Hello and thank you for joining us today for a presentation on Mapping the First Year Experience.
I’m Cassady Glass Hastings, consultant for First Year Programs.

It has been a privilege to work on this project and I’m looking forward to continuing the work today by engaging with all of you.

I’ve had the opportunity to meet with some of you and those I haven’t, I hope we are able to connect soon.

Cassady brought with her an understanding of higher education and student learning based on her experience working on 3 different campuses: UW, UC Davis and the University of Southern California. Prior to coming to UW, she worked in First Year Programs (USC), Service-Learning (USC), Career Center (UC Davis) and Student Affairs Administration (UC Davis).

Cassady has been a consistent contributor to this campus for the last 15 years. Cassady got her start here at the UW in 2005 as a graduate student assistant for then Psychology Chair Ana Mari Cauce on a campus-wide climate assessment: Leadership, Community and Values Initiative. From the start of her time at UW, she has thought critically about campus-wide engagement.
Today, Cassady is known by many on this campus as an engaging instructor of both undergraduate and graduate courses so it’s no wonder she is a 4 time nominee for the Distinguished Teaching Award. Many advisors know of her reputation as a statistics instructor, in particular.

She also has an in-depth knowledge of undergraduate education at the University. In the College of Education, she helped facilitate the creation and implementation of the Education, Communities and Organizations major. She’s thought deeply about the purpose of an undergraduate education and the curricular and co-curricular elements of a successful undergraduate experience.

She has also been an active campus partner to many programs across campus, including being a founding member of the Husky Leadership Initiative and the Resilience Lab, a faculty advisor for undergraduate research and service-learning, and a faculty speaker at many freshman and parent orientation sessions over the last 5 years. She is also a well-known advocate for advancing our University mission for equity and diversity.

In some ways, the combination of her expertise and her deep knowledge of this campus made her the only one who could take on this project. And I’m grateful for her work.
The First Year Experience is a campus—wide investment. Thank you for taking the time to talk with us today. Your perspective on this issue is a valuable piece of the first year experience.

This room is a testament to the importance of this work.

As the Council for the Advancement of Standards for Higher Education states.....

*Because supporting first year student success is a topic that is not easily localized or specific to one functional area, an effective first-year experience requires campus-wide coordination and cooperation.*

And you have demonstrated your commitment by being in this room today.
The representation in this rooms inspires me and it shows our institutional commitment to the first year experience. Not only does it span departments and units across campus, we represent different perspectives on the first year experience. Some of you work within a unit, others work centrally. Some of you are administrators charged with implementing change campus-wide, and others meet 1-1 with students every day.

And I’m grateful for the faculty who are in this space to engage in the conversation.

What we all have in common is our commitment to serving students, promoting learning and development, to realizing the full potential of a UW education.

In this way, if your schooling took place in the united states, I’m going to ask you to think back to elementary school PE class.......
Remember this activity? You and your classmates each held a small part of the parachute and raised your arms.......and the parachute soared!

This activity took collaboration and shared investment. The first year experience, and our first year students, need the same team work.

As one of my interviewees said: “We need faculty and staff to link arms in support of our students.”

We don’t aim to create a safety net, or only a safety net. We want our students to soar.....to be Boundless, if you will. But that requires that we join hands and hold the parachute together.

So thank you for being here today to invest in this work and continue the conversation.
I’m here today as a convener and a facilitator to share YOUR perspectives on the first year experience.

The expertise on the first year experience is in the room. I have the privilege of holding up a mirror for your expertise on the student experience.

This image of a mirror was chosen specifically because we don’t all have the same perspective and there are certainly gaps in the reflection of the first year experience.

One of those gaps is the work in progress.....
There are new initiatives launched every day and there is great work happening in every department in this room. This presentation reflects data collected in one moment in time and cannot possibly completely encapsulate the plethora of initiatives happening across campus.

With that, let me tell you a little bit more about the project.
I was charged with mapping the first year experience on the UW Seattle campus.

To do this, I conducted more than 65 interviews with staff and faculty and collected focus group data from more than 150 current UW students.

There was no strict IRB protocol and all interviews were loosely structured. Student data was collected through both randomly selection and convenience sampling.

