survey Administration

This survey was conducted on the campus of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR). In Fall 2007, twelve sections of the freshman seminar, which included 200 undergraduate students, were invited to participate in the FYI study. Of these twelve sections, eleven 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 173 surveys were completed from the twelve sections yielding an 87% response rate.

Comment on Course Offerings. During the years 2006 and 2007, about half of the sections of PEAW 1300 were offered as linked, meaning that students were required to complete this course if they were enrolled in any developmental course. The other 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 and 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 and Priorities**
10. **Course Improved Knowledge of Wellness**
11. **Sense of Belonging and Acceptance**
12. **Usefulness of Course Readings**
13. Satisfaction with College/University
14. Course Included Engaging Pedagogy
15. Overall Course Effectiveness

Note, the **factors that are bolded** are directly related to UALR's learning objectives for the First Year Experience course.

Respondent Demographics

Demographics for the 173 students who participated in the Fall 2007 FYI survey are listed as follows:

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----|
| Gender: | Female | 65% |
| | Male | 35% |
| Ethnicity: | African American | 65% |
| | White Non-Hispanic | 27% |
| | Multi-racial/Other | 6% |
| | Hispanic American | 2% |
| Hours Worked per Week (paying job): | Do not work | 36% |
| | 1-10 hours | 10% |
| | 11-20 hours | 20% |
| | 21-30 hours | 14% |
| | 31-40+ hours | 20% |
| Current Residence: | Campus residence halls | 43% |
| | Campus apartment | 6% |
| | Off-campus w/family | 38% |
| | Off-campus w/o family | 11% |

| | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----|
| High School GPA: | Mostly A | 12% |
| | A and B, Mostly B | 50% |
| | B and C, Mostly C | 37% |
| | Lower than C | 1% |
| Highest ACT/SAT Score: *Breakdown reported differently from previous reports | 19 or lower | 72% |
| | 20-24 | 16% |
| | 25 or more | 3% |
| | N/A | 8% |
| Current Academic Performance at UALR: | Mostly A | 9% |
| | A and B, Mostly B | 48% |
| | B and C, Mostly C | 38% |
| | Lower than C | 5% |

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, maintained, and monitored along with their Performance Rating.

Table 1 – Priority Matrix Table for Fall 2007

| Top Priority for Fall 2007 | | Impact on Overall Satisfaction | Performance Description |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Factor 12 | Usefulness of Course Readings | High Impact | Good |
| Factor 14 | Course Included Engaging Pedagogy | Moderate Impact | Good |
| Factor 1 | Course Improved Study Strategies | Moderate Impact | Good |
| Factor 2 | Course Improved Academic and Cognitive Skills (negative correlation) | Moderate Impact | Good |
| Factor 3 | Course Improved Critical Thinking | Moderate Impact | Good |
| Maintain or Improve | | | |
| Factor 13 | Satisfaction with College/University | Moderate Impact | Excellent |
| Factor 11 | Sense of Belonging and Acceptance | No Impact | Excellent |
| Monitor | | | |
| Factor 4 | Course Improved Connections with Faculty | No Impact | Good |
| Factor 5 | Course Improved Connections with Peers | No Impact | Good |
| Factor 6 | Course Increased Out-of-Class Engagement | No Impact | Fair |
| Factor 7 | Course Improved Knowledge of Campus Policies | No Impact | Good |
| Factor 8 | Course Improved Knowledge of Academic Services | No Impact | Good |
| Factor 9 | Course Improved Managing Time and Priorities | No Impact | Good |
| Factor 10 | Course Improved Knowledge of Wellness | No Impact | Fair |

The top priority factors, which were found to have the most impact on the student's overall course satisfaction, for Fall 2007 are as follows: Factor 12 (Usefulness of Course Readings), Factor 14 (Course Included Engaging Pedagogy), Factor 1 (Course Improved Study Strategies), Factor 2 (Course Improved Academic and Cognitive Skills), and Factor 3 (Course Improved Critical Thinking). In all of the top priority factors, UALR's performance

was rated as 'Good.' Since Factor 12 (Usefulness of Course Readings) has the most relative impact (High Impact), efforts should continue to focus on it. This factor has the greatest potential to improve the Overall Satisfaction for the Course. The other top priority factors, Factor 14 (Course Included Engaging Pedagogy), Factor 1 (Course Improved Study Strategies), Factor 2 (Course Improved Academic and Cognitive Skills), and Factor 3 (Course Improved Critical Thinking), were found to have a Moderate Impact on the Overall Course Satisfaction. Improvements should continue to be implemented for these factors.

It is notable to mention that a negative correlation was found between Factor 2 (Course Improved Academic and Cognitive Skills) and Factor 15 (Overall Course Effectiveness). Although this does not indicate the strength or causation of the relationship, it does indicate that if the mean for Factor 2 (Course Improved Academic and Cognitive Skills) would decrease, then the mean for Factor 15 (Overall Course Effectiveness) would increase and vice versa. The Cronbach's Alpha value for this factor was 0.91 meaning that there was an excellent degree of internal consistency for the answers that were provided in this category and that this data is psychometrically sound.

