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ACCESS AND STUDENT SUCCESS:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES
OF FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR PROFESSIONALS
AT FLORIDA HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education
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at the University of Central Florida
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ABSTRACT

The focus of this research was to understand the lived experiences and working perceptions of Florida HBCU first-year seminar professionals. Much empirical work has been done to examine the experiences of students transitioning into the college environment. In contrast, there is little work that specifically looks at the professionals that service first-year students within a minority serving context, specifically Historically Black Colleges and Universities. As a result, the findings of this study suggest that Florida HBCU first-year seminar professionals are active partners in the scholastic success of its freshman students.

Keywords: HBCUS, first-year seminar, student success services, college transition

First, I wish to dedicate this manuscript to the present, past, and future forces of empowerment in my life. To my mom and dad.

Your love carried me through three of the most gratifying years of my life.

I don't say so often, but I love you both immensely.

To those who came before me, my nana-Betty Jean Maiden, Grandma Ruth, and Grandpa Matthew Maiden. I also dedicate this manuscript to you. I love you!

Though you all are all in heaven you are NEVER forgotten.

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ONWARD!

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CHAPTER 1 THE PROBLEM AND ITS CLARIFYING COMPONENTS

Introduction

The United States has been working to regain its status as the world leader in the percentage of citizens who have attained a postsecondary credential (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2015). In a relatively short time, the Obama Administration created the 2020 Plan to increase post-secondary graduation rates (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2011). As a result of the President's 2020 Plan, the Lumina Foundation researched how each state can support the federal government to reach its goal of 60% of Americans attaining a post-secondary credential (Matthews, 2014). The cornerstone findings of the Lumina Foundation's investigation indicated that states would have to increase minority student graduation rates (Matthews, 2014; Ryu, 2008). Carneval and Strohl (2013) reported that minority students generally enroll in open access institutions. Doyle (2010), in his report on college completion, defined open access colleges as non-selective institutions who accept more than half of their applicant pools. Some Historically Black Colleges and Universities' (HBCUs) enrollment patterns mirror Doyle's definition of open access (Alim, 2013; Meade, 2013; Powers, 2008). Moreover, due to the student population profile of HBCUs, which have been consistently classified as low income, first generation, and educationally underprepared, increasing African American graduation rates at Historically Black Colleges and Universities have required and will continue to need a lot of support (Richards & Awokoya, 2012).

Researchers described graduation rates at Historically Black Colleges and Universities as low, dismal, and damning (Gasman, 2013; Tracking Black students, 2014). According to the most up to date information provided by the National Center for Educational Statistics, the average graduation rate at HBCUs in 2011 was 30%. Gasman (2013) asserted that the aforementioned number neglects to tell the entire story, as HBCUs also have had disproportionate number of students who are first generation, economically disadvantaged, and educationally underprepared for college (Gasman, Lundy-Wagner, Ransom, & Bowman, 2010).

Tinto (1997) suggested that environment can support or sabotage student success. In particular, classroom interaction can serve students well in enhancing student persistence. As such, higher education professionals at the University of South Carolina retooled the orientation program to assist students with successfully transitioning into college (University of South Carolina, n.d.). According to Goodman and Pascarella (2006), first-year seminars boost persistence, support student success, and serve as bridge in helping students understand how to maneuver the collegiate environment.

However, a key factor in the existing studies on utilizing first-year seminars to support student success is that they have failed to pinpoint the perceptions and or experiences of first year professionals at HBCUs (Padgett & Keup, 2009; Tobolowsky, 2006; Tobolowsky, Mamrick & Cox, 2003; Young, & Hopp, 2012-2013). Understanding the perceptions and experiences of first year professionals at HBCUs is important, as researchers reported there is a positive correlation between classroom instructional practices and the probability of persistence (Pascarella, Salisbury, & Blaich, 2011).

Purpose

The purposes of this study are to (a) examine the experiences and perceptions of first-year seminar professionals at HBCUs to understand how they utilize the first-year seminar to orient their students to the college environment and (b) understand the best practices at these institutions while also providing the professionals with an opportunity to share their insights.

Research Questions

The primary research question for this study is: What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals, instructors or administrators, at Historically Black College and Universities regarding the structure, purpose, implementation, instruction, and pedagogy and professional development of seminar professionals?

Sub-research Questions

1. What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding the first-year seminar purpose and structure?
2. What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding seminar program implementation?
3. What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding instruction and pedagogy of seminar courses?

4. What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding professional development of seminar professionals?

Significance

This study is significant because it will provide information about the first-year seminar that has not been captured in national data or reports previously distributed. Furthermore, it will contribute to the canon of information available on how first-year seminars support students' success from the perspective of first-year seminar professionals at HBCUs.

Delimitations

The single delimitation for the study was that information was captured from only four of the 107 historically Black colleges and universities in the United States. Therefore, though the information may be useful to some institutions, it may not be generalizable to all.

Definition of Terms

Cheyney Model of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): Historically Black Colleges and Universities whose date of origin pre-dates the conclusion of the Civil War.

1890 land grant universities: A designation to identify Black land grant institutions

First generation college student: A collegiate student pursuing a two- or four-year credential who has not had a history of parent college completion.

First-year seminar: A college course freshman students take in order seamlessly support transitioning the student into college.

First-year seminar professionals: Employees, instructors and/or administrators whose primary responsibility includes assisting first-year students' transition into college.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): Educational institutions located in various states throughout the United States created prior to 1965 with the expressed purpose of educating African Americans.

Persistence: The ability for college students to progressively continue from year to year in their studies that aligns them in meeting the requirements to graduate.

Predominately White Institutions (PWI):

Southern States Model of Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Historically Black Colleges and Universities whose date of origin postdates the Civil War. These HBCUs started with support of various organizations such as the Freedmen Bureau and Northern Christian Missionaries.

TRIO: A set of federal programs that provide federal dollars to equal the playing field for college students labeled as first-generation, low income, or academically underprepared.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review supports research about Historically Black Colleges and Universities, providing classification models of HBCUs that are consistent with the origins as well as the foundations of institutional missions, and scope of services. Other sections of the literature review include first-year seminar, college persistence, and first generation college students.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

In this section of the literature review, the researcher evaluated the origins and formation of Black colleges and how they grew from three institutions in the north into more than 107 institutions throughout the United States (White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 2015). Additionally, in this section of the literature review, the researcher was concerned with describing the mission of HBCUs and understanding their scope of service. In the final section of the review, the benefits and modern day issues affecting HBCUs have been highlighted.

Cheyney Model of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

Cheyney, Lincoln, and Wilberforce Universities were the inaugural educational structures developed to educate African Americans. The Cheyney Model is named after Cheyney University, the first Black college with the exclusive purpose of educating African Americans. With the original site located in Philadelphia, Cheyney opened its doors in 1837. Lincoln and Wilberforce Universities are included in the Cheyney model

of HBCUs because of their distinct curriculum, specific scope of service, institution type, and geographic location (Cheyney, 2002; Freeman, 2010; Gerber, 1976).

In order for HBCUs to successfully begin, there had to be no legal limitations in place regarding teaching African Americans. In the northern region of the USA, African Americans could learn how to read and write without fear of retribution. This dynamic was not the case in other regions of the country, particularly the south where teaching slaves was outlawed (South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1740). This need made the location of the first HBCU significant. Societal norms made it possible to begin training African Americans to read and write only in specific regions of the United States. Wilberforce University might seem to be a contradiction. Though it is located in Ohio, a former slave state, it was also the location for the Underground Railroad (Wilberforce University, 2015). This situation provided escaped slaves an opportunity to learn.

The primary curricula at the early HBCUs were unlike other institutions of higher learning. Students were essentially taught grammar and basic reading. However, the curriculum structure was not a deficiency. The trend in the American college curriculum rarely took into account the learner's current capability or future purpose as a means for developing course work (Jordan, 2013). This trend was not the case for Black colleges. The early HBCU curriculum was uniquely based on the level of student preparedness and skill set demands of the region. Because there was little to no formal education available for African Americans prior to the opening of the first American HBCU, most of the colleges were not colleges in the traditional sense at all (Gerber, 1976). Gerber explained

that at the time of the HBCU inception, the school curriculum was equivalent to secondary education at the elementary level with a primary focus on reading, writing, and basic arithmetic. Likewise, Cheyney University was started by the philanthropic support of a Black Quaker to improve the labor skills of African Americans for greater access to jobs (Cheyney University, 2002). Overall, Cheyney's early curriculum was limited, because it was designed to accommodate building basic work readiness in the areas of blacksmithing, agriculture, preaching, teaching and trade. It was influenced by the learners' capabilities, all of which did not initially require extensive teaching in the areas of classical literature or philosophy (Freeman, 2010).

Finally, the first American HBCUs were distinct in terms of who these institutions could agree to serve. The early HBCUs were created to educate African Americans. However, not all African Americans could attend the institutions. Access to the Wilberforce, Lincoln and Cheyney institutions was granted only to free African Americans or runaway slaves (Cheyney, 2002; Freeman, 2010). Additionally, each of the HBCUs included in the Cheyney Model were started with the support of private philanthropy. Nevertheless, after the Civil War ended, the trend of educating African Americans suddenly spread to the South. With the assistance of northern missionaries and the U.S. government, HBCUs grew exponentially (Brubacher & Rudy 2008; Clement, 1936; Lee & Keys, 2013). The defining characteristic of the Cheyney Model of HBCUs was that these early institutions were created and supported by empowered African Americans and religious organizations.

Table 1 provides a summary of the origins of the Cheyney Model of HBCUs. Included for each of the three institutions are: institution type, location, founding year, and early curriculum characteristics.

Table 1

Institutional Characteristics of Cheyney Model Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

Name	Type	Location	Founding Year	Early Curriculum Characteristics
Cheyney University	Initially founded as a private institution; today it is designated as a public university.	Cheyney, Pennsylvania	1837	Training for skilled labor.
Lincoln University	Initially founded as a private institution; today it is designated as a public university.	Chester County, Pennsylvania.	1854	Ministerial training.
Wilberforce University	Private	Wilberforce, Ohio	1856	Ministerial training

Southern States Model of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

The educational experience of African Americans was previously restrained by geographic and legal limitations. However, after the Civil War ended, a number of factors such as the emancipation of slavery and explicit governmental support contributed to the expansion of HBCUs located in the South (Brubacher & Rudy; Clement, 1936; Lee & Keys, 2013). Other trends recognized during this period of growth included curriculum advancement, increased educational accessibility for African Americans, and the

emergence of various types of HBCU institutions (Clement, 1936; Lee & Keys, 2013; Titcomb, 2013).

In contrast to the Cheyney Model of HBCUs that was created and supported by empowered African Americans and religious organizations, the development for the southern formation of HBCUs was impacted through Federal assistance. Governmental regulations and resources provided by the Freedmen's Bureau and The Morrill Act created a system of both private and public learning structures for former slaves. The Freedmen's Bureau created the establishment of private HBCUs whereas the Morrill Act contributed to the creation of Public Land Grant black colleges (Brooks & Marcus, 2015; Clement, 1936; Dubois & University of, 1996).

More than a dozen HBCUs formed after the ending of the Civil War. This trend was in response to the social reaction of promoting the education of African Americans. During this period, there was a pronounced focus on educating newly freed slaves (Clement, 1936). However, southern hostility toward freed blacks delayed public education opportunities. Instead, many southern HBCUs received public assistance to form private schools. The Freedmen's Bureau, coordinated educational efforts of freed slaves in the south. Some of the educational institutions that formed as a result of early governmental support included Howard, Washington DC; Morehouse, Georgia; Spelman, Georgia; Claflin, South Carolina; Hampton, Virginia; and Benedict, South Carolina (History.com Staff, 2010).

The curriculum for southern African Americans was organized differently than that which was designed to serve African Americans who were educated in the north.

Clement (1936) explained that southern states offered separate educational opportunities for African Americans. The black colleges were free to teach students; however, the curriculum primarily focused on credentialing students to be preachers or teachers (Clement, 1936). The Black college curriculum betrayed advances in higher education. Institutions had long abandoned the academic order of classical trivium and quadrivium curriculum for more modern subjects in history, government sciences and modern philosophy (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008). In order to appease the paranoia of White southerners after the ending of slavery, the focus of HBCU curriculum would support the racial status quo and social order (Brown II & Ricard, 2007).

A period of black college growth was spurred by the humanitarian efforts of northern Christian denominations, such as the Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008). Historically Black Colleges and Universities were the turning point that led to educating more African Americans. Before the existence of HBCUs, a limited number of African Americans had access to or received a credential from an institution of higher learning. Brubacher and Rudy (2008) acknowledged that the first African American received a degree in 1826. After the Civil War ended in 1865, this trend changed dramatically. Through the coordination of the Refuges, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands Bureau led by General Howard of the United States Army, more than three million African Americans had access to higher education (Gasman et al., 2010).

1890 Land Grant Institutions Model

1890 land grant institutions have been categorized in a variety of ways. They are variously identified as (a) public federally subsidized schools created for the education of

Africans Americans, (b) illegitimate institutions denied equal funding, or (c) dual higher education systems separated by race as byproduct of segregation (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008; Harris & Worthen, 2004; Mutakabbir, 2011). “Land Grants” was a governmental led initiative to place education back in the hands of the common man with federal support under the leadership of President Abraham Lincoln and Senator Morrill through the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. The 1862 Morrill Act’s purpose, broadly defined, was to donate federal land to states to cultivate colleges that focused on agricultural and mechanical arts (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008). However, the Morrill Act of 1890 specifically stimulated Black college growth as it prohibited the funding of federal dollars to land grant institutions that excluded educational access based on race (Lee & Keys, 2013).

Educational access for African Americans was not an issue in northern states. However, school segregation in the South influenced a pattern of two land grant institutions, a predominately White and historically Black institution within one state to meet the federal requirements for receiving government support for land grant institutions. Therefore, most Black land grant institutions were located in southern states as educating Black and White students in a single learning facility was prohibited (Lee & Keys, 2013). Additionally, the 1890 HBCU land grants expanded the list of land grant institutions in the United States that were federally supported through the Morrill Act legislation. Table 2 provides an overview of the land grant schools supported by the Morrill Act legislation in 1862 and 1890, their location, and whether they were

predominately White institutions (PWI) or Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Table 2

1862 and 1890 Land Grant Institutions

Location	1862 Land Grant	1890 Land Grant
Alabama	Auburn University (PWI)	Tuskegee University Alabama A&M University (HBCUs)
Arkansas	University of Arkansas Fayetteville (PWI)	University of Arkansas Pine Bluff (HBCU)
Delaware	University of Delaware (PWI)	Delaware State University (HBCU)
Florida	University of Florida (PWI)	Florida A&M University (HBCU)
Georgia	University of Georgia (PWI)	Fort Valley State University (HBCU)
Kentucky	University of Kentucky (PWI)	Kentucky State University (HBCU)
Louisiana	Louisiana State University (PWI)	Southern University System (HBCU)
Maryland	University of Maryland College Park (PWI)	University of Maryland Eastern Shore (HBCU)
Missouri	University of Missouri (PWI)	Lincoln University (HBCU)
North Carolina	North Carolina State University (PWI)	North Carolina A&T University (HBCU)
Oklahoma	Oklahoma State University (PWI)	Langston University (HBCU)
South Carolina	Clemson University (PWI)	South Carolina State University (HBCU)
Tennessee	University of Tennessee (PWI)	Tennessee State University (HBCU)
Texas	Texas A&M University (PWI)	Prairie View A&M University (HBCU)
Virginia	Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University (PWI)	Virginia State University (HBCU)
West Virginia	West Virginia University (PWI)	West Virginia State University (HBCU)

Note. PWI = Predominately White Institutions; HBCU = Historically Black Colleges and Universities

According to Brubacher and Rudy (2008), the federal government gifted land to states for the purpose of establishing “Land Grant” higher education institutions. In order to meet the conditions required by the federal government for funding, southern states segregated their land grant schools based on race (Lee & Keys, 2013). As a result of southern segregation, schools such as Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University, Delaware State University, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, South Carolina State University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University were formed. Table 3 contains these institutions by name, type, location, founding year and governmental assistance that impacted their creation.

Table 3

Southern States Model: Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

Name	Type	Location	Founding Year	Governmental Assistance Impacting Creation
Howard University	Private	Washington, D.C.	1867	Freedmen's Bureau
Morehouse	Private	Atlanta, Georgia	1867	Freedmen's Bureau
Hampton University	Private	Hampton, Virginia	1868	Freedmen's Bureau
Claflin University	Private	Orangeburg, South Carolina	1869	Freedmen's Bureau
Benedict College	Private	Columbia, South Carolina	1870	Freedmen's Bureau
Alabama Agricultural & Mechanical University	Public Land Grant	Normal, Alabama	1875	1890 Morrill Act
Spelman College	Private	Atlanta, Georgia	1881	Freedmen's Bureau
Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University	Public Land Grant	Tallahassee, Florida	1887	1890 Morrill Act
Delaware State University	Public Land Grant	Dover, Delaware	1891	1890 Morrill Act
North Carolina Agricultural & Technical University	Public Land Grant	Greensboro, North Carolina	1891	1890 Morrill Act
South Carolina State University	Public Land Grant	Columbia, South Carolina	1896	1890 Morrill Act

Mutakabbir (2011) believed that these land grant universities were beneficial because they were the first public colleges opened to African Americans. However, Mutakabbir (2011) argued that the 1890 Land Grants, had restricted curricula, limited

funding, and poor physical conditions that regressed the potential of the schools. Harris and Worthen (2004) echoed Mutakabbir's sentiments; stating that the 1890 Land Grants were hardly equipped to advance the land grant mission. However, Harris and Worthen (2004) believed that, unrestrained by Jim Crow and segregation, 1890 Land Grants could strengthen their focus beyond the African American diaspora and create world class educational centers.

