



First-Year Seminar Faculty: Recruitment, Supports, Motivators, and Challenges

ABSTRACT

The majority of universities and four-year colleges in the USA currently offer first-year seminars in at least one format. These programs often pride themselves in recruiting from among their institutions' best teachers to lead the seminars. In reality, this process of recruitment to teach in the program, as well as retention of faculty members who have received training and gained experience in the program, requires thoughtful strategies. Among other challenges, well-regarded faculty members often have many demands on their time already, including teaching and research. Department chairs may pressure them to focus on teaching courses that are seen as more crucial to their departments' missions. Many institutions have found that appealing to potential instructors' intrinsic motivations and building a strong sense of community among instructors help to recruit and keep groups of high-quality instructors. Those instructors are still prey to the challenges of extrinsic motivations, however. This article outlines and summarizes findings on both motivations and challenges shared by institutions across the USA.

KEYWORDS

first-year seminar, faculty recruitment, faculty support, undergraduate education, motivators

The majority of universities and four-year-plus colleges across the USA offer at least one form of first-year seminar program. The *2009 National Survey of First-Year Seminars* found that 86.5% of responding institutions offered at least one form of first-year seminar (Padgett & Keup, 2011, p. 4). Steering committees and administrators who guide these programs often speak cheerfully of hiring “the best and the brightest” from among their institutions' faculty to teach in the program. In reality, attracting these faculty members and supporting them as they make arrangements to teach in the program proves challenging. Keeping faculty members who have participated in training and built up valuable experience may prove an even larger challenge. Yet programs make their arrangements work, one way or another. In fact, none of authors of sources listed in this bibliography—or sources that were considered for inclusion but ultimately cut—indicated overall dissatisfaction with the quality of the faculty who staffed their programs. Rather, they tended to express gratitude to their faculty, particularly those who taught for more than one year.

This paper reviews 19 sources on recruiting, training, and retaining faculty to teach in first-year seminar programs. It summarizes and distills strategies developed at institutions of varying sizes and profiles. In some sections of the paper, the research can be considered comprehensive. In other sections, I selected papers that represented a range of approaches and views and presented them in clear, accessible terms.

TERMINOLOGY

In this paper, I use the term “first-year seminar” to describe courses designed to teach first-year undergraduates a range of skills for intellectual and practical success in higher education. These courses appear in a range of formats in terms of themes, number of credits, structure, and specific goals. Since literature indicates that the challenges of faculty recruitment are far more similar than different for all formats, this article purposefully refers to all formats by the most popular term, “first-year seminar.”

I use the term “instructors” to describe those who teach first-year seminars. This is not a reference to academic rank. Rather, it is meant to represent all faculty who teach first-year seminars. It does not, however, represent student assistants working alongside a faculty member.

BACKGROUND ON FIRST-YEAR SEMINARS

First-year seminars take many forms. Most focus on helping first-year undergraduates build skills that support general student success, such as time management, college-level research and writing, developing familiarity with campus resources, and learning to communicate with faculty. These skills may be taught on their own in a “college skills” class, or they may be embedded in a themed class relating to either an academic discipline or a more specific topic of interest. The majority last for one course during one semester; others incorporate multiple courses during several semesters, or for a portion of a semester. They may or may not be required for all students at an institution.

Whatever the time structure and format, they do have some similarities in structure. Many institutions express a goal of keeping student-to-teacher ratios as low as possible. Montana State University described an enrolment cap of 18 students per section in 1998 (Barefoot, Warnock, Dickinson, Richardson, & Roberts, 1998, p. 65), a class size that is representative today. In the same piece, Montana State University explains that each section was taught by a full-time, part-time, or adjunct faculty member, an “upper division teaching fellow,” and a peer mentor (Barefoot et al., 1998, p. 65). Team teaching structures, generally including either one or two faculty members and a peer mentor, are still a popular structure almost twenty years later. In a 2008 piece, faculty at Furman University describe another popular structural aspect of first-year seminar instruction. Each section pairs two faculty members from vastly different fields, such as a biologist and a philosopher (Liao & Worth, 2011, p. 38). Liao and Worth note that this particular model of team teaching leads to a tremendous variety of both team teaching and content (p. 38).

