

**Office of First Year Immersion
Adams State University
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Introduction

The Office of First Year Immersion works closely with students, faculty, and staff to help first year students and their families transition to Adams State University. We define first year students as freshman or transfer student who is attending to Adams State for the first time and any readmitted student who is returning to Adams State after stopping out. In the past three years, efforts to support first year students have grown, become more cost effective, and worked diligently to keep the mission of Adams State University and the Office of First Year Immersion at the center of our decisions.

Mission Criticality & Essentiality

First Year Immersion programs align directly with institutional learning outcomes I, II, III, and IV and are central to the academic and co-curricular institutional mission and vision. The focus of this program is largely immersing students into the Adams State culture and creating engagement and connection with the institution. Its essentiality to the University was recently demonstrated through the approval of the Pathways model including requiring a First Year Seminar for graduation, which is extended through the GLC's and peer mentoring of FYI.

The mission of the Office of First Year Immersion is to support students' transition to Adams State University through intentional opportunities that will help guide them through the entirety of their college experience. The mission of our office is evident throughout Orientation Programming (Transfer, New Student, and Family), Family Programming (Orientation and Family Weekend), and Grizzly Learning Communities. We recently created our mission to align with Adams State's mission which drive initiatives. These initiatives reinforce Adams State's 2020 Strategic Plan by engaging students early and nurturing a strong sense of connection to Adams State, as specifically stated in ASU 2020 plan:

Strategic Initiative 2.1	Provide flexible avenues and entry points from which to be engaged in and to progress toward their educational, personal, and career goals.
Strategic Initiative 2.2	Recruit and support eligible transfer students
Strategic Initiative 2.5	Promote and increase early student engagement as a means to graduate students with a strong sense of connection to ASU
Action 4.2.4	Create a communication plan to parents including a timeline of important dates (use e-mail from FASFA, but also traditional US Postal Service options)

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Strategic Initiative 5.3	Partner with community and business groups to foster strong unifying campus connections, and build understanding of the large SLV
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New Student Orientation is designed to welcome freshmen, transfer, and readmitted students and to help them begin building lasting bonds to Adams State. To do so, we have significantly shifted the orientation experience. Prior to fall 2015, the orientation program was based on a large assembly model. In fall 2015, the Office of First Year Immersion adopted a small group model in which returning students serve as Orientation Leaders (OLs). In fall 2015, 20 returning students served as Orientation Leaders (OLs). We have slowly increased the number of OLs to 23 in fall 2017. This intentional shift in New Student Orientation programming provides space for students to develop relationships with their peers, faculty, and staff and to showcase resources that will aid in their success.

As noted in the table below, the number and percentage of new students who checked in to Orientation grew significantly between fall 2015 and fall 2016 from 380 or 60% of new students to 430 or 71% of new students. In fall 2017, when athletes were no longer required to check in to Orientation, attendees dropped to 265 or 51% of new students. These new student-athletes are already immersed in the Adams State community and Athletics helps student-athletes navigate through their first year experiences.

In fall 2017, we also refocused attention from the quantity of new students who check in to the quality of experiences offered. We continued to emphasize the quality of the experiences and by the spring 2018 Orientation, the impact of this shift in focus was noticeable. In the past, many students participated only in initial programs and few attended evening programs. In spring 2018, nearly 90% (30/34) of students who checked in to Orientation attended the last presentation of Orientation, and half (17/34) attended evening activities.

Number of NSO Attendees			
NSO	Number of Attendees	Number of Students enrolled as of NSO	Percentage
Fall 2015	380	632	60%
Spring 2016	34	103	33%
	414	735	
Fall 2016	430	607	71%
Spring 2017	29	105	28%
	459	712	
Fall 2017	265	521	51%
Spring 2018	34	111	31%
	295*	632	

*athletes were no longer required to check in to Orientation

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Family Programming is essential to our mission to support students in their transition to Adams State. We have increased the support of family members by creating family focused orientation programming that targets finances, safety, and family/ student transition. In the first year of implementation during fall 2016, 74 family members attended. That number grew significantly to 101 family members by fall 2017. To maintain communication with families, First Year Immersion was given responsibility of the monthly newsletter, Family Connect, and Family Weekend during fall 2017. In fall 2016, 47 family members attended Family Weekend; in fall 2017, 52 family members participated.

Grizzly Learning Communities (GLCs) provide ongoing mentorship between upper class students and first year students within the same field of study. In fall 2015, there were 38 first year participants representing 4 majors; in fall 2016, 34 first year students representing 5 majors; and in fall 2017, 143 first year students representing 6 majors. The increase in numbers is attributed to using an opt-out model, rather than an opt-in model. The opt-out model was adopted as we shift to an inclusive model that will allow all first year students to have the opportunity to have a mentor. As a result of the Pathways requirement, all first time, full time students will be members of a GLC by Fall 2020. Mentors provide programming for first year students and check in with students on a weekly basis to aid in the transition to college.