HBCU Mission

Historically, the mission of HBCUs was grounded on a village pedagogy. These institutions assisted with advancing the cultivation of African Americans beyond the boundaries of the campus (Harris, 2012). Over the years, the USA has come to better terms with segregation as a historical backdrop of all of the negative vestiges that impacted Black life. However, HBCUs bear the critique of trying to continue to make their missions work in a modern, semi-post racial society (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009; Arroyo, 2009; Harris, 2012).

Harris (2012) described the initial education of African Americans at HBCUs as a way to distance student learners from their own culture for the purposes of absorbing the European values and culture as a benchmark for educational excellence. To counter that narrative, Harris (2012) explained that historically black colleges and universities focused on tailoring schools to build the black community. Once students were formally educated, they were commissioned to go back into their communities to serve as professionals such as teachers, doctors, or agriculturalists. Therefore, according to Harris, the missions of

HBCUs can be characterized as schools commissioned to advance African Americans socially and educationally.

Abelman and Dalessandro (2009) advanced the discussion further by explaining HBCU missions were defined by those the institutions serve. HBCU missions are a part of what, in fact, identifies them as HBCUs. Historically, they have provided educational services to African Americans (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE] Office of Civil Rights, 1991). Abelman and Dalessandro (2009) clarified that the drawback to a mission that specifically focuses on who it serves, African Americans, delineates detailing academic characteristics of why these schools are organized.

Arroyo (2009) asserted that HBCU missions were a work in progress. Historically, Black colleges were limited by what they could teach and how much money they would receive to instruct their students. What legitimized HBCUs was that they were the only institutions of record that explicitly served African Americans. Arroyo also observed that the end of segregation opened opportunities for African Americans to be educated at any school of choice. He emphasized that re-examining school missions from the lens of process and outcome would further inform HBCU missions.

Scope of HBCU Service

Several transformations have occurred in the formal education of African Americans. These transformations were moderately impacted by race and markedly impacted by changes in laws, attitudes, and perceptions of African Americans. To a large extent, these factors led to transforming the modernity of who Historically Black Colleges and Universities serve. This section of the literature review is focused on the

scope of service at HBCUs in three distinctively different time periods: (a) pre-Civil War, (b) post-Civil War, and (c) present-day .

Pre-Civil War

Prior to the Civil War, there were only three Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the nation; Cheyney University, Lincoln University and Wilberforce University (Titcomb, 2013). These schools were primarily located in the northern part of the country: Pennsylvania and Ohio (Titcomb, 2013; USDOE Office of Civil Rights, 1991). Though these institutions shared a common mission to educate African Americans, each had a unique niche. For instance, Cheyney served free Blacks and did not grant degrees until 1923 (Titcomb, 2013). Lincoln University served only free Black men (Titcomb, 2013). Meanwhile, Wilberforce was started to privately educate runaway slaves (Titcomb, 2013). As the law of the land changed and slavery ended, HBCUs were able to educate more than free slaves as well as introduce a liberal arts curriculum (Gasman, 2010).

Post-Civil War

At the conclusion of the Civil War, HBCUs changed in many ways. HBCUs were able to educate all African Americans, not only free Blacks or escaped slaves. Access to the academy meant that African Americans could be educated in the North as well as in the South. HBCUs were decidedly the educational epicenter for educating the United States African American population. The largest population of African Americans living in the USA resided in the South where segregation was in full effect. Segregation

eliminated any opportunity for African Americans to attend school with White pupils in the South (USDOE Office of Civil Rights, 1991). However, directly after the Civil War, racial tensions in the south further complicated the growth and development of Historically Black Colleges and Universities. During this time, Black colleges were symbolic reinforcements of cultural cast structures and separate systems. This perspective, instead of exposing students to modern day style of educating during that day, promoted a common system of education (Woodson, 2006).

Present

At the time of the present study, HBCUs served a diverse student body in terms of social, economic, cultural, nationality, and geographic backgrounds. Grants (2009) identified HBCUs as attracting low wealth students who would not be able to access higher education, noting that HBCU students tend to be first generation college students with little financial means and little support from family regarding navigating the collegiate process. These students tend to assemble at HBCUs where there are active narratives regarding students who have overcome insurmountable odds to gain a higher educational credential because professors care and are invested in helping students succeed (Seymour & Ray, 2015).

In addition, according to Gasman in (2013), approximately 13% of those enrolled at HBCUs were White. The reasons for White students attending an HBCU are radically different from those of Black students who are often motivated by a sense of tradition. According to Carter and Fountaine (2012), White students who attend HBCUs persist as a result of engagement and appear to have exposure to diverse environments.

HBCUs: Benefits and Issues

Historically Black Colleges and Universities were created to educate African Americans. This section of the literature review focuses on the impact of Historically Black Colleges and Universities. More specifically, the benefits and issues regarding HBCUs in order to accelerate the current context of their standing in Higher Education are examined.

Benefits

There are a multitude of benefits offered by HBCUs. The academic advantages of Black colleges to students have been noted, but the influence of HBCUs can be measured beyond student experience. These benefits include economic impact on the host community in which HBCUs dwell, diversity in academe, and serving as the educational trust for Black middle class professionals (Arnett, 2014; Kim & Cook, 2013; Humphrey & Korb, 2006; Song & Hartley III, 2012).

Higher Education is filled with several different moving parts, including administrative leaders, that contribute to powering the Ivory Tower. The university president, chief academic officer, departmental vice presidents, faculty, and academic deans play integral roles within institutions of higher learning. Several studies conducted on college presidential leadership reported that minority senior campus leadership is severely underrepresented in higher education (Kim & Cook, 2013; Song & Hartley, 2012).

The Council of Independent Colleges (2012) found that in 2011, 6% of its coalition of small and midsized independent colleges and universities were led by

minority presidents. Likewise, the American Council on Education reported that only 13% of college presidents were racial and ethnic minorities (Kim & Cook, 2013). The same report revealed that HBCU presidents comprised slightly more than half (52%) of the majority of racial and ethnic minority presidents (Kim & Cook, 2013).

Collectively the economic impact of HBCUs benefits the communities that surround them. According to a study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education, HBCUs are a \$6.6 billion industry and have a multiplier effect. Approximately 35% of the resources that come into HBCUs generate more resources. For instance, HBCUs provide jobs for more than 180,000 individuals. Moreover, HBCUs directly impact the communities in which they are located, as HBCUs supply a sizeable share of jobs to local economies. For example, Tuskegee University is an economic asset to the Tuskegee Alabama area. According to data compiled in an economic impact report, the university employs 25% of the Tuskegee, Alabama workforce (Humphrey & Korb, 2006).

Historically Black College and Universities have contributed to the social mobility of African Americans and have supported educating the Black middle class (Cantey, Bland, Mack, & Davis, 2012). It has been reported that HBCUs over produce the number of African Americans with undergraduate degrees based on their size (Lee & Keys, 2013). Gasman (2013) acknowledged that HBCUs represent approximately 3% of the total population of colleges and universities in the country. HBCUs can be a strategic force in the college completion crisis in America. Black colleges graduate 17% of all African Americans with an undergraduate degree yet represent only 3% of higher

education institutions (Lee & Keys, 2013). Furthermore, HBCUs graduate approximately 30% of all African Americans with degrees in mathematics, science, and engineering. Likewise, HBCUs serve as feeder institutions, sending credentialed alumni to further their educations at highly selective graduate schools such as Harvard, Yale, Berkley, and Duke Universities (Lee & Keys, 2013).

Issues

At present, Historically Black Colleges and Universities were highly criticized for low retention rates, lagging graduation rates, poor facilities, and campus leadership challenges (Freeman & Gasman, 2013; Gasman, 2013). HBCUs are not in this predicament alone. All of the aforementioned issues are critical needs area that higher education as a whole must address. For instance, the national average for graduation in America is stagnant hovering around the 50th percentile (Gasman, 2013). However, Clay (2012) described others issues such as external and internal threats that impact HBCUs. Clay readily recognized visionary leadership, financial operation, and institution ranking as areas of concerns. Clay believed that due to the history and changing roles of HBCUs, it was critical for them to have leaders who have demonstrated the ability to lead these institutions with an understanding of the legacy and tradition while also having a keen regard for the modern day trends in higher education.

First Generation College Students

There has been an influx of students who have enrolled in postsecondary institutions. According to 2014 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data, it is

expected that 20 million Americans will attend a four- or two-year institution in the coming years. Moreover, USDOE (2015) data indicated that approximately 32% of the students who were attending a college or university have been first generation college students. Researchers have developed studies that look at first generation college students through the prism of multiple factors such as: family educational attainment, deficiencies concerning navigating the collegiate culture, socio-economic background and or race (Engel, 2007, Engel & Tinto, 2008; Demetriou & Mann, 2012; Nunez & Cuccaro-Almin, 1998; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004).

According to Tym et al. (2004), the first generation college student is uniquely defined in relation to the parental educational attainment of a college student. Tym et al. (2004) described first generation students based on a confluence of pre-college factors such as family income and educational levels, arguing that first generation college students are less informed about how to gain admissions to and pay for college, and are rarely able to adjust to the specific scholastic demands of the collegiate environment. Additionally, Tym et al. (2004) asserted that first-generation students present a risk to the betterment of their own educational performance, noting that they are also more prone to decide to accept employment to offset the costs associated with a post-secondary education. Such a choice has been proven to impose limitations on student success (King, 2006).

Still, researchers have yet to develop a single definition that provides a concise characterization of a first generation college student. For instance, Pascarella et al. (2004)

identified a first generation college student as one whose parents had no more than a high school education. In contrast, Engle and Tinto (2008) defined a first generation college student as one where neither parent had earned a bachelor's degree. Despite the variances in definition, the history of family education remains an important factor to be considered in the investigation of first generation college students.

First Generation College Student Designation

The title of first generation college student gained legitimacy as result of federal legislation that led to programming that targets first generation college students. The Higher Education Act of 1965 fortified the financial support of students attending U.S. postsecondary institutions. Additionally, programs like TRIO began as a result of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (USDOE Office of Postsecondary Education Federal Trio Programs, 2008).

TRIO is comprised of eight programs: Educational Opportunity Center, Ronald McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement, Student Support Services, Talent Search, Training for Federal TRIO Programs, Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math-Science, and Veterans Upward Bound (NCES, 2014). NCES reported that TRIO programs are accessible at over 3,000 program sites. According to the Council for Opportunities in Education (2015) over \$840 million, during the last fiscal year, were appropriated for TRIO programming. The featured objective associated with TRIO funding has been to decrease predisposed factors that alter first generation students' ability to enter and/or complete an education at a post-secondary institution of learning (Berkner, He, & Forrest Cataldi, 2003; Engel & Tinto, 2008; Horn & Bobbitt, 2000).

The designation of first generation college student matters. The largest and oldest form of financial support for first generation college students on campus services has been the federal government. Students on the college pathway who are first in their family to pursue an education often have pre college experiences that do not substantially provide them with an advantage in the collegiate environment. Horn and Bobbitt (2000) suggested that understanding this population has contributed to providing services that help increase their ability to successfully graduate.

TRIO has focused on providing student services specifically to those from disadvantaged backgrounds (USDOE, 2015). Engle and Tinto (2008) lauded the program as a provision that empowers students and decreases, but not elevates, student dropout and failure. TRIO programs can assist students in a number of ways before and during the college experience.

For example, Upward Bound supports college admissions through advance access to college course to under privileged, low income, and first generation high school students. Support of first generation students is further expanded through TRIO programs such as Student Support Services. Student Support Services connects first generation college students to various forms of assistance such as tutoring and mentoring. The overarching goal of the TRIO program is to foster greater completion of post-secondary work for disadvantaged students (USDOE Office of Postsecondary Education Federal Trio Programs, 2008).

The Department of Education commissioned the National Evaluation of Student Support Services to determine the impact of TRIO Programs such as Student Support

Services (SSS) (Chaney, 2010). The short (one- and three-year) and long (six-year) term findings of the report identified participation in SSS as a factor that can improve graduation, grade point average, retention, and number of credits earned. In the evaluation of the program, Chaney (2010) reported that SSS participation of low income and first generation college students improved the likelihood, by six percentage points, of first generation college students completing a bachelor's degree.

Barriers and Bridges to Success

At the center of understanding first generation college student, it is important to also address the unique challenges these students face in actualizing the dream of receiving a post-secondary credential. According to Berkner et al. (2003), first generation college students experience a high risk level for potentially ending their college careers prior to receiving a degree. First generation students are polarized by factors such as limited financial resources. In particular, first generation college students are more likely to receive loans than grants and/or scholarships, and/or receive limited family financial support (Berkner et al., 2003).

Students who enter college for the first time and who are also classified as first generation college students face barriers to success. These barriers may include, but are not limited to, poor academic preparation, inadequate finances, low campus engagement with faculty and peers, lack of institutionalized strategies for success, decreased parent encouragement and support, and/or resource deficient colleges (Cabera, & Castaneda, 1992; Engle, 2007; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999; Mudge,

2010). However, researchers have suggested that there are strategies that can serve to bridge gaps experienced by first generation students.

Academics have identified pre college efforts, such as preparing students for admissions into college, as an example of bridging the divide that will help underprepared first generation college students successfully transition into the collegiate environment (Mudge, 2010). Mudge (2010) reported that the most significant form of preparing students for college has been school based. School based college preparation encompasses several different factors. For instance, Mudge (2010) asserted that high schools can share the importance of college through messaging, specifically promoting going to college, from school leaders like teachers, administrators, and staff. Another factor that encourages college preparation is offering programming, such as AP classes and college entrance test preparation. However, the aforementioned are just the “tip of the iceberg,” as other forms of bridges are created within the college environment.

With all of the funding and programmatic support in place, there is still a long way to go to attain success and graduate for First Generation College students. Nearly 60% of first generation college students exit the post-secondary system without earning a degree (Engle & Tinto, 2008). However, Engle and Tinto (2008) found that colleges and universities can reduce barriers that lead to academic failure by utilizing national programs such as the first-year experience to facilitate transition and persistence in college. The initial educational experiences during the freshman year encourages student retention. Therefore, Engel and Tinto (2008) recommended that institutions implement

both orientation programs in the summer and college freshmen seminar courses in the fall.

Enrollment Patterns for First Generation College Students

Researchers revealed that there are distinctive enrollment patterns of first generation college students (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Chen, 2005; Engle, 2007). First, Carneval and Strohl (2013) found that a significant portion, 68% of African Americans and 72% of Hispanic first generation college students, enrolled at open access colleges and universities, and the completion rate for open access colleges was 49%. First generation students, who have been determined to be more likely to attend open access colleges, have also been determined to be less likely to graduate. Carnevale and Strohl, however, stopped short of attributing poor completion rates of first generation college students to pre-college factors; instead, they emphasized systemic underfunding and resultant lack of support services of open access college services as the primary reason why students were not graduating at these institutions.

Chen (2005) and Engle (2007) identifies first generation college enrollment patterns by examining who the student was and what they did in college. According to Chen (2005), first generation college students were more likely to attend college part time. Engle expanded on the enrollment patterns of first generation college students by calling attention to the fact that these students have full time jobs, are less likely to live in on campus housing, and need to take pre college courses in order to be able to do well in school. Engle (2005) observed that these enrollment patterns coincide with risk factors that are characteristics of college students who do not persist.

First-year Seminar Programs

Need and Purpose of Freshman-Year Seminar

The making of the modern day freshman seminar course began as result of a downward trend of entering students' levels of preparedness as well as a fundamental interest in impacting student outcomes (Cohen & Jody, 1978; Murphy, 1989). In their seminal work, Cohen and Jody reported that the level of college preparedness of incoming freshmen triggered a need to extend the traditional format of a weekend pre-fall socialization to campus. Enrollment in college grew as a result of access. Moreover, students who had pre-college conditions that could impede college completion landed on the front steps of American campuses. Therefore, support services were provided within colleges to prepare students to perform better in a demanding scholarly environment.

Cohen and Jody (1978) noted the variety of areas in which freshman seminars helped incoming students. First, the courses helped students to think more deeply about their role in college. Institutions found that students were accustomed to being told "what to do and how to do it" in regard to their academic environment. Cohen and Jody believed that in order for students to acclimate to the new environment their learning style had to move from passive to active. This change would begin when students took responsibility for the information they acquired. In addition, fewer and fewer students were arriving at college with the cultural capital to best position themselves for success. Therefore, Cohen and Jody suggested that the freshman seminar could also be used to help incoming students understand the new system and structure of rules and resources of the college. Finally, Cohen and Jody attested that another purpose of the freshman

seminar was to equip students with the skills that would support long term achievement in the college environment. Freshmen needed guidance and strategies to be effective learners in their new environment. Therefore, the freshman seminar provided students with opportunities to acquire learning skills such as note taking, test-taking, and class participation (Cohen & Jody, 1978). In contrast, Murphy (1989) viewed the need and purpose of freshman seminar as a tool to prepare students to transition to college.

Structure of First-year Seminar

In the 1980s and 1990s, the freshman seminar began to be a popular tool universities used to further orient students to the college experience. Moreover, the first-year seminar was created to prepare students to acquire the skills needed to effectively navigate the collegiate environment. The first-year seminar structure can be divided into two segments: (a) course content and (b) classroom organization (Alexander & Gardner, 2009; Barefoot, 2000; Cohen & Jody, 1978; Keup & Petschauer, 2011).