Payment and other forms of compensation

Few sources discuss the topic of compensation, buyouts, or alternative remuneration for faculty who teach first-year seminars. This subject merits additional investigation, considering how much time faculty and administrators spend discussing the subject at committee meetings and conferences. *The National Survey of First-Year Seminars*, however, provides detail on the subject. For its 2009 survey (conducted during the 2009-2010 academic year), it received responses from 1019 first-year seminar programs, which it estimates as representing approximately 40% of programs that it contacted across the USA (Padgett & Keup, 2011, p. 4). According to survey respondents, among tenure-track faculty who teach first-year seminars, 37.2% receive stipends, 35.7% receive no compensation, 5.1% receive release time, 2.6% receive unrestricted professional development funds, 0.4% receive graduate student support, and 29.1% receive “other” compensation. Among adjunct faculty who teach first-year seminars, 52.6% receive stipends, 13.7% receive no compensation, 2.0% receive release time, 1.5% receive unrestricted professional development funds, 0.5% receive graduate student support, and 35.2% receive “other” compensation. Note that participants were allowed to choose more than one response (Padgett & Keup,

2011, p. 38). The same table on the report also discusses compensation for student affairs professionals, other professionals, and graduate students who taught first-year seminars.

Soldner, Lee, and Duby (2004) compare faculty who “persisted” in teaching first-year seminars for more than one year with faculty who quit after one year. In their study, approximately 40% of those who did *not* persist reported negative perceptions of the compensation they received for teaching their seminars. In contrast, only 15% of those who persisted in teaching a seminar for at least two years reported dissatisfaction with compensation (Soldner, Lee, & Duby, 2004, p. 28). These numbers, however, do not present a clear-cut picture. Interpreted another way, 60% of those who did not persist apparently held either positive or neutral feelings toward their compensation, yet still stopped teaching (Soldner et al., 2004, p. 28).

Groccia and Hunter’s 2012 book, *The First-Year Seminar: Designing, Implementing, and Assessing Courses to Support Student Learning and Success* provides a brief but insightful discussion of compensation in available sources. Groccia and Hunter discuss the popularity of stipends as compensation. Programs employing graduate students as instructors were the most likely to offer stipends to instructors, in addition to their regular pay. The authors cite and analyze statistics from Padgett and Keup’s *2009 National Survey of First-Year Seminars*. In the survey, 54% of graduate student instructors of first-year seminars reported receiving a stipend (Groccia & Hunter, 2012, p. 81). Groccia and Hunter highlight the fact that the group least likely to receive stipends for teaching seminars was tenure-track faculty, at a rate of 37.2% (p. 81).

Purdie and Rosser (2011) briefly touch upon one additional practical aspect of funding in first-year seminar programs: the department that pays for instruction and other costs associated with first-year seminar programs. They provide details on a model at a large, unnamed Midwestern public university, where both funding and administrative support come from the Student Affairs department (Purdie & Rosser, 2011, p. 97). Again, because of the centrality of these issues to the building of a quality first-year seminar program, I believe that these topics merit much more scholarly or professional writing.

Administrative arrangements

Few pieces of literature discuss the administrative arrangements that institutions and faculty members set up to facilitate teaching in first-year seminars. Dolinsky, Matthews, and Greenfield (2007) discuss several levels of organization that may be conducted at upper levels of first-year seminar programs. They state that “In overcoming silos and building a community of practice that attends to first-year students, campuses have developed a variety of approaches ranging from new administrative or academic units to coordinating committees” (p. 10). They go on to mention that some programs may choose to create special categories of academic appointments for individuals who will play major administrative roles in the program (Dolinsky, Matthews, & Greenfield, 2007, p. 10).