Staff and faculty interviews centered on a couple key questions:

a) Trademarks (positive and negative) of a first year experience for freshman and/or transfer students  
b) Best practices for programming, advising and teaching  
c) Key components of 1 year seminars  
d) Characteristics of this generation of 1st year students  
e) Populations that departments were endeavoring to better serve

As some of you know, I’m a proud data-dork and am happy to chat with interested parties more in-depth about data analysis. So if you want to geek out over correlation tables, let me know.
Given the decentralized nature of our campus, I also attempted to collect and collate previous research and reports relevant to the first year experience.
Before sharing my data themes, it’s useful to first situate this research within the larger context of higher education; both the national landscape and trends at the University of Washington.
First, the UW can be situated among larger, national trends in higher education. I’m sure none of these come as a surprise and there are likely others we could add.

1. **Return on Investment Rhetoric** – Over the last couple years there has been an Increase in the societal rhetoric that there should be a significant return on the investment due to the high cost of a postsecondary education.

2. **Major as Career** - Generation Z was shaped by the recession, and they are motivated by sense of purpose, with an entrepreneurial spirit. This results in an even stronger correlation between major and career, than we have seen in past generations. They feel
a pressure to decide on a major early in their college career, but many (30-80%) change their major at least once

3. College for All- Increasing national rhetoric on class inequality and initiatives that financially support access and completion of a postsecondary education. Our own Seattle Mayor has launched such an initiative.

4. Rise of STEM- Over the last decade, the number of STEM undergraduate degrees granted nationwide has steadily risen. In 2000 about one-third of all freshmen planned to study a STEM field; this proportion rose steadily to 45% by 2016 (Eagan et al. 2017).

5. Mental Health- Across the country universities are seeing significant increases in the numbers of students who report mental health struggles and seek services. However, this is equally a result of changes in mental health struggles as it is a result of an increased acceptance in reporting struggles. As mental health services in K-12 have also increased, there has been an increase in students who come to campus with pre-diagnosed mental health conditions.

• The American College Health Association reported in 2018 that approximately 40% of undergraduates have felt severely depressed in the last year. Approximately a 20% increase from a decade ago.

• However, there has also been a 20% DROP in the reported stigma about receiving mental health treatment.

• These numbers parallel changes at UW.
There are also several trends on our campus that influence the first year experience.

1. We have enviable retention and graduation rates. More work to be done, especially with regard to the equity gaps in our retention numbers. But many universities would love to be in our position.
   1. 92% 1st Year Retention Rate
   2. 81% 6 Year Graduation Rate

2. The state and K-12 education system have invested in advanced learning opportunities that prepare high school students for college and provide students with the opportunity to earn college-level credit. This has resulted in students coming to campus with an increasing number of college credits completed.

3. Increased number of colleges and departments who accept students directly.
   1. While these changes have had an overall positive effect and helped to refine communications with students about potential academic paths, it has also been over-emphasized in the student culture and resulted in an increased
sense of urgency to find a major because “everyone else has it figured it.”

4. Not only has our student body become increasingly diverse over the past decade, but we have also strengthened our position as a globally-engaged campus and a global leader in higher education.
The final context important to mention when we discuss the first year experience, is our student body.

In an attempt to promote understanding of the student experience, I have created a set of First Year Student Typologies. These were created in collaboration with the First Year Experience Roundtable, instructors of freshman seminars across campus.

We created 10 typologies of first year students based on my research. I often took direct quotes from my interviews and tried to package them into fictional personas to exemplify common challenges and assets of first year students.

It should go without saying that anytime you endeavor to create such a product you risk reifying stereotypes and inevitably oversimplify the student experience. So they come with that caveat.

The typologies are meant as a conversation starter, as an interactive way to generation conversation on the needs, struggles and assets of your own first year students. They are particularly helpful when working with groups who are less familiar with the first year student experience.
The typologies are posted to our first year mapping website and also include snapshot of UW student demographics to help you better understand our student population, as well as discussion questions to facilitate dialogue within your department or unit.
Freshman Student A

- Wanted to be a doctor but now unsure.
- Bombed Chem 142 and doesn't understand how to write a good paper in ENGL 131.
- Feels like they are failing at everything but afraid to tell anyone.
- Privileged background, older brother and parents went to UW.

