CHALLENGING & SUPPORTING THE FIRST-YEAR STUDENT

A HANDBOOK for IMPROVING THE FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE

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This book begins with an introduction in which we review what has happened in the past decade that dictates revisiting the scholarship practice of the first year of college, offer a revised definition of first-year student success, and expound principles of good practice for first-year student success. We also suggest a conceptual framework for the first-year: challenge and support for both first-year students and the institutions in which they enroll.

Part One provides an overview of what we know about today's first-year students and institutional efforts to help them succeed. The chapters in this part include a description of the demographics and characteristics of today's first-year students, a review of the research on what institutions and students must do to promote persistence into the second year of college, and a review of current practices devoted to helping students make a successful transition to college.

Part Two discusses the important challenge of recruiting and retaining first-year students, the obligation of institutions to help them become engaged and involved in their own education, and the importance of establishing and enforcing high expectations for them.

Part Three is about creating campus cultures for first-year student success, including fostering the success of underrepresented minorities; creating campus climates that reflect the realities of our increasingly diverse colleges and universities; promoting first-year student success in public, urban universities; discussing the importance of first-year student success from a president's perspective; advocating for first-year students; educating first-year students about the impact of technology on their lives; and creating collaborative partnerships between academic and student affairs.

Part Four discusses the many ways in which first-year students must be challenged and supported in the classroom, including suggesting ways in which faculty may structure inclass learning environments to promote student success and how faculty may be supported in their efforts to become more effective in teaching first-year students. Furthermore, other efforts that promote first-year student success are also discussed, including first-year seminars, developmental education, supplemental instruction, academic advising, libraries, service-learning, and learning communities.

Part Five discusses the many ways in which first-year students must be challenged and supported outside the classroom by faculty, student affairs professionals, and other staff, including orientation programs, living environments, student support services, and alcohol abuse and other drug use prevention.

Part Six sets out a framework for assessing efforts that promote first-year students' success, provides many practical suggestions for conducting assessment studies, and reviews both quantitative and qualitative instruments for assessing first-year services, programs, and courses.

In the summary and conclusion of this book, we present some principles of good practice to guide efforts to promote first-year students success, summarize the recommendations for the ways in which institutions should organize to promote that success both inside and outside the classroom, and reiterate the importance of making assessment an essential part of improving the first college year. While we strove for continuity among the many topics covered in this handbook, we recognize that because of the length and breadth of this handbook, many readers are more likely to pick and choose among chapters rather than read it from cover to cover.

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