While some members of a first-year seminar committee may have special appointments, most faculty members who teach first-year seminars do so in addition to their regular roles, or as a substitute for some part of their regular roles. Interestingly, this is another area for which little published discussion exists, despite the prevalence of conversation within institutions and at first-year seminar conferences.

CHALLENGES THAT PREVENT OR DISSUADE FACULTY FROM TEACHING

One of the most notable challenges that prevent faculty from teaching in first-year seminar programs relates closely to the topic of administrative arrangements. The literature does discuss the importance of having support from one’s department chair in terms of teaching for the program in general, as well as support for the specifics of one’s arrangements. In Soldner, Lee, and Duby’s 2004

study, the majority of both persisters (faculty who taught a first-year seminar for two or more years) and non-persisters (faculty who only taught for one year and then chose not to return to the program) reported that their department chairs were supportive of their participation in the program. However, 10% of those who stopped teaching a first-year seminar after one year listed lack of support from their department chair as a challenge they faced (p. 28). None of those who continued in the program listed lack of support from a chair as a challenge that they faced (Soldner et al., 2004, p. 28). While 10% seems like a small number, losing quality, experienced faculty means that a program will have to go through recruitment and training again. Replacement faculty members will take several years to become “experienced.” It’s worth noting that Soldner, Lee, and Duby’s study only covers faculty members who were given permission to teach a first-year seminar. This suggests the question of how many faculty members were unable to teach even once because of lack of support.

Wanca-Thibault, Shepherd, and Staley’s 2002 article, to which much of the other literature refers, provides a different perspective on the frequency of departmental chairs’ support for teaching of first-year seminars. In their sample group, interviewees listed lack of support from chairs as the second-biggest challenge faced by instructors (the biggest challenge being the amount of time required to teach the seminar). Interviewees elaborated that chairs often perceived these courses as not particularly valuable (Wanca-Thibault, Shepherd, & Staley, 2002, p. 30). Groccia and Hunter (2011) also noted that department chairs’ lack of support for teaching of first-year seminars as one of the biggest reasons why faculty choose not to teach as well (p. 82).

Another challenge that Groccia and Hunter mention is that tenure-track faculty who do feel compelled to teach first-year seminars may find themselves stretched too thin with their job overall in terms of time. Some feel that they should not teach seminars that are known for consuming large amounts of time when they know that they need to work on their publishing and other tenure-related efforts. Thus, they may choose not to teach a first-year seminar (Groccia & Hunter, 2011, p. 82). Wanca-Thibault, Shepherd, and Staley’s earlier work had brought up concerns with faculty (not exclusively tenure-track or tenured faculty) managing their time as well. Their study found that concerns with the amount of time that the first-year seminar would take up was the largest disadvantage listed by faculty (Wanca-Thibault et al., 2002, p. 30).

Soldner, Lee, and Duby provide insight into one additional challenge that both persisters and non-persisters faced. Both groups expressed negative perceptions that the seminar had “helped faculty collaboration.” In other words, the seminar had *not* guided faculty to collaborate with each other (Soldner et al., 2004, p. 27). Interestingly, they note that most other forms of intrinsic motivation (the classification into which “helped faculty collaboration” fit) showed more negative responses among non-persisters than among persisters (Soldner et al., 2004, p. 27).

INTERNAL OR INTRINSIC MOTIVATORS

A greater number of articles discuss the “internal” or “intrinsic” motivators that do compel faculty to teach first-year seminars. At many institutions, faculty seem to have the perception that the time they invest in a first-year seminar will be worth it, as they will develop skills in terms of relating to students, teaching through more modern and interactive methods, and learning from other faculty who teach in the program. Discussion in the literature suggests that their efforts are often rewarded. In fact, the topics of (a) building new competencies and (b) building a sense of community among highly motivated faculty members who teach first-year seminars provided the largest number of citations in the research performed for this article. Readers who enjoy theory-based discussions may enjoy Groccia and

Hunter's work, which offers a brief discussion of instructor motivations using Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (pp. 78-79).