Cohen and Jody (1987) believed that the freshman seminar was most useful if it provided information, built academic competency in student learning skills, and allowed students to practice their learning. Overall, Cohen and Jody explained what students were in need of and how the university could address those needs through a variety of different structures. For instance, a seminar could be structured to be credit-bearing versus noncredit bearing, graded or non-graded (Cohen & Jody, 1987). Though Cohen and Jody provided insight into how universities could foster successful student transition through

the utilization of programming such as first-year seminar, a critical drawback in their study was the absence of specific content for the intervention.

Barefoot (2000) addressed the aforementioned issue in her work focused on improving the first-year experience. In this volume, she called for refocusing and conceptually reimagining the structure of the first-year seminar. Based on common themes developed from a discussion of students' first year in American higher education, Barefoot (2000) determined that first-year seminars need to focus on increasing interaction between students so that students could be exposed to peers who were successful in higher education. Moreover, Barefoot (2000) introduced the concept of increasing faculty interaction with students, and increasing academic expectations. She concluded that first-year experience seminars would benefit from connecting the course programming to the specific student skills in which students were deficient.

In 2011, Keup and Petschauer (2011) put forward a work that combined reviewing both course content and structure. Specifically, the authors reviewed class size, credit versus contact hours, and curriculum focus based upon student needs. Ultimately, Keup and Petschauer concluded that a key building block for the structure of first-year seminars and success was the institutionalization of such program. Institutionalization refers to increasing further and wider impact of a campus wide process.

Models of First-year Seminars

Offering a first-year seminar is just as important as the decisions and actions regarding student retention and graduation. This section of the literature review seeks to introduce the various structural approaches of freshman seminar courses (Barefoot,

Gardner, Cutright, Morris, Schroder, Siegel, Schwartz & Swing, 2005; Greenfield, Keup & Gardner, 2013; Keup & Petschauer, 2011; Weissman & Magill, 2008; Keup & Petschauer, 2011). Regarding freshman year seminar models, some may correlate with school mission and size (Barefoot et al., 2005.), but others may articulate student expectations solely as student attendance (Keup & Petschauer, 2011).

Weissman and Magill (2008) suggested that models of freshman year seminars should be examined through the lens of a formula for successfully impacting student outcomes, and that the effectiveness of seminars was largely based on addressing needs of different types of students (Weissman & Magill, 2008). Weissman and Magill created the academic profile of the “student askers” and “student hermits”, students who were less likely to be prepared to academically benefit from an academic skill building model of freshman year seminar. Whereas “seekers” and “independents”, highly motivated students, benefited in enrolling in inquiry type courses. Essentially, Weissman and Magill (2008) stressed that models of student freshman seminar should be based on the academic strengths or weaknesses of a student. Beyond first-year seminar course type, Braxton, Bray, and Berger (2000) suggested strength of faculty instruction can also influence student outcome.

Greenfield et al. (2013) believed that the model of freshman seminar should be institutionalized; providing courses, extended orientation, academic seminars, basic study skills, pre-professional and disciplined linked seminars. Such consistency allowed students to progress successfully from freshman to sophomore year. In this sense, models of freshman year seminars progressed from being an extended orientation course with the

focus of acquainting students to the new college environment to understanding and meeting the individual advisement and learning needs of the first-year student. Table 4 displays key characteristics of each type of first-year seminar and summarizes the similarities and differences of the seminars as explained by Padgett and Keup (2011).

Table 4

Models of Freshman-year Seminars: Key Characteristics, Differences and Similarities

Model	Key Characteristics	Students Served	Seminar Focus
Extended orientation	Acquaint students with on campus resources, time management, academic and or career planning and learning strategies.	Generally designed for first-time enrolled college freshmen at large campus, or public less selective institutions.	The course credit can range from 0-3 credit hours and supports transition from high school to college.
Academic seminar	Academic inquiry course.	Course is for high performing students and is generally offered at highly selective institutions.	Supports transition from high school to college.
Basic study skills	Developmental course.	Focuses on developing study skills.	Supports transition from high school to college.
Pre-Professional/ Disciplined Seminar	Freshman year seminars that are tied to a specific academic unit administered by an academic program.	Acquaints students to the academic discipline and may be continually offered beyond the freshman year.	Supports transition from high school to college.

Theory and Philosophy

Retention is a critical component in justifying the move for first-year seminar programs in academia. As such, first-year seminars were dynamically developed to facilitate student persistence beyond the freshman year to graduation from the institution of higher learning (Berger, Ramirez, & Lyons, 2012; Gahan, 2002.) First-year seminar work began in the 1800s as a way to enhance pre-college students' experience so that they could be prepared for the university setting (Gahan, 2002), but preparing students for the university setting changed over the years. In the early 1900s, the level of support was more nurturing and caring with a focus on the personal welfare of the student (Gahan, 2002). In the 1930s, freshmen seminars were widespread, but it should be noted that the transition of the purpose of the program to institutional student success and retention did not begin to take place until the 1970s. As student demographics changed, faculty involvement shifted to a philosophy of survival of the fittest (Gahan, 2002). However, with the increase of first generation college students' curricula changes and more accountability of the college to ensure that students were persisting towards graduation, first-year seminars took on the role of improving retention (Gahan, 2002). According to Berger et al. (2012), two factors paved the way for the emergence of retention as important themes in higher education growth and diversity. From 1980 to 2014, attendance in post-secondary education grew from several thousand to more than 20.2 million students enrolled in colleges and universities throughout the United States (USDOE, 2015). Moreover, increased diversity in race, gender, and financial background

of students further encouraged universities to adopt the concept of retention as a central focus in helping students complete college (Buddin, 2014).

Persistence in College

The ability of a student to continue the collegiate journey and depart an institution with a degree describes persistence in U.S. higher education (Hagedorn, 2005). Put another way, Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges and Hayek (2006) described persistence as a three part process (a) college preparedness, (b) college admission, and (c) college completion. Researchers have suggested that collegiate persistence is based on various factors such as motivation, scholastic success, and determination to succeed in school (Guiffrida, Lynch, Wall, & Abel, 2013). In the first decade of the 21st century, several trends have emerged affecting student persistence. This section will focus on student economic indicators and institutional financial support as factors in understanding student persistence.

First, student social economic background has been found to be the strongest predictor of college success. Paulsen and St. John (2002) determined that college persistence was directly tied to a student's ability to pay for a post-secondary education. Secondly, colleges and universities have long been the symbols of high level learning and academic excellence (Flores, 2014). Still, there remains a degree deficiency in the United States. According the USDOE (2015), only 59% of first-time enrolled students received a credential within six years of enrolling in a four-year higher education institution. As a

result, there has been a call for greater fiscal responsibility from state legislatures to ensure that dollars spent on higher education equate to student graduation.

At the time of the present study, 32 states had used performance based funding (PBF), granted to them, to contend with the issues of college student persistence (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015). A critical component of performance based funding is the matrix used to award resources. Traditionally, universities were funded based on the number of full time equivalency students (FTE). Nevertheless, post-secondary institutions in states like Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Michigan and others have begun to receive funding based on various factors such as student graduation rates, employment placement, continued graduate education, and cost of degree completion. The ultimate evaluation of performance based funding has yet to be fully determined. However, it is a new model which structures how institutions advance towards improving graduation rates. Therriault and Krivoshey (2014) challenged the notion of the PBF model, suggesting that an involuntary result of performance based funding was limited access to post-secondary educational opportunities. These researchers were concerned that institutions might use new admissions algorithms that prioritize meeting the mandates of PBF.

The problems related to persistence are not completely unsolvable. Hu and John (2001) concluded that persistence of minority students has been directly tied to financial support and cost of college. In order to change the degree achievement rate at HBCUs, Harmon (2012) suggested that institutions serving minorities create a data driven model for degree completion of first generation, low wealth minority students.

Summary

In this chapter, origins of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were traced to their present day status. This included a review of literature relevant to first generation college students and first-year seminar courses. Chapter 3 contains a discussion of the methods and procedures used to conduct the study which involved analyzing the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

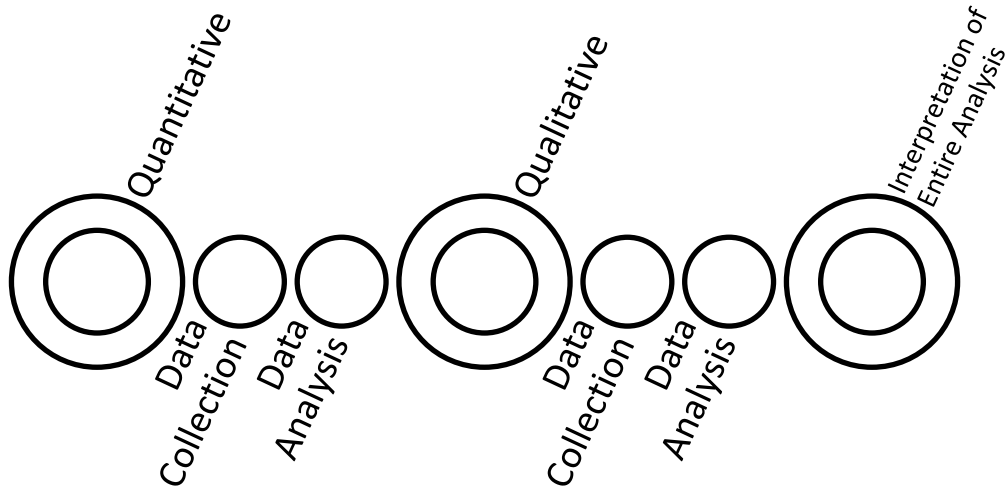
This chapter identifies the method selected for the study and provides a brief historical background of the use of the selected research design as well as the challenges associated with the methodology.

A mixed methods sequential explanatory strategy was utilized to collect and analyze data in this study about first-year seminars at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Creswell (2009) highlighted that a sequential explanatory mixed methods design utilized research phases that link both quantitative and qualitative methods. In this study, data sources were both quantitative (survey design) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews and document analysis). The following sections provide an explanation of the research methodology, setting and participants, support, data collection, procedures, instruments, data analysis and significance/limitations.

Mixed methods research combines qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano, 2007). Creswell and Plano (2007) noted, the overall power of a mixed methods study is the ability to explore the meaning of human experiences and testing the relationship among variables and theories together. Researchers use the mixed methods approach to gain greater insight in various ways. For instance, Creswell (2009) explained that a mixed methods design is utilized “to better understand, explain, or build on the results from the other approaches” (p. 205). Moreover Palinkas, Aarons, Horwitz, Chamberlain, Hurlburt and Landsverk (2011) discussed how mixed method designs are useful for implementation research.

The growth of mixed methods research design began more in the mid 20th century, and the origins of its practice are in the discipline of psychology (Creswell, 2009). The popularity of mixed methods design has continued to grow as is evident in the large number of mixed methods dissertations, NIH grant awards, and diverse academic disciplines that have been completed (Creswell, 2009, 2013). Despite the growth and expansion of mixed methods research, there are some limitations with regard to the use of the design.

Creswell (2009) noted that challenges associated with the mixed methods design are associated with data collection, time management of data analysis, as well as examining the interaction of combining qualitative and quantitative research to comprehensively answer a research question. Figure 1 illustrates the Sequential Explanatory Design (Creswell, 2009), the mixed methods design used in this study



Note. Reproduced with permission from “Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches” (3rd ed.) by J. Creswell (2009), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage (See Appendix A).

Figure 1. Sequential Explanatory Design A

Research Questions

The primary research question for this study was: What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals, instructors or administrators, at Historically Black College and Universities regarding the structure, purpose, implementation, instruction, and pedagogy and professional development of seminar professionals?

Sub-research Questions

1. What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding the first-year seminar purpose and structure?

2. What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding seminar program implementation?
3. What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding instruction and pedagogy of seminar courses?
What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding professional development of seminar professionals?
4. What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals regarding professional development of seminar professionals?

Researcher's Role

In research that uses qualitative measures it is important to understand the role of the researcher as the primary investigator and data collector (Creswell, 2009). My perspective of first-year seminars in higher education has been shaped by personal experiences. I am the eldest of five girls raised by two hard working, outstanding educators and political activists. All that I am or ever will be rests on the combination of two important factors: (a) my upbringing and (b) my college education. In 2001, I left Miami, Florida, which at the time was my hometown, to enroll as a college student in Tallahassee, Florida. My freshman year was thrilling. I'd finally eclipsed being Dewey and Valerie's daughter to becoming authentically me, Amanda. I enjoyed making independent decisions, but I did not always count the cost of the responsibility that accompanied my choices. Fortunately, as a college freshman, I made a great decision to enroll in the course, College Orientation. The class was dynamic, and I received in-depth

information about the history of my HBCU, made friends with new students, and received rousing lectures on the importance of completing college. The goal of the class was to motivate students to stay committed to degree attainment. Needless to say, I earned a letter grade of an A in the course. However, the success I experienced in College Orientation did not seamlessly translate into success as a college student.

To be direct, it took nearly nine years to finish a degree that in the best circumstances could be completed in four years or in extreme circumstances six years. Many factors played a role in my slow acceleration to degree attainment. Throughout college, I reduced the amount of credit hours I pursued, took on a full time job as a full time student, stopped out, moved to a different state, and nearly dropped out of school completely. More telling was the fact that my two younger sisters, who entered college after me, one several years behind me, both graduated ahead of me.

Through all of the challenges of adjusting to the demands of academia, I finally earned what I initially went to Tallahassee to receive, my bachelor's degree. Two years after I was awarded my B.S. I set out to go back to school and earn a master's degree. Upon admission to the same institution I attended for my undergraduate education, I received a stern caution from the program coordinator that I would not be allowed to "fool around." Somehow that caution was the fuel that made me focus. It was also a warning that gave me the faith to believe I could excel in graduate school. In a year's time, just three semesters, I completed a 33-hour graduate program. Meritoriously completing my graduate work was a personal major accomplishment. However, I did not participate in graduation. I have no regrets. Not walking across the graduation stage came

as a result of having to sit among new peers who, like me, were attending our doctoral studies orientation.

Admission into the Higher Education and Policy Studies program was a major life milestone that also came with unique prospects. I received the opportunity to teach, and as God would have it, I am an instructor of record for a first-year seminar course. The experience was entirely different from what I remembered as an undergraduate student taking a similar course in 2001. The focus of the seminar I have taught was not just on understanding the history of the institution. Instead, this first-year seminar course was focused on developing habits of highly effective college students. The assignments I have given my students included research projects, in classroom presentations, understanding theories of motivation, and utilizing on campus resources. In addition, I became an invited member of the SLS university-wide steering committee at the nation's second largest public institution. As a committee, we have been charged with influencing best practices for the program as well as internally monitoring our progress regarding pre-established program strategic goals.

The work of this dissertation has brought me full circle. I have had the opportunity to revisit the first-year seminar, not as student or instructor, but as a researcher. I commenced this study with the understanding that my experiences had likely shaped my thoughts and how I interpreted information; and I was determined to allow my accumulated knowledge to count towards a greater cause. First-year seminars are a powerful tool for student retention and success. It is my hope that historically Black

colleges and universities will continue to position their institutions to more powerfully use first-year seminars as a tool to facilitate student success.

Setting and Participants

Setting

This study was conducted at four Historically Black College and Universities (HBCU) located in the Southeast United States. Table 5 lists the institutions by the pseudonyms assigned to maintain anonymity, enrollment size, school type, and six-year graduation rate.

Table 5

Study Institutions by Size, Type, and Graduation Rate

College/University	Enrollment Size	School Type	Graduation Rate (Six Year)
Blue	7,000 - 12,000	Public	Below 50%
Green	2,000 - 7,000	Private	Above 50%
Purple	2,000 - 7,000	Private	Below 50%
Yellow	500 - 4,000	Private	Below 50%

Blue College/University enrolled 7,705 undergraduate students: 4,918 (63.8%) were female and 2,787 (36.1%) were male. There were 2,524 graduate and unclassified students on campus. The overall enrollment by racial category was as follows: 87.5%, African American; 7.1%, White/Non-Hispanic; 1.1%, Asian; 0.2%, American

Indian/Alaskan Native; 1.3%, Non-Resident Alien; and 0.08%, Multiple Races. The percentage of students that graduated within six years was 41%.

Green College/University enrolled 3,787 students: 2,241 (59%) were female and 1,546 (41%) were male. The enrollment figures include fulltime, part-time, and graduate students. These data revealed the overall enrollment by racial category as follows: 89.0%, are African American; 2.0% are White; <1% are Asian; 3.0% are Hispanic/Latino; <1% American Indian/Alaskan Native; 2.0%, Non-Resident Alien; 2.0%, Multiple Races; and 2.0%, Ethnicity Unknown. The percentage of students that graduated within six years was 51%.

Purple College/University enrolled 1,735 undergraduate students: 1,072 (61.78%) were female and 663 (38.2%) were male. There was a total of 156 part-time students on campus. The report did not provide information indicating whether part-time students were online students. Furthermore, residential occupancy within the university residential life facilities required that a student be admitted as a fulltime student (Purple College/University Residential Life, 2012). Moreover, no information was provided regarding graduate student enrollment. The overall enrollment by racial category was as follows: 84.0%, African American; <1%, White; 10.3%, Non-Resident Alien; and 2.4%, Multiple Races. The percentage of Purple College/University students who graduated within six years was 40%.

Yellow College/University enrolled 862 undergraduate students as follows: 406 (47%) were female and 456 (53%) were male. No information was provided regarding graduate student enrollment. The overall enrollment by racial category was as follows:

90.0%, African American; 3.0% White; 2.0%, Hispanic; <1%, American Indiana/Alaskan Native; <1%, Non-Resident Alien; 1.6%, Multiple Races; and 3.0%, Ethnicity Unknown. The percentage of students who graduated within six years was 20%.