Living Communities (LCs) allow for students to live with students with a common interest in order to create a space for relationships to form. Participating in an LC is voluntary by selecting a LC on the housing application. In fall, 2016, 155 first year students opted in to a living community. In fall 2017, 101 first year students opted into a living community.

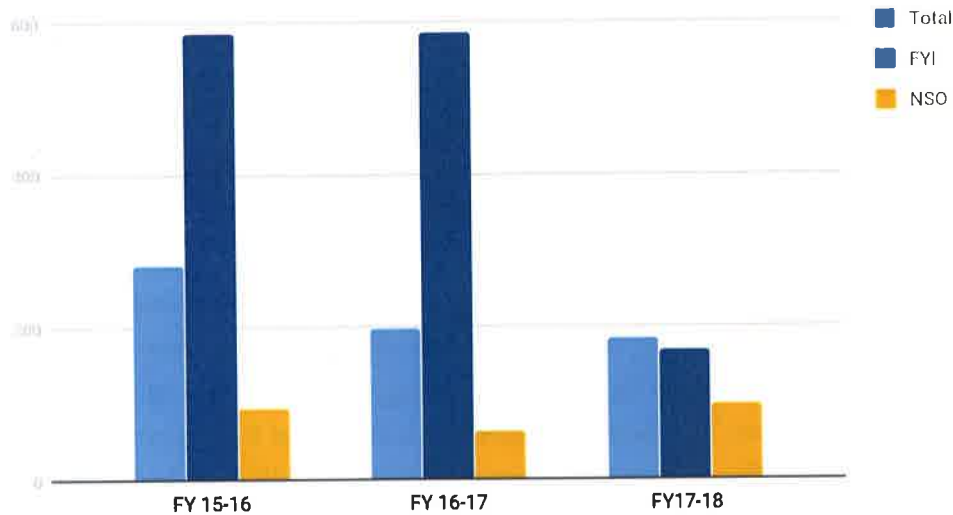
Cost & Benefit

The Office of First Year Immersion has a total current budget of **\$132,916** (Coordinator Estimated Compensation Package \$49,966; General Fund \$44,000; and Student Fees, \$38,950). In these times of decreasing enrollments, it is more important than ever to connect with new students on multiple and personal levels.

The cost effectiveness from 2015-2016 to 2017-2018 has significantly increased as indicated in the chart below. In 2015-2016, the total amount of money spent per touchpoint was \$281. In 2016-2017, the total per touchpoint decreased to \$184. The increase was impacted by the number of students enrolled in Grizzly Learning Communities and Living Communities. Grizzly Learning Communities and Living Communities provide a high impact intervention.

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Cost per touchpoint



Our goal is to increase the number of high level interventions (Grizzly Learning Communities and Living Communities) that engage students during their first year at Adams State and to continue to advance a supportive culture that helps all students succeed. The total number of new students enrolled in fall and spring has declined from 735 in 2015-2016 to 632 in 2017-2018. Even with the intentional reduction in NSO program participation when student athletes were no longer required to check, touchpoints have grown in absolute number and average per student. The number of touchpoints are outlined in the chart below:

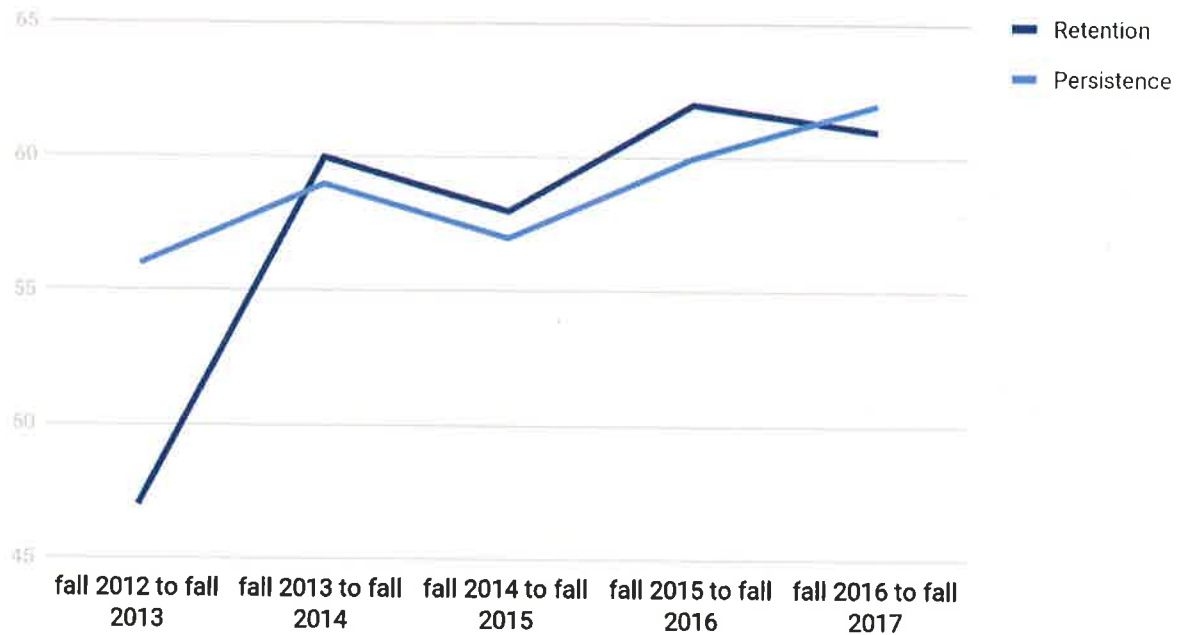
Number of Touchpoint			
Program	Year		
	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
<i>Total Number of Students as of Fall & Spring NSO</i>	735	712	632
New Student Orientation (Spring & Fall)	414	459	299
Grizzly Learning Communities	38	34	143
Student Leaders (GLC Mentors, Orientation Leaders, Student Coordinator)	20	24	25
Living Communities	0	155	101
Total Number of Student Touch Points	472	672	568
Family Programming (Orientation & Family Weekend)		121	153
Total Number of Touch Points		793	721