Building new competencies

Faculty members at institutions with established first-year seminar programs often perceive that they will have opportunities to learn new teaching methods and learn to build stronger relationships with students by teaching a seminar. Numerous sources show that these perceptions turn out to be true for many faculty, and that faculty find satisfaction in the competencies that they develop through this teaching.

Some older articles from the 1980s and 1990s highlight the skills that faculty build through teaching in seminars. In 1989, Robert A. Friday wrote that instructors of first-year seminars and similar programs developed their abilities in "therapeutic listening skills" and "group communication principles" (p. 57). His writing goes into detail on what constituted these skills. Ten years later, in 1999, Paul Fidler, Julie Neururer-Rotholz, and Sharon Richardson wrote a powerful article that began by stating that plenty of research existed showing the effects of first-year seminars on students, but not on the faculty who taught them (p. 60). How times have changed! Fidler and his co-authors proceeded to discuss the ways in which techniques such as those that Friday mentioned helped build relationships between students and faculty. He explains that, as faculty begin to feel "sympathies" for their first-year students, they also begin to develop supportive feelings toward other groups of students in need, most notably transfer students (Fidler, Neururer-Rotholz, & Richardson, 1999, p. 65). Fidler's observation highlights what is still considered one of the biggest advantages of teaching a first-year seminar (although transfer students are one among many groups of interest today).

Fidler and his coauthors provide data and narratives on how faculty's teaching of other courses changes after teaching a first-year seminar. In their study, 80.8% of faculty reported that they adapted pedagogies for their other courses at least some of the time in response to what they experienced teaching a first-year seminar (Fidler et al., 1999, p. 63). The Fidler article also provides data on eleven specific ways in which faculty reported interacting differently with their students after teaching the seminar. Examples included taking initiative on referring students to campus resources and changing certain aspects of syllabi (p. 64). This article continues to influence research on why faculty teach first-year seminars.

Leslie Gordon and Tim Foutz discuss Fidler, Neururer-Rotholz, and Richardson's study, saying that "Evidence from one study revealed that eighty percent of first-year faculty [faculty teaching a first-year seminar for the first time] reported having to use different pedagogy in freshmen seminars that they would use in other courses" (Gordon & Foutz, 2015, p. 82).

Also in the 1990s, faculty at Montana State University Bozeman reported that the top two changes they made to other courses after teaching a first-year seminar were "listen[ing] more effectively to student comments" and "ask[ing] more challenging questions of their students" (Barefoot et al., 1998, p. 64).

Moving into the current century, Wanca-Thibault, Shepherd, and Staley's article, often cited in other pieces in first-year seminars, follows up on similar themes. The authors wrote that the two biggest "advantages" to teaching a first-year seminar, as discussed by the faculty they interviewed, were (a) connecting with each other and (b) connecting better with students (Wanca-Thibault et al., 2002, p. 30). Faculty were drawn in by the student-focused professional development they knew they would receive, despite the fact that it would take quite a bit of time. The authors wrote:

Teaching in the program [at the authors' institution] requires attendance at a comprehensive, annual, three-day faculty development retreat for freshman seminar instructors, staff co-instructors, and student mentors to learn new instructional technologies, innovative teaching methods, and classroom communication methods related to engaging first-year students in class discussions. Ideally, as faculty temporarily distance themselves from their content-laden expectations of their disciplines, they are encouraged to unleash their creative energies, fuel their desires to learn new instructional technologies, and become actualizing teachers (i.e., take risks, expand their repertoires, and build communities of learners) (Wanca-Thibault et al., 2002, p. 24-25).

Wanca-Thibault, Shepherd, and Staley follow up by providing quotations from staff assessments of training that indicate these hopes were rewarded. Responses highlighted by the authors focus on the nature of bonds that faculty learned to create with their students (p. 29).