Participants

The researcher identified faculty and or staff who were instrumental in organizing and implementing first-year seminars at the four selected colleges/universities. The following sections provide descriptions of the first-year seminars and the faculty who teach the courses at each of the participating institutions.

Blue University College/University

Blue College/University reported that the mission of the first-year seminar was to assist first-time-in-college freshman students' transition into the collegiate environment. First-time-in-college freshman enrolled at Blue College/University are encouraged to take the first-year seminar course which is a two-credit hour course graded by a letter grade. The first-year seminar course is administered through Academic Affairs at the university. Information regarding faculty who teach first-year seminar was limited. However, according to available online resources Blue College/University offered eight sections of the first-year seminar taught by eight different instructors.

Green College/University

Green College/University reported that the mission of the first-year seminar was to improve skills that aid in developing the academic skills of students. First-time-in-college freshman enrolled at Green College/University are required to take the first-year seminar

course which is a one-credit hour course graded by a letter grade. The first-year seminar course is administered through Academic Affairs at the university. Green College/University has 41 sections of the first-year seminar taught by 17 different instructors. Locating information regarding faculty who taught the first-year seminar was difficult.

Purple College/University

Purple College/University reported the mission of the first-year seminar was to improve skills that aid in developing the academic skills of students. Purple College/University's first-year seminar course is a three-credit hour course graded by letter grade and required of all first-time-in-college freshmen enrolled. The first-year seminar course is administered through Academic Affairs at the university. Purple College/University has 12 sections of the first-year seminar taught by six different instructors

Yellow College/University

Yellow College/University reported that the mission of the first-year seminar course was to improve skills that aid in developing the academic skills of the students. First-time-in-college freshman enrolled at Yellow College/University who have completed less than 30 credit hours are required to take the first-year seminar course. The first-year seminar course at Yellow College/University carries one credit hour. Based in a thorough review of available online data, the researcher was unable to determine whether the course was graded, who administers the first-year seminar course at the institution, or the

number of faculty and or staff responsible for teaching and or administering the first-year seminar.

At Blue College/University, Green College/University, Purple College/University, and Yellow College/University, purposeful sampling was used to identify possible participants for the study. According to Creswell (2009) purposeful sampling allows those most closely related to the research subject to be selected for the purposes of better understanding the research inquiry.

Procedures

Data Collection

The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative approaches (survey, semi-structured interview, and document analysis) to collect data for the study. Using multiple steps of sequential explanatory design, data were collected and analyzed as follows: (a) quantitative data collection; (b) quantitative data analysis; (c) qualitative data collection; (c) qualitative data analysis; and (d) interpretation of the entire analysis. The following paragraphs contain a detailed description of the transitional steps associated with the data collection process.

In Step 1, the quantitative data were collected utilizing the HBCU First-year Seminar Survey. The survey used a five-response Likert-type scale, and respondents were able to indicate their responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. In order to yield a high response rate the researcher implemented Dillman's (2002) tailored design. As such the surveys disseminated in accordance with the current study were

checked to ensure that the survey was respondent friendly, that multiple attempts were used to increase the number of respondents completing the survey, that the process for returning the survey was understood, and that the survey was personalized (Dillman, 2000).

Step 2 involved quantitative data analysis. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies) to provide a profile of the perceptions of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCU institutions who completed the survey inquiring about their first-year seminar.

Step 3 began the next phase of data collection. The qualitative data collection was conducted to gain the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals through (a) semi-structured interviews and (b) the review of participating instructors' first-year seminar syllabi. Syllabi were reviewed to gain information regarding the types of class assignments, class length, and credit hours in order to develop greater understanding of the perceptions and experiences of freshman-year seminar professionals at HBCUs. Participants in the qualitative phase were selected based on their willingness to participate in interviews as expressed in their initial survey responses. Step 4 involved analysis of the qualitative data. The interview transcripts and syllabi data were coded and categorized to identify and group themes and/or patterns of the perceptions and experiences of interview participants (Patton, 2002).

Step 4, the final step, required an interpretation of the entire analysis. Following the analysis, the researcher identified how the qualitative findings elaborated on the quantitative data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009).

The researcher sent a letter inviting participants to participate in the study (Appendix B). The letter explained the purpose of the study and how to access the online survey. Upon receiving the link, participants reviewed the consent form, agreed, and completed the survey. Appendix C contains the explanation of the research, the consent form, and the online survey to collect quantitative data. After the survey results were received, participants had the opportunity to provide additional information through a series of semi-structured in-depth interviews which followed the sequential explanatory design for a mix methods approach.

At the end of the data collection for the survey, the researcher analyzed the collected data and requested interviews with first-year seminar professionals. At the interview point of the process, the researcher met with interview participants to develop a rapport. At the end of a 30-minute conversation, the researcher provided participants with a confidentiality agreement. Participants had a 24-hour period to complete the information, and the researcher scheduled an in-depth online semi-structured interview within a time frame of five to seven business days. Appendix D contains the interview questions posed by the researcher to interviewees in semi-structured interviews. Dillman (2000) supported the use of Internet surveys as an economical way of collecting and retrieving data. Moreover, Wengraft (2001) suggested that a demographic questionnaire is useful in identifying information that may assist the interviewer during the interview process.

Data Analysis

Table 6 contains a detailed description, organized by research question and data source, of the data analysis used to analyze quantitative and qualitative data collected in this study

Table 6

Mixed Method Data Collection and Analysis Procedures by Research Question

Research Question (RQ)	Survey Question (SQ)	Survey Analysis	Interview Questions	Interview Analysis
RQ1. What are the perceptions of freshman seminar professionals of the freshman seminar purpose and structure?	<p>SQ1. I understand the purpose of my campus first-year seminar course is to provide of campus resources and services for students.</p> <p>SQ2 I understand the purpose of my campus first-year seminar course is to provide self-exploration/personal development services concerning students who take the course.</p> <p>SQ3 I understand the purpose of my campus first-year seminar course is develop academic skills.</p> <p>SQ4 I understand the purpose of my campus first-year seminar course is to assist students with developing a connection with the institution</p> <p>SQ5 Currently, the type of first-year seminar at my institution is best described as academic seminar that covers various topics.</p>	Descriptive statistics calculated.	Semi-structured interview questions.	Data coded and categorized to arrive at themes/patterns of interviewees' experiences.

Research Question (RQ)	Survey Question (SQ)	Survey Analysis	Interview Questions	Interview Analysis
	SQ6 Currently, the type of first-year seminar at my institution is best described as extended orientation.			
	SQ7 Currently, the type of first-year seminar at my institution is best described as professional or discipline based seminar.			
	SQ8 Currently, the type of first-year seminar at my institution is best described as basic study skills seminar.			
RQ2. What are the perceptions of freshman seminar professionals on seminar program implementation	SQ21. First-year seminar is taught primarily by tenured track faculty. SQ22. First-year seminar is taught primarily by full-time non-tenured track faculty. SQ23. First-year seminar is taught primarily by academic advisers. SQ24. First-year seminar is taught primarily by adjunct faculty. SQ25. First-year seminar is taught primarily by graduate students.	Descriptive statistics calculated (mean, median, mode).	Semi-structured interview questions	Data coded and categorized to arrive at themes/patterns of interviewees' experiences.

Research Question (RQ)	Survey Question (SQ)	Survey Analysis	Interview Questions	Interview Analysis
RQ3. What are the perceptions of freshman seminar professionals on instruction and pedagogy of seminar courses?	SQ13 All incoming freshman are required to take first-year seminar.	Descriptive statistics calculated (mean, median, mode).	Semi-structured interview questions	Data coded and categorized to arrive at themes/patterns of interviewees' experiences.
	SQ14. Undeclared students are required to take first-year seminar.			
	SQ15. Students with specific majors are required to take first-year seminar.			
	SQ16. First-time-in-college, first generation students are required to take the first-year seminar. .			
	SQ17. Transfer students are required to take first-year seminar.			
RQ4. What are the perceptions of freshman seminar professionals on professional development of seminar professionals?	SQ18 My institution supports first-year seminar faculty attending national conferences regarding first-year student college transition.	Descriptive statistics calculated (mean, median, mode).	Semi-structured interview questions	Data coded and categorized to arrive at themes/patterns of interviewees' experiences.

Research Question (RQ)	Survey Question (SQ)	Survey Analysis	Interview Questions	Interview Analysis
	SQ10. My institution supports first-year seminar faculty development through ongoing workshops.			
	SQ11. My institution supports first-year seminar faculty development through ongoing orientation.			
	SQ12. My institution supports first-year seminar faculty development through ongoing peer instructor modeling.			
	SQ19. My institution invests in library resources for first-year seminar instructors.			
	SQ20. My institution invests in academic materials for first-year seminar instructors and/or administrators.			

Note. Document review of freshman seminar syllabi was conducted prior to interviews to determine types of assignments, class length, and credit hours and contributed to building a profile of perceptions of freshman year professionals at HBCUs.

Validity & Reliability

Golafshani (2003) defined reliability as trustworthiness and rigor of a research design. In order to ensure reliability, the researcher utilized the following strategies:

1. Triangulation of data: collected data were retrieved from multiple sources (survey, interview, and document analysis).
2. Clarification of researcher bias: The researcher documented in writing, under the heading “The Researcher’s Role,” personal connections that could address possible bias.

The aforementioned strategies were used to preserve the validity and reliability of the study for accurate findings (Creswell, 2009). According to Bowen (2009), triangulation of data through multiple sources decreases any likely biases. The researcher also shared her perspectives of values and interaction with the dissertation topic (Greenbank, 2002)..

Analysis of qualitative data were performed utilizing the constant comparative method (Creswell, 2013) for the purpose of supporting data discovered through interviewing and survey perceptions and experiences of freshman seminar professionals, instructors or administrators, at Historically Black College and Universities. The purpose was to explore the structure, purpose, implementation, instruction, pedagogy and professional development of first-year seminar professionals at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The complete data gathering process provided multiple sources from different perspectives which provided for and strengthened the validity of the research.

Limitations

1. The study was limited to four HBCUs, all located in the State of Florida. Therefore, the findings of the research may not be generalizable to broader HBCUs populations.
2. Another possible limitation of the study is the survey sample size. The present information regarding number of first-year seminars may have contributed to a large standard error. As a result of a small survey size it may be hard to determine the true effect size. However, Hackshaw (2008), suggested that a small sample size does not have to be problematic. The data from the proposed study survey results can be used to design larger studies that can confirm results yielded from the smaller study.

Significance

The findings of the research may be significant in improving understanding how, when grouped together, perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at HBCUs and student transition are connected to student success. Specifically, the research study may yield recommendations for modifications in specific teaching pedagogies that may contribute to further to first generation Black college student success.

Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed explanation of the research design, sequential explanatory design A (Creswell, 2009) that was used to examine the perceptions of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs. The four research questions which guided

the study have been restated, and the setting and participants have been described.

Procedures used in the both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis have been detailed. Perceptions were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter includes a summary of the findings from the HBCU First-Year Seminar Survey, qualitative interviews, and syllabi document. To begin, the researcher provides a brief reiteration of the purpose of the study and research questions, along with a description of the research participants. Next, the researcher provides a summary of the research methods used to examine the quantitative and qualitative data. Following the summary of the research methods, the researcher presents the findings. The findings are e grouped according to corresponding research questions. Additionally, the researcher provides tables that list descriptive statistics. Beneath each frequency table is information regarding central tendency which describes the perceptions of first-year seminar professionals. Then, the researcher provides a summary of the quantitative findings. Concerning the qualitative data, the researcher will describe the outcomes of the qualitative data. The findings of the analysis of the qualitative data are grouped according to the corresponding research question and summarized. The researcher provides challenges associated with the study that were beyond the researcher's control. After the reporting of the findings according to research questions, the researcher summarizes the findings in their entirety.

Purpose of the Study

There were multiple purposes associated with this sequential explanatory design study. First, the researcher sought to examine the experiences and perceptions of first-

year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs and to understand how they utilized the first-year seminar to orient their students to the college environment. Furthermore, the second purpose of the study was to understand the best practices at these institutions while also providing first-year professionals with an opportunity to share their insight regarding their experiences as it related to their work.

Research Questions

The following research questions served as a catalyst for guiding the investigation of this study:

1. What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding the first-year seminar purpose and structure?
2. What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding seminar program implementation?
3. What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding instruction and pedagogy of seminar courses?
4. What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding professional development of seminar professionals?

Participant Demographics

Research on the university has routinely revealed information on students. In the case of this study, Table 7 displays demographic information that accounts for interesting facts concerning the characteristics of the interview participants, who are instructors,

faculty, and administrators. In particular, Table 7 presents data regarding professional rank, race, post-secondary credential attainment, age range, HBCU affiliation, class mode, size, and course grading scale. In reviewing the data, the researcher found that those who held administrative positions fit into the following three categories, student personnel administrator, college level administrator, or university wide administrator.

Table 7

Interview Participants' Demographics

Participant Name/ Institution	Professional Title	Age Range	Race	Highest Level of Education	HBCU Graduate	Sections Taught Annually	Class Mode	Average Class Size	Course Grading Scale
001 Purple	Lead Academic Advisor	40-50	Black	Bachelors	Yes	1	Face to Face	25	P/F
002 Blue	Director, Black Archives/Research Associate	50-60	Black	Doctorate	Yes	1	Mixed Face Online	25	A-F
003 Blue	Director, Pre-Medical Advising	30-40	Black	Doctorate	Yes	1	Face to Face	25-30	A-F
004 Blue	College of Education Administration	50-60	Black	Masters	Yes	1	Face to Face	25-35	A-F
005 Purple	Director of Student Success	30-40	Black	Bachelors	No	2	Face to Face	30+	P/F
006 Yellow	Director of General Studies	40-50	Black	Doctorate	No	3	Face to Face	30	A-F
007 Yellow	Adjunct Instructor	40-50	Black	Masters	Yes	1	Face to Face	30	A-F
008 Yellow	Adjunct Instructor	30-40	Black	Masters	Yes	1	Face to Face	30	A-F

Note. HBCU = Historically Black Colleges and Universities

All except two of the participants described themselves as administrators within their respective institutions. As disclosed in Table 7, first-year seminar professionals' affiliation to the institution went beyond an academic or scholastic purpose. For example, approximately 75% of the respondents identified themselves as an HBCU graduate. Moreover, all of the interviewees were Black or African American.

Among the first-year seminar professionals interviewed, there was a high level of variance regarding highest level of educational attainment. Although all participants had a post-secondary credential, there was a difference in the types of credentials. For instance, three of the eight interview participants reported earning a doctoral degree, whereas, three reported earning a master's degree, and two reported earning a bachelor's degree. The researcher found there was a correlation between level of education and institutional affiliation at one of the participating sites. For instance, all of the interviewed participants from Institution Purple had a bachelor's degree. While at the other institutions participants level of education varied between bachelor's, master's, and doctorate.

Program Descriptors

In this section, the researcher shares findings related to mode of instruction, class size and course grading scale. Participants overwhelmingly responded, seven of eight, that the mode of instruction for the classes was face to face. Additionally, the researcher found the average class size ranged from 25-30 students. Respondents also indicated that the course was graded on two distinct scales. Results showed, six of eight interviewees used the traditional letter grade scale, whereas, two interviewees utilized the pass/fail

scale. Overall, participants generally did not teach more than one class per semester. However, the data suggested that directors of the first-year seminar program generally taught more than one course. When first year-seminar professionals were questioned about mode, participants agreed their seminar mode of instruction was generally face to face. Class sizes were relatively intimate for undergraduate level courses, and student enrollment was generally capped at no more than 30 students.

Data Analysis

Over a 10-day period, the researcher engaged in the process of collecting quantitative data. These data included sending out four different correspondences (a) pre-notice letter, (b) first contact letter, (c) thank you/follow up letter, and (d) final request letter that invited participants to partake in the study (Appendix B). The online survey was disseminated to first-year seminar professionals at three institutions: Blue, Purple, and Yellow. Initially, it was reported that the population size concerning first-year seminar professional population at Florida HBCUs was 31.

Originally, the researcher used online data from the respective institutions to determine the population size regarding Florida HBCU first-year seminar professionals. However, upon officially commencing the study and through additional information from institutional informants, the researcher adjusted the population size to correspond with updated information. Table 8 provides information regarding the adjusted population size of the Florida HBCU first-year seminar professionals. It should be noted that Institution Green eventually did not participate in the study. Because of this, the adjusted population

size for this study was 38. Supplementary information regarding this fact will be discussed later in this chapter in the Challenges section. Additionally, the survey data would be further enriched by the findings from the interviews in the next stage of the study.

Table 8

Study Population Size by Institution

Pseudonym Institutional Name	Previously Reported Population Size	Adjusted Population Size
Blue	8	16
Green	17	0
Purple	6	13
Yellow	0	9
Total	31	38

Originally, the population size for the study was 22. A total of 11 surveys were collected from Blue Institution; 10 surveys were collected from Purple Institution, and one survey was received from Yellow Institution. Results from the single respondent at Yellow Institution were excluded, as the survey was incomplete. The survey only contained information regarding the respondent's willingness to participate in an interview. Therefore, the researcher adjusted the sample size to 21. The overall survey completion rate was 55.26%.

