



# FOUNDATIONS OF EXCELLENCE TASK FORCE



## POLICY CENTER MISSION

The Policy Center on the First Year of College has as its basic mission the improvement of the beginning college experience through enhanced learning outcomes, success, and retention of new students. This mission is grounded in the belief that an institution's first-year policies and practices are the foundation for attainment of the larger goals of undergraduate education. The signature work of the Policy Center is the engagement of postsecondary institutions in a model for voluntary, comprehensive self-study and development and implementation of an intentional action plan designed to enhance the effectiveness of the first year.

# POLICY CENTER ON THE FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE



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Executive Director

# POLICY CENTER ON THE FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE

Betsy O. Barefoot  
Co-Director and  
Senior Scholar



# POLICY CENTER ON THE FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE



Randy L. Swing  
Co-Director and Senior  
Scholar

# PURPOSE



- Develop an action plan to ensure that UCA's approach to the first year of college is intentional and effective.
- Satisfy one piece of implementation of the university's Strategic Framework
- Form an important part of UCA's next application for continuing accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (North Central)
- Recognize a foundation for student success in the first year of college.

# 2005 FOUR-YEAR COHORT SCHOOLS (FIRST CLASS)

Bridgewater State College

Davenport University

Fairmont State University

Georgia Southern University

Indiana State University

Missouri Southern State University

New Mexico State University

Ohio University

Texas A & M University, Kingsville

University of Akron

University of Arkansas of Little Rock

Thiel College

University of West Georgia

Washburn University

University of North Texas

Wright State University

Arkansas State University, Jonesboro

Central Missouri State University

Florida International University

Midland Lutheran College

Midwestern State University

Northeastern Illinois University

Oakland University

Salisbury University

State University of New York, Cortland

University of Central Arkansas

Utah Valley State College



# SUMMER MEETING

ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

AUGUST 3 & 4, 2005



# FOUNDATIONS OF EXCELLENCE – FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE TASK FORCE

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# CHARGE AND MISSION

- Complete a campus audit of the first year
- Administer Faculty On-Line Survey
- Administer Student Paper Survey
- Evaluate findings using Foundation of Excellence Model
- Review Performance Indicators
- Develop action plan for campus improvement



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# “STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE”

## Exploring Nine Foundational Dimensions



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## **PHILOSOPHY**

*The problem:*

Disaggregated approaches to the first year that have no underlying philosophical base

## **ORGANIZATION**

*The problem:*

No one is in charge on many campuses. Many silos resulting in confusion, inefficiencies, and gaps.

## **LEARNING**

*The problem:*

Inadequate attention to learning outcomes both in and out of class.



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## **TRANSITIONS**

*The problem:*

Uneven attention to various elements of a successful transition.

## **FACULTY**

*The problem:*

A lack of significant faculty involvement in the first year.

## **ALL STUDENTS**

*The problem:*

Many first-year initiatives are piecemeal; others do not reach special student subpopulations.



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*Foundations of Excellence*®

## **DIVERSITY**

*The problem:*

Institutions vary widely in the degree to which they successfully address diversity issues.

## **ROLES AND PURPOSES**

*The problem:*

Students' narrow view of the purpose of higher education.

## **IMPROVEMENT**

*The problem:*

Too few initiatives are subjected to rigorous assessment. Isolation – lack of exposure to others.



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## PHILOSOPHY

### *The problem:*

Disaggregated approaches to the first year that have no underlying philosophical base.

### *Why this Dimension is important:*

Where the first year should begin – A sense of purpose, a rationale for what constitutes the overall experience of first-year students

### *Performance Indicators*

- Whether a philosophy/rationale exists in either written form or “implicitly”.
- Whether and to what degree it has an influence on policy and practice.
- To what degree it is disseminated to various constituent groups



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## ORGANIZATION

### *The problem:*

No one is in charge on many campuses. Many silos resulting in confusion, inefficiencies, and gaps.

### *Why this Dimension is important:*

Organization is essential to the realization of a purposeful first year.

### *Performance Indicators:*

- Determining existing organizational structure
- To what degree the structure provides an integrated approach
- Whether the structure has been evaluated
- The role of the structure in faculty/staff development
- To determine whether funding is appropriate



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## LEARNING

### *The problem:*

Inadequate attention to learning outcomes both in and out of class.

### *Why this Dimension is important:*

Learning is the primary purpose of the first year.

### *Performance Indicators:*

- The existence of learning outcomes for the first year
- Quality of instruction in high enrollment first-year classes
- Measures of out-of-class learning
- Appropriate placement into courses



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## TRANSITIONS

### *The problem:*

Uneven attention to various elements of a successful transition

### *Why this Dimension is important:*

The success of the first-year transition often determines future college success.

### *Performance Indicators:*

- The quality of your communication to students on a range of issues
- The quality of your communication to students' support networks
- Intentionality in helping students establish connections
- Academic advising



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## FACULTY

### *The problem:*

A lack of significant faculty involvement in the first year

### *Why this Dimension is important:*

Without faculty support and involvement, first-year efforts are difficult to launch and sustain.

### *Performance Indicators:*

- Institutional or unit encouragement of faculty involvement
- Expectations at the point of faculty hire
- Faculty rewards for first-year involvement



## ALL STUDENTS

### *The problem:*

Many first-year initiatives are piecemeal; others do not reach special student subpopulations.

### *Why this Dimension is important:*

All first-year students have developmental needs that should be addressed by the institution.

### *Performance Indicators:*

- What you know about the needs of particular students
- What you do to meet those needs
- How well you meet the needs of all students



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## DIVERSITY

### *The problem:*

**Institutions vary widely in the degree to which they successfully address issues.**

### *Why this Dimension is important:*

Education about human differences is an important component of the beginning college experience.

### *Performance Indicators:*

- Students exposure to diverse ideas
- Students exposure to diverse people
- The degree to which the institution conveys “standards” for behavior in a civil and open environment



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## ROLES AND PURPOSES

### *The problem:*

Students' narrow view of the purpose of higher education.

### *Why this Dimension is important:*

The first year is the time for exploration of roles and purposes for higher education

### *Performance Indicators:*

- How well you communicate the institution's notion of purpose
- Whether you provide students the opportunity to explore their own purpose
- How well you communicate the institution's rationale for the curricular organization of the first year



## IMPROVEMENT

### *The problem:*

Too few initiatives are subjected to rigorous assessment. Isolation – lack of exposure to others.

### *Why this Dimension is important:*

Improvement is vital to sustainability and effectiveness

### *Performance Indicators:*

- The practice of assessment
- The use of assessment for improvement
- Other strategies for improvement



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The result for our students will be increased engagement in their own education, higher academic performance, better retention in the university, and higher graduation rates.





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