International Student I

- Traveled with parents to US and has never been to campus before.
- Stressed in Seattle due to language barriers, making it challenging to meet people.
- Classroom norms are uncomfortable; unsure of the way they ask for your opinions.
- Feels professors only see deficits and other students don't want to partner for in-class activities.
- Hates doing food and feels homesick for a familiar culture.
- Learning how to use many US-based tech tools (e.g., Facebook).
With the context set, let’s move on to the findings.

First give the bottom line of my research

Next, I will review specific themes and findings

Finally, I have a few humble recommendations.

It’s worth noting that project findings and recommendations echoed those by University working groups.
Good News: Smooth, Successful Transition

The good news: The UW excels at supporting students in their transition to UW, particularly in the ways we provide spaces for students to receive additional support or to build smaller communities in their first year.

Imagine for a moment that the UW is like the Atlantic Ocean. An astonishing array of opportunity.

The scale of our first year experience is like the amazon river, which is an impressive 4,000 miles long and 55,000,000 gallons of water flow through the river every second. Our first year experience is one of scale: this year we welcomed 7,500+ freshman and over 1,3000 transfer students.

And our incoming students are like the 1,100+ tributaries that flow into the Amazon. The diversity of waterways is part of what makes the amazon so strong.

So if we imagine that the UW is like the Atlantic Ocean, Some students are ready to go right on out into the atlantic ocean when they get here.

Others need a little bit more scaffolding for their transition and find the Ocean
overwhelming.

These students benefit from the availability of transition support programs. I continue my analogy, these transition support programs are like estuaries. Smaller, shallow, and safe bodies of water students can enjoy before flowing out to the Amazon.

The good news is that there is a solid array of estuaries for our first year students.

there is a variety of high quality programs to transition students to campus and college-life. And student benefit from different estuary options to best fit their transition and support needs. And students in these programs tend to have higher GPA’s and graduate faster.

And there is evidence to suggest that there are enough estuaries for students who need/want them.
This evidence comes from analysis of the freshman in fall 2018.

Those who want to be served are being served and there is no evidence of systematic bias in who is being served.

For the purposes of this analysis the Business School freshman seminar was not included because their transition course is offered in winter quarter. Also, the Brotherhood Initiative did not accept a cohort in Fall 2018 so EDUC 303 was not included in this analysis.

Matriculated = some college, no degree

The question is: Would more students benefit from being in a first year seminar? Do those with more credits need a seminar?
The first year experience at UW is like asking students to explore the Olympic National Park without a map. We say something like: “Here are the landmarks, go find them.” They don’t understand the terrain, which hiking trails contain more significant elevation gains or might be covered in snow.

And to further compound their wayfinding, students often also receive multiple suggestions from multiple people on how to best get to their destination, so perhaps in addition to not having a map, they also have to gage the advice of multiple guides.

My research suggests that this wayfinding without a map, and with multiple guides, takes significant energy (time and
emotional energy) to navigate.

Further, the energy spent wayfinding might also prevent them from spending the same amount of energy in building community or supporting their mental health.
Next, let’s dig deeper into some of the central themes and findings.
The UW is part of 2 other interconnected, mutually shaping systems: K-12 and Commuter and Technical Colleges. We do not operate in isolation. Changes in one system impact the others. And when it comes to first year students, the systems are not streamlined. Can be frustrating for students.

Best exemplified through the transfer student experience:

“If you don’t know what you want to do, you’re told ‘Go to community college,’ but then they get there and the community college says ‘Get major ready.’ Then they transfer and they can’t get into their major until winter or spring.”
There were 3 first year populations that emerged through my research:

**Freshman:**
- “1st year student” is most synonymous with freshman
- Need help “adulting” and finding their way

**Transfer:**
- Universal admiration for the focus, professionalism and increased academic engagement of transfer students, inside and outside the classroom.
- Different socialization emphases for freshman (standardize/extended) and transfer (diverse/quick) when they enter the UW.
- Although several departments have tried to adapt programming to better serve transfer students, they remain an elusive group that are not served to the same extent as freshman, and yet they are unsure how to best meet transfer students’ needs. Attendance at events or enrollment in courses targeted to transfer students remain persistent
challenges.
• Question of when transfer students shed their “transfer” identity.
• “We are starting to think of transfers like we think of veterans; it is part of their identity but it’s not all of them.”