Qualitative data were captured through interviews which assisted the researcher in analyzing the experiences of the participants regarding their perceptions of the experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs. The researcher

gathered approximately four and one-half hours of transcribed interviews with first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs. The researcher conducted a semi-structured interview with participants who expressed an interest in being interviewed using information amassed from the survey and email communication. In order to begin and successfully conduct the interviews, the researcher did the following: (a) created an interview protocol, (b) contacted potential interviewees to arrange a date and time to conduct the interview, and (c) requested that participants respond to a demographic questionnaire.

Qualitative Codes

After all interviews were conducted, the researcher transcribed the data and generated approximately 59 pages of data (Appendix E). The researcher applied Colaizzi's method as a guide for interpreting data (Sanders, 2003). The application of Colaizzi's method included the following steps: (a) read and review interview transcriptions, (b) pull statements from the interview transcripts that explain the experience of the participants as it relates to the research questions, (c) describe the statements, (d) pull themes from the statements, and (e) describe the phenomenon (Sanders, 2003). As such, after transcribing the data collected, copies of the transcripts were sent to participants to review and verify their comments (member checking). The researcher then pulled significant statements from the participant verified transcribed data. A total of 177 statements were captured. Finally, the researcher collapsed the statements into a list of 30 codes. The 30 codes that were identified are listed in Table 9.

Table 9

Interview Codes

30 Qualitative Codes Identified in Interviews		
• Love	• Support	• Motivation
• Professional development	• Drive	• Mentoring
• Leadership	• Workshops	• Training
• Faculty development	• In-service training	• External workshops
• Conferences	• HBCU best practices	• Class conversations
• Student experiences	• Instructor experiences	• Shared experiences
• Basic study skills	• Perseverance	• Skill building
• Learning from peers	• Positive role modeling	• Changing realities
• Poor	• Purpose	• Teaching
• Serving	• Helping	• Non-traditional roles

Demographic information was collected which identified respondent characteristics of gender and professional classification as shown in Table 10. Of 21 respondents, two did not report their gender. However, a majority (55%) reported their gender as female followed by 45% of respondents who identified their gender as male. A total of 85.7 %, of the individuals reported that they were first-year seminar instructors, and only one (4.8%) of the respondents indicated being a first-year seminar administrator. Finally, two (9.5%), of the respondents selected the option of other. When respondents were asked to explain what other meant, those who listed their work within the first-year seminar as other classified themselves as “university administrators.”

Table 10

Demographic Characteristics of First-year Seminar Professionals

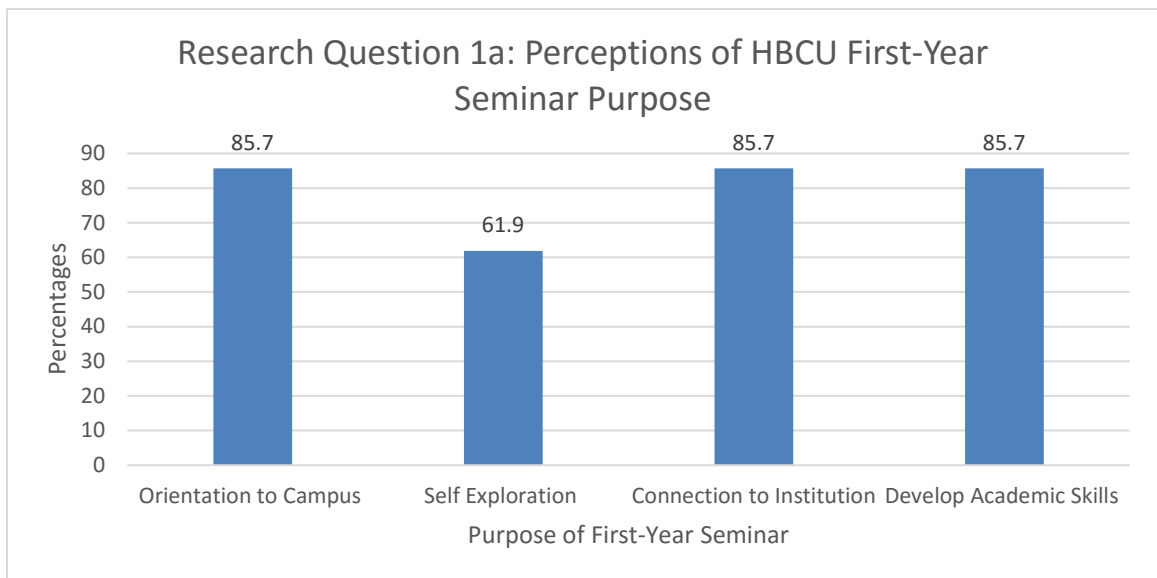
Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Male	9	45.0
Female	11	55.0
Missing	1	0.0
Total	21	100.0
First-year seminar instructor	18	85.7
First-year seminar administrator	1	4.8
Other	2	9.5
Total	21	100.0

Research Question 1

What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding the first-year seminar purpose and structure?

To determine the perceptions of first-year seminar professionals regarding course purpose/structure, respondents replied to eight open ended statements: (a) provide orientation of campus resources and services for students; (b) provide self-exploration/personal development services; (c) development of academic skills; (d) assist student with developing a connection with the institution; (e) the type of first-year seminar at my institution is best described as an academic seminar that covers various topics; (f) the type of first-year seminar at my institution is best described as extended orientation; (g) the type of first-year seminar at my institution is best described as professional or discipline based seminar; and (h) the type of first-year seminar at my institution is best described as basic skills seminar.

For the reader’s convenience, a summary of the survey statements corresponding to specific research questions can be found in Figures 2-6. Figure 2 contains a summary of the data reported for survey items 1-4. Tables 11-14 contain the frequencies and percentages for the responses to survey statements that focused on purpose.



Note. Percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses of respondents. HBCU = Historical Black Colleges and Universities.

Figure 2. Summary of Perceptions of HBCU First-year Seminar Purpose: Survey Statements 1-4

In evaluating the purpose of first-year seminar, Figure 2 illustrates that the perceived purpose of the first-year seminar, as described by participants, was to orient students to campus resources as well as connect students to the institution. Respondents were asked to share their perceptions regarding the purpose of the campus first-year seminar. Of the 21 respondents, 66.7%, agreed that the purpose of the first-year seminar

was to provide orientation of campus resources and connection with the institution, whereas only 19.0%, respondents strongly agreed that the purpose of their first-year seminar was to provide orientation of campus resources and services for students. It is important to note that not a single respondent disagreed with the statement. Table 11 shows the number of times a respondent agreed or disagreed with Survey Statement 1.

Table 11.

Survey Statement 1: Provide Orientation of Campus Resources and Services for Students

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	0	0.0
Neither agree or disagree	3	14.3
Agree	14	66.7
Strongly agree	4	19.0
Total	21	100.0

Respondents were asked to identify the perceptions regarding the purpose of the campus first-year seminar in regard to Survey Statement 2. Their responses are shown in Table 12. Of the 21 respondents, 42.9% agreed that the purpose of the first-year seminar was to provide self-exploration/personal development services, whereas 19%, of the respondents strongly agreed that the purpose of their first-year seminar was to provide self-exploration/personal services. Note, not a single respondent disagreed with the statement.

Table 12

Survey Statement 2: Provide Self-exploration/Personal Development Services

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	0	0.0
Neither agree or disagree	8	38.1
Agree	9	42.9
Strongly agree	4	19.0
Total	21	100.0

Respondents were asked to identify their perceptions regarding the purpose of the campus first-year seminar in regard to Survey Statement 3. Of the 21 respondents, 61.9%, agreed that the purpose of the first-year seminar was to develop academic skills, whereas 23.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that the purpose of their first-year seminar was to develop academic skills as shown in Table 13. Note, not a single respondent disagreed with the statement.

Table 13

Survey Statement 3: Develop Academic Skills

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	0	0.0
Neither agree or disagree	3	14.3
Agree	13	61.9
Strongly agree	5	23.8
Total	21	100.0

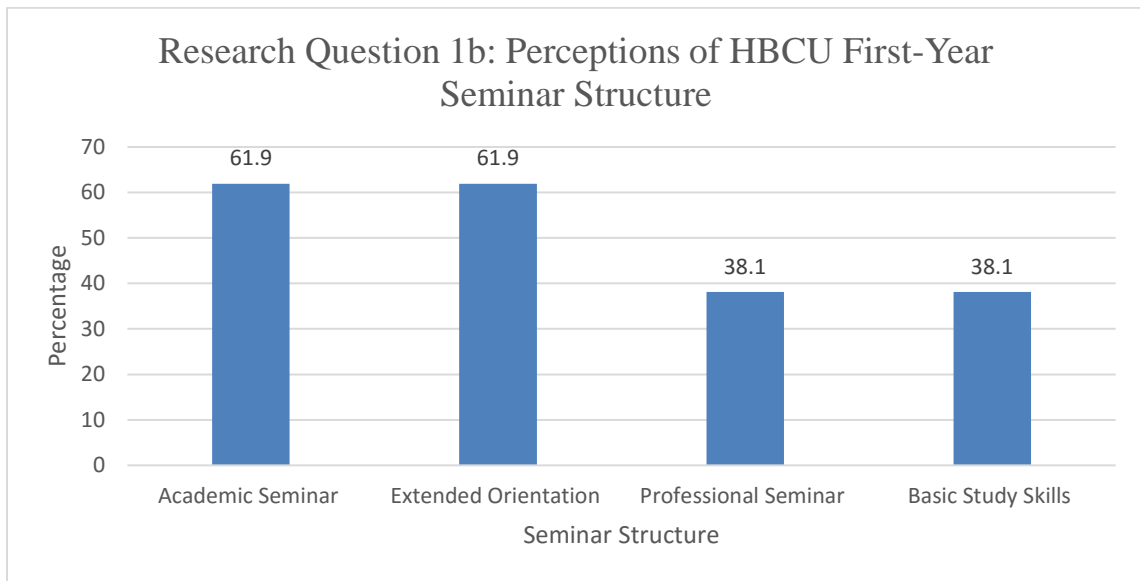
Respondents were asked to identify the perceptions regarding the purpose of the campus first-year seminar in regard to Survey Statement 4. As shown in Table 14, of the 21 respondents, 14 (66.7%) agreed that the purpose of the first-year seminar was to assist students with developing a connection with the institution, whereas four (19%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the purpose of their First-year seminar was to assist students with developing a connection with the institution as indicated. Note, not a single respondent disagreed with the statement.

Table 14

Survey Statement 4: Assist Students in Developing an Institutional Connection

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	0	0.0
Neither agree or disagree	3	14.3
Agree	14	66.7
Strongly agree	4	19.0
Total	21	100.0

Figure 3 and Tables 15-18 contain a summary of the perceptions of participants as to the structure of their HBCU First-year seminar.



Note. Percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses of respondents. HBCU = Historical Black Colleges and Universities.

Figure 3. Summary of Perceptions of HBCU First-year Seminar Structure: Survey Statements 5-8

In order to understand the perceptions of seminar structure, respondents were asked to read various statements concerning seminar type. The statements are included, with each table, and discussed. Though respondents' responses reflected the range of answers available within the survey, the respondents perceived that the structure of the first-year program was best described as an academic seminar. Tables 15-18 contain the

data associated with each survey statement that focused on purpose and/or structure. The tables list the number of times a respondent agreed or disagreed with the statement.

Respondents were asked to identify the perceptions regarding structure: first-year seminar was best described as an academic seminar that covers various topics (Survey Statement 5). As shown in Table 15, 4.8% and 19.0% of the respondents, respectively, strongly disagreed and disagreed that the structure of the first-year seminar was best described as an academic seminar, whereas, 42.9%, and 19.0%, respectively, agreed and strongly agreed that the structure of the first-year seminar can be described as an academic seminar.

Table 15

Survey Statement 5: First-year Seminar is Best Described as an Academic Seminar

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	4.8
Disagree	4	19.0
Neither agree or disagree	3	14.3
Agree	9	42.9
Strongly agree	4	19.0
Total	21	100.0

Respondents were asked to identify the perceptions regarding: First-year seminar is best described as an extended orientation course (Survey Statement 6). As shown in Table 16, 4.8 %, and 14.3%, of participants respectively strongly disagreed and disagreed that the structure of the campus first-year seminar was best described as an extended

orientation. In contrast, 38.1%, and 23.8%, respectively agreed and strongly agreed that the structure of the first-year seminar can be described as an extended orientation.

Table 16

Survey Statement 6: First-year Seminar is Best Described as Extended Orientation

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	4.8
Disagree	3	14.3
Neither agree or disagree	4	19.0
Agree	8	38.1
Strongly agree	5	23.8
Total	21	100.0

Respondents were asked to share their perceptions regarding: first-year seminar is best described as professional or discipline based course (Survey Statement 7). Table 17 reveals that 9.5 %, and 42.9% of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively, that the structure of the campus first-year seminar was best described as a professional or discipline based course, whereas, 9.5%, and 9.5%, respectively, agreed and strongly agreed that the structure of the first-year seminar can be described as a professional or discipline based seminar.

Table 17

Survey Statement 7: First-year Seminar is Best Described as Professional or Discipline Based

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly disagree	2	9.5
Disagree	7	33.3
Neither agree or disagree	4	19.0
Agree	6	28.6
Strongly agree	2	9.5
Total	21	100.0

Respondents were asked to identify the perceptions regarding: the structure of the campus first-year seminar is best described as a basic study skills course (Survey Statement 8). As shown in Table 18, 9.5% of respondents strongly disagreed and 33.3% disagreed that the classroom structure of the campus first-year seminar was best described as a basic study skills course; whereas, 28.6% and 9.5% respectively agreed and strongly agreed that the structure of the first-year seminar can be described as a basic study skills course.

Table 18

First-year Seminar is Best Described as Basic Study Skills

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly disagree	2	9.5
Disagree	7	33.3
Neither agree nor disagree	4	19.0
Agree	6	28.6
Strongly agree	2	9.5
Total	21	100.0

Open Ended Responses

Research Question 1 sought to understand the experiences and perceptions of first-year seminar professionals regarding purpose and structure. The following thematic narratives are descriptions that provide an account of the involvement of first-year seminar professionals who detailed their relevant experiences regarding purpose and structure.

Holistic Support

I love that we open the doors of access to students. But once that first door of access is open, I am worrying about how to get them through the next door of graduation, the next door of success beyond college. Success can't stop for our students with wearing a cap and gown. They become examples of success for their communities. That looks different and is more complex than just a regular class. I was excited for Barack Obama, but he was the first. He will not be the only. In my classroom, I am building the next. (Participant 002, p. 13, lines 254-260)

The aforementioned respondent's comment captures the collective essence of participants in this study regarding the perceptions of their purpose as professionals teaching the first-year seminar. Participants interpreted their purpose to be a very deliberate, albeit a strategic, factor in meeting the goals associated with transitioning students through their first-year experience. The participants viewed the first-year course not just as a seminar but as a stepping stone to lift their students into several levels of

success (e.g., success in school, success in their communities). Participants provided profound statements that explained this purpose. Many interviewees agreed that the purpose of first-year seminar could best be described as a pattern of connecting education and aspirational goals.

I don't know any job that will require you to do multiple choice answers. So I've really focused on helping them do presentations in connection between what they have learned and their major and today's world or just problem solving. I think that's just more topical and real as much as I can make it. (Data Record 006, p.2, lines 33-36)

As Data Record 006 indicated, the purpose of the course was to train students to apply the knowledge from the skills learned in college, particularly in first-year seminar, to their everyday lives. The aforementioned example illustrates the premise that first-year seminar professionals were united in their convictions that the purpose of the seminar reaches beyond the components of progress into the sophomore year. The distinction of the first-year seminar program at Florida HBCUs was its careful focus on fusing together building academic skills and supporting lifelong learning. As such, the respondents believed that both academic purpose and personal purpose create an intervention that promotes students' continual success.

Academic Purpose

I think it is just a given and that's why it is considered a transitional course. It's a part of our role and responsibilities to help students transition [to college] because

they may not know how to do it on their own. Some are more adaptable than others. (Data Record 001, p.1, lines 16-18)

First-year seminar professionals recognized that they were teaching a range of students who come in with various factors that can impede or support their transition into college. As such, seminar instructors viewed the purpose and structure of the first-year seminar course as a way to build the skills of the students through the medium of supporting their academic success. Various accounts from research participants indicated skill building was achieved through different processes. The first-year seminar professionals clarified that the course was a starting point for growing students' core academic skills.

Well the majority of the students, at least in the fall, you have the larger number of students in the SLS class. These students are from different backgrounds. They are students from different majors, they are students with different concerns, but many of them still need to know what I call basic information about the educational process. (Data Record 002, p. 2, lines 22-26)

Additional processes that explain the purpose of first-year seminar are interlocking the skills learned in the course and empowering students to use the skills to assist them in their other courses beyond the freshman year. A respondent described this need as follows:

I honestly believe in the first year-year seminar program, and freshmen should be required to take the course, and all schools should offer this course because it really does benefit the student in so many ways because by the time they get to

the sophomore, junior, year they got [sic] the skills to keep going. (Data Record 004, p.5, lines 100-102)

Personal Purpose

Based on the interviews, it is clear that these first-year seminar professionals recognized that academic skills and life skills were not separate. Rather, they were intertwined with the program purpose and structure which encouraged students to effectively take the academic skills they had acquired and use them as necessary components for flourishing when they return to their communities of origin. Throughout the interviews, the respondents continued to share stories that expressed how first-year seminar connected to this greater purpose.

