

Teaching First-Year College Students

**Revised and Expanded Edition of
*Teaching College Freshmen***

Bette La Sere Erickson
Calvin B. Peters
Diane Weltner Strommer

Published by Jossey-Boss
San Francisco, CA
2006
(284 Pages)

In the years since the first edition of this book appeared, millions of first-year students have entered our nation's colleges and universities. By most estimates, only about half have completed their studies and emerged four, five, or six years later as freshly minted graduates. Some, of course, were not prepared for the challenges of college and academic life; others found the financial burden too much to bear, and still others tired of the classroom and abandoned academic routine to take their chances in life beyond the campus. But many more, perhaps most, were first-year students brimming with potential who encountered an institution out of step with their needs, a campus climate that was unwelcoming and unsupportive, and faculty who were all too often aloof, distant, and seemingly disinterested in students' struggles to fit in socially and succeed academically.

We in higher education have known for some time that the lives of students who enter colleges or universities are profoundly affected by their experiences in the first semesters, if not their first weeks on campus. If they feel welcomed, challenged, and supported, first-year students flourish. They persist in their studies, grow as human beings, and eventually become the sort of informed and inquiring citizens so essential for our times. If they feel abandoned and adrift, at once ignored and overwhelmed, they do what we all would do in similar circumstances: flee to places that are more comforting and more affirming.

The attrition of so many new college students exacts a high price – in dollars, in missed opportunity, and in human lives. Of course, the movement to direct the academy's attention to the experiences of first-year students recognized this fact more than two decades ago, and a number of committed faculty members and administrators on campuses across the country invested considerable energy attending to the needs of first-year students. They have much to show for those efforts. There are two national centers devoted to first-year student experience, and nearly every institution in the United States now conducts some form of focused seminar for its incoming students.

The heart of a student's first-year experience remains in those interactions that occur in classrooms, laboratories, recital halls, and studios: teaching and learning. It is, after all, what drew them to college in the first place, and their relationships with faculty members, as instructors and as mentors, are the foundation for successful college careers. If more first-year students are going to persist and succeed in college – and the need is urgent that they do – then the instruction they receive demands our renewed attention. That is the focus of this book.

(Preface)

CONTENTS

Part One: Understanding First-Year Students

- Chapter 1: First-Year Students in Perspective
- Chapter 2: Intellectual Development in College
- Chapter 3: Learning Styles

Part Two: Effective Instructions for First-Year Students

- Chapter 4: Knowing, Understanding, Thinking, and Learning How to Learn:
The Goals of First-Year Instruction
- Chapter 5: Preparing a Syllabus and Meeting the First Class
- Chapter 6: Presenting and Explaining
- Chapter 7: Creating Involvement in the Classroom
- Chapter 8: Encouraging Active Reading
- Chapter 9: Supporting Active Study Practices
- Chapter 10: Trying Transformed Teaching
- Chapter 11: Evaluating Student Learning
- Chapter 12: Grading

Part Three: Opportunities and Challenges in First-Year Instruction

- Chapter 13: Creating Inclusion in First-Year Classrooms and Curricula
- Chapter 14: Teaching Large Classes
- Chapter 15: Sustaining Engagement Outside Class:
Office Hours, Advising, and First-Year Seminars
- Chapter 16: Strengthening Commitment to First-Year Instruction