Soldner, Lee, and Duby discuss the aspects of intrinsic motivations that other studies have covered before. Their summary of the most common topics analyzed in other articles includes “networking, time commitment, innovation, motivation, and engagement” (p. 21). Positive and negative motivators are often closely related and difficult to separate. While time commitment may be a negative motivator for many potential faculty members, as Wanca-Thibault and colleagues demonstrated, some faculty members do desire a strong immersion in these skills. Soldner, Lee, and Duby focused on identifying motivators that encouraged faculty members to persist in teaching in first-year seminar programs. Throughout their study, six factors emerged as having the most potential to encourage faculty to persist. Faculty participants in the study stated that teaching in this program “changed views on undergraduate teaching, increased involvement, helped students, helped faculty collaboration, increased interdisciplinary chances and [helped them to] see student viewpoint[s]” (p. 26). Interested readers can see the article’s appendix to compare the responses they selected with other possible responses that they did not select.

Thomas Brown and Christine Johnson McPhail discuss development of teaching skills among community college faculty members. They cite a 2008 Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching report in saying that the majority of community college instructors enter their jobs having received no training or experience in teaching the academically underprepared students that they will often work with (Brown & McPhail, 2011, p. 70; Carnegie Foundation, 2008, p. 8). Participating in a first-year seminar program that includes extensive training and continual support can help community college instructors build their teaching repertoires. Brown and McPhail continue their discussion by providing a detailed list of skills and topics that should be taught to instructors of community college first-year seminars (p. 73). Bette LaSere Erickson and Diane W. Strommer (2005) provide a similar list, although their target group includes first-year seminar instructors at any institution of higher education. Their chapter outlines and summarizes practices for teaching and learning that faculty members can develop by teaching in a first-year seminar program.

Two resources discuss how first-year seminars can help faculty change particular attitudes toward teaching, and thus encourage them to explore new types of teaching and to teach better. Scott E. Evenbeck and Barbara Jackson (2005) discuss the fact that those who teach first-year seminars can learn to see first-year students as “fresh slates” rather than as students who come in with poor work ethics and over-reliant attitudes on parents, for example. When faculty start to perceive that they are instead helping their students to develop practices that will guide their undergraduate studies, some faculty

members experience positive shifts in their teaching and in their own perceptions (Evenbeck & Jackson, 2005, p. 260-261).

Lisa Carstens and Joyce Bernstein Howell (2012) provide an example of another attitudinal shift that they witnessed among instructors in their first-year seminar program. Their article discusses the redesign of an institution's first-year seminar program, where pedagogy was shifted to an inquiry-guided learning (IGL) model. Carstens and Howell explain that some faculty viewed IGL as "jargon" (p. 52). However, throughout the course of their article, they discuss six training sessions that their first-year seminar program offered instructors, all related to IGL. After receiving the training, using it in the classroom, and being invited to shape various aspects of the program, faculty expressed more positive attitudes toward the programs IGL content.

Barbara Jackson (2000) investigated how faculty members could see their teaching improving in other courses after teaching in a learning community that included one faculty member, an advisor, a librarian, a tech specialist, and a student mentor. After one semester, faculty stated that they were able to "see past their own disciplines," thanks to the training (p. 143). They also noted that they had gotten to know campus resources better, and that the one-on-one conferences they held with their first-year seminar students helped them get to know the class better (p. 144).

Joining a community of instructors and students

When first-year seminar instructors, particularly "persisters", discuss the benefits of teaching these courses, concepts of "community" generally arise. They most frequently discuss the power of belonging to an active community of other instructors. Instructors are often described as motivated and positive, and they share techniques, support, and enthusiasm with each other. They provide a place for discussion and camaraderie away from an instructor's home department. Faculty also discuss the value of having a community of students they get to know well, and that they often get to know beyond the classroom: through one-on-one conferences, through special events, and more. Soldner, Lee, and Duby's research on persistence among faculty members leads readers to understand that, ultimately, spending time with a group of supportive and energetic colleagues from across the institution drives many of the "persisters" to persist (Soldner et al., 2004).