I had one who had come from jail and he really just want[ed] to make it. He told me, "I messed up, but I want to never go back from where I just came from." But then he says he has to work and has to come to class so he was telling me he has to choose one of the two. His dilemma is he doesn't know how he can choose an education and leave his job. That's a tough one. But I talked with him and tried to make him see that there is a way. There is a way. Did I have an answer for him? My job is to build confidence. I tell you why. When they are confident. I can tell you they do well. Stuff I was thinking to myself like how will they make it out of that? If they have a plan and they act bold about it, I see them succeed. (Data Record 007, p. 3, lines 60-66, p.4 lines 67-68)

Many instructors realize that there are undesirable perceptions with respect to the students they serve. Sometimes, the students themselves display uneasiness about their ability to achieve success in their current educational setting. However, HBCU first-year seminar professionals participating in the present study prided themselves on creating an environment that they used to transform the student in non-academic ways. Participants noted that the aforementioned goal was accomplished with the help of the first-year seminar which was sometimes modified to meet the specific needs of students.

I don't care what people say about HBCU students. I let my students know you are okay just as you are. You are okay. No matter what they brought into the room, no matter what their academic standing is. Whatever your resources are. YOU are okay. We [are] about [to] build from who you are. I will tell you this and at a black school you need to do this; I give my students love. (Data Record 002, p.10, lines 217-221)

The first-year seminar professionals found it constructive to purpose their seminars around the unique needs of their students, both academic and non-academic. First-year seminar professionals were clear regarding the course's extended purpose that includes shaping social skills or non-cognitive factors. Table 19 provides information on the themes associated with the purpose and structure of the first-year seminar program at Florida HBCUs.

Table 19

Purpose and Structure Themes: Major and Minor Categories

Themes	Major Categories		Minor Categories
Academic purposes	Improving academic skills	Building academic skills	Basic study skills Information skills Sequential skill building
Non-academic purposes	Activities	Programming	Interacting with students Challenging realities Positive role modeling

Summary of Purpose/Structure of First-year Seminar

When queried as to the purpose of the first-year seminar, respondents conveyed that the seminar had multiple purposes. In regard to all of the statements, no professional disagreed with the available responses, even though the survey responses ranged from a level of agreeing to neutral. However, the respondents seemed to believe that the purpose of the first-year seminar was primarily to orient students to campus resources, develop academic skills, and assist freshmen in connecting to the university. Though none of the respondents indicated that they disagreed with the statements, a greater frequency of respondents remained neutral when asked to determine if the purpose of first-year was to provide self-exploration/personal development (Table 10). Each of the statements were aligned with each other, and all suggested that the purpose of the program was tied to the student. The qualitative interviews further clarified the purpose of the first-year seminar. The respondents delineated the purpose of the first-year seminar as an intervention that was both academic and non-academic. The purpose of the first-year seminar can be conceptualized as follows:

1. Orient students to campus resources and services.
2. Develop academic skills.
3. Assist students with developing a connection with the institution.
4. Develop non-academic skills.
5. Fuse academic/non-academic purposes together.

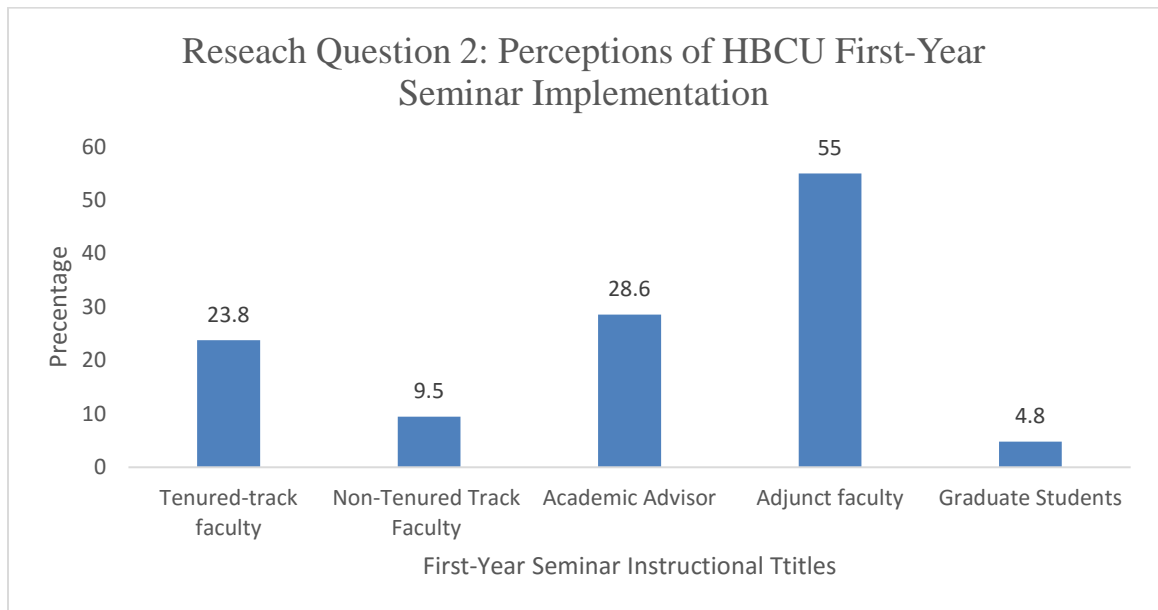
Research Question 2

What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding the first-year seminar program implementation?

In order to understand the perceptions of first-year seminar professionals, respondents were asked to read and answer various statements concerning instructional implementation. For the purpose of the survey, perception of instructional implementation referred to the instructor of the seminar and/or their classifications. To determine the perceptions of first-year seminar professionals regarding course implementation, respondents replied to five open ended statements: (a) first-year seminar is taught by tenured-track faculty; (b) first-year seminar is taught primarily by full time; non-tenured track faculty; (c) first-year seminar is taught primarily by academic advisers; (d) first-year seminar is taught primarily by adjunct faculty; and (e) first-year seminar is taught primarily by graduate students.

As shown in Figure 5, first-year seminar professionals perceived that adjunct faculty implemented the first-year seminar course. Tables 20-24 contain the data

associated with each survey statement that focused on implementation. The tables list the number of times a respondent agreed or disagreed with the Survey Statements 21-25.



Note. Percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses of respondents. HBCU = Historical Black Colleges and Universities.

Figure 4. Summary of Perceptions of HBCU First-Year Seminar Implementation: Survey Statements 21-25

In order to describe who taught first-year seminar, participants evaluated a series of five statements. For each statement, respondents were asked to rate how much they personally agreed or disagreed with statements concerning the characteristics of first-year seminar instructors. Statement 22 was: First-year seminar is taught primarily by tenured-track faculty. Table 20 indicates that 9.5%, and 52.4%, strongly disagreed or disagreed that first-year seminar was taught primarily by tenure-track faculty; whereas, 23.8 8% of the respondents agreed that first-year seminar was taught by tenure track faculty.

Table 20

Survey Statement 21: First-year Seminar Taught by Tenure-track Faculty

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly disagree	2	9.5
Disagree	11	52.4
Neither agree nor disagree	3	14.3
Strongly Agree	0	0.0
Agree	5	23.8
Total	21	100.0

Survey participants believed that non-tenure track faculty were not essential parts of the faculty force who taught the first-year seminar. Table 21 shows that 71.4%, disagreed that first-year seminar was taught primarily by non-tenure full time faculty. Only 9.5%, of the respondents agreed that first-year seminar was taught by non-tenure track faculty.

Table 21

Survey Statement 22: First-year Seminar Taught by Non Tenure-track Faculty

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly Agree	0	0.0
Disagree	15	71.4
Neither agree or disagree	4	19.0
Strongly Agree	0	0.0
Agree	2	9.5
Total	21	100.0

In survey statement 23 respondents were asked to share their perceptions regarding whether academic advisors taught first-year seminar. Formal findings

indicated, 52.4% disagreed that first-year seminar was taught primarily by academic advisors. Table 22 reveals that 14.3% neither agreed nor disagreed that the first-year seminar was taught primarily by academic advisors, but 28.6%, of the respondents agreed that first-year seminar was taught by academic advisors and one respondent selected not applicable.

Table 22

Survey Statement 23: First-year Seminar Taught by Academic Advisor

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	11	52.4
Neither agree nor disagree	3	14.3
Agree	6	28.6
Not applicable	1	4.8
Total	21	100.0

In survey statement 23 participants were also asked to classify their perceptions regarding whether adjunct faculty taught first-year seminar. Table 23 shows that 35%, disagreed that the first-year seminar was taught primarily by adjunct faculty. In addition, 10.0%, of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that first-year seminar was taught primarily by adjunct faculty, while 55%, of the respondents agreed that first-year seminar was taught by adjunct faculty.

Table 23

Survey Statement 24: First-year Seminar Taught by Adjunct Faculty

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly agree	0	0.0
Disagree	7	35.0
Neither agree nor disagree	2	10.0
Strongly Agree	0	0.0
Agree	11	55.0
Missing	1	0.0
Total	21	100.0

Respondents were asked to identify their perceptions regarding whether graduate students taught first-year seminar. The results shown in Table 24, indicated 19%, and 66.7%, strongly disagreed or disagreed that first-year seminar was taught primarily by graduate students. Results indicated that 9.5%, neither agreed nor disagreed that first-year seminar is taught primarily by graduate students. At the same time; 4.8%, of the respondents agreed that first-year seminar was taught by graduate students.

Table 24

Survey Statement 25: First-year Seminar Taught by Graduate Students

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly disagree	4	19.0
Disagree	14	66.7
Neither agree or disagree	2	9.5
Strongly agree	0	0.0
Agree	1	4.8
Total	21	100.0

Open Ended Responses

Research Question 2 sought to understand the experiences and perceptions of first-year seminar professionals regarding implementation. Following are the thematic narratives that emerged from the participant interviews. The narratives provided an account of the involvements of first-year seminar professionals regarding their experiences of seminar implementation.

The researcher found that there were multiple dimensions of course implementation. The dimensional aspects of the course that were linked to two major areas of implementation (a) relationships and (b) activities.

Relationships

HBCU first-year seminar professionals had an exceptional way of leveraging relationships as an implementation tool for the first-year course. The professionals understood that students' support systems shrink as the levels of their education increase. Therefore, the first-year seminar professionals would develop relationships with the students and serve as conveyers of information, standing in the place that family members may have occupied, especially as it related to assisting students navigate their educational environments. Data Record 008's comments highlighted the aforementioned findings which follow:

I used to teach high school. I used to think you only have to do that in high school, but they come here and need it a lot more here. They got [sic] people that told them how to make it happen in high school, because their parents went

to the same high school and sometimes had some of the same high school teachers that they had. In college it's a whole different world. Their parents may not know nothing [sic] about this environment, so it's really scary for them.

(Data Record 008, p. 4, lines 83-86)

The role of academic informant was not the only type of relationship first-year seminar professionals formed with their students. Yet, first-year seminar professionals knew that their relationships with the students did not replace their persistent advocacy of the students. Though many of the professionals understood the students' needs, they were well aware that they could not solve all of their problems. They did not, as one example, have any control over some of the external factors that attributed to a student's success (e.g., socio-economic background, educational preparedness). As such, interview participants indicated that their implementation of the course could also be viewed as "academic advocacy." Many of the first-year seminar professionals regarded their relationships with their students in a professional manner.

Data record 002 summarized how one first-year seminar professional delineated her relationships with the students:

I honestly like to go in the class playing the bad guy. I don't want to be their friend; I don't want to be their buddy; I want them to learn. So I focus on academics. When I say academics, I mean grading and correcting papers, helping with strengthening their presentations, building their confidence. However, I get other students to help them with the social side of college. How to dress. If we are doing a campus excursion, my peer mentors may say "We are going to leave the

classroom, so everyone needs to dress appropriately.” We are all contributing to help the students to adjust from a high school mentality to a college mentality. And so I play the beast. A student in my class cannot give me anything hand written: it has to be typewritten, [with] formal grammar, spell checked. I am getting them in the habit of seeing me as an academic advocate. (Data Record 002, p. 7, lines 141-149)

As data Record 002 explained, relationships are key. However, the right kind of relationships matter most. Students enter the university needing more than academic support. As first-year professionals, these educators realized the strongest role they can play is an academic one. However, there are different sources of support within the classroom setting. Therefore, the researcher found that the academic role was the primary role first-year seminar professionals had with the students. Nevertheless, within the relationships formed with the student there are different types of support. Data Record 002 further explained:

Our first charge is to try and get the student on a path. A path to graduation, a path to a field of study. My goal is to get the student off the “I don’t know path” to a path that focuses on why they are here. I get them on this path by doing research. I have my students look at what they like to do, or what their grades are like. And some people may not like this, but also if they can’t get what they want here then I find a place for them where they can be successful in the long run. For me, it is always about what the students need. (Data Record 002, p. 1, lines 44-49)

Activities

The first-year seminar professionals not only advocated for, but also enlisted, experienced peers to guide first-year students. Altogether, these efforts of using relationships to build academic and non-academic skills intersected in many areas of the students' lives. HBCU first-year seminar professionals' classes were also inspired by academic aspects of course implementation that were more distinctively connected to implementing a course. First-year seminar professionals often measured their implementation utilizing themes such as learn, academics, resources, alternative assignments, opportunity. Rather than just using relationships to facilitate learning, academic activities were also used. The following exchange illustrates this point.

Participant: Well, we do active learning initiatives.

Researcher: Explain, what active learning initiatives are.

Participant: Sure. Usually you have a teaching style that is focused on lecturing. [The] teacher comes in and says, "Did you read the assigned chapters?" and then pulls up a PowerPoint and the entire exchange in the class is between the PowerPoint, the teacher and maybe the students. However, if anybody teaches like that to these millennials you are really not sticking with how to engage and foster their learning. What we have learned to do is immerse and engage the student into learning. Make the student responsible for their learning or the learning process. (Data 002, p. 3, lines 51-57)

Other research participants further shared the use of interactive learning as a key implementation tool:

I first start with the basics. What I mean by basics is an open forum. I want to give students an opportunity to open up and discuss college as a baseline to see where they are at. Once I find out where everyone is at in terms of knowing their new environment and answering their questions that they are not sure about in terms of college life, because when I first start off with my freshman I am really welcoming them to college, then I move into creating a classroom space where lectures takes place. However, I do activities so that the environment is interactive. (Data Record 002, p. 1, lines 20-25)

Table 25 summarizes the findings regarding themes associated with implementation of the first-year seminar program at Florida HBCUs.

Table 25

Implementation Themes: Major and Minor Categories

Themes	Major Categories		Minor Categories
Relationships	Academic advocacy	College transition	Engage Connection Help
Academic activity	Assignments	Engagement	Learn Resources Alternative assignments

Syllabi Analysis

To further explain first-year seminar implementation, the researcher conducted a document review of course syllabi. The reviewed syllabi indicated that Florida HBCUs

first-year seminar professionals implemented the seminar through a robust consolidation of (a) institutional history, (b) course assignments, and (c) co-curricular connections.

Three syllabi were extensively reviewed by the researcher who found the history and origins of HBCUs were uniquely embedded in content to be covered in the course. Each of the documents listed an introduction and/or overview of the school's unique ancestry. For instance, Institution Yellow began the course with an introduction of the knowledge and history of the school. Though each institution taught the history of the school, application of the content varied from history and knowledge to learning the school's alma mater as an assignment.

Second, the researcher found classwork helped to identify course goals. Quizzes, homework, tests, discussion, and presentations were all utilized to measure the students' understanding of the course material. The interviewed first-year seminar professionals assigned a total of 22 quizzes, hosted class discussions during every class session, and assigned 37 homework projects. Although a majority of the homework assignments were connected with class topics, Institution Purple required unique experiential homework assignments such as attending an advisement session and registering for class for the upcoming semester.

Finally, the researcher found that first-year seminar professionals reinforced course content by mandating student attendance at co-curricular activities. The researcher found that each of the three institutions required their students to attend university wide convocations as a form of co-curricular or out-of-classroom activity. Therefore, the researcher concluded that first-year seminar professionals had a specific strategy for

implementing the first-year seminar. The implementation strategy centered on three distinct areas: (a) institutional history, (b) course assignments, and (c) co-curricular connections. The conceptualized model of first-year seminar implementation is shown in Figure 5.

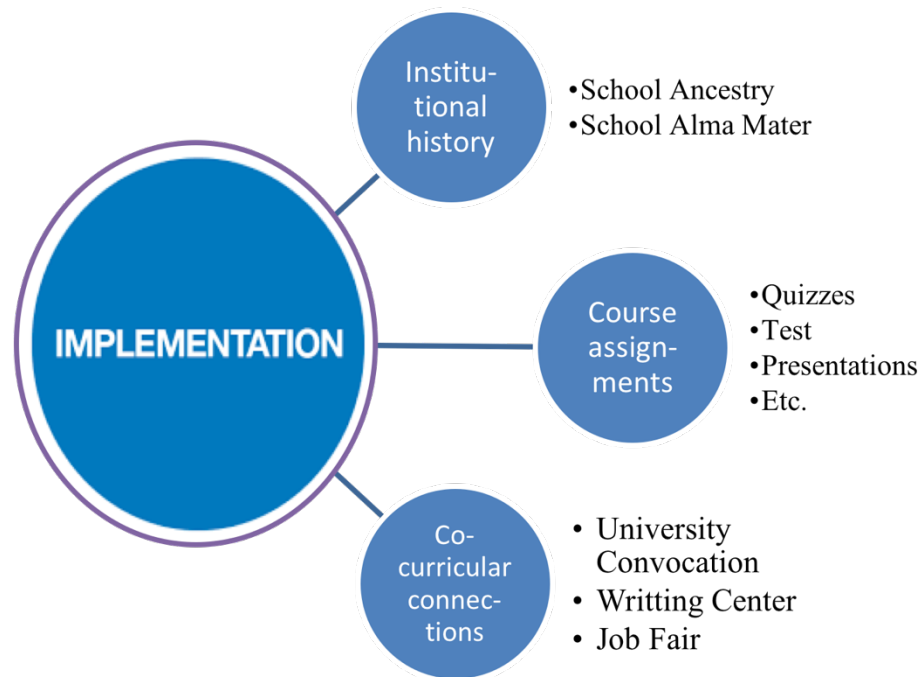


Figure 5. Conceptualized Model of First-year Seminar Implementation

Summary of Implementation of First-year Seminar

Based on the findings of this research, the details of first-year seminar implementation revealed: (a) who taught the course; (b) what was implemented in the

first-year seminar course; and (c) how first-year seminar professionals implemented the course.

