

# BCC First Year Program Update

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## The First Year Program - Designed for Student Success

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BCC's First-Year Program (FYP) is designed as a comprehensive support program intended to help first year students make a successful transition to college. At the center of the First Year Program is the First-Year Seminar (FYS), a one-credit two-hour course that combines student support, orientation to college, and introduction to academic skills and content. The purpose of the course is not only to provide an academic experience in which college success topics are interwoven, but to support students' success in other courses. This is achieved through both the classroom experience as well as through out-of-classroom support systems embedded into the FYP. The FYP utilizes an integrated approach to student support. Academic advisors work closely with FYS faculty and staff, embedded peer mentors, as well as student resource programs across the campus to monitor students' academic progress and social integration. In Fall 2017 there are 52 FYS sections, with 41 peer mentors, serving more than 1200 students. Forty-five full-time faculty have participated in the FYS professional development and teaching of FYS classes.

### Chronology:

The BCC First Year Seminar (FYS) was created as part of a college-wide effort to positively impact the success of first year students at the college. The program design was informed by an institutional self-study and improvement plan conducted under the auspices of the John Gardner Foundations of Excellence in the First Year in 2010-11. This study highlighted four major factors contributing to the lack of student success at BCC: Student disposition; curricular organization, pedagogy and academic supports; institutional organization. In Fall 2011, a First Year Advisory Committee was established to address recommendations from the Foundation of Excellence Report with a special working group charged with designing a Freshman Year Seminar. FYS 11 was piloted with 10 sections and 155 students in Spring 2012. The number of FYS sections have grown to 79 sections, serving over 1900 students during the 2016-2017 academic year. Special sections of FYS are scheduled for students enrolled in College Discovery, Accelerated Studies in Associates Program (ASAP), ESL Program; and students that have Community Based Organization (CBO) affiliations.

### Mission:

The mission of BCC FYP is to facilitate the academic and social integration of first year students to Bronx Community College by promoting student empowerment, informed decision making, community building, academic and life skills development and individual accountability for student success. The FYS prepares entering BCC students for successful college careers by immersing them in a program that integrates a variety of high impact practices, such as proactive academic advising, peer to peer support, mentoring, faculty support and development.

### First Year Program Objectives:

- ◆ Improve outcomes for First Time Freshman at BCC
- ◆ Connect freshman students to faculty, peer mentors, advisors and each other to create a sense of community as they transition to BCC
- ◆ Empower students to independently utilize services and develop a deeper understanding of their responsibilities for individual success.
- ◆ Provide opportunities for students to develop and practice the following general education skills: critical thinking, research, and information literacy
- ◆ Promote faculty use of engaged and effective pedagogies that encourages teaching innovation
- ◆ Serve as a model for peer to peer mentoring at all levels (faculty, student, and staff)
- ◆ Develop a culture of assessment by incorporating mechanisms whereby program activities are evaluated for program improvements at all levels.

### Student Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the semester, students enrolled in FYS will:

- ◆ Learn effective ways to evaluate and challenge ideas by using critical thinking strategies
- ◆ Identify essential campus resources and understand the purpose of building relationships with key personnel and departments on Campus
- ◆ Understands the importance of co-curricular involvement and how it enhances their academic study at BCC
- ◆ Find, evaluate and use sources of information gathered from traditional and technological resources.
- ◆ Understand the process for analyzing, interpreting, evaluating, and integrating information to solve problems and to support claims.

## First Year Program Findings:

### Student Experiences:

- ◆ 85% of students in assigned FYS sections met with their advisors at least once before the end of the semester.
- ◆ 90% of Students report satisfaction with FYP instructor support, advisement services and peer mentoring
- ◆ Review of the student support surveys shows that over 90% students believe that participation in FYS has enabled them to better understand the available campus resources and are better able to resolve issues on campus.

In particular, students indicated in Spring 2017 surveys, agreement/strong agreement that FYS has enabled them to:

Percent Agree/Strongly Agree:	%
Better understand my responsibilities	97%
Understand campus resources	96%
Feel comfortable participating in class	95%
Have a better sense of career options	94%
Gain better sense of how to be successful	94%
Develop stronger study skills	92%
Better resolve issues that arise	92%
Manage my time effectively	91%

### Impact on Peer Mentors:

Focus groups conducted in Spring 2017 with peer mentors revealed the following sentiments of the FYP peer mentors:

- ◆ Peer mentors describe their relationship with faculty, advisors and FYS administrators as collaborative and positive.
- ◆ Peer mentors see themselves as a connection between faculty and students. They see themselves as advocates for students and as role models.
- ◆ Peer mentors identified their roles in the FYS classes, including: making presentations, taking attendance, contacting students, facilitating group work, and meeting with professors before class.
- ◆ Peer mentors indicate that serving in this position helped them:
  - \* Improve their communication and leadership skills
  - \* Feel more confident
  - \* Better understand how to navigate the college
  - \* Work more effectively with others by becoming more empathetic and patient
  - \* Improve their communication with faculty in other courses.

## Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes:

Assessment has always been an important part of First Year Seminar. One of the most important pieces of FYS assessment is assessment of the critical thinking learning outcomes. For several semesters faculty have been asked to have students submit their critical thinking assignments through ePortfolio so that the assignments can be evaluated using a rubric. We have collected a substantial number of assignments and are ready to assess a relevant sample of them. An FYS Assessment Team is convening to:

1. Meeting once a month at time convenient for members, tentatively Fridays at 12pm
2. Evaluating assignment sample groups (can be done off site after an initial calibration)
3. Reevaluating the rubric
4. Writing a report summarizing the findings of the assessment

### Student Outcomes Assessment

The FYS program regularly assesses student progress and persistence, with a focus on improving student success. FYS students regularly outperform those students who do not participate in a first year Seminar, with respect to 1-year retention rates and most recently 3-year graduation rates.

Students in FYS (with no special program) demonstrated a 9% point higher 1-year retention rate (compared to those with no FYS) and a 10% point lead in 3-year graduation rates.

Category	N	% Retained
ASAP & FYS	96	80%
CD & FYS	159	65%
FYS	488	63%
no FYS	1026	54%
Total	1769	59%

Category	N	% Grad
ASAP & FYS	106	52%
CD & FYS	107	22%
FYS	409	20%
no FYS	1016	10%
Total	1638	16%