Gordon and Foutz discuss the influence of faculty learning communities (FLCs). In their program at the University of Georgia, first-year seminar FLC participants spent time together during a single academic year "identifying common teaching challenges and collaborating on ways to overcome them, meet the goals of the program, and enhance the teaching and learning experience" (p. 81). They later discuss their belief that faculty who are attempting to innovate through teaching in their classrooms benefit particularly from the continual, teaching-centered support they receive from an FLC (p. 82). They provide a strong literature review on the benefits of participation in FLCs (p. 82-83). Gordon and Foutz also note that each FLC at their institution decides on its own best practices (p. 81).

Wanca-Thibault, Sheperd, and Staley (2002) discuss the power of communities of first-year seminar instructors (though not specifically FLCs) to help an institution increase the size of its first-year seminar program. They note that their program expanded from having 19 to 370 seats for students (They note that 370 students equaled 50% of the freshman class) between 1991 and 1999 (p. 23-24). They discuss the increase in relation to support for faculty: "Faculty and administrators suggest the growth and success of the program may be due to the following factors: comprehensive faculty development; creative, interdisciplinary course design; infusion of technology and other innovations; and most importantly, a core group of dynamic and committed instructors" (p. 23-24). This article

suggests strong interplay between support for excellent teaching and learning and dedicated communities for instructors.

Several authors discuss the power of pairing or otherwise grouping instructors to teach a single section of a seminar. Randy Jedele and Vincent Tinto's chapter is one of several examples in which an institution purposefully pairs two faculty members from very different disciplines to teach a section together. Jedele and Tinto state that, based on their interviews, one of the most important benefits of this scenario is that the faculty members and their students naturally create questions that combine the two disciplines, and end up exploring questions and viewpoints that probably would not have arisen if only one discipline were represented in the classroom (p. 149).

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) has used a different combined model, where each section is led by a faculty member, a librarian, a tech specialist, an advisor, and a student mentor (Jackson, 2000, p. 140). The authors note that the faculty member is viewed as the primary instructor so that the class remains "academically oriented" (p. 139). In IUPUI's program, the learning community instructors also take part in freshman orientation, co-curricular activities, and other offerings associated with the first-year seminar program. Faculty felt that this helped to expand their roles in the university community (Jackson, 2000, p. 140). While some faculty members may find these additional offerings to be difficult in terms of time commitment, they hold a strong appeal for faculty members who do choose to take part in them.

Purdie and Rosser's work (2011) emphasizes how much some faculty members appreciate having the opportunity to take part in student life beyond the traditional classroom. The authors discuss the first-year seminar at an unnamed large, public Midwestern university, where some offerings related to the first-year seminar take place in residence halls, lecture spaces, and more. The authors explain that student retention can be increased when faculty help design the programs that link their lives in the classroom to their lives in the residence halls (Purdie & Rosser, 2011, p. 95). Students at their institution can choose to live on "Academic Themed Floors" in their dormitories, dedicated to a specific academic subject. While not all students choose to do so, the sheer scale of the program suggests at least some level of popularity: between 50 and 300 students live on each of the floors (p. 96-97). Faculty do not live on the floors, but take part in programming such as lectures and activities (p. 97). The level of engagement suggests that "persisters" may enjoy taking part in communities; they certainly make a powerful commitment when they choose to do so.

Freedom to experiment

Another topic that comes up frequently during in-person discussions of motivations, though less frequently in scholarly literature, is the freedom to experiment with a first-year seminar in terms of topics and content. In practice, first-year seminars at some institutions end up being "special topics" courses, where a faculty member shapes the course around a specific academic topic, such as humor in Jane Austen's writing or Stephen Hawking's discoveries. These courses often allow faculty members to pour out their passions, or to teach topics that they have never found a place for in other courses.