First, the researcher found that first-year seminar professionals perceived the seminar to be taught by adjunct faculty. Next, from the perspective of interview participants, the researcher determined that first-year seminar professionals built relationships with students to provide them with a source of support. Finally, data from the document analysis suggested that there was a distinct strategy for implementing first-year seminar. In essence, how first-year seminar professionals implemented the course was largely based on (a) acquainting students with the institutional histories of the college and or university; (b) monitoring students' understanding of class information through course assignments; and (c) making co-curricular connections which aid in scaffolding information to enhance students' knowledge of the material through out of classroom activities. The out-of-classroom or co-curricular activities enabled students to apply the skills and information they had gained. Following are the key summary points associated with implementation of the first-year seminar.

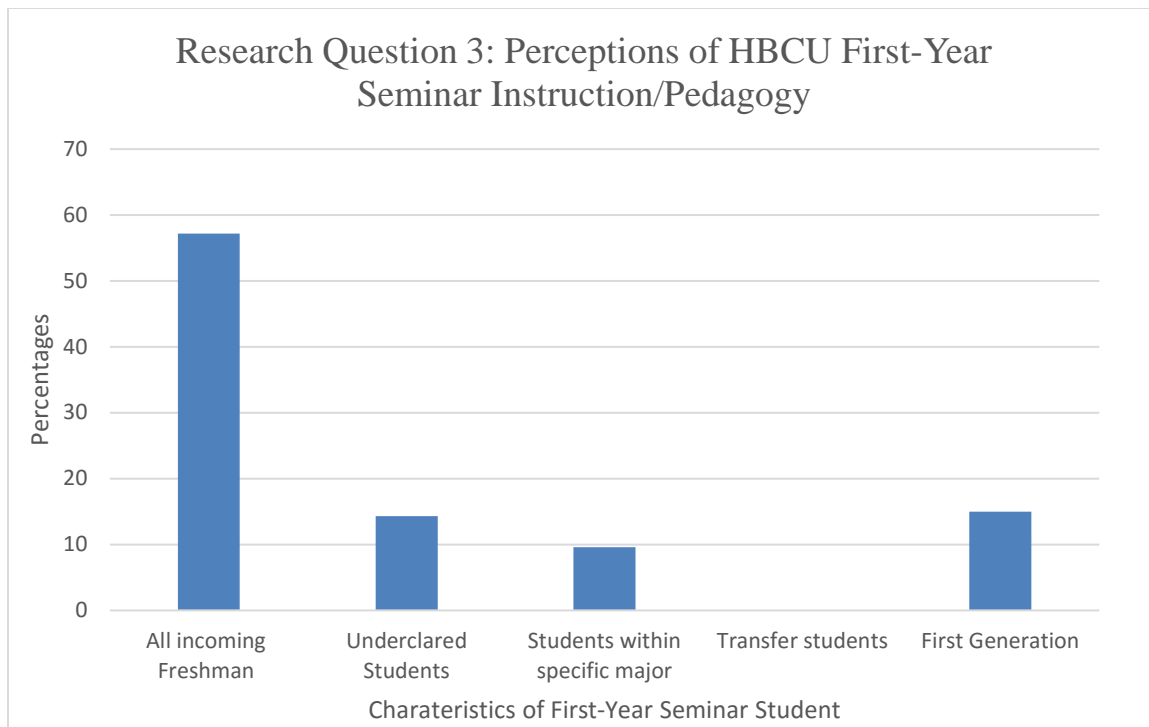
1. Adjunct Faculty are more likely to implement first-year seminars at Florida HBCUs.
2. A primary characteristic of first-year seminar implementation is versatility.
3. Developing relationships with students helps to empower instructors to understand the needs of students.

Research Question 3

What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding instruction and pedagogy?

Reviewed literature indicated that a variety of students may enroll in first-year seminar course. To better describe students who enrolled in the first-year seminar course at Florida HBCUs, respondents replied to five open-ended statements: (a) all incoming freshman are required to take the first-year seminar course; (b) undeclared students are required to take the first-year seminar; (c) my institution supports first-year seminar faculty development through ongoing orientations; (d) students within specific majors are required to take the first-year seminar; and (e) first-time-in-college, first generation students are required to take the first-year seminar.

As shown in Figure 6, first-year seminar professionals perceived their instructional setting to be relevant for all incoming freshmen. Tables 26-30 contain the data associated with each survey statement that focused on instruction/pedagogy. The tables list the number of times a respondent agreed or disagreed with Survey Statements 13-17.



Note. Percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses of respondents. HBCU = Historical Black Colleges and Universities.

Figure 6. Summary of Perceptions of HBCU First-year Seminar Instruction/Pedagogy: Survey Statements 13-17

Respondents were asked to share their perceptions as to whether all incoming freshman were required to enroll in first-year seminar. Table 26 indicates that 28.6% disagreed that their instruction of the course was required of all incoming freshman; however, 52.4 % and 4.8%, respectively agreed and strongly agreed that instruction via the first-year course was required of all freshman.

Table 26

Survey Statement 13: First-year Seminar Required for All Incoming Freshmen

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	6	28.6
Neither agree nor disagree	3	14.3
Agree	11	52.4
Strongly agree	1	4.8
Total	21	100.0

Respondents were asked to identify whether undeclared freshman were required to enroll in the first-year seminar (Survey Statement 14). As shown in Table 27, 52.4%, disagreed that their instruction of the course was required of undeclared students, but 9.5%, and 4.8%, respectively agreed and strongly agreed that instruction of the first-year course was required of undeclared students.

Table 27

Survey Statement 14: First-year Seminar Required for Undeclared Freshmen

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	11	52.4
Neither agree nor disagree	7	33.3
Agree	2	9.5
Strongly agree	1	4.8
Total	21	100.0

In addition, respondents were asked to identify whether students with specific majors were required to enroll in the first-year seminar. Table 28 shows that 61.9% of

respondents disagreed that their instruction was required by students within a specific major. Only 4.8 %, and 4.8%, respectively agreed and strongly agreed that instruction of the First-Year course was required of students within specific majors.

Table 28

Survey Statement 15: First-year Seminar Required of Students With Specific Majors

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly Agree	0	0.0
Disagree	13	61.9
Neither agree nor disagree	6	28.6
Strongly agree	1	4.8
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Total	21	100.0

Survey participants were asked to identify whether first-time-in-college, first generation students, were required to enroll in the first-year seminar. Table 29 indicates that 55%, of first-year seminar professionals disagreed that their instruction of the course was required for first-time-in-college first generation students. Only 10.0 %, and 5.0%, respectively, agreed and strongly agreed that their instruction of the course was required for first-time-in-college, first generation students. Finally, 5.0%, of the respondents selected Not Applicable for this survey response.

Table 29

Survey Statement 16: First-year Seminar Required of First-time-in-college, First Generation Students

Response choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Disagree	11	5
Neither agree nor disagree	5	2
Agree	2	10
Strongly agree	1	5
Not applicable	1	5

Respondents were asked to identify their perceptions instruction and pedagogy.

Table 30 indicates that 47.6% of first-year seminar professionals disagreed that their instruction of the course was required for transfer students, but only one (4.8%) of the respondents strongly disagreed.

Table 30

Survey Statement 17: First-year Seminar Required of Transfer Students

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentages
Strongly disagree	1	4.8
Disagree	10	47.6
Neither agree nor disagree	7	33.3
Strongly agree	0	0.0
Agree	2	9.5
Missing	1	4.8
Total	21	100.0

Open Ended Responses

Research Question 3 focused on better understanding the experiences and perceptions of first-year seminar professionals regarding instruction and pedagogy. The section below define and illustrate the thematic narratives which illustrate the involvements of first-year seminar professionals. In their responses, participants described their experiences concerning seminar instruction and pedagogy.

The researcher found that, when asked about instructional approaches, the first-year seminar professionals collectively agreed their strategy for disseminating knowledge to students was generally to avoid employing the traditional lecture method alone. Instead, pedagogical styles included lecture alternatives such as discussions, in class activities, and student to student interaction in the form of group projects. For example, Data Record 002 discussed the impact activity based instruction has within the classroom.

If anybody teaches like that to these millennials you are really not sticking with how to engage and foster their learning. What we have learned to do is immerse and engage the student into learning. Make the student responsible for their learning or the learning process... activities are important and I have the students practice it in practical ways. (Data Record 002, pg. 3, lines 55-62)

In-class activities are not a sacrifice to learning. In fact, as Data Record 002 explained, it is an instructional approach that enables instructors to direct, develop, and guide a student's learning. When probed, Data Record 004 further reflected on scaffolding and alternative instructional approaches as methods of teaching.

Welcoming gets their attention better than a straight out lecture. I use the welcoming as a way to say this is your new learning space. I want to give the students a sense that they have a say so in what they do in the class. It's not just me lecturing to them. Students get to share and, you know, put their own two cents into the conversation. I know some say "Well, students can do that in general." However, a lot of students don't start off wanting to use the class to dialogue and discuss. So the welcoming of the students helps me to listen to them, allows them to speak up without them thinking "Oh, all she is going to do is lecture at me." No, we are going to get to know you first. (Data Record 004, p. 2, lines 27-34)

In this instance, the participant did not forgo lecturing. Instead, the participant created a learning environment that optimized students' involvement. Another specific form of instruction that first-year seminar professionals utilized was facilitating dynamic discussions. Data Record 006 emphasized the uniqueness of the approach as a strategy in a first-year seminar.

I wanted to engage them more in a real world economic situation and prepare them for real jobs. So instead of just a traditional lecture class, I mean, I have some of that, but we also did round robin seminar discussions where we learn and discuss a specific real world theme at length during the entire class. Students get to ask questions, work on their communication skills, work on their problem-solving skills and thinking skills which [all are] important in all jobs. In addition, their finals and midterms are not multiple choice answers. I don't know any job

that will require you to do multiple choice answers. (Data Record 006, p. 2, lines 27-34)

As the participant described, facilitating discussion built transferable academic skills as a learning strategy. In essence, the discussion allowed students to discover, learn, and practice skills that the instructor felt were pertinent to their future success as working professionals. Ultimately, the objective of the alternative teaching approaches amounted to accomplishing a greater goal. Data Record 008, summarized the overall purpose of the alternative teaching approached used by first-year seminar professionals.

Getting them out of their comfort zone. They have been in high school and junior high school the last 10 years. All they know is No Child Left Behind. They have been raised on standardized testing. Their world doesn't function on standardize testing. So I got to go in [sic] and say, "Okay, let's think today. Some of them will say, "But what is the right answer?" And I will tell them, "It's not about getting the right response. [I would] rather, all of you give me a thoughtful answer than looking for what's right or wrong." I got to teach these babies how to THINK! (Data Record, 008, p. 2, lines 41-45)

Document Analysis

To further explain first-year seminar instruction and pedagogy, the researcher conducted a document review of the course syllabi of participating institutions involved in this study. In this analysis, the researcher found several distinct forms of pedagogy: (a) cultural, (b) group or collaborative, and (c) active learning. Florida HBCU first-year

seminar professionals' present culturally relevant content to connect students to course learning goals. To accomplish this, instructors approached teaching students academic concepts by incorporating cultural assignments. For example, in discussing managing stress, one institution prepared an activity where students would demonstrate how they dealt with stress in the form of writing a letter to a neighboring high school senior about what it was like to enter college as a freshman at an HBCU. Another example of incorporating culture into academic work was having students visit the on-campus Black Archives to examine the materials of state-preserved African American history as a way to connect to on campus resources. The aforementioned assignment was linked to learning the campus.

The researcher also found that first-year seminar instructors utilized active learning pedagogy. Each syllabus reviewed had at least one major paper as a project for the course. In order to assist students in completing the paper, instructors would actively engage students on a weekly basis to monitor student progress from start to completion.

For example, at Institution Blue, students were expected to turn in different aspects of the paper, introduction, thesis statement, on a bi-weekly basis for instructor feedback. Furthermore, at the end of the semester, students turned in the entire paper which was improved gradually with the active support of the instructor's feedback. In contrast, at Institution Yellow, students selected a topic for the paper and created a "goal" list to establish dates and times when different parts of the paper would be completed. During this process, the instructor coached students in meeting their writing goals. Moreover, the first-year seminar professional also utilized a portion of class time to

discuss different aspects of the paper, allowing students to share feedback or ask questions. Additionally, all of the syllabi required students to discuss and share information from the paper prior to formally presenting or turning in the assignment.

Another pedagogical approach used by first-year seminar professionals was the group project. In particular, Institution Blue utilized group projects in order to promote reflection and learning connected with the course textbook. Institution Blue's syllabus indicated that students were to organize themselves into groups of no more than three members and that each group would be responsible for selecting a chapter to cover in the textbook. The groups would select a day to present their chapter and provide an activity that correlated with the premise of the chapter. Classmates would evaluate each other's presentations on four major areas: content, organization, delivery, and overall quality.

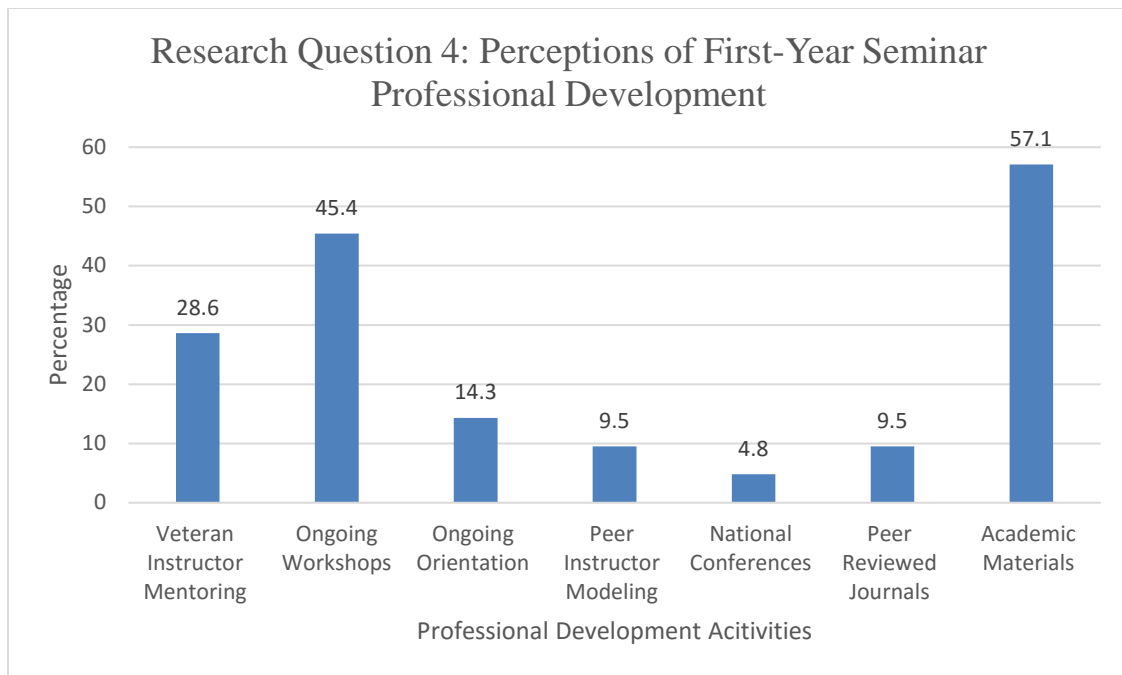
Summary of Instruction and Pedagogy of First-year Seminar

To understand the instructional design utilized for first-year seminar, the researcher delineated the various categories of learners. The researcher found that first-year seminar professionals considered all freshmen as potential students who were eligible to take the course. As such, the researcher used evidence in the course syllabi to further understand the instructional model used to account for the experiences of first-year seminar professionals regarding instruction and pedagogy.

Research Question 4

What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals regarding professional development of seminar professionals?

To determine the perceptions of first-year seminar professionals regarding professional development, respondents replied to the following seven open ended prompts: (a) new instructors for the first-year seminar receive mentorship from veteran instructors in the program; (b) my institution supports first-year seminar faculty development through ongoing workshops; (c) my institution supports first-year seminar faculty development through ongoing orientations; (d) my institution supports first-year seminar faculty development through ongoing peer instructor modeling; (e) my institution supports first-year seminar faculty development through national conferences; (f) my institution supports first-year seminar faculty development through peer reviewed journals; and (g) my institution supports first-year seminar faculty development through academic materials. As shown in Figure 7, first-year seminar professionals perceived that professional development was provided for them in a variety of ways.



Note. Percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses of respondents. HBCU = Historical Black Colleges and Universities.

