In the following report, Hanover Research examines support services for new and transfer students at 33 liberal arts colleges identified as peer intuitions. In particular, First-Year Experience programs are highlighted as a best-practice for orienting new students to campus, developing a sense of community, and fostering ongoing engagement.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary and Key Findings ................................................................. 4
  INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................... 4
  KEY FINDINGS ..................................................................................................... 5
Section I: First-Year Experience Programs at Peer Institutions ............................... 6
  FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS .......................................................... 6
  FIRST-YEAR REQUIRED COURSES ............................................................... 8
  ORIENTATION PRACTICES ............................................................................... 9
Section II: Institutional Profiles of First-Year Experience Programs ......................... 23
  KALAMAZOO COLLEGE .............................................................................. 23
    First-Year Experience Program Overview .................................................... 23
    Required First-Year Courses ...................................................................... 24
    Orientation ................................................................................................... 24
    Academic Advising ..................................................................................... 25
    Academic Resource Centers .................................................................... 25
  OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY ................................................................. 26
    First-Year Experience Program Overview .................................................... 26
    Required First-Year Courses ...................................................................... 27
    Orientation ................................................................................................... 28
    Academic Advising ..................................................................................... 29
    Academic Support Services ..................................................................... 30
  SIMPSON COLLEGE .................................................................................... 31
    First-Year Experience Program Overview .................................................... 31
    Required First-Year Courses ...................................................................... 31
    Orientation ................................................................................................... 32
    Academic Advising ..................................................................................... 32
    Academic Resource Center ................................................................... 33
  WITTENBERG UNIVERSITY ........................................................................... 33
    First-Year Experience Program Overview .................................................... 33
    Required First-Year Courses ...................................................................... 35
    Orientation ................................................................................................... 36
    Academic Advising ..................................................................................... 36
Academic Resource Center

Appendix A: Roanoke College: FYE Seminar Topic Examples
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

Traditional-aged new students—typically defined as first-year and transfer students—require specialized support as they acclimate to their new on-campus environment. To provide the greatest level of support, traditional programs (i.e., orientation, academic support services) can no longer serve as “an isolated effort to help students through their transition.” Recognizing the importance of offering robust support to new students, institutions are increasingly adopting the concept of First-Year Experience (FYE) programs. FYE programs have been recognized as critical for establishing an on-campus culture dedicated to fostering “student learning, development, and success.”

One component of an effective FYE program is the First-Year Seminar, which according to the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition (NRC), “is an important element of the first year at liberal arts colleges, community colleges, and research institutions.” The most comprehensive seminars offer a range of courses to engage students according to individual interest, provide an extended orientation to college life, and develop a foundation of academic skills—critical thinking, writing, communication, and basic study skills.

However, a standard for how to design a comprehensive FYE program does not exists, as evidenced by the variety of seminar design and delivery method—required versus optional, does or does not satisfy a general education requirement, or serves as stand-alone course versus being embedded in a community of learning. Furthermore, the objective of the first-year seminar often varies by institution according to student and community need. For example, the seminar may be designed to explore questions of engagement, intellectual development, and career exploration, while developing self-confidence, decision-making, and faculty-student interactions in and out of the classroom, or all of the above.

In the following report, Hanover Research examines First-Year Experience programs at 33 small, residential liberal arts colleges identified as peer institutions. The following report is divided into two sections:

4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
Section I: First-Year Experience Programs at Peer Institutions investigates current First-Year Experience program offerings at 33 liberal arts colleges identified as peers. Special attention is paid to FYE program components, required first-year courses, and orientation practices, distinguishing between new and transfer students, when applicable.

Section II: Institutional Profiles of First-Year Experience Programs profiles four exemplary First-Year Experience programs, focusing primarily on key elements of each FYE program, first-year seminars, new student orientation practices, academic advising, and academic resources. The institutions profiled below include:
- Kalamazoo College
- Ohio Wesleyan University
- Simpson College
- Wittenberg University

Key Findings

First-Year Experience programs are common among four-year, residential liberal arts colleges. Of the 33 institutions included in the following report, each institution offered an element of the FYE program, as identified by the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. At a minimum, new student orientation and academic advising services were offered to all new and transfer students.

The most comprehensive FYE programs do not address the needs of students in isolation, but rather are embedded in a community of higher learning. Such programs begin with a new student orientation program that continues throughout the course of the first year. The programs include opportunities for common experiences, focus on academic skill development (e.g., critical thinking, writing, and communication), and intellectually challenge and engage students through methods other than “teaching to the text.”

First-Year Seminar courses are a common element of the FYE. Seminars may last for a semester or throughout the first-year, are small in size, and are structured around the exchange of ideas within a tailored, liberal arts area of interest. While adhering to the institution’s identified academic goals, instructors are encouraged to personalize their seminar’s content according to their area of expertise; therefore no two seminar sections are the same.

A number of institutions have developed programs in which peer leaders (upper-class students) play an integral role in new student orientation. A few of the profiled institutions ensure peer leaders are available to new students throughout the first semester or year, rather than solely during orientation. In such arrangements, peer leaders take on the role of mentor through workshops, support programs, and occasionally as seminar teaching assistants.
SECTION I: FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS AT PEER INSTITUTIONS

In the following section, Hanover Research examines current First-Year Experience (FYE) program offerings at 33 liberal arts colleges identified as peers. Although no universal first-year practice or program was identified, certain components of the FYE are highlighted below. Included practices were selected either because of the frequency with which they were offered, or because the practice takes a particularly unique approach to cultivating a memorable FYE for new students.

This section includes three subsections: First-Year Experience Programs, Required First-Year Academic Courses, and Orientation Practices. Every effort was made to distinguish between offerings for new and transfer students, however many institutions do not clearly differentiate the two groups. Furthermore, it should be noted that some peers’ websites or other information sources were not particularly clear on FYE offerings, thus the precise count of peers providing a given service may vary.

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS

The structure and purpose of FYE programs vary considerably by institution. In some cases, the FYE program’s primary focus is to support first-year students as they transition from high school to college and beyond. In other cases, the program’s focus is to develop college-level academic skills, particularly critical thinking, writing, and communication. Whereas, other institutions take a more inclusive approach—developing support networks to aid in the transition, fostering intellectual curiosity, and challenging students to look at different perspectives through the lens of a liberal arts education.

After evaluating FYE programs offered at peer institutions, several key components were identified:

- First-Year Experience Programs
- Advising Structure
- Required First-Year Academic Courses
- Orientation Practices

The first component, First-Year Academic Programs is distinguished from the other components due to the wide range of program offering. For example, some
institutions offer a residential option to new students, while other institutions may require multiple semesters of content—throughout and occasionally beyond the first year. In contrast, although one peer institution highlighted below requires new students to complete a summer reading assignment, they are simply “encouraged” to enroll in a writing intensive course during their first-year. To further delineate between institutions with FYE programs and those that simply report the presence of courses designed for first-year students without indicating any particular cohesive program, we include a “Standalone” category in Figure 1.1.