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Moreover, according to section B22 of the Adams State University Common Data Sets, there has been an increase in retention rates since the creation of the Office of First Year Immersion. The chart below demonstrates the change of retention and persistence rates.

Benefits:

Percent of Retention & Persistence



The retention rate from fall 2012 to fall 2013 was 47% (2014); the retention rate from fall 2016 to fall 2017 was 61% (2018). Similarly, the graduation and retention rates of student leaders in the Office of First Year Immersion have been at least 80%. Of the 2015-16 cohort of leaders, 82% have either graduated or are still attending Adams State. Of the 2016-17 cohort of leaders, 80% have either graduated or are still attending. Of the fall 2017 cohort, one person has graduated and one person has stopped attending Adams State, leaving 92% of our leaders still attending Adams State University.

Quality of Outcomes

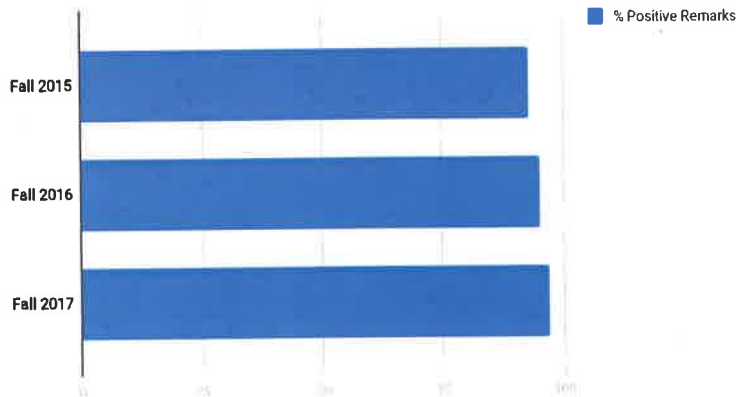
First Year Immersion programs [align directly with institutional learning outcomes I, II, III, and IV](#) and are central to the academic and co-curricular institutional mission and vision. The focus of this program is largely immersing students into the Adams State culture and creating engagement and connection with the institution.

The Office of First Year Immersion values continued improvement using data and feedback from students, faculty, and staff. After Fall New Student Orientation, all faculty and staff are invited to

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participate in a meeting to provide input on what went well, suggested changes, and how the office can improve the NSO experience. Likewise, first year students are emailed a survey.

NSO Participant Satisfaction Survey



The first year student survey sent in Fall 2015 indicated that 93% of the respondents had positive remarks about the NSO leaders, faculty, and staff and in Fall 2016 95% of the respondents had similar positive remarks and Fall 2017 survey respondents indicated a similarly high satisfaction with 97% having positive remarks.

The current assessment plan for the Office of First Year Immersion includes seven student learning outcomes and two operational outcomes. The operational outcomes are (1) to have an appropriate amount of well trained and invested leaders (2) to have at least 50% of new students enrolled in a Living Community or Grizzly Learning Community by Fall 2018. The activities we are using to assess the amount of well trained and invested leaders we are using: student leader NSO committee; training for NSO Leaders; campus partnerships with academics, athletics, and admissions.

Conclusion

The Office of First Year Immersion works diligently to create, implement, and assess programs that creates connections with new students and their family members to the Adams State community. New Student Orientation, Family Programming, Grizzly Learning Communities, and Living Communities are essential to providing students intentional support as they navigate their transition to Adams State University. The Office of First Year Immersion continuously seeks cross-campus partnerships to capitalize on the resources that we have on campus. As seen in the Adams State 2020 Strategic Plan, we will continue to provide quality, fiscally responsible programming to new students and their families while keeping the mission of Adams State and the Office of First Year Immersion at the center of our decision making. As demonstrated throughout the report, since the creation of the Office of First Year Immersion, the retention rate has increased by 14%, high satisfaction rates among students

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participating in New Student Orientation, an increase of students receiving high impact interventions, an increase of families receiving support, and an increase in cost effectiveness.

Works Cited

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