Running Start or those with many AP/IB credits
• Newer and growing 1st year population no one fully understands or knows how to best support, but is seen as not fitting with current freshman/transfer first-year student molds.
• Is there a ”college mindset”? Not engaged in the college mindset when you are in AP/running start? More credits, but less practice.

Research suggests that there is no universal first year experience at UW.

The most common shared experience: The first exam :( “The First Exam Breaks them.”

Adapting to studying at the UW was also a nearly shared universal experience, but transfer students had a significant leg up.

So what are the specific highs and lows of the first year experience? I asked students.....and here’s what they said.
In terms of positive experience in the first year here is how students ranked the provided list of experiences.

PAUSE

What is noticeable, surprising, interesting to you?

I personally was pleased that interested courses and connecting with faculty was so nigh on the list, with 67% of students ranking it in their top 3 experiences.

When I asked students about their negative or challenging experiences, here’s what they said......
This isn’t terribly surprising. Except perhaps that I might have expected mental health to rank higher on the list. Which leads me to wonder what proportion of mental health is due to academic-related challenges.

The other interesting finding here is exactly HOW challenging students found academics to be at the UW.

We know from other data that students expect their education at the UW to be challenging and they view that as beneficial.

For example:

**PERTS - Project for Education Research That Scales - University of Washington - Seattle, 47,691**

Do students anticipate difficulties in the transition to college in a positive light, and remain excited to come to college?
• 80% of students expected their transition to college to be at least moderately difficult, and 88% of students at least mostly agreed that they viewed difficulties in their upcoming transition as a positive challenge.

But maybe, clearly, it is more challenging than they expect.
I also asked students about where, or from whom, they gather information on a variety of topics.

When asked about sources of information, peers feature prominently, but so do academic advisors and the internet.

*It’s worth noting that peers playing a stronger role in choosing a major than getting into a major

Anecdotally, peers are the most pervasive source of information…..and my data confirmed that not only are they a consistent course of information but faculty and staff also view peers as a beneficial tool of communication. Departments that don’t utilize peers to convey information, wished they did.

Caution: peer advice on how to navigate system not always best and can perpetuate “efficient” culture and urban legends become Truth.

Navigating the maze of majors was noted as one area where student lack the full range of information to helpful to students, their advice can be more harmful than helpful, or it is inappropriate for students to have such conversations.
However, there was also a recognition that there is a boundary to what is appropriate and reasonable to expect in the peer mentor role: “Our staff has the knowledge of student development theory that is required for student success but the sweet spot is staff paired with peers.”

There are a couple interesting findings here:

1) Interesting most disappointed in grades, but self-knowledge on how to succeed in the classroom. This substantiates the PERTS survey: Students think they are prepared to be challenged, but they are more challenged than they anticipate. They are confident in their self-knowledge to know how to succeed in the classroom but then disappointed in their grades.

2) PARENTS: Of all topics asked, students were most likely to seek their parents advice on “stress, anxiety or emotional well-being.”

This could mean that parents disproportionately hear about this topic (as opposed to exploring majors, etc.). It would behoove the University to ensure that parents receive timely messages about potential stressors and accurate information on resources.
Speaking of peers, developing friendships and finding community was a common challenge. I liken the experience to the feeling of being the lone multicolor tree in a forest. Your people are out there, but how can I find them?

“I’ve never had students asking for help on how to make a friend before.”
Personality wise….while it is undoubtedly overgeneralizing, this generation is one of anxious anti-explorers......which makes the wayfinding without a map, and with multiple guides, even harder more challenging.

Many first year students’ experience as they would a scavenger hunt, where you first have to find the “first stop” before you can proceed to the next one. And they run from one stop to the next. If you’ve ever participated in such an experience, you know that you run past the beautiful fountain or the street musician playing your favorite song. So focused on figuring out the next clue and getting there as fast as you can. This focused, purposeful process means students often “miss” moments of self-exploration.

Common descriptors of this generation of students: Stressed, anxious, lacking curiosity, unwilling to explore and career-focused.

Students want to do everything right away

Due to this generation’s focused on career,
experiential learning is seen as one of the practical and productive step towards career.