Among the peer institutions, several of the FYE components listed above were almost universally present. For example, some form of orientation was evident at all institutions. Furthermore, academic advising is provided at all institutions, either by a faculty advisor or, when applicable, by the instructor of the first-year seminar in which the student is enrolled. However, it is worth noting that at one institution, a separate, professional academic advising office was available for all first-year, new, and undeclared students. Westminster College’s START Center uses a “shared model of advising,” pairing students with professional staff and peer advisors to develop an “intellectual, educational and personal growth” plan.

Three institutions, Kalamazoo College, Ohio Wesleyan College, and Randolph-Macon College have a specific dean or assistant dean of first-year students, whereas Wittenberg University has a specific first-year programs department. This position appears to coordinate orientation and other activities while providing an additional administration connection for first-year students with questions or concerns.

Although many institutions provided new students with upper-class peer support, the degree to which support was provided varied considerably, ranging from orientation guides to support throughout the first-year. For example, at Allegheny College, NaviGators initially meet with their mentees at orientation and continue to facilitate two workshops per semester focused on a range of issues, including academic, social, emotional, and transitions.

It should be noted that a few institutions that indicate the presence of a FYE program have either recently implemented or are still developing the program.

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http://www.westmont.edu/_academics/overview_ge


FIRST-YEAR REQUIRED COURSES

Peer institutions almost universally offered some form of first-year academic program or course, frequently termed “seminar.” Each seminar enrolled a relatively small number of students per course, typically between 10 to 15 students. Of the institutions included in the scan, 26 provide a broad/integrative FYE programs that include a seminar component, while the remaining eight indicate the presence of a first-year course. Regardless of whether the academic program was delivered as an element of a greater FYE program, the majority of programs tend to include both a more traditional, liberal arts academic component and a “college skills” (study skills, time management, critical thinking, etc.) component.

The range of first-year course requirements is quite profound, although the majority of institutions require a minimum of a first-year seminar and/or writing course, with the sole exception being Westmont College. At Westmont, the only apparent requirement for first-year students is a summer reading assignment, while enrolling in the “Common Skills Writing Intensive Course” is encouraged. In contrast, the following are examples of more comprehensive first-year academic programs:

- Luther College’s liberal arts program is comprised of a three interdisciplinary courses, two of which are offered in a semester sequence for first-year students.
- Ripon College’s first-year academic program includes a first-year seminar, a writing course, an exercise science activity course, as well as the common reading experience.
- Westminster College’s first-year academic program—Learning Communities, which pairs two professors from traditionally different subject areas consists of an introduction to liberal arts course, a writing course, an oral communications course, in addition to the common summer reading course.

As previously mentioned, seminar offerings are centered in the liberal arts and aim to develop academic skills (e.g., study skills, time management, and critical thinking); however, the focus area—from “Chemistry to Crime” to “Can Art Change the World?”—and structure—one professor to team taught—vary profoundly. See Appendix A for a list of example FYE seminar topics from Roanoke College.

12 “Paideia.” Luther College. http://www.luther.edu/paideia/
**Orientation Practices**

Orientation practices at peer institutions vary as well. At a minimum, two-days of orientation activities are scheduled, while the longest orientation begins three weeks before classes begin. Some institutions opt to include parents and families for one to two days of activities, while others do not. Several institutions scheduled a separate day of activities for transfer students and others included break-out sessions for transfer students, however the majority grouped all new (first-year and transfer) students together.

Eight colleges offer two-part orientation programs. The first orientation is offered during the beginning of summer and generally lasts between one and two days—students have an opportunity to register for courses and meet with faculty advisors. The second orientation is focused on acclimating students to campus, introducing expectations for the next few years, and establishing networks of peers and mentors.

A few institutions offer overnight excursions during orientation. For example, students beginning at Hendrix College can choose from one of 23 trips, ranging from volunteering at a wildlife refuge to dune-buggying through the wilderness.

A less common orientation activity, —“First-Connection Pre-Orientation,” is offered by Lake Forest College. The five-day orientation for traditionally underserved and/or underrepresented students (e.g., ethnic minorities, first generation, and LGBT) is held prior to the College’s traditional new student orientation.

Finally, Muhlenberg College takes a unique approach to orientation “to help ease the transition from high school to college, thereby increasing the likelihood of success in the first year.” In addition to its regular orientation activities, the College provides the *Transition Handbook for New Students and Their Parents*. The Handbook is given out in the beginning of the summer and includes information on how to prepare for school, effective methods of self-advocacy, suggestions for parents to help ease the transition, and a checklist of responsibilities for students, parents, and college personnel, among others.

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16 Wittenberg University offers an optional Summer College orientation program.
### Figure 1.1: First-Year Experience Programs at Peer Institutions

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<th>INSTITUTION</th>
<th>FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE PROGRAM</th>
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<th>REQUIRED FIRST-YEAR ACADEMIC COURSES</th>
<th>ORIENTATION PROGRAMS</th>
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| Albion College, MI | The William Atwell Brown, Jr. and Mary Brown Vacin FYE program focuses on aiding first-year students in their transition from high school to college, through graduation | Advising begins during orientation; facilitated by academic advisors and Student Affairs staff throughout the first year | ▪ *FY Seminar*  
▪ *Common Reading Experience: Will Allen’s “The Good Food Revolution: Growing Healthy Food, People, and Communities”*  
▪ *FYE Residential Program Learning Strategies: offered through residence halls* | ▪ SOAR (Student Orientation, Advising, and Registration)  
▪ First-year and transfer students move into residence halls three days before classes begin  
▪ Author of *Common Reading Experience* attends |
| Allegheny College, PA |  | ▪ Seminar instructor serves as academic advisor until student declares a major  
▪ NaviGators (upper-class students) guide students throughout the year; facilitate two workshops per semester (academic, social, and emotional transitions); meet at least once/month | ▪ *Academic Discourse I and Communication in a Discipline: oral and written communication skills*  
▪ *Living Learning Community: students grouped in residence halls by common interest*[^20] | ▪ First-year and transfer students move into residence halls three days before classes begin  
▪ Orientation activities coordinated by The Learning Commons |
| Alma College, MI |  | Faculty advisor assigned upon admission; together plan courses, co-curricular activities, evaluate progress; students may change advisors at any time | ▪ *FY Seminar: interdisciplinary course to develop critical thinking and communication skills; may be taken first or second term*  
▪ *Writing Competency: may be taken first or second term* | Orientation Week: new and transfer students move into residence halls one week before classes begin |

