

Background

the FYE general education requirement, which was originally conceived of as a retention strategy which, as its name indicates, was targeted at first-year students. The rationale provided in the original proposal is as follows: “This course would serve as a cornerstone for a new student success initiative with goals of improving completion and retention of students at YSU.” By 2018, declining first-year retention rates, along with end of semester student FYE surveys results, indicated that FYE was not serving the purpose for which it was created and that change was needed. Success Seminars – YSU 1500 and Strong Start 1500 – which replaced the FYE requirement as the University’s main strategy to increase first-year retention rates – are substantively different from the courses that had met the FYE general education requirement.

On May 21, 2020, the YSU Academic Senate Executive Committee, acting on behalf of the University Senate, approved a 10-week, 1 s.h. Success Seminar YSU 1500: Success Seminar or implementation in Fall 2020. YSU 1500 is required of all incoming regularly-admitted first-year students, and transfer students having less than 30 earned credits. Individual sections of this course are organized by college or program. YSU 1500 is not for conditionally admitted students or those in the honors program – both take separate first-year success courses.

YSU 1500 was designed as the comprehensive, integrated, and proactive student intervention strategy called for in *The Plan for Strategic Actions: Taking Charge of our Future*, referenced below. It is proactive in that it anticipates and provides tools and support for students adjusting to the academic demands of college. Students learn the conventions that govern the academic community including what is expected of them and what they are responsible for, skills needed to successfully manage their academic workload, habits of mind that promote openness to challenge and resilience, college study strategies, and how to understand and use degree planning tools. YSU 1500 is comprehensive in that it integrates advising into course content and blends the role of advisor and the role of instructor, leveraging weekly contact between instructors and students to build relationship between advisor and advisee.

YSU 1500 Course Description

YSU 1500: Success Seminar helps students establish a solid foundation for success at YSU. Students learn the conventions that govern the academic community including what is expected of them and what they are responsible for, skills needed to successfully manage their academic workload, habits of mind that promote openness to challenge and resilience, college study strategies, and how to understand and use degree planning tools.

YSU 1500 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- use information provided on course syllabi to assess their workload and monitor their overall grade performance in each class
- develop and maintain an effective study plan
- apply principles of mindset theory in order to accept challenges and/or overcome setbacks
- know standards for good academic standing and financial aid eligibility, and how to calculate a grade point average
- understand and follow their curriculum sheet, four-year plan, and academic progress requirements for their major.

Student Feedback

Students completed end of the semester surveys in YSU 1500 Fall 2020 and Fall 2021 where asked for feedback about YSU 1500. Over 93% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the course helped them understand the resources available to them at YSU, and over 91% agreed or strongly agreed that the course helped them understand the importance of their syllabi. Over 87% agreed or strongly agreed that the course helped them understand University policies, and over 87% agreed or strongly agreed that they understood how mindset

impacted their responses to certain situations. Over 92% agreed or strongly agreed that the course helped them understand their degree requirements.

Students were also asked what they found most helpful about YSU 1500. The four most common themes that emerged from student comments were appreciation for: advising support, campus information and resources, the supportive relationship with their YSU instructor, and learning academic success strategies. Source: Institute for Teaching and Learning.

Students also provided feedback on their experience with advising. 94% agreed or strongly agreed their advisor cared about them. 91% would reach out to their advisor if they had an issue or problem, and over 95% agreed or strongly agreed that they would respond to emails or texts from their advisor. Over 89% agreed or strongly agreed that their advisor is their primary source of academic advice.

Results of the Spring 2021 NSSE confirm the positive impact YSU 1500 has had on first-year advising. YSU first year student responses to 11 out of 15 questions regarding advising was significantly higher ($p < .05$) with an effect size at least .3 in magnitude than those of first-year students at peer institutions. YSU first-year students rated their experience higher on all 15 questions compared to YSU seniors. Source: Institute for Teaching and Learning

Impact on first to second year retention

	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020			Fall 2021		
					All Regular Admit	YSU 1500	No YSU 1500	All Regular Admit	YSU 1500	No YSU 1500
FT, FT Bachelor Regular Admit	1526	1649	1728	1427	1284	1200	84	1113	1069	44
Fall- Spring	1363 (89.5%)	1470 (89.1%)	1513 (87.6%)	1263 (88.5%)	1100 (85.7%)	1036 (86.3%)	64 (76.2%)	996 (89.5%)	962 (90%)	34 (77.3%)
Fall-Fall	1171 (76.7%)	1229 (74.5%)	1280 (74.1%)	1078 (75.5%)	928 (72.3%)	882 (73.5%)	46 (54.8%)	880 (79.1%)	846 (79.1%)	34 (77.3%)

	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021
FT, FT Bachelor Admitted w/ Restrictions	214	163	187	164	128	134
Fall- Spring	153 (71.5%)	124 (76.1%)	143 (76.5%)	134 (81.75%)	93 (72.7%)	87 (64.9%)
Fall-Fall	121 (56.5%)	94 (57.7%)	111 (59.4%)	108 (65.9%)	76 (59.4%)	66 (49.4%)

	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021
FT, FT Bachelor Honors Admit	264	329	314	275	336	293
Fall- Spring	259 (98.1%)	316 (96%)	308 (98.1%)	272 (98.9%)	320 (95.2%)	284 (96.9%)
Fall-Fall	241 (91.3%)	299 (90.9%)	287 (91.4%)	257 (93.5%)	304 (90.5%)	269 (91.8%)

Source: Initial cohorts created by Jim Hanek – Information and Reporting Services. Subsequent updates created by Becky Geltz – Institutional Research