These characteristics and orientation to education can be exacerbated by the centralized structure of the UW, which for students can feel like this.......

We require many stops to accomplish a goal.

We’ve told them to go find these landmarks in the Olympic National Park, right? It’s like telling them to go backpacking......anyone a backpacker?...... and you have to stop at 3 ranger stations for your permit to start hiking, but one open at 8am, one of 1pm and the other only open on Mondays.

We know from the student withdrawal survey that students get passed around which exacerbates their problem and is a major obstacle to retention.

University departments don't talk to one another and tend to replicate programs. Too often innovative programming is siloed without effort, or sometimes even unwillingness, to collaborate.

We need to all hold the parachute together not try to own the parachute.

Related to this student experience, one of the most interesting findings was a theme about the change in student demeanor from Fall to spring.......
Many interviewees, including all of the faculty, commented on the drastic change in students’ engagement and perspective between fall and spring of their first year.

As one faculty member said to me:

“In the fall they are bright-eyed, eager, engaged….with a palpable curiosity…. but then by spring the same students are so jaded and removed .....that look is gone .....What happens in between?”

What’s evening more fascinating than this quote is that this faculty member started our interviewing by saying “I don’t know if I will be the best person to talk to because......”

“What in the fall students ask questions like ‘Can I learn more than 1 language?’ ‘How do I audition for the band?’ but by spring they just want into a major, check the boxes and be done. How do we manage to kill the curiosity in 2 quarters?”

Student focus group data suggests that low grades (real or perceived) are a large part of what happens between fall and spring.
This is what happens as a result of the wayfinding without a map. They enter the maze and come out looking like this.
Speaking of Mazes

Without exception, every conversation noted the impact of our maze of major admissions practices as a significant, if not the most significant stressor during the 1st year experience.

Even departments whose work is not focused on advising, such as tutoring centers, reported that the majority of their conversations with students are around navigating majors.

Exceptional number of departments that offer undergraduate degrees. It takes professional staff more than a year to understand who to call and how to advise.

Maze isn’t only the process to be accepted, but to also find out about options and maximize enrollment to preserve options.

Maze emphasizes mindsets/activities that are antithetical to the Husky Experience.

I couldn’t resist adding a couple of the Facebook Boundless Memes
When I asked students.....
Consistent theme in multiple analyses. Current academic landscape, coupled with the personality of this generation, suggested that perhaps there is a cost of this unguided, without a map, but with multiple guides, sort of academic exploration. The exploration itself was asked as a positive experience and it ranked fairly high for many students- 3rd highest with 47% ranking it in the top 3 most positive.

However, it was also significantly correlated with negative experiences.

**Significant Inverse Relationship (positive experiences)**

↑ Meeting new people/finding community  
↓ Interesting classes/connecting with faculty  
↓ Discovering academic/professional interests

Strong, but not statistically significant relationship between “getting into major/connecting to department” and “meeting new people/finding community.”

Find academic home early = additional energy to establish social communities?  
Connect with peers with similar interests?  
Freed from the mental and physical energy of finding academic home = more time/energy for community building?
Interestingly academic spaces also promote building friends and community. When asked where they made friends students reported:

#1 Through current friends
#2 Through student organizations
#3 Through courses/study groups
Similarly, evidence suggests that faculty matter.

(Interpret chart)

However, faculty have many demands on their time and exist within a system that does not support or reward investment in undergraduate education.

Since faculty are an important positive (and maybe even protective influence) in the first year, how can we provide tools and supports for faculty?
As mentioned earlier, UW students are not immune to an increase in students seeking mental health support.

In a recent survey administered to students who left UW prior to degree completion, 54% of respondents reported that they withdrew due to “personal and well-being reasons.”

The UW Counseling Center recorded a 70% increase in the number of calls to the crisis counselor in fall 2018 compared to the same period the previous year.

While this is on par with national student data, my interviewees wondered if there was a need for something between informal conversations with parents or friends and an appointment at the counselor center.

Academic maze necessitates that advisors spend their time on logistics not student development

“Students need opportunities for interpersonal connection.”
“This university does an insanely awesome job with first year students. We are a leader in this area. But what happens to second year students? We worry about them all the way through that year. It’s the year when many don’t get into their major of choice, and this failure is added to real and perceived academic failures, and sometimes also personal rejection, such as relationships or not getting into student organizations, internships, etc.”