Factor 13 (Satisfaction with College//University) has a Moderate Impact on Overall Satisfaction. Although this factor does have an impact, it is not considered a top priority because the performance for this factor was rated as Excellent. For this reason, it is only necessary to maintain or improve on this factor.

The remaining factors were found to have 'No Impact,' meaning that they were not predictors of overall course effectiveness. It is notable that Factor 11 (Sense of Belonging and Acceptance), received a performance rating of 'Excellent.' Then aside from Factor 6 (Course Increase Out-of-Class Engagement) and Factor 10 (Course Improved Knowledge of Wellness) which received 'fair' performance ratings, all of the remaining non-impact factors received a performance rating of 'Good.'

The Longitudinal Comparison of Factors table below (Table 2) indicates the change in the performance mean for the major predictors on overall satisfaction. Any significant increase in the performance mean should be used as an indicator that efforts for improvement of this factor have had an effect, but prioritization of factors should be based on the overall performance rating (i.e. excellent, good, fair).

Table 2 – Longitudinal Comparison of Factors for Fall 2007

| Top Priority for Fall 2007 | | Impact on Overall Satisfaction | Statistical Level | % Difference from Previous Year |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Factor 12 | Usefulness of Course Readings | High Impact | ND | ----- |
| Factor 14 | Course Included Engaging Pedagogy | Moderate Impact | * | 4% increase |
| Factor 1 | Course Improved Study Strategies | Moderate Impact | ** | 5% increase |
| Factor 2 | Course Improved Academic and Cognitive Skills (negative correlation) | Moderate Impact | ** | 5.4% increase |
| Factor 3 | Course Improved Critical Thinking | Moderate Impact | * | 4.9% increase |
| Maintain or Improve | | | | |
| Factor 13 | Satisfaction with College/University | Moderate Impact | ND | ----- |
| Factor 11 | Sense of Belonging and Acceptance | No Impact | * | 4.4% increase |
| Monitor | | | | |
| Factor 4 | Course Improved Connections with Faculty | No Impact | ** | 5% increase |
| Factor 5 | Course Improved Connections with Peers | No Impact | ND | ----- |
| Factor 6 | Course Increased Out-of-Class Engagement | No Impact | ND | ----- |
| Factor 7 | Course Improved Knowledge of Campus Policies | No Impact | ND | ----- |
| Factor 8 | Course Improved Knowledge of Academic Services | No Impact | ND | ----- |
| Factor 9 | Course Improved Managing Time and Priorities | No Impact | * | 4.6% increase |
| Factor 10 | Course Improved Knowledge of Wellness | No Impact | ND | ----- |
| Dependent Variable: Overall Satisfaction | | | | |
| Factor 15 | Overall Course Effectiveness | ----- | * | 4% increase |

Level of statistical significance: - ***: $p < 0.001$; **: $p < 0.01$; *: $p < 0.05$; ND denotes no statistical difference

Of the Top Priority factors, Factors 12, 1, 2, and 3 were directly related to the learning objectives for the First Year Experience course. A look at the table above (Table 2) indicates that Factor 12 did not significantly change from that of the previous year, while Factors 14, 1, 2, and 3 showed a significant increase. Since Factor 12 continues to appear as a Top Priority since the 2003 FYEC Report and it has the greatest potential to improve the Overall Satisfaction for the Course, efforts should continue to improve performance in this area. Additionally, efforts need to continue for Factors 14, 1, 2, and 3. Even though these factors showed an increase from the previous year and their rating is "good", continued efforts in improvement will impact the overall course effectiveness.

PEAW 1300 and PEAW 1124

In summation, the First Year Initiative Survey was completed by 173 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 2007, the average PEAW student had the following characteristics:

Gender: Female (65%)
Ethnicity: African American (65%)
Hours Worked per Week (paying job): Do not work (36%)
Current Residence: Campus residence hall (43%)
High School GPA: A and B, Mostly B (50%)
Highest ACT/SAT Score: 19 or lower (72%)
Current Academic Performance at UALR: A and B, Mostly B (48%)

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 2007 | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Factor 12 | Usefulness of Course Readings | Good |
| Factor 14 | Course Included Engaging Pedagogy | Good |
| Factor 1 | Course Improved Study Strategies | Good |
| Factor 2 | Course Improved Academic and Cognitive Skills | Good |
| Factor 3 | Course Improved Critical Thinking | Good |

The data suggests that research should be initially focused on methods to improve the 'Usefulness of Course Readings' (Factor 12) since any improvement in this area will create the greatest impact on the overall course effectiveness. Efforts should then focus on 'Including Engaging Pedagogy', methods to 'Improve Study Strategies' and 'Academic and Cognitive Skills', followed by improving 'Critical Thinking.'

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. The implementation of linked courses provides an opportunity to do this. The 2007 data shows that the mean on the top priority factors except Factor 3 was higher for the linked courses compared to the non-linked courses.

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. The only exception in its performance is the year 2006 where a decrease in overall performance was detected and attributed to several changes in the 2006 program: implementation of Gateway Communities and initiation of a full-time UALR PEAW instructor. But the 2007 increased performance in all but one of the top priority factors indicates that the program changes have not had a negative effect on the overall course performance. They provide an opportunity to further enhance the program and move the overall course performance in a positive direction.

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