Reshaping the Whole Story: Using Data to Enhance the FYE Experience for Students and Instructors

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Reshaping the whole story: Using data to enhance the FYE experience for students and instructors.

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What we’ll cover today

- Phase 1: Initial Evaluation
- Phase 2: Planning
- Phase 3: Implementation
- Phase 4: Assessment
- Moving forward
An overview of FYE at WMU

- Established in 2005 in Enrollment Management
- Part of Office of Student Transitions
- Fall semester, 2 credits
- 40-45 sections annually
- Required for some students
- Program manager & one UG student intern
- Primary instruction and student co-facilitator
- Annually around 700 students
- Included a Common Read/Watch experience
The impetus for change

- Change in leadership
- New university initiative: the Wellness Wheel
- Perception of the course
- Data
Phase 1
Initial Evaluation
Phase 1: Initial Evaluation

Skyfactor Data - 2018

- Higher than peer institutions on 2/23 measures
- Below goal on 6/8 high impact factors
- Benchmark 5.5/7 for course effectiveness
  - From 2006-2018, didn’t reach it
  - Highest was 5.15 in 2018
Phase 1: Initial Evaluation

Student survey - 2019
- Too many presentations
- Negative perception
- 62% recommend the class

End of semester instructor evaluations
- Average 6-12 presentations
- Desire more training
- Need pedagogy
- Activity ideas

Instructor focus group
- Need consistency among sections
- More resources
- Pedagogy training
- Co-facilitator expectations
Phase 1: Initial Evaluation

- This is what we heard:
  - Sections need consistency
  - Instructors need more training
  - Instructors need more resources
  - Too many presentations
  - Clearer co-facilitator expectations

- This is what we wanted to do:
  - Wellness Wheel; core assignments
  - Multiple touchpoints & pedagogy
  - Facilitation Guide, Schedule of Topics
  - Train instructors; limit presentations
  - Enhanced match support
The Plan! January 2020

- Rewrite outcomes to align with university’s focus on wellness and DEI
- Consistency among all sections
  - Required components
  - Wellness Wheel framework
- Integrate Strengths in all sections
- All sections 2x week
- Semester-end showcase
The Plan! January 2020

- New hiring process and recruit new instructors
- Improve instructor training & communication
- Fall support for instructors – booster trainings & check-ins
- eLearning requirement
- Instructor mentor/mentee matches
- Instructor/Co-facilitator of the Year awards
“The wellness wheel provided a framework to build upon. My students could relate to the areas easily and it provided a common vocabulary for crucial topics such as mental health. It normalized health in a comprehensive manner.”

–FYE instructor
Learning Outcomes

Previous Outcomes

Students will:

• Develop critical thinking, writing, and research skills.
• Demonstration competency in accessing University resources and services.
• Examine personal interests and explore related WMU academic and career pathways.
• Understand the requirements for earning a bachelor’s degree.
• Develop a global awareness and an appreciation for diversity and culture in its broadest sense.
• Make connections with WMU faculty, staff, student leaders, and/or peers to facilitate success.
• Demonstrate responsible social and academic behaviors.

New Outcomes

After active participation in the FYE 2100 course, students will be able to:

• Employ strategies for a successful transition to college.
• Explain the culture and expectations of being a student at WMU.
• Recognize WMU’s commitment to upholding values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
• Develop strategies to meet their own physical, financial, social, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, occupational, and environmental wellness.
Phase 2
Planning
Phase 2: Planning

- WITH INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNER
- COURSE OUTCOMES AT THE FOREFRONT
- WHAT DID WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN THAT WEEK
- Aligned with Wellness Wheel
- WHAT DID STUDENTS LEARN
- DO THESE POINT BACK TO OUTCOMES?
Storyboarding allowed us to...