[^20]: Limited to first-year students enrolled in a specific Seminar course.
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<th>ORIENTATION PROGRAMS</th>
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| Augustana College, IL | Liberal Studies First Year (LSFY) is a three-course sequence for first-year students; LSFY introduces the liberal arts tradition, and develops foundational thinking and communication skills. | Academic advisors help new students select courses according to “experience and ambition” | - LSFY 102, *Rhetoric and the Liberal Arts* (Fall): writing and oral communication skills  
- LSFY 102 (Winter): difficult academic texts  
- LSFY 103 (Spring): research-based argument  
- Learning Perspectives: taken by most students, not required | Summer Connection and Transfer Connection: orientation and registration for first-year students and transfer students, respectively |
| Austin College, TX | Seminar instructor serves as academic advisor until student declares a major; mentorship helps academic adjustment; discuss career interests, aspirations, and steps | | - Communication/Inquiry Course (Fall): communication skills (written, oral, non-verbal), intellectual inquiry skills  
- Common Read: David G. Campbell’s “A Land of Ghosts: The Braided Lives of People and The Forest in Far West Amazonia” | No information available for new and transfer student orientation; information available for visiting the College, international student orientation, and new employee orientation |
| Beloit College, WI | Prior to first semester, students choose which seminar topic interests them most; seminar instructor serves as academic advisor until student declares a major | | - FYI: The FY Initiatives Seminar: introduction to liberal arts, college level instruction, develop skills (evaluate complex arguments and write coherent essays), resources available on campus; begins during orientation  
- Common Reading: discuss during orientation  
- New Student Days: new and transfer students move into residence halls one week before classes begin  
- Continues throughout fall term |
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| Birmingham Southern College, AL     |                              | Faculty advisor and student-peer advisor assigned upon admission; together identify academic goals, facilitate growth, and assist with career planning; students are encouraged to stay with their advisor for at least the first year | ▪ *FY Seminar* (Fall): writing and critical thinking  
▪ *Exploration Term* (Winter): opportunity for exploration—study-travel or focused creative production | ▪ *Summer Orientation*: one-day, meet classmates and advising faculty; register for classes  
▪ *Fall Orientation*: mandatory; student move in four days before classes begin; student groups of approx. 10 paired with an upper-class orientation leader |
| Central College, IA                 |                              | Faculty advisor assigned upon admission; together they examine goals, curricular and co-curricular programs, and career options | *Intersections* (Fall): interdisciplinary seminar; introduces students to liberal arts; focus on a significant question for inquiry; independent inquiry, critical thinking, and persuasive communication | *Welcome Week*: new and transfer students move in four days before classes begin |
| Cornell College, IA                 | The FY Program is designed to support student engagement; includes academic experiences intended to transition students into college-level coursework | Academic advisors are assigned according to expressed academic interests; students remain with advisor until they declare a major | ▪ *FY Seminar*: academic honesty, critical reading, information literacy, and writing  
▪ *FY Writing*: emphasize the importance of the writing process; courses vary by discipline  
▪ *One Book*: Ernest Cline’s “Ready Player”; discussions at orientation | ▪ *New Student Orientation*: new and transfer students move into their residence halls one week before classes begin  
▪ Activities help students get “settled, connected, integrated, and prepared” |
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| Gustavus Adolphus College, MN | The FY Program introduces students to a liberal arts education; small, interactive classes focus on values | Seminar instructor serves as academic advisor until student declares a major; together plan students’ education and introduce campus resources | - **First Term Seminar:** one-semester course for all students; critical thinking, oral communication, and writing skills  
- **Reading in Common:** Tori Murden McClure’s “A Pearl in the Storm” | - New and transfer halls students move in to residence halls four days and two days before classes begin, respectively  
- 10-15 students assigned to a “Gustie Greeter” (upper-class) and a faculty member, administrator, or staff member during orientation  
- Mentors persist throughout the year |
| Hanover College, IN         | The FYE program is intended to develop academic skills (e.g., writing and critical thinking), informed decision-making, self-motivation, and develop a network of academic advisors | Advisor relationships are established during the August Experience                  | **Great Works** (two course sequence, Fall and Winter): analyze and interpret “great works” of literature and/or the visual and performing arts; includes intensive writing and public speaking | **August Experience:** introduction to college-level modes of inquiry; Common Reading discussion; writing and public speaking activities; academic advising; and co-curricular activities |
| Hendrix College, AK         | The FY Program introduces students to a liberal arts education; small, interactive classes focus on values | Faculty advisor assigned upon admission; serves as mentor, ally, and resource; students remain with advisor until they declare a major | **Explorations: Liberal Arts for Life:** (one semester) engages students in the liberal arts tradition and facilitate transition to college  
**Engaged Citizen:** (one semester) taught by two professors | New students move into residence hall one week before classes begin; meet with faculty advisor, social events, and a trip[^1] |