Programs and services seem to sufficiently meet the transition needs of first year freshman students, especially in the first quarter. Some questioned sufficient support beyond the first quarter or the first year.

Freshman students often struggle most after their initial transition, namely in spring of their first year and during their second year.

According to research, the “sophomore slump” is tied to the 105 credits where you have to make a decision on a major. Academic advisors and university
administrators suggested that the increase in the accumulation of credits prior to UW results in students advancing in time-to-degree status before they are ready developmentally.

Since students are entering the UW with more and more credits, and those with 90+ credits are least likely to enroll in one of the current first year seminar options, how can we best help these students?
With an increased understanding that a successful first year experience includes both transition to the university and integration into the academic environment.

3 primary recommendations
Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Articulate the UW curricular expectations and create avenues of academic socialization of all students.

2. Examine methods to increase wayfinding and academic belonging for all students.

3. Explore potential interventions in the first year which could promote positive student health and wellness in the 2nd year.
“It has been a tough academic adjustment because I'm unsure how to perform academically for a university instead of high school. In high school, I understood what a successful piece of work looked like but here, I'm still trying to figure that out.”

In order for a student to be academically successful they need 3 pieces of information:

1) Understand and adjust to system of higher education.
   a) Being an adult
   b) develop a self concept that says “i belong here” and understand What are my strengths and weaknesses as a learner? In general
   c) How do I ask for help succeeding in the classroom and where do I go?
i) Navigating resources and relationships

1) Academic socialization
   a) What is expected of me in each class and how does this differ between departments, classes and faculty?
   b) How do I need to study differently here?
   c) What do I want/need to get out of my education? ("Why do I have to take writing credits?")

1) Disciplinary knowledge
   a) This academic socialization continues, as a sort of a Part II when students enter a major and a specific disciplinary field. Where they can understand the academic standards of anthropology compared to chemistry or art.
   b) Should be conveyed by experts in that field.
   c) Mastery of disciplinary content

Right now there is no intentional or systematic way students are socialized to these three elements. Most students gain the first on their own and those in first year seminars, for example, have a comprehensive orientation to the UW as a system. But academic socialization, in particular tends to be haphazardly learned and often academic socialization and disciplinary knowledge are learned together once students enter a department, which often is not until their junior year.

Question for you: Should we and how would we engage students in our community of scholars in their first year?
A way the UW could accomplish this goal is to adopt learning outcomes for the first year experience and then assess how and where students meet these learning goals in the first year.

Earlier this year the Retention Taskforce charged a working group with identifying interventions for the first year. This group identified First Year Learning Outcomes.

These could be revised, adopted, assessed and implemented systematically across campus.
In order to realize our institutional goals, students need to be given more maps to explore the Olympic National Park-like experience that is a Husky undergraduate education.

They don’t all need the same map, and that’s important to remember. But they need consistent information, to guide, but not direct them, so they don’t have to triangulate the advice of multiple guides. And by giving students more guidance, they hopefully will have more mental space and physical time for academic and personal exploration, as well as reflection and self-care, that is an essential part of a successful undergraduate education.

I want to be clear that I am NOT suggesting that students should be directed to a specific major or even department. But rather that we, as a university, provide two things:

1) A feeling of security that they are held by the university. That they belong somewhere, academically. That they will find their path and there is a place for them. Sort of a psychology home.

2) Guided support to explore academic paths.

This “home” will also help accomplish the previous recommendation:
• Systematic information on the academic expectations of being a UW student-
message that will be refined by departments when students engage in a specific discipline

Similarly, I know I’m not the first to say this, but transfer students, in order to be efficient with their time here and since they tend to build community within academic communities, need to be admitted directly to their department.

Great progress already through admissions work and current wayfinding projects underway.

The way we present maps can also serve as a valuable socialization tool to calm the anxiety students feel and promote engagement in additional opportunities that support student development.
For example, the University of Texas, demonstrates how maps also serve socialization purpose. Value of exploration, normality in change, major does not equal career.