- Determine required vs. optional
- Standardize syllabus
- Create Facilitation Guide
- Develop instructor training plan

Will this lead to meeting course outcomes?
The Covid Plan! April 2020

- Rewrite outcomes to align with university’s focus on wellness and DEI
- Consistency among all sections
  - Required components
  - Wellness Wheel framework
- Integrate Strengths in all sections
  - Provided opt-out option; only two sections opted-out
- All sections 2x week
- Instructor/Co-facilitator of the Year awards
- Two synchronous and two asynchronous sections offered
- Strengths delivered differently
  - Pre-recorded videos
  - Instructions equipped with facilitation toolkit
  - Virtual group coaching sessions
The Covid Plan! April 2020

✓ New hiring process and recruit new instructors
✓ Improve instructor training & communication
  • All training virtual
  • Microsoft Teams
✓ Fall support for instructors – booster trainings & check-ins
  • Virtual booster trainings
  • Surveys and individual email checkins (formative assessment/relationship building)
✓ eLearning requirement - multiple training sessions offered; course shells for all instructors
✓ Instructor mentor/mentee matches
X Semester-end showcase
X No Common Read/Common Watch experience
X Enhanced match support
Phase 2: Planning

The assessment plan

- Student Strengths reflection papers
- Student course evaluations (Campus Labs)
- Co-facilitation evaluations (Qualtrics)
- Instructor evaluations (Qualtrics)
- Instructor of the Year nominations
- Instructor focus group
Phase 3
Implementation
Phase 3: Implementation

Instructor Training

- New Instructor Orientation
  - Required
    - Online modules
    - ½ days – July & August
  - eLearning tutorial
- Optional
  - Virtual Kickoff (June)
  - Boosters (July – Nov)
Phase 3: Implementation

Required training
- Pedagogy
- Wellness
- eLearning fundamentals
- Student Conduct
- Panel discussions
- Strengths
- Mental Health & Title IX

Boosters
- A conversation with ODI
- How to grade
- Teambuilding
- Teaching in an Inclusive Classroom
- Experiential Learning
- Mental Health checkup
- Strengths in the classroom
- Wellbeing check-in
- What to do after Nov. 20
Phase 3: Implementation

HPE presentations
Partnered with WMU’s Health Promotion & Education

EVERFI modules
AlcoholEDU Sexual Assault Prevention for Undergrads (SAPU), DEI, Financial Literacy

Instructor documents
Facilitation Guide, Course Schedule of Topics, Syllabus

Microsoft Teams
Files, announcements, conversations

Strengths
Strengths Champions or instructors did in-class Intro to Strengths presentation and group coaching sessions

Check-in's
Formal & information surveys, emails, and office hours
Phase 3: Implementation

Required course core assignments

- Virtual Library Tour (Intellectual)
- Strengths presentation and coaching (Occupational & Emotional)
- Mental Health presentation (Emotional)
- Academic advising appointment (Occupational)
- FOCUS assessment (Occupational)
- Financial Literacy modules (Financial)
- Sexual assault prevention presentation (Social & Environmental)
- AlcoholEDU and SAPU modules (Physical, Social, & Emotional)
- 1:1 check-in with co-facilitator
- End-of-semester culminating project (must assess 1-2 learning outcomes)
- End-of-semester course evaluation
Phase 4
Assessment
Phase 4: Assessment

Student course evaluations
Instructor focus group
Student Strengths reflection papers
Instructor survey
Co-facilitator survey
Nomination forms
Phase 4: Assessment

- Student course evaluations

2019 vs. 2020 Course Evaluation by Students

- Positive rating of the instructor: 86% (2019), 95% (2020)
- Positive rating of the course: 79% (2019), 88% (2020)
- I learned a great deal from my instructor: 80% (2019), 89% (2020)
- The grading system was clearly explained: 84% (2019), 91% (2020)
- The course appears to be well organized: 79% (2019), 89% (2020)
- The climate of the class is conducive to learning: 84% (2019), 91% (2020)

2019 = 31% response rate
2020 = 41% response rate
Overall, the items that received the lowest ratings in the scale included:
This course helped me:
- Participate in volunteering/community service – 75% agreed
- Participate in student organizations/activities – 78% agreed
- Use the WMU library – 78% agreed