[^1]: Does not indicate whether transfer students are included in all New Student Orientation activities.
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| Juniata College, PA    |                               | Freshman advisor assigned upon admission; orients students to the College, academic policies, and procedures; in February of first year, students choose two faculty advisors—a program advisor and a liberal arts or general advisor | • *College Writing Seminar*: required of all freshman.  
• *Information Access*: ensures competency in computing, network, and library technologies; new and transfer students | New Student Orientation sessions occur in June |
| Kalamazoo College, MI  | Nationally recognized FY College Program that lasts throughout the entire first year.  
|                        |                               | Seminar instructor often serves as academic advisor; students remain with advisor until they declare a major | • *FY Seminar*: exploratory discussion format—writing, speaking, analytical reading, discussion, and critical thinking; includes collaborative group work, peer review, and discussions; begins during orientation  
• *Common Reading*: author visits campus during orientation | Students explore academic and co-curricular opportunities, participate in community service, and meet peers; includes faculty, staff, student-mentor, and new student involvement |
| Knox College, IL       | The FY Preceptorial Program encourages students to explore the language, culture, and meaning of liberal arts | Faculty serve as academic advisors.  
|                        |                               | *Foundations*: includes FY Preceptorial and at least one other foundational course—art, history, social sciences, humanities, mathematics, and/or natural sciences  
<p>|                        |                               | <em>One Community Orientation</em>: new and transfer students move into residence halls five days before classes begin | |</p>
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| Lake Forest College, IL  | The FYE program is designed to help students successfully transition to Lake Forest College | Seminar instructor often serves as academic advisor     | • **FY Seminar**: writing, critical reading, analysis, oral communication, and mathematic skills          | • New and transfer students move into their residence halls six days before classes begin  
• **First Connection Pre-Orientation**: five-day program prior to regular orientation for traditionally underrepresented and/or underserved students (e.g., ethnic minority, first generation students, GLBT) |
| Lawrence University, WI | Freshman Studies is a year-long series of interdisciplinary courses that have been offered for over 60 years | Faculty advisors are assigned to students according to expressed academic interests | • **First Term**: learn foundations of reading, speaking, and writing clearly and persuasively  
• **Second term**: build on foundations and learn to develop complex forms of argument | Welcome Week: new and transfer students move into residence halls one week before classes begin |
<p>| Luther College, IA       | Paideia, Greek for Education, is a liberal arts program of three interdisciplinary courses, two of which are offered in a two semester sequence for first-year students | Incoming students are assigned an academic advisor according to expressed interests; students may change advisors after January term of their FY | • <strong>Enduring Questions 111/112</strong>: two sequential first-year courses; students read the same works and attend performances and events intended to “ground students for success in education and life” | Students learn about the Luther community, academic and community expectations, and meet with faculty and other new students |</p>
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<td>Monmouth College, IL</td>
<td>The FY course is designed to raise questions about the human experience, values, and goals</td>
<td>Seminar instructor often serves as academic advisor</td>
<td><em>Introduction to Liberal Arts Seminar (Fall):</em> all sections share common objectives, core readings, instruction in writing, although instructor emphasis will vary; foundational skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking, quantitative reasoning)</td>
<td>New and transfer students move into residence halls three days before classes begin; separate academic information section for transfer students</td>
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| Muhlenberg College, PA         | The FY Program is a year-long process that begins with June orientation; designed to facilitate intellectual, personal, and social growth | Incoming students are assigned a first-year faculty advisor; faculty, staff, and upper-class student leaders are trained to assist first-year students | *FY Seminar:* discussion-oriented courses focused on developing effective thinking, writing, and speaking skills; upper-class writing assistant helps first-year students throughout semester | • *Orientation Weekend:* new and transfer students move into residence halls the weekend before classes begin  
• *Transition Handbook for New Students and Their Parents* |
| Nebraska Wesleyan University, NE | In 2011, NWU received a $50,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; grants fund faculty to design and revise seminars "that utilize service learning and other high-impact practices that promote student learning" | Seminar instructor often serves as academic advisor; together they explore life, career, and educational goals; students remain with advisor until they declare a major | • *Liberal Arts Seminar (Fall):* intellectual practices, critical and analytical thought, oral and written expression, research, and collaboration  
• *English Language and Writing:* write with clarity, confidence, and conviction  
• *Fundamentals of Communication:* communicate effectively in a variety of settings | New and transfer students move in four days before classes begin |
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| Ohio Wesleyan College, OH      | OWU Connection is a pilot program implemented Fall 2010 through a $500,000 alumni gift | Incoming students are assigned an advisor according to expressed academic interest; together they set short- and long-term goals, plan courses, and identify campus resources; Orientation team leaders (upper-class mentors) meet with students throughout the Fall term | ▪ The Connection (pilot, Fall): interdisciplinary course; resources for transiting students, writing assignments, class outings, and a collaborative, end of term project  
▪ Summer Reading/Writing: William Cronon’s essay, “Only Connect: The Goals of a Liberal Education”; discussed in seminar | ▪ StART OWU: academic orientation in June  
▪ August orientation: new and transfer students move into residence halls three days before classes begin; OMSA (Office of Multicultural Student Affairs) pre-orientation for multi-cultural students |
| Presbyterian College, SC       | Freshman Experience includes either the Freshman Seminar or Introduction to Inquiry Course | Incoming students are assigned a faculty advisor according to expressed academic interest; students change advisors when select a major | Freshman Seminar and Introduction to Inquiry (Fall): interdisciplinary courses vary by topic; emphasize critical thinking, communication, small group experiences, and assist in transition | New Student Orientation: new and transfer students move into residence halls three days before classes begin |
| Randolph-Macon College, VA     | FYE courses are designed for students to make connections between disciplines in a “yearlong exploration” of a challenging and interesting topic | One (of two) FYE instructors serve as an academic advisor | FYE: interdisciplinary course taught by two professors from different disciplines within the liberal arts; writing, speaking, critical thinking, an research skills; includes co-curricular activities | New Student Orientation (Fall and Spring): new students move in to residence halls two days prior to the beginning of Spring term^{26} |

^{26} Dates not available for Fall term.
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</table>
| Ripon College, WI | FY Programs are designed to facilitate college-level reading and thinking, as well as create a shared experience between students | Incoming students are assigned a faculty advisor according to expressed academic interest | • FY Studies  
• FY Writing: reading, analyzing, writing  
• FY Explorations: courses in each division (behavioral and social services; fine and performing arts; humanities; natural sciences)  
• Reading Experience: Rebecca Skloot’s, “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks” | • June Academic Orientation: over two days, new and transfer students meet with advisor, plan courses, meet classmates  
• Welcome Week: new and transfer students move in to residence halls one week before classes begin |
| Roanoke College, VA | Liberal Arts 2.0 is designed for students to look at “real-world problems through the lens of liberal arts... and vice versa” | Incoming students are assigned a faculty advisor according to expressed academic interest; students may change advisors when they declare a major | • Intellectual Inquiry Seminar (Fall): critical reading, writing, and research  
• Living an Examined Life Seminar (Spring): ethical thinking and problem solving through speaking, quantitative reasoning, and collaboration | • Spring into Maroon: one-day orientation in June  
• New and transfer students move in to residence halls four days before classes begin  
• Orientation spans from admissions through the end of Fall term |
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| Simpson College, IA | Simpson’s FY Program—designed to help students transition into their FY of college—is one of the best in the nation<sup>27</sup> | Incoming students are assigned a faculty advisor according to expressed academic interest; students may change advisors when they declare a major | ▪ Simpson Colloquium: a variety of introductory Liberal Arts courses to develop academic skills, written communication, and critical thinking skills, as well as introduce students to campus resources  
▪ Transfer Simpson Colloquium: designed specifically for transfer students | ▪ Summer Registration: one day; meet advisor, select courses, gain access to online portal system, etc.  
▪ Welcome Week: new students move in to residence hall four days before classes begin  
▪ TransferMations: same Welcome Week activities with additional programs |
| Saint Norbert College, WI | The FYE is a three-tiered program beginning with summer orientation, ending with a 10-week seminar in the Fall | Faculty advisor assigned upon admission; together they select courses and a probable major | ▪ Foundations Courses:  
  ▪ Theological Foundations  
  ▪ Philosophical Foundations  
▪ FY Common Experience<sup>28</sup> | ▪ Summer Orientation: two-days focused on payment plans, housing, meal plans, etc.  
▪ Welcome Week: new and transfer students move in one week before classes begin; special session offered to transfer students |

<sup>28</sup>First-Year Common Experience program is currently in development.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUTION</th>
<th>FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE PROGRAM</th>
<th>ADVISING STRUCTURE</th>
<th>REQUIRED FIRST-YEAR ACADEMIC COURSES</th>
<th>ORIENTATION PROGRAMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Wartburg College, IA        | The FYE is a component of the Wartburg Plan of Essential Education—a four-year curriculum focused on thinking strategies, reasoning skills, fundamental literacies, faith and reflection, health/wellness, and a capstone course | Faculty advisor assigned upon admission; students switch advisors when they declare a major | • **Introductory Inquiry Skills** (year one of Wartburg Plan): critical inquiry and communication skills:  
  o Asking Questions, Making Choices (IS 101)  
  o Living in a Diverse World (IS 201)  
  • **Readings in Common**: Rebecca Skloot’s, “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks” | SOAR (Summer Orientation, Advising, and Registration): new and transfer students move in five before classes begin; transfer students have their own day of activities |
| Washington and Jefferson College, PA | FY Seminar instructors serve as academic advisors; students switch advisors when they declare a major | **FY Seminar**: reading, writing, speaking, and quantitative analysis (depending on content), as well as cultural and intellectual events  
**Intensive Writing Course** | • **Senior Overnight**: students meet with faculty advisors and register for courses  
• New students move in to residence halls three days before classes begin  
• Transfer students participate in a separate but similar orientation program  
• **FY Summer Outdoor Experience** (pilot): 14 students participated |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUTION</th>
<th>FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE PROGRAM</th>
<th>ADVISING STRUCTURE</th>
<th>REQUIRED FIRST-YEAR ACADEMIC COURSES</th>
<th>ORIENTATION PROGRAMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Westminster College, PA   | The FY Program is an integrated educational experience, comprised of orientation, Learning Communities, and a first-year mentoring program | Incoming students receive individualized advising through the START Center where they participate in Pathfinder (an educational development and transitional support program); first-year fall term, courses are pre-assigned 29 | Learning Communities pair two professors from traditionally different subject areas  
  - Inquiry (Fall): introduction to a liberal arts education, critical thinking and literacy skills, consider moral and ethical responsibility  
  - Writing (Fall): investigation, analysis, evaluation, and expression of foundational Inquiry course skills  
  - Oral Communication (Fall): builds on Inquiry course skills  
  - Physical Education/Wellness  
  - FY Summer Reading: Rebecca Skloot’s, “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks” | New and transfer students move in to residence halls four days before classes begin; transfer students have a different schedule of events one day |
| Westmont College, CA     | Warrior Wise encompasses weekly interactive first-year class meetings for “fun, fellowship, food, and key topics” | Faculty advisor assigned upon admission; together they select courses and a probable major |  
  - Summer Reading: John Hersey’s, “Hiroshima” 30  
  - Common Skills: students are “encouraged” to take an intensive writing course |  
  - New students move in to residence halls five days before classes begin  
  - Transfer students participate in a separate but similar orientation program |

