

Academic Program Evaluation
February 5, 2018

Department: Academic Affairs

Program: Academic Achievement Strategies

Criteria 1

Impact and overall essentiality of the program; connection to mission/vision/ASU

Key Points:

- As a First Year Seminar course, it is a High Impact Practice *if done well*
- In summer of 2016, a program review and redesign was initiated
- A First Year Seminar has been identified as integral to the future ASU First Year Experience as developed during the Pathways project
- Recently voted to be part of the undergraduate degree requirement for all students
- New curriculum has been design and piloted

Alignment to the ASU 20/20 plan:

Strategic Initiative 2.1 - Provide flexible avenues and entry points from which to be engaged in and progress toward their educational, personal, and career goals.

Initiative 2.1.1 - *Adams state will evaluate the efficacy of the current AAA program outcomes*

Initiative 2.1.2 - *Explore possible seminar courses to best meet the needs of students*

Narrative:

In effort to increase retention, the AAA 101 class ‘Academic Achievement Strategies’ was developed in the late 2000s specifically to support incoming students in their transition to college. At the time, there was already plenty of research evidence and literature pointing to the benefits of such a course. Learning outcomes that focused on developing strategies for academic and personal success, goal setting, knowledge of university support services, policies and procedures and student engagement were selected and a curriculum developed. At the outset, the primary targeted population was conditionally admitted students.

Athletics had also provided a transition program for their athletes in effort to align with NCAA guidelines for best practice. However, not long after AAA was launched athletics worked with the AAA coordinator to simply require student athletes to take a AAA course instead of continuing to offer their own program.

AAA courses have historically been taught primarily by adjunct instructors who are predominantly university staff, however, a few faculty have also taught sections.

Currently, each year between 250-350 new students enroll in AAA each fall semester. Most enrolled students are required to take the course due to being conditionally enrolled, are in a specific support program such as CAMP or Colorado Challenge, or they are an athlete.

In the summer of 2016, a curriculum review and redesign process was initiated. Data was collected through a campus survey as well as through one on one interviews with students currently enrolled in a AAA class. A small task force was assembled during the academic year to review the data and assist the program coordinator in assessing the relevance and efficacy of current learning outcomes and curricular strategies. Concurrently, the program coordinator was directly involved in the Pathways work specifically to assist in identifying the role that AAA could evolve into as ASU seeks to revitalize its general education and co-curricular programming alignment and integration.

Two redesigned courses were piloted in the Fall of 2017. Data collection also began to investigate the impact of the AAA and FYS designs on student engagement and academic self efficacy. The proposed Pathways changes were presented to the faculty for vote in December of 2017. In Spring of 2018, with additional curricular modifications, taking into account student feedback and analysis of outcomes from the Fall, two sections are being taught to further test the new curriculum design.

Criteria 2

Quality of the program outcomes

To the knowledge of the current program coordinator, an assessment plan was not developed for the AAA courses as a whole. For the new First Year Seminar, the assessment plan should include the following:

Semesterly report from IR to include at a minimum:

- GPA
- Admission status
- Persistence
- Demographics
- Declared / Undeclared
- FYS section
- Athlete / Non athlete

Internal Annual Assessment to include at a minimum:

- Course artifacts randomly selected from each major learning module of each section
- Instructor observation
- Student feedback
- Pre/post data of standardized metric for critical thinking (if purchased)
- Learning Community participation

Criteria 3

Demand for the program

Internal program demand was created by requiring certain students to take a AAA course.

Programs requiring AAA include:

- Athletics (about 200 each fall)
- CAMP (about 30 students each Fall)
- SSS (require their own section taught during their summer bridge)
- Colorado Challenge (about 15-20 students each Fall)
- And any conditionally admitted student

	Fall 14	Fall 15	Fall 16	Fall 17
Conditional	113	96	98	76
Unconditional	545	551	529	449
Total ASU First Year FTE	658	647	627	525

Criteria 4

Size, scope, and productivity of the program

The program has one full-time faculty and relies on adjunct instructors for the delivery of additional sections. Between 250 and 350 students have taken a section of AAA each fall for the past several years. The average section has between 20 and 25 students.