Gordon and Foutz (2015) discuss a scenario that supports faculty in teaching this sort of seminar. In their program at the University of Georgia, faculty were allowed to design courses using any one of a number of specified formats, as long as they adhered to three course goals:

- Introduce first-year students to the importance of learning and academics to engage them in the academic culture of the University.

- Give first-year students an opportunity for meaningful dialogue with a faculty member to encourage positive, sustained student-faculty interactions.
- Introduce first-year students to the instruction, research, public service and international mission of the University and how they relate to teaching and learning in and outside the classroom to increase student understanding of and participation in the full mission of the University (Gordon and Foutz, 2015, p. 82).

This gave faculty freedom to incorporate special topics into courses while ensuring that the University's core goals were included as well.

Purdie and Rosser's work ties in again as well. The freedom that faculty participants in the Academic Themed Floors had to develop lectures and activities, which they could share with enthusiastic students in their discipline and others, was a strong motivator in terms of their participation. They were able to share their passions and enthusiasms directly with students and other faculty who participated in the program (Purdie & Rosser, 2011, p. 97).

SHARING THE VALUE OF THE PROGRAM

While some articles hint at the ways in which faculty members were made aware of opportunities for teaching in first-year seminars (often through communications from the seminar program's administration, through department chairs, or through colleagues who teach in the program; a topic worthy of more investigation), one strong similarity among strategies becomes apparent. First-year seminar programs must work hard to convince potential instructors of the value that their teaching will bring to students. This is the key point in terms of convincing faculty to put in so much work.

Andrew Barton and Christine Donohue (2009) discuss the rise in faculty interest in first-year seminars that the University of Maine Farmington experienced when its program learned to present its own value to faculty. Barton and Donohue explain that, prior to the efforts their study focuses on, faculty had frequently expressed concern that various aspects of their students' curricula underwent major changes which were never followed up on to assess effectiveness (p. 260). The first-year seminar was certainly not the only program that garnered concern, but those running the program realized that faculty were not convinced of its value. The University came up with a relatively simple way of gathering some meaningful statistical value of the program. They simply used National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data to measure students' progress from their first to their fourth years. Most importantly, they were able to separate data from students who had participated in the first-year seminar from those who had not (Barton & Donohue, 2009, p. 266-267). Success was markedly high for students who had taken a first-year seminar. Faculty exhibited more supportive attitudes toward the program almost instantaneously (p. 270). Barton and Donohue highlight two items from the NSSE that indicate positive effects of the program: students' satisfaction in discussing career plans outside of class with faculty, and students' opportunities to discuss course material outside of class with faculty. Both of these activities had been emphasized in the program (Barton & Donohue, 2009, p. 273). One aspect of this study that will encourage many readers is that use of the NSSE is widespread at institutions of higher education. The categories of data that Barton and Donohue discuss may very well be available to readers through Offices of Institutional Research or similar units on campus. Dolinsky, Matthews, and Greenfield suggest using either NSSE or Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data to communicate value, since these are the most crucial in faculty member's minds (p. 9). They note

that NSSE contains more categories of data that may be useful for pointing out specific programs that are working (Dolinsky et al., 2007, p. 9).

Dolinsky, Matthews, and Greenfield (2007) emphasize that the more faculty support a first-year seminar program, whether or not they teach for it, the stronger outcomes for the program tend to be. Sharing values that are supported by data is key. They explain, “Just as assessment activities foster communication and collaboration among campus constituencies, effective communication about assessment results builds campus-wide support for first-year experience and enhances the overall effectiveness of programming” (p. 10). The authors continue on to discuss specific aspects of first-year seminar programming that should be assessed and to whom those results should be communicated (Dolinsky et al., 2007, p. 10).

The topic of student retention drives many decisions in higher education today, with good reason. Not surprisingly, good first-year seminar programs are quite often linked to retention at their institutions. Brown and McPhail (2011) discuss strategies used for communicating the connections between student retention, student success, and faculty effectiveness at their institution (p. 70-71). Readers may find this to be a useful model.