30 Summer Reading is the only requirement.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUTION</th>
<th>FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE PROGRAM</th>
<th>ADVISING STRUCTURE</th>
<th>REQUIRED FIRST-YEAR ACADEMIC COURSES</th>
<th>ORIENTATION PROGRAMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Wittenberg University, OH | FY Programs are designed to foster academic and intellectual development, personal and moral development, global and local awareness, and social development | WittSem instructors serve as academic advisors; students switch advisors when they declare a major | - WittSem: designed by individual instructors, or by a team of instructors; topics vary widely, but they share common goals; close reading, problem solving, critical thinking  
- English 101: college writing, frequent practice in writing and revising, explore various stages of the writing process from planning to proofreading | - June Orientation: optional  
- Summer College: optional two-week pre-college program; students take two-credit course  
- New Student Days: new and transfers students move into residence halls four days before classes begin |
SECTION II: INSTITUTIONAL PROFILES OF FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS

In the following section, four First-Year Experience programs among peer institutions highlighted in Section I are profiled in greater detail. The institutions were selected based on the availability of comprehensive program information, established practices and program components, and unique First-Year Experience elements. The institutions profiled below include:

- Kalamazoo College
- Ohio Wesleyan University
- Simpson College
- Wittenberg University

KALAMAZOO COLLEGE

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Kalamazoo College (Kalamazoo) has received national recognition for its FYE program: the National Policy Center of the First Year of College named Kalamazoo one of 13 “Institutions of Excellence in the First College Year;” the program was featured in the book, “Achieving and Sustaining Institutional Excellence for the First Year of College;” and U.S. News and World Report has recognized Kalamazoo’s FYE as “a program that really works.” Furthermore, the FYE Program Director, Dr. Zaide Pixley, was recognized as an “Outstanding First-Year Advocate” in 2006 by the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

At Kalamazoo, the FYE persists throughout the first-year, as opposed to ending after the first-semester or orientation period. Throughout the first-year, programs’ “focus on the dimensions of student growth in hopes that students develop lifelong learning, career readiness, intercultural understanding, leadership and social responsibility,” all of which comprise the stated goals of Kalamazoo.

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32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
**REQUIRED FIRST-YEAR COURSES**

Kalamazoo’s First-Year Seminars “are the centerpiece of the First-Year program.”

The seminars are small, consisting of 16 to 17 students, begin during orientation with discussions of the Summer Common Reading, and are structured as a discussion. Instructors develop topics that facilitate the exploration of an idea, topic, or event, and design the seminars to foster important academic skills, such as critical thinking and writing (the seminar fulfills the writing requirement), while maintaining an emphasis on intercultural understanding. Samples of previous First-Year Seminars Topics include:

- The Empire Writes Back
- The Da Vinci Code: History or Hoax?
- Reading German Fairy Tales: How Grim(m) Are They?
- Who Are the Samurai?
- Community Building in Action and Theory
- Co-authoring Your Life: Writing Your Self in the Context of Others

The collaborative seminars are designed to help “students find and develop a voice through writing, speaking, analytical reading, discussion, and engagement in critical thinking.” Additionally, each year one session, “Survivor in the Library: College Information Literacy Skills,” is dedicated to research techniques and focused writing.

**ORIENTATION**

Over the summer, students are assigned a common reading assignment, which culminates in a discussion during orientation. The Summer Common Reading not only “joins new students, faculty, and staff in a conversation,” but “it is an important first step in building a cohesive, dynamic, educational community.”

During orientation, the author of the chosen novel visits the campus to discuss the book—for academic year 2013, Vaddey Ratner’s, “In the Shadow of the Banyan” was studied. Furthermore, the first-year seminars begin during orientation and persist through the fall term.

First-Year Forums teach students about “the history and tradition” of Kalamazoo. The Forums are designed around Kalamazoo’s desired educational outcomes—intercultural understanding, leadership, social responsibility, career readiness, and lifelong learning—and often take the form of presentations, interactive learning, and

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35 Ibid.
36 “Summer Common Reading.” Kalamazoo College. http://www.kzoo.edu/studentlife/?p=fye&s=_scr
conversations. All first-year students are required to attend five or more forums during the fall term.

Finally, Kalamazoo’s LandSea Wilderness Experience is an optional “bridge from high school to college” program designed to “prepare students for the new physical and social environment of their first year on campus.”38 The program has been offered for almost 40 years, creating an opportunity for first-year students to connect with one another and current students (i.e., trip leaders).

**ACADEMIC ADVISING**

All academic advisors participate in Kalamazoo’s developmental advising model training program to ensure they are effective in their role. Academic advisors are mentors who help students “set goals, select courses, understand the curriculum and degree requirements, frame questions about career interests, and identify College resources.”39 First-Year Seminar instructors act as first-year students’ academic advisor until they declare a major at the end of their sophomore year.

Academic advisors are assisted by Peer Leaders—upperclassmen that help first-year students navigate college, locate resources, and serve as a mentor. Beyond orientation, Peer Leaders participate in the First-Year Seminars, thus remaining an active part of the first-year students’ experience.40

**ACADEMIC RESOURCE CENTERS**

Kalamazoo’s academic resource centers are dedicated to helping students raise their academic achievement by supporting peer collaboration. As such, the College hires students who have “distinguished themselves in math, writing, science, or library research,” providing services to students at no cost (Figure 2.1).41

**Figure 2.1: Academic Resource Centers, Kalamazoo**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CENTER</th>
<th>AREAS OF ASSISTANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Center42</td>
<td>▪ Helps students hone skills they already possess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Provide strategies and constructive feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Not an editing service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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42 Bullet points taken with minimal variation from: “Writing Center.” Kalamazoo College. http://reason.kzoo.edu/writingcenter/
Ohio Wesleyan University

First-Year Experience Program Overview

Ohio Wesleyan University’s (OWU) program, The Connection, is a pilot program that began in Fall 2010 through a $500,000 alumna gift. The Connection begins with orientation, where students are introduced to the campus and “all the things that make Ohio Wesleyan a special place to live, learn, and grow.”