The highest rated items were:
This course helped me:
- Make safe decisions about alcohol use – 89% agreed
- Make safe decisions about drug use – 89% agreed
- Make choices that support my overall wellbeing – 89% agreed
- Describe how I can apply my Strengths to my career goals – 87% agreed
Phase 4: Assessment

The table below indicates how many students agreed that they are better equipped to manage these dimensions of wellness in their lives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wellness Dimension</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Wellness</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Wellness</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Wellness</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Wellness</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Wellness</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Wellness</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Wellness</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Phase 4: Assessment

Qualitative student comments:

- Instructors were instrumental in their transition to WMU and contributed to student persistence.
- Personal growth and development from Strengths learning.
- Class was an open space to make friends and build community; there was joy in learning.
“[My primary instructor] helped me figure out [another class] and its navigation outside eLearning when the professor for this class was not forthcoming or helpful. Overall, she is the reason I am hopeful to continue my studies at Western.”

-FYE student
Phase 4: Assessment

- Instructor evaluations

Changes considered extremely or mostly useful by instructors

- Wellness Wheel: 79%
- Required course assignments: 79%
- Course schedule of topics: 74%
- Increased standardization of content and grading: 68%
- Using Teams for communication and resource sharing: 56%
Phase 4: Assessment

Teaching FYE is meaningful for instructors

84% response rate

Instructors' Experience

- Teaching FYE was a positive experience: 97%
- I would like to return as an instructor: 90%
- I would recommend this position to a colleague: 97%
- This role facilitated meaningful connections to first-year students: 97%
Phase 4: Assessment

- Instructors feedback on implementing Strengths:

**Instructors' Perceptions of Strengths in FYE 2100**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Pretty Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-class presentation</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group coaching sessions</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional activities/conversations</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One of my biggest takeaways was learning about Strengths and relating that to our majors (teaching) as well as in life and how we can work with others to connect all of strengths.”

-FYE student
Teaching FYE is meaningful for co-facilitators.

- 33% response rate, 100% agreed:
  - This role had a positive impact on their growth and development as a student leader.
  - Serving in this role created a sense of belonging at WMU.
  - They would recommend this position to a friend.

“I had a great relationship with my instructor. We were able to communicate and make decisions on class together. I appreciate her including my opinions on class discussions so much.”

-FYE Co-facilitator
Biggest Wins

- Improved instructor training
- Wellness Wheel integration and HPE collaboration
- Strengths in all sections
- Majority of sections F2F for maximum student impact
- Instructor of the Year Awards
Moving forward
Lessons learned & what comes next
Improvements for Instructors

Training
Start earlier.
Veterans share more.
Use rubrics.
Enhance Facilitation Guide.
More eLearning.

Communication
Expectation that everyone uses Teams.
Stick to one convention.
Roundtable discussions for instructors to share.

Co-facilitator support
Clear expectations of role.
More structure to work with primary over summer.
Protocol for when expectations aren’t met.
Lessons Learned

- Outcomes weren’t specific enough
- Need to set our own benchmarks
- Need comparable data
- Better to have Strengths Champions do presentation
- Booster attendance low
- Flexibility is key
Improvements for Course

- Tighten up learning outcomes
- Elevate DEI focus in class
- Primary/co-facilitator match support
- Enhanced co-facilitator training & expectations
- More focus/activity ideas on Wellness Wheel
- Streamline and require use of Teams
- Introduce Strengths earlier
- Find balance between standardization and customization
This year, more than others, this role has been so fulfilling. These students are going through so much and it has been so rewarding to be part of the village of humans that are helping them navigate everything going on in their world.”

-FYE Instructor
The best part was connecting with my students and them knowing that I was their biggest support system during this class.”

-FYE Co-facilitator
She integrated a lot of activities that were actually meaningful and exciting to work on. She gave us practical assignments and not busy work, and I really like how she structured the class and I would consider her a great friend after taking the class. Going to FYE is my favorite part of my day.”

-FYE student
Thanks!

Questions?

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