

Principles of First Year Programs

1. Approach the first year in ways that are intentional and based on a philosophy/rationale of the first year that informs relevant institutional policies and practices. The philosophy/rationale is explicit, clear and easily understood, consistent with the institutional mission, widely disseminated, and, as appropriate, reflects a consensus of campus constituencies. The philosophy/rationale is also the basis for organizational policies, practices, structures, leadership, and resource allocation. **(Philosophy)**

2. Create organizational structures and policies that provide a comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated approach to the first year. These structures and policies provide oversight and alignment of all first-year efforts. A coherent first-year experience is realized and maintained through effective partnerships among academic affairs, student affairs, and other administrative units and is enhanced by ongoing faculty and staff development activities and appropriate budgetary arrangements. **(Organization)**

3. Facilitate appropriate recruitment, admissions, and student transitions through policies and practices that are intentional and aligned with institutional mission. Institutions improve the academic and social readiness of students to make the transition to higher education environments by communicating clear curricular and co-curricular expectations and providing appropriate support for educational success. They are forthright about their responsibilities to students as well as students' responsibilities to themselves and the institution. They create and maintain linkages and curricular alignments between faculty and secondary school teachers, and they communicate with guidance counselors, families, and other sources of support, as appropriate. **(Transitions)**

4. Elevate the first college year to a high priority for the faculty. Chief academic officers, deans, and department chairs articulate expectations for substantial faculty interaction with first-year students, both inside and outside the classroom. The institutions' system of rewards supports these expectations. **(Faculty)**

5. Serve all first-year students according to their varied needs. The process of anticipating, diagnosing, and addressing needs is ongoing and is subject to assessment and adjustment throughout the first year. Institutions provide services with respect for the students' abilities, backgrounds, interests, and experiences. **(All Students)**

6. Engage students, both in and out of the classroom, in order to develop attitudes, behaviors, and skills consistent with the desired outcomes of higher education and the institution's philosophy and mission. An explicit goal of first-year instruction across the curriculum, engagement promotes intellectual curiosity and excitement. Engagement is also the basis for out-of-class learning and development. Whether in or out of the classroom, engagement promotes critical thinking,

lifelong learning, moral and spiritual development, and civic responsibility.

(Engagement)

7. Ensure that all first-year students experience diverse ideas, worldviews, and peoples as a means of enhancing their learning and preparing them to become members of pluralistic communities. Whatever their demographic composition, institutions structure experiences in which students interact in an open and civil community with people different from themselves, reflect on ideas and values different from those they currently hold, and explore their own cultures and the cultures of others. **(Diversity)**

8. Promote student understanding of the various roles and purposes of higher education, both for the individual and for society, and support the development of relevant personal goals. First-year students are provided opportunities to examine their motivation and goals with regard to higher education in general and to their own college/university. They are exposed to the value of general education as well as to the value of more focused, in-depth study of a field or fields of knowledge (i.e., the major). In general, institutions help students realize a variety of balance points: for example, learning for personal enrichment; learning to prepare for future employment; learning to prepare for citizenship, and learning to serve the public good. **(Roles and Purposes)**

9. Conduct assessment and maintain associations with other institutions and relevant professional organizations in order to achieve ongoing first-year improvement. This assessment is specific to the first year as a unit of analysis—a distinct time period and set of experiences, academic and otherwise, in the lives of students. It is also linked systemically to the institutions' overall assessment. Assessment results are an integral part of institutional planning, resource allocation, decision-making, and ongoing improvement of programs and policies as they affect first-year students. As part of the enhancement process and as a way to achieve ongoing improvement, institutions are familiar with current practices at other institutions as well as with research and scholarship on the first college year. **(Improvement)**