From the First-Year Seminar to Course Connections networks to Travel-Learning opportunities to Theory-to-Practice research and projects, the OWU Connection offers not only an enriching education, but also a competitive edge, whether you choose to go immediately to graduate school or into the job market.

Eleven professors comprise the FYE program, representing all of the liberal arts disciplines. The program is designed to help students transition to college and provide information on resources, curriculum, and the community. Furthermore, the FYE program helps students to develop a network of professors, staff, administrators, and peers.

47 “The Connection.” Ohio Wesleyan University. http://choose.owu.edu/theExperience/#theConnection
48 Ibid.
REQUIRED FIRST-YEAR COURSES

OWU’s First-Year Seminar, UC 160, is a semester long course designed to help first-semester, first-year students connect with faculty, and one another. Before arriving on campus, students are required to read a common essay, William Cronon’s, “Only Connect: The Goals of a Liberal Education,” and complete a short writing assignment. This element of the seminar is intended to introduce students “to the excitement and challenge of college work in a community of engaged scholars.”49 Once on campus, seminar sessions of no more than 16 students meet weekly; initially fueled by discussions of Cronon’s essay, the course also includes class outings, written assignments, and a collaborative creative project at end of semester. UC 160 is designed to engage students: "They are reading, listening, and discussing, with an eye on broad ideas, themes, and directions."50 No two seminar sections are the same, as instructors are encouraged to personalize their classes through the selection of a keystone text.

OWU’s Course Connections stays true to the liberal arts tradition, providing opportunities for students to study a particular topic of interest through the lens of a variety of disciplines. The cross-divisional networks include the following themes:51

- American Landscape
- Crime, Responsibility, and Punishment
- Food: How Production and Consumption Shape Our Bodies, Our Cultures, and Our Environment
- Four Corners
- Modern Life and Its Discontents
- Poverty, Equity, and Social Justice
- Silk Road
- Water: Rites and Rights

To supplement the first-year courses, Travel Learning and Theory-to-Practice grants “integrate classroom learning with practical research, internships, service, and cultural immersion almost anywhere in the world.”52

49 Ibid.
**ORIENTATION**

Orientation at OWU includes two events that all students are required to attend: StART OWU and August Orientation. StART OWU, offered in June, focuses on students’ academic orientation. Students “interact in a relaxed atmosphere with a core group of faculty, staff, and experienced students specially trained to answer [omitted] questions;” students leave with valuable resources and having set their fall semester schedule. Beginning four-days before the start of the fall term, August Orientation welcomes students to their new community, teaches them about OWU traditions and expectations, and offers some fun. Family events are scheduled through the first two days, during which students meet in small groups with their Orientation Leaders (a peer resource available to students throughout the fall semester) to learn about different ways to get involved on campus. Additionally, students meet with their academic advisor.

To help ease the transition, Ohio Wesleyan University has developed an informational document for students and parents regarding what to expect during the first-year of college: The W-Curve and the First Year of College. Based on the research of Zeller and Mosier, “[t]he W-Curve is a predictable pattern of stages [that] occurs when a person experiences culture shock,” and can “be applied to first-year college students and the phases they go through in adapting to a new culture.” By informing students and parents of the W-Curve, the University normalizes the stages of transition to a new environment in an effort to make the transition easier for students (and their parents).

The W-Curve is recreated below in Figure 2.2.

*Figure 2.2: The W-Curve*

![Diagram of the W-Curve]

Source: Ohio Wesleyan University

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53 “Start OWU.” Ohio Wesleyan University. http://newstudents.owu.edu/orientationPrograms/StARTOWUOverview.php
56 Ibid.
The “Honeymoon” phase generally begins when a student has been accepted to college, building as they plan for school. “The initial sense of freedom new students feel often is exhilarating” particularly for traditional-aged students. ⁵⁷

The “Culture Shock” phase sets in when students “begin to deal with the reality of all the adjustments they are going through.” ⁵⁸ Over time, homesickness and anxiety levels may increase.

The “Initial Adjustment” phase begins when new students eventually fall into a routine, realizing that they have successfully managed many of the initial challenges they faced. ⁵⁹

The “Mental Isolation” phase frequently begins after an extended break from campus. Once again, students are faced with a combination of homesickness, in addition to feeling as though they do not belong at school or at home. ⁶⁰

The “Acceptance, Integration, and Connectedness” phase begins when students integrate the values and beliefs of their “home culture” with their new environment. ⁶¹ They become more involved on campus, develop deeper relationships with friends, become more comfortable with faculty, and feel more connected to the campus community.

**ACADEMIC ADVISING**

Each new student is assigned an academic advisor who is most often a member of the faculty. OWU makes every effort to assign students to advisors within a particular discipline, according to the students’ expressed academic interest at the StART OWU orientation session. The University notes that although the advisor is available to help identify and clarify educational objectives and refer students to appropriate on-campus resources, the student is “ultimately responsible for [his or her] own educational program and goals and for meeting all degree requirements.” ⁶² Figure 2.3 displays the respective responsibilities of advisor and advisee.

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⁵⁷ Zeller and Mosier, as cited by: Ibid.
⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 2.
⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 3.
⁶⁰ Ibid.
⁶¹ Ibid., p. 4.
**Figure 2.3: First-Year Student and Advisor Responsibilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Responsibility</th>
<th>Advisor Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Plan to meet with your advisor at least twice during the first-semester</td>
<td>▪ Set short and long-term academic goals consistent with interests and abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Consult with your advisor when you are in academic difficulty</td>
<td>▪ Plan each semester’s course schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Determine whether you should schedule an appointment, or whether you can drop in during office hours. If you do make an appointment and need to change or cancel it, please contact your advisor directly and ASAP.</td>
<td>▪ Identify campus resources and services available to help with specific academic, social, career, or health related issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ohio Wesleyan University

**ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES**

OWU’s Sagan Academic Resource Center incorporates a number of student resources, including an academic skills center for students in need of assistance in learning strategies, a learning disabilities assistance center, a quantitative skills center, and a writing center (Figure 2.4).