ADVERTISING TO FACULTY

The concept of “putting out the call” for faculty members who wish to teach in first-year seminars is another pragmatic topic that receives plenty of informal discussion but little emphasis in the literature. Groccia and Hunter (2011) discuss strategies for getting the word out. Readers may want to peruse their list and select strategies which seem relevant to their campuses (p. 78). Dolinsky, Matthews, and Greenfield (2007) remind us that, no matter how wonderful an institution’s advertising is, plenty of faculty will feel that this is not a good fit for them. They suggest focusing on sharing evidence gathered through assessments indicating that the program is working. They believe that this strategy has the highest chance of pulling in interested faculty (Dolinsky et al., 2007, p. 10-11). Soldner, Lee, and DUBY add another layer to the conversation. Through their story of recruiting faculty to teach for Northern Michigan University’s first-year seminar program, they emphasize that programs can start by targeting types of faculty members they would prefer to teach in their program, and then broaden recruitment if necessary. Northern Michigan University began by recruiting only full-time faculty, but then opened recruitment to part-time faculty and adjuncts to fill some additional needed positions (Soldner et al., 2004, p. 22).

FURTHER RESEARCH

The themes of pragmatism and balancing ideals with needs connect with several topics that do not appear in the scholarly and professional literature in great detail despite forming the basis of countless conversations among faculty. I believe that these topics merit further research and publication.

First, what strategies have individuals and institutions found for convincing reluctant department chairs of the value of teaching first-year seminars? Certainly, presenting data is part of the piece. Institutional culture is as well; at some institutions, having faculty lend a hand in undergraduate efforts (or retention-related efforts; there are many ways to phrase this) is the norm. Yet faculty at many institutions speak of their inability to convince department chairs of the value of teaching a first-year seminar, no matter what data or rationale they supply. Others speak of the heartbreak of losing a first-year seminar they have taught for years when a new department chair decides that he or she is against it. Doubtless, not all faculty who wish to teach will find a way to do so. Gathering methods from those who have convinced reluctant department chairs to support them in teaching a first-year seminar would help

many who do wish to teach. It would also help seminar programs that struggle to find instructors to cover the number of sections they wish to offer.

Compensation and administrative arrangements for teaching also merit additional analysis. I find it remarkable how few sources discuss this topic (and appreciate the few that do cover it), when they are a frequent topic of discussion among those associated with first-year seminars. Even the information that some institutions provide can be cryptic, such as Soldner, Lee, and Duby's 2004 statistics on satisfaction or dissatisfaction with compensation (pp. 27-28). While dollar amounts of compensation would not be particularly useful (times change; pay rates and cost of living vary; the amount of funding available at different institutions varies), sharing compensation strategies would be tremendously helpful. For example, are instructors at an institution paid extra for their teaching? Do they receive professional development funds? Do they receive course buyouts? Do their departments receive compensation for their time? Institutions also have to decide whether to compensate all instructors in the same way, or to offer multiple options that would help satisfy individuals' needs. For example, some institutions offer a choice of additional pay at the adjunct rate or a course buyout. Gathering data on these arrangements would be useful to many institutions.

CONCLUSIONS

Several powerful ideas emerge from the literature reviewed for this paper. First, keeping faculty members teaching in the program for two or more years is a key goal for keeping programs strong. Second, faculty members who teach in first-year seminars—and especially those who persist over two or more years—tend to focus on intrinsic motivations rather than on payment or other rewards. They value having a supportive, energetic community of instructors and continually updating their teaching strategies most of all. Third, communicating the value of a first-year seminar program, especially in terms of students' retention and success, helps “sell” the program to faculty as well as to other constituents. NSSE and IPEDS data have the most valued reputations, may already be offered at one's institution, and likely cover sizeable portions of the student body.

I hope these findings will help colleagues at other institutions plan for recruiting and retaining faculty in their first-year experience programs. I also hope that fellow researchers will take up the calls for further research.

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