Some evidence nationally that students who declare later are happier and developmentally this provides opportunities for growth and self-understanding.

https://wayfinder.utexas.edu/
In addition to examining ways to engage students in the community of scholars in their first year and providing maps for students to find their academic path and achieve their goals.

We can also increase potentially protective practices in the first year, with the hope of promoting positive health and wellness in the 2nd year.

My research suggests that spring of the 1st year might be a particularly impactful momentum point. See rollercoaster. They can gather steam towards finding their paths during the second year. This is a moment when we can potentially buffer them against some of the real and perceived failures that occur in the 2nd year.

**Create On-Ramps to High Impact Educational Practices (HIEP’s) in the First Year??**

- Research
- Community Engagement
- Internships
- Study Abroad

These practices connect academic learning to larger questions and skill building.
Not as a way to increase time to graduation, but to improve the student experience.
In integrating on-ramps to High Impact Educational Practices, but also for all 3 of these recommendations, the UW might find it beneficial to embrace, rather than fight, our decentralized structure. We don’t suggest the same experience for all students, right? In this sense, there are ways in which our decentralized structure can be a benefit.

Remember the Amazon river analogy. Students come to us from multiple tributaries, and that is one of our greatest strengths. Similarly, the UW experience, is an ocean. While there are common elements of a positive experience that we hope all students experience, it is not a uniform education.

So rather than a one-size-fits-all solution for first year engagement, think about how our maps can optimize students’ previous knowledge, as well as the multiple routes to their destination.

The first year experience is one example where the many options for students is serving us well. Students who want or need a first year seminar have several options and can choose their estuary. Evidence that this structure is working for us. Could we have more options, maybe?
Successful programs are at capacity so there is certainly room for additional options, or estuaries. What I’m suggesting is embracing, codifying our decentralized structure as a benefit for first year students.

Several of my interviews suggested that we have a requirement for first year seminars for all. We could certainly do that but I’d recommend we do so within this kind of structure because there is no one size fits all at an institution this size. And some peer institutions have done just this: UT Austin has this model, called 360 Connections.

My recommendations have been specific with regard to the pain points in the first year experience. It might be that these are best ameliorated through an additional type or form of seminar, but that’s not my place to decide.

**UT Austin- 360 Connections**
Explore academic integrity, leadership, connecting to faculty, university spirit and traditions, and more. Each connection is unique, but all have:
- Approximately 20 students
- Routine meetings, typically once a week
- A peer mentor and a staff or faculty member connected to the group
- A particular topic and curriculum

**University of Texas, Austin- 360 Connections**
First Year Interest Groups
Computer Science Pods
Economics Peer Mentor Program
Women in Natural Sciences
Black Student Alliance Freshman Action Team
Leadership and Ethics Institute
Liberal Arts 101
Residence Life 360

https://ugs.utexas.edu/360/connections
Finally, I’d like to address a bit of an elephant in the room: faculty engagement.

We have engaged the Faculty Council on Student Affairs, as well as faculty who participated in interviews and attended the public presentation.

And we have been and will continue to engage faculty in other spaces.

Findings suggest what we’ve always known: faculty matter. Their engagement in undergraduate education, their relationships with students, matter.

But they also have many demands on their time and exist within a system that does not reward deep undergraduate engagement.

How can we help?

When we presented at the Faculty Council on Student Affairs there was universal enthusiasm for this work and a strong willingness to help engage faculty in conversation.
In terms of next steps there are two initiatives UAA will be launching:

**Student Journeys:**
Partners will explore how we might give students opportunities to explore and accomplish their goals.

**Spring Momentum**
Convene a group of people to explore ways to connect with the curriculum- articulate learning in relation to curriculum
Gladly meet with any department for presentation or follow-up meeting.

Groups Visited:
• Faculty Council on Student Affairs

Planned Visits:
• Office of the University Registrar and Enrollment Information Services Leadership Team

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**Take Action: Continue the Conversation**

- Share this information with your peers
  - Host a conversation in your unit about how to further support students in their first year.
  - If you want more information feel free to reach out to Cassady Cassady@uw.edu or LeAnne ljwiles@uw.edu

- Explore the student typologies activity
  - fyp.washington.edu/fycmapping
Yes my teaching tools are coming out again.....
Questions
Contact Us

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