**Figure 2.4: Sagan Academic Resource Center, OWU**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Center</th>
<th>Areas of Assistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Skills Center</td>
<td>▪ Time management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Note taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Study skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Stress managements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Test taking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Disabilities Service Center</td>
<td>▪ Promotes access and opportunities for students with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Quantitative Skills Center</td>
<td>▪ Individual and group assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Academic quantitative area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ GRE preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Writing Center</td>
<td>▪ One-on-one tutoring/instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Resumes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Cover letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Personal statements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ohio Wesleyan University

Additional resources at OWU include departmental tutoring services offered free of charge, as well as the Lanni Library which contains over 1,000 volumes, a variety of

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63 Figure text taken with minimal variation from: Ibid.
66 “Sagan Academic Resource Center: Departmental Tutoring Services Outside the ARC.” Ohio Wesleyan University. http://arc.owu.edu/departmentalTutoringServicesOutsideTheARC.html
handbooks, computer software, learning resource materials, computer terminals, study stations, and tutorial rooms. 67

**SIMPSON COLLEGE**

**FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

Simpson College’s First-Year Program is designed to help students ease into their first-year of college. 68 Enrolling in the Simpson Colloquium is required during the fall term of all entering, degree-seeking students, although each seminar will vary according to the needs of each cohort (i.e., first-year students and transfer students). 69

**REQUIRED FIRST-YEAR COURSES**

The Simpson Colloquium is an introductory college course designed to “integrate new students into an academic culture focused on engaged citizenship” by: 70

- Familiarizing students with the liberal arts tradition through the focused study of important issues
- Providing students with a solid foundation for future academic work by introducing them to campus resources and developing essential skills (e.g., written communications and critical thinking)
- Enhancing student satisfaction with college life by providing opportunities to grow personally and intellectually

The characteristics and learning objectives of the Simpson Colloquium are listed in Figure 2.5.

**Figure 2.5: Simpson Colloquium Characteristics and Learning Objectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No more than 18 students enrolled per section</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will not carry a departmental designation, and it cannot be used to meet major or minor requirements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address substantial topics, questions, or issues in a manner that encourages engaged citizenship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be open to all incoming students without prerequisite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet the course requirements for the Critical Thinking (CT) embedded skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet the course requirements for the Written Communication (WC) embedded skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporate opportunities for students to familiarize themselves with Dunn Library and Hawley Academic Resource Center</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

70 Bullet points taken with minimal variation from: Ibid.
Include various components that address the enhancement of student engagement, sense of purpose and vocation at Simpson College (e.g., forum events, guest speakers, service learning, service projects, social events, and working with the career services and counseling services office).

Include a standard, campus-wide diagnostic instrument to assess the writing proficiency of every student.

Include a student peer leader trained in various aspects of student development.

Taught by instructors who will serve as the students’ academic advisors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articulate the purpose and advantages of a liberal arts education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain how the components of the New Curriculum work together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate familiarity with various campus resources that provide academic support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfill the stated learning objectives of the Written Communication embedded skill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfill the stated learning objectives of the Critical Thinking embedded skill.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Simpson College

**ORIENTATION**

Simpson College offers three different orientations: Summer Registration Days, Welcome Week, and TransferMations, all of which are guided by an upper-class orientation leader.

During Summer Registration Days, students meet with their faculty advisor, select their first semester classes, receive contact information and access to the online portal system, have their student ID photo taken, and begin to build academic and personal relationships.

At Welcome Week and TransferMations, new and transfer students move into their residence halls four days prior to the start of the fall term. The orientation schedules are similar, with the exception of certain program offerings developed specifically for transfer students.

**ACADEMIC ADVISING**

The Simpson Colloquium instructor serves as the academic advisor for both first-year and transfer students; however, students are encouraged to switch advisors once they declare a major. The role of the advisor is to guide the student through the curriculum, explore majors and minors, and assist with the registration process. Students are responsible for maintaining open communication with their advisor and to respond to their advisors inquires.

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71 Figure text taken with minimal variation from: Ibid.
**ACADEMIC RESOURCE CENTER**

Simpson’s Hawley Academic Resource and Advising Center provides support services to all Simpson students in areas such as “academic advising, disability services, studying for tests, or tutoring in a specific subject” (Figure 2.6).  

**Figure 2.6: Hawley Academic Resource and Advising Center, Simpson College**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCE CENTER</th>
<th>AREAS OF ASSISTANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject Tutoring</td>
<td>• Faculty-approved student tutors (one-on-one or group session)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o World languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Assistance</td>
<td>• Writing consultants available to guide the writing process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Prewriting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Thesis development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Documentation styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Revisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Skills</td>
<td>• Time management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Textbook reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Note taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Test taking strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>• Provides information regarding the following (in addition to an academic advisor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Graduation requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Course selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Major exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Career assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Academic policies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Simpson College  

**WITTENBERG UNIVERSITY**

**FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

Wittenberg University’s First-Year Program (FYP) is “a comprehensive selection of programs and initiatives for first-year students, as well as for parents and families.” Although its collection of FYPs were designed in recognition of the fact that different students will have different needs and interests, each program aims to build a foundation for “life-long academic, personal, and professional success.” As such, the

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76 Ibid.  
FYPs provide educational opportunities and support services aligned to meet four overarching goals:78

- Academic and intellectual development
- Personal and moral development
- Global/local awareness
- Social development

Wittenberg’s vision for its First-Year Program is,

By adopting a comprehensive and integrated approach to student learning that incorporates a state of the art advising program, service learning, international experiences, experiential learning opportunities, spiritual exploration, leadership development, [and] understanding of diversity and moral growth, Wittenberg will have a first-year program that ’transforms the undergraduate educational experience.’79

Figure 2.7 provides an overview of Wittenberg’s First-Year Program offerings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Optional June Orientation</th>
<th>Pre-Orientation</th>
<th>Summer College</th>
<th>New Student Days</th>
<th>Wittenberg Seminars (WitteSems)</th>
<th>English 101</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A chance for you to visit campus and get acquainted with the place where you will call home for the next four years. At June Orientation you will tour your residence hall, attend informative sessions about life at Witt, talk to current students as well as other incoming First-Years and learn what it means to be a Wittenberg Student</td>
<td>The online portal which you will use to register for classes, explore all of the great student groups Wittenberg has to offer, and learn all about our academic programs and potential majors</td>
<td>A two-week pre-college program for newly admitted first-year students that allows students to take a 2-credit college course and learn how to be successful in college</td>
<td>A required four-day orientation program for first-year students that takes place immediately before classes begin each fall semester</td>
<td>A required first-year seminar class that explores an intellectual topic in detail and addresses academic issues and skills first-year students need to master. To assist in the transition to Wittenberg, peer mentors act as social and cultural guides for the students</td>
<td>A first-year writing class that introduces students to basic forms and conventions of college writing, provides the opportunity for frequent practice in writing and revising, and helps students explore various stages of the writing process from planning to proofreading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION</th>
<th>HONORS PROGRAM</th>
<th>EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM</th>
<th>COMMUNITY SERVICE AND SERVICE-LEARNING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An academic support program that uses collaborative learning strategies and trained, supervised student facilitators to increase academic achievement and retention in target courses</td>
<td>Offers a travel-abroad opportunity to enhance the education of first-year Honors students. The program provides first-year Honors students an opportunity to experience another culture and engage in a service-learning experience</td>
<td>A leadership development program for first-year students that meets weekly from October-December each year. Through the program, students develop the skills, personal qualities and knowledge they will need to be effective leaders at Wittenberg. Students will also have the opportunity to work with mentors to plan an event or program for the campus in the second semester</td>
<td>Experiences students can participate in during their years at Wittenberg. First-year students will have the option to participate in a service-learning course where they can engage in meaningful and purposeful ways of connecting the concepts and theories they learn in the classroom with the practical, hands-on learning of “real life” experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wittenberg University

**REQUIRED FIRST-YEAR COURSES**

According to the University, the highlight of the FYP is the Wittenberg Seminars (WittSems), which are small, contemporary courses designed by either an individual instructor or a team of instructors. As an introduction to academic inquiry at Wittenberg, participation in the WittSems is required of all first-year students. Although seminar topics will vary, they all share a common goal, “to help students become intellectually and personally engaged in academic inquiry and understand the relation between the world of learning and their own lives.” The seminar format facilitates close faculty and student interaction; through exploratory conversation, the seminars encourage intellectual risk-taking while developing trust. Similar to each program profiled in this report, the WittSems offer students an opportunity to “explore an intellectual topic in detail and from different perspectives, practicing the kinds of close reading, problem solving, and critical thinking skills that form the bedrock of a liberal arts education.”