The one full-time position's current service to campus:

- Program Coordinator
- Academic Council
- Pathways ELTF
- Academic Master Plan

Criteria 5

Cost and Benefit of the Program

	2014	2015	2016
Full Time	58,343.42	55,793.12	61,752.34
Adjunct	15,140	16,000	18,600.12
Operating	-	-	327.66
Total	73,483.42	71,793.12	80,680.12

Fall 2016 SCH = 825

Spring 2017 SCH = 108

Cost per SCH 2016-17 = \$86.47

Criteria 6

Faculty and Program Strengths and Accomplishments

Current Full-Time Faculty Credentials

- Prior experience teaching in collegiate academic recovery program
- 15 years experience in collegiate level experiential education curricular and co-curricular programs
- 10 years experience in higher education administration within Student Affairs
- 8 years experience in designing and managing co-curricular leadership development programs

Quality of Curriculum

As indicated above, the AAA curriculum was reviewed and a revised curriculum developed within the last 18 months. While the original curriculum was indeed aligned with best practices for First Year Seminars, it was more aligned with the Basic Study Skills and Extended Orientation design. While not necessarily an inappropriate design or approach, the quality of the program was challenged by factors primarily controlled by program design and institutional structures.

- Students reported confusion on “why they had to take it”
- For some student athletes, they felt the course was a “waste of time”
- Course counted as elective credit, but student perception was that it “did not count toward their degree”
- Student perception that the course was a “hoop to jump through”
- Inconsistent curriculum delivery in part due to “loose” programmatic structure
- Instructor accountability structures were vague
- Lack of consistent instructor training to provide for a unified approach to course expectations

In light of the observations and feedback gathered, it was clear that key elements were missing to leverage this HIP to have greater positive impacts for our students. “It is not enough to offer a first year seminar or a learning community or a service-learning course. Institutions must also ensure that the qualities of what makes a learning experience high impact are also intact” (Schmidt & Graziano, 2016 p.12).

Criteria 7

Future of the Program

Moving forward, the AAA course has been replaced by the First Year Seminar. Now housed within Academic Affairs and with a full-time faculty overseeing the program there is much more positive support among the faculty as a whole for the future impact of this initiative. The Pathways team will be working on the logistics and further program alignment to best support the success of the new initiatives. The success of the reform efforts depend upon a clear shared

vision and leadership, the strategic alignment of several administrative units, shared movement towards best practices, and intentional resource investment.

The feedback from students who took the Fall pilot provided an early indication for the impact of the redesigned course. Since then, additional modifications to the curriculum have occurred and two more sections are underway this Spring to again test the quality of the course. Artifacts have been and will be collected to assess the impact of the curriculum and delivery.

As indicated above, there are certain key elements that have been identified as essential to the quality of HIPS. The following 8 elements emphasized by Kuh and O'Donnell have guided the design and framework of the new FYS course and will guide the on-boarding and faculty development for any FYS instructor:

- 1) Performance expectations set at appropriately high levels
- 2) Significant investment of time and effort by students over an extended period of time
- 3) Interactions with faculty and peers about substantive matters
- 4) Experiences with diversity, wherein students are exposed to and must contend with people and circumstances that differ from those with which students are familiar
- 5) Frequent, timely, and constructive feedback
- 6) Periodic, structured opportunities to reflect and integrate learning
- 7) Opportunities to discover relevance of learning through real-world applications
- 8) Public demonstration of competence

New Course Design:

- Emphasis on development of critical thinking and information literacy skills
- Emphasis on developing relationships with peers and faculty
- Emphasis on deep meaningful learning
- Emphasis on inquiry and student-centered learning rather than teacher-centered
- Intentional scaffolded processes to provide students with clear expectations for completing quality work
- Each section has a unique topic or content emphasis
- Encouragement, flexibility, and support for out-of-class experiences
- Peer mentoring built into each section

Program costs:

The current allocation should be sufficient to sustain the new efforts. The operating budget has been underutilized to date, but to effectively prepare and support instructors moving forward, expenses for faculty development will be necessary. In addition, the operating budget should be leveraged for supporting out-of-class experiences including the following:

- Service Learning
- Field trips
- Peer mentors

FYS Alignment:

To be the most effective, the FYS must have strategic alignment with other campus programs and initiatives. Expectations across programs must align with best practice. It is recommended that serious thought be given to the leadership framework for the undergraduate educational experience. Shared vision, alignment and accountability are essential if we are to pursue excellence. The FYS class can serve as a key element within a much more comprehensive approach to a high quality First Year Experience. With the integration of peer mentors into the FYS, their contribution through in class and out of class experiences can increase the relationship building, social transition, sense of belonging, and other relevant aspects of a first year student's transition. Connecting the FYS to the NSO experience through an aligned admissions and advising process can help us ensure our incoming students receive the support they need and have a high quality experience.

Aligned programs should include the following at a minimum:

- Admissions
- Financial Aid
- New Student Orientation
- Grizzly Learning Communities
- Advising
- All Tutoring Programs
- Support Programs (CAMP, SSS)
- Library
- Themes
- Early Alert
- Athletics
- Academic Recovery
- Academic Departments
- CTIR