In addition to the WittSems, all first-year students are required to enroll in English 101. This course helps to ensure students are proficient in writing—practicing the craft through writing and revising. The course:

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80 Figure text taken verbatim from: “Overview of First-Year Programs.” Wittenberg University. http://www5.wittenberg.edu/academics/fye/programs/overview.html


82 Ibid.

- Prepares students to meet the demands of college-level writing
- Provides instruction in research methods, with specific attention to the resources available at Thomas Library, and addresses the more comprehensive goal of developing the knowledge and skills that constitute information literacy
- Promotes, by virtue of being capped at 20 students, individual attention and frequent interaction with faculty during the first year

**ORIENTATION**

The orientation program at Wittenberg is comprised of four opportunities for new students: June Orientation, Pre-Orientation, Summer College, and New Student Days:

- **June Orientation** is a one-day optional program that provides students with an opportunity to learn about the liberal arts, meet with a faculty advisor, become familiar with the campus, and begin to build a network of support by meeting other students, faculty, and staff, among other opportunities.\(^{84}\)

- **Pre-Orientation** provides an online introduction to academics at Wittenberg. Once students have taken their math or foreign language placement exams, they are able to indicate their course preferences for the fall term through the online portal.\(^{85}\)

- **Summer College** is a two-week program open to new students prior to the start of New Student Days. In addition to enrolling in the course of their choosing, students take part in a field experience, such as a canoe trip, a zipline canopy tour, or an archeological excavation on campus. The course offerings for 2013 were: “Grace Under Pressure: The Secrets of Survival” and “Digging for Our Past.”\(^{86}\)

- **New Student Days** are mandatory for all new students and take place the four-days prior to the start of fall term. New Student Days include informational sessions to help student acclimate to their new environment, as well as fun activities to make new friends. Additionally, the first WittSem session is held during New Student Days.\(^{87}\)

**ACADEMIC ADVISING**

Academic advising is provided by approximately 30 faculty members at Wittenberg. Initially, each student’s WittSem instructor serves as an advisor, “heighten[ing] the

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\(^{84}\) “OJO.” Wittenberg University. http://www5.wittenberg.edu/academics/fye/programs/optionaljuneorientation.html

\(^{85}\) “Pre-Orientation.” Wittenberg University. http://preo.wittenberg.edu/

\(^{86}\) “Summer College.” Wittenberg University. http://www5.wittenberg.edu/academics/fye/programs/summercollege.html

student’s sense of belonging and establish[ing] a close working relationship with the advisor.” Advisors take a person-centered approach, offering guidance on issues such as educational, vocational, and personal planning. Recognizing the importance of individual responsibility, the University “affirms the primary responsibility for the pattern and outcome of the student’s educational program, while the development of social responsibility lies with each student.” Figure 2.8 defines the responsibilities of both first-year students and their advisors.

**Figure 2.8: First-Year Student and Advisor Responsibilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Responsibility</th>
<th>Advisor Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Initiate and maintain contact with your advisor</td>
<td>• Help students understand the nature of a liberal arts education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Read all University and departmental materials</td>
<td>• Help students obtain maximum benefit from the total educational experience—discuss interests and opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Get to know your professors</td>
<td>• Assist students in understanding policies and regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Start you college career with a good GPA</td>
<td>• Help students begin to determine career goals according to aptitude and interest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wittenberg University

**ACADEMIC RESOURCE CENTER**

Academic Support Services provide academic and personal support beyond what is offered through the advisor-advisee relationship. The Academic Services office partners with faculty, students, and staff to support students through all transitions throughout their time at Wittenberg, including: summer orientation programs, major declaration assistance, success in the classroom, services for students with disabilities, assistance for students on academic warning and/or probation, as well as programs that recognize academic achievement.

The Wittenberg Academic Learning Centers consist of four centers offering individualized support in four disciplines: writing, math, foreign language, and oral communication. Figure 2.9 provides additional information on the services available through each Learning Center.

**Figure 2.9: Academic Support Services, Wittenberg University**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING CENTER</th>
<th>AREAS OF ASSISTANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Center</td>
<td>Student writing advisors provide professional assistance for every type of writing assignment, through every stage: brainstorming, drafting, and final editing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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88 “First-Year Advising.” Wittenberg University. 
http://www5.wittenberg.edu/academics/fye/advising/index.html

89 Ibid.

90 Figure text taken with minimal variation from: Ibid.

91 “Academic Support Services.” Wittenberg University. 
http://www5.wittenberg.edu/administration/provost/support.html
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>LEARNING CENTER</strong></th>
<th><strong>AREAS OF ASSISTANCE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math Workshop</td>
<td>Offers tutoring for every level of math, ranging from basic math to calculus. The workshop can be used one-on-one or in groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
<td>The “latest computer hardware and pedagogical language software” is available for students fulfilling a course requirement (first-year students); tutors are available for independent assistance, as well as higher-level study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Communication</td>
<td>One-on-one tutors offer direct assistance on oral communication assignments—formal presentations, discussions/debates, class participation, leadership and oral reports—at every stage: develop, organize, and deliver.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wittenberg University

Ibid.
## APPENDIX A: ROANOKE COLLEGE: FYE SEMINAR TOPIC EXAMPLES

### Figure A: First-Year Experience Seminar Topics, Roanoke College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forensic Science: The Science Behind CSI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Study of American Film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Contact: Native Americans and Europeans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People and the Planet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Search for Good/God in Fantasy Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You and the Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Culture and Graphic Novels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSPECTIVES COURSE EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital Media: Manipulating for Good and Bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Way Things Work: Skydiving and Deep Sea Diving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing the Mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Information Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilgrimage: El Camino de Santiago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical Reasoning for Social Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Do Living Organisms Evolve?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTENSIVE LEARNING TERM (MAY) EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History of Hawaii - Travel to Hawaii and discover its history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forensic Chemistry - Use chemistry to examine crime scene evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical Marine Biology - Learn marine biology firsthand on a tropical island in the Bahamas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential Campaign - Understand the practical tools of political campaigns. Includes hands-on experience in Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Roanoke College

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93 “Example Courses.” Roanoke College.  
http://roanoke.edu/Academics/Core_Curriculum_(INQ)/Example_Courses.htm
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