Figure 7. Summary of Perceptions of HBCU First-year Seminar Professional Development: Survey Statements 9-12 and 19-21

Of the 21 respondents, eight or 38.1% agreed that receiving academic material was a form of professional development, whereas 23.8%, attributed their professional development to ongoing workshops or receiving mentoring from veteran instructors. Less than 20% of the respondents agreed that ongoing orientation (14.3%), attending national conferences (4.8%), peer instructor modeling (9.5%), and access to peer reviewed journal articles (9.5%) were forms of professional development utilized to evolve their work concerning first-year seminar. Tables 31-37 contain the data associated with each survey

statement focused on professional development. The tables list the number of times a respondent agreed or disagree with Survey Statements 9-12 and 19-21.

Respondents were asked to identify their perceptions concerning mentorship from veteran instructors in the program. Table 31 shows that 28.6%, disagreed that new instructors for the first-year seminar receive mentorship from veteran instructors in the program; whereas 23.8%, and 4.8% respectively agreed and strongly agreed that new instructors for the first-year seminar receive mentorship from veteran instructors in the program.

Table 31

Survey Statement 9: Mentorship From Veteran Instructors

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	6	28.6
Neither agree nor disagree	9	42.9
Agree	5	23.8
Strongly agree	1	4.8
Total	21	100.0

Respondents were asked to share their perceptions concerning support of faculty development through ongoing workshops. Table 32 indicates that 4.8%, disagreed that they receive ongoing faculty development through ongoing workshops. In contrast, equal percentages (23.8%) agreed and strongly agreed that their institution supports first-year seminar faculty development through ongoing workshops.

Table 32

Survey Statement 10: Professional Development Through Ongoing Workshops

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	1	4.5
Neither agree nor disagree	10	45.5
Agree	5	22.7
Strongly agree	5	22.7
Total	21	100.0

Respondents were asked to share their perceptions concerning support of faculty professional development through orientations. Table 33 shows that 33.3% disagreed that their institution supports first-year seminar faculty development through orientations. However, a smaller number (14.3 %) strongly agreed that their institution supports first-year seminar faculty development through orientation.

Table 33

Survey Statement 11: Professional Development Through Ongoing Orientations

Response Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	7	33.3
Neither agree nor disagree	11	52.4
Agree	0	0.0
Strongly agree	3	14.3
Total	21	100.0

On survey statement 11, participants were asked to share their perceptions concerning support of faculty professional development through peer instructor

modeling. Table 34 reveals that 47.6%, disagreed that their institution supports first-year seminar faculty development through peer instructor modeling. Only 9.5% of responding first-year seminar professionals strongly agreed that their institution supports first-year seminar faculty development through peer instructor modeling.

Table 34

Survey Statement 12: Professional Development Through Peer Instructor Modeling

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	10	47.6
Neither agree nor disagree	9	42.9
Agree	0	0.0
Strongly agree	2	9.5
Total	21	100.0

In the next section, respondents were asked to identify their perceptions concerning support of faculty professional development through attending national conferences. Table 35 contains the results of the analysis indicating that 19%, and 66.7%, respectively, strongly disagreed or disagreed that their institution supports first-year seminar faculty development through attending national conferences. Only one (4.8%) of the respondents agreed that the institution supports first-year seminar faculty attending national conferences.

Table 35

Survey Statement 21: Professional Development Through Attending National Conferences

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly disagree	4	19.0
Disagree	14	66.7
Neither agree nor disagree	2	9.5
Agree	1	4.8
Strongly Agree	0	0.0
Total	21	100.0

Respondents were asked to share their perceptions concerning their institution's investment in subscriptions to peer reviewed journals as a source of professional development. Table 36 shows a wide range of responses. Over half of the respondents strongly disagreed (4.8%) or disagreed (47.6%) that their institutions invest in subscriptions to peer reviewed journals. In contrast, one-third (33.3%) neither agreed nor disagreed and 9.5%, and 4.8%, respectively, agreed or strongly agreed that this investment occurred

Table 36

Survey Statement 19: Professional Development Through Peer Reviewed Journals

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly Disagree	1	4.8
Disagree	10	47.6
Neither agree nor disagree	7	33.3
Agree	2	9.5
Strongly agree	1	4.8
Total	21	100.0

Respondents were asked to share their perceptions concerning their institutions' investment in academic training material. Table 37 indicates that 28.6%, disagreed that their institutions invest in academic training material, and 14.3%, neither agreed nor disagreed that their institutions invest in academic training material; however, 38.1% and 19.0%, respectively, agreed or strongly agreed that their institution invests in academic training material.

Table 37

Survey Statement 20: Professional Development Through Academic Material

Response Choice	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	6	28.6
Neither agree nor disagree	3	14.3
Agree	8	38.1
Strongly agree	4	19.0
Total	21	100.0

Open Ended Responses

Research question 4 sought to understand the experiences and perceptions of first-year seminar professionals regarding professional development. The following narratives provide an account of the experiences regarding professional development involvement of first-year seminar professionals.

The Call

Based on the conducted research the extraordinary work of leading a first-year seminar course at a historically Black college and university, as described by the participants of this study, meant utilizing various forms of professional development. Participants in the study acknowledged the unique ways in which they supported students in the course. Overall, the data indicated professional development was consistently divided into two major sections: informal and formal.

Informal Professional Development.

Informal professional development consisted of ways in which professionals received support that enabled them to teach the first-year seminar course. In these cases, examples of informal professional development were interactions with the students who enabled instructors to better understand the students' needs. The needs of the students often varied, ranging between academic and non-academic assistance. Instructors consistently shared narratives that illustrated how informal experiences resulted in enabling first-year seminar professionals to develop skills that would improve their practice.

One respondent identified exactly how students communicated their needs and how the technique enabled the instructor to serve the students.

I learn and grow all in one. I learn how to change my approach from how the students respond to me. That prepares me a lot. Sometimes students will say to me, "You know you talk too much. We are listening, but sometimes we want to

talk too. . . take a breath.” At first I would think to myself, “That’s rude.” But ultimately I made the shift and said what are they really trying to tell me. The difference also is I get different types of students who come with different challenges so I am always learning. Students are different now from the time I went to school, so I got [sic] to keep learning. (Data Record 008, p.5, lines 102-108)

At the center of the aforementioned practice is the utilization of student interaction. Interacting with students builds an instructor’s capacity to understand how to serve those specific students.

The professionals reflected upon experiences with students to learn how to best service their needs. In general, research participants found that students were the best purveyors of informal professional development. Data Record 005 elaborated:

Okay I have to say this. My college education (and I have a doctorate), my college education did not prepare me to teach these students. When I came to teach here I had to tell myself “Okay you have to shift from teaching in New Jersey and New York and start thinking differently,” and I did. What can prepare you for understanding how to teach a student who is asking you to help them make a decision between education and work and they just got out of jail? I’m not saying that jail makes you unable to learn; I am saying that this scenario was nowhere in a textbook, a case study, a research presentation... (Data Record 008, p. 5, lines 96-100).

This statement emphasizes a critical point: academic credentialing is not a prerequisite for in-classroom preparation. Many of the first-year seminar professionals expressed similar sentiments. However, the instructors placed a priority on understanding the students. As such, the researcher found student interaction as a common source of professional development for those professionals.

First-year seminar instructors also discussed the informal professional development they acquired through their individual experiences. In particular, the participant narratives collectively established that personal experiences informed their instructional practice. One first-year seminar professional explained the value of personalizing using one's own life as a conduit to best serve their students.

Personal and academic are both of the things that give me the best practice to teach students. Because of my own education experience, I am able to tie that into my class. So I don't just have to rely on what the author from the book says about a topic. I make it personal and give them scenarios or examples of what I did and how I overcame obstacles. And sometimes I had to learn the hard way to get to where I am trying to lead them to. (Data Record 004, p.4, lines 66-70)

This statement is an example of similarly shared experiences among the participants interviewed. First-year seminar professionals reported relying on their own experiences as a guide in understanding how to assist their students. Such informal professional development presents a much different picture compared to formal professional development, and the researcher found that first-year seminar professionals

at Florida HBCUs also utilized formal professional development through workshops, trainings, and conferences.

Formal Professional Development.

Participants indicated that forms of training such as program related and university wide trainings were offered to assist and to build on informal professional development. As a result, several interesting facts emerged regarding program training. For instance, the researcher found the basic building block for preparing instructors to teach within the first-year seminar was through workshops and colleague to colleague discussion on best practices. The discussions had multiple purposes. First, discussions served as a medium of exchange whereby instructors could converse on ideas of how to best reach students. Another purpose of the discussions was to understand the impact of instructional practices, while also allowing instructors to individualize information retrieved from peer conversations that would enhance the quality of their scholastic service.

Everything that we do here is to have common outcomes. We do a training in the beginning and we provide the professors the actual material they are going to teach. And we have feedback sessions periodically throughout the semester. In the sessions, we figure out what works [and] what doesn't work. [We] also [are] getting a sense of where the students are, what the feel is, what the mode it, and we go from there. (Data Record 005, p.1, lines 16-20)

Participants further differentiated among workshops in which meeting time is structured for instructors by program administrators compared to training sessions. Some trainings were organized around strategies that would empower the instructors to understand freshman students with program units that actively collected information on retention. A number of interviewees responded that training was an institutional priority . . . yearly workshop and faculty development. The program brings people to come in from the outside to share ideas for what works in the classroom. We are also engaged in seminars with the University Office of Retention. (Data Record 004, p.5, lines 89-91)

Analysis of the interviews resulted in the identification of two sources of professional development: informal and formal experiences. Essentially, informal professional development centered on student and instructor personal experiences as a means of preparing instructors. Formal experiences, however, were identified as trainings and workshops in which best practices were discussed, thereby generating an infrastructure for sharing techniques and strategies to prepare course professionals. The researcher found that informal experiences were more widely discussed by the participants. Participants shared stories of informal professional development experiences without being prompted. Furthermore, the researcher found that formal experiences were generally set to a time table. Participants consistently discussed the formal professional development in terms of an annual/semester timeline. In comparison, informal professional development was not held to pre-set times and more impromptu.

The combined informal and formal experiences were highly regarded characteristics concerning professional development among Florida HBCU first-year seminar professionals. The dual experiences spoke to the dynamics involved in understanding what equips first-year seminar instructors at historically Black colleges to assist with successfully transitioning students into their first year. Overall, the underlying depiction that best categorized professional development emerged from a single source.

I would say at an HBCU, generally, but especially here, the professionals have to give a certain part of themselves. Forget clocking into work. You don't have a nine to five at an HBCU; you have a calling. Either you do the work to help these kids and it takes a lot of work or it will be hard to work here because we always have to do more. (Participant 007, p.4, lines 89-93)

Included in the calling are activities such as formal and informal experiences that first-year seminar instructors use as factors in relation to building a framework concerning professional development. Table 38 provides themes associated with the previously detailed description.

Table 38

Professional Development Themes: Major and Minor Categories

Themes	Major Categories		Minor Categories
Formal professional development experiences	Training within the institution	Training outside the institution	Workshops Faculty development In-service training External workshops Conferences Best practices from other HBCUs
Informal professional development experiences	Learning from student/instructor interactions	Learning from personal collegiate experiences	Casual class conversations Student experiences Instructor's individual experience Out of class student interaction
Motivation	The Calling		Professional need Student need

Summary of Professional Development for First-year Seminar Professionals

Though analysis of survey data showed academic material as the most common form of professional development (as shown in Figure 8), interviews revealed otherwise. As such, there are two elements that the researcher would like to highlight. The survey responses regarding professional development may have been affected by the survey items not tapping more deeply into the realities of faculty and staff teaching the course.

The researcher was intrigued by the professional development data. According to the literature, first-year seminar experts define professional development as attendance at national conferences and access to academic journals (Keup & Petschauer, 2011). However, the respondents in this study did not indicate that these activities were not tools for professional development at their individual institutions. In fact, the researcher noted

respondents remained neutral in their evaluation of the professional development that they received. As such, the researcher began to develop an interview protocol to further understand the lack of professional development as indicated by the respondents.

Challenges

The researcher commenced this study in hopes of including all of Florida's HBCUs in the work that would examine the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals, and all but one of the four historically Black colleges in the state of Florida seized the opportunity to participate in this study. During the data collection process, the researcher faced a serious challenge in gaining the participation of Bethune Cookman University. Though the researcher provided Institutional Research Board (IRB) documentation regarding the approval of the study, the leadership would not allow the researcher access to the site to conduct the study. In fact, despite abundant documentation and dialogue one key member of the university's IRB board appeared to have a comparatively high level of anxiety regarding the purpose of the study and how the findings of the research would portray the image of the institution. It was the hope of the researcher that, sequential explanatory design of the study, would illuminate practitioners concerning a segment of the population whose experiences are rarely empirically examined. After a series of e-mails, and phone conversations it became exceedingly clear to the researcher, despite following protocols involving human subjects, that no academic research tool would be able to reduce this college's professional fears (Appendix F). In the end, efforts to proceed forward regrettably failed. As a result, the institutions included

in the study were reduced from four to three. This experience provided insight into how research can be misunderstood or feared by some college professionals.

Summary

Prior to this study, there has been no statistical profile of the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs. Descriptive statistics provided basic information concerning the first-year seminar's: (a) purpose and structure, (b) implementation (c) instruction and pedagogy, and (d) professional development. Overall, first-year seminars at Florida HBCUs have been designed for all incoming college freshman with no delineation regarding transfer status, academic program, or first generation status. There were multiple implementers of first-year seminar. However, respondents agreed that first-year seminar professionals can be largely classified as adjunct instructors. The purpose of first-year seminar at Florida HBCUs had multiple purposes, interlocking around servicing the needs of the students. Finally, although respondents were more forthcoming in their evaluation of the purpose/structure, implementation and instruction of first-year seminar, the findings indicated that perceptions regarding professional development were harder to characterize. Respondents did not overwhelmingly identify a professional development item that best described their preparation for instruction. Nonetheless, they were involved in types of professional growth which has been characterized as informal and formal professional development.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Introduction

Chapter 5 concludes the present research which was conducted to examine the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at historically Black colleges and universities in Florida. In this chapter, the researcher briefly reviews the background of the study, research purpose, and research summary. The chapter also contains a discussion of the researching findings and the limitations of the study. Finally, the researcher offers implications of the research and recommendations for further study. At the conclusion of this chapter, the researcher reflects heuristically on the research results.

Background of the Study

This study sought to examine the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at historically Black colleges and universities in Florida. As previously stated, the United States seeks to achieve the designation of having a highly educated citizenry (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2015). Current administrators at the White House have created a plan to address increasing post-secondary graduation rates (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2011). Foundations such as Lumina, whose purpose has been to explore student success in America, have researched how each state can support the federal government's goal of growing the percentage of Americans with post-secondary degrees (Matthews, 2014).

Ultimately, Lumina's studies indicated that minority student degree attainment is a critical turning point in seeing the President Barack Obama's graduation goal come to fruition (Matthews, 2014; Ryu, 2008). It has been reported that open enrollment institutions serve a large population of minority students. Additionally, HBCU enrollment patterns reflect Doyle's definition of open access (Alim, 2013; Carneval & Strohl, 2013; Doyle, 2010; Meade, 2013; Powers, 2008). Leading researchers have determined that student success is predicated on factors such as collegiate environment (Tinto, 1997).

College transition programming emerged as a resource for assisting students in adapting to the college environment (University of South Carolina, n. d.). As a result, in the late 1970s, the intent of the first-year seminar moved from a pure orientation system to a focus on developing skills to promote credential attainment. The participants in this study included administrators, general education instructors, and academic advisors who work tirelessly to acclimate incoming freshman to the university and, in a broader sense, to a better life.

Though research on college transition is readily accessible, there has been limited empirical investigation that places a focus on intertwined freshman student transition, in a minority institution context, with respect to the voices of professionals who serve the students. Prior to the beginning of this research, no other study highlighted the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs. As such, this study enlightened the research regarding the perceptions and experiences of 29 first-year seminar professionals (21 survey research participants, and eight interview

participants), as they shared their respective insights concerning first-year seminars at historically Black colleges and universities.

Purpose

The purposes of this study were to (a) examine the experiences and perceptions of first-year seminar professionals at HBCUs to understand how they utilize the first-year seminar to orient their students to the college environment, and (b) understand the best practices at these institutions while also providing the professionals with an opportunity to share their lived experiences.

Research Summary

This section contains a review of the major areas of the overall study: area of inquiry, reviewed literature, research questions, methodology, and findings.

The area of inquiry in this study involved an examination of the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at historically Black colleges and universities in the state of Florida. Three critical areas, historically Black colleges and universities, first generation college students, and theories regarding persistence in college, were reviewed. The review of these topics created a foundation upon which the researcher could investigate the phenomenon in question.

The primary research question for the study was: What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals, instructors or administrators, at Florida historically Black College and Universities? The research question was sub-divided into four different sub-questions.

1. What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding the first-year seminar purpose and structure?
2. What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding seminar program implementation?
3. What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding instruction and pedagogy of seminar courses?
4. What are the perceptions and experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs regarding professional development of seminar professionals?

The researcher utilized a mixed methods sequential explanatory design (Creswell, 2009) to collect data and analyze findings in the study. The design combined both qualitative and quantitative methods. Data collection involved (a) survey responses (quantitative), (b) interviews (qualitative), and (c) document analysis (qualitative).

Finally, the key findings of the study were the following two themes regarding first-year seminars at Florida HBCUs:

1. Course programing is prioritized to fit the students it serves.
2. First-year seminar is not just a transition into a course, it is entry into a community.

Summary of Research Findings

Table 38 provides the detailed responses to the four research questions that guided the study. It contains a restatement of the research questions, the methods of analysis, and a summary of the both quantitative and qualitative results.

Table 38
Perceptions and Experiences of First-Year Seminar Professionals at HBCUs

Research Question (RQ)	Survey Results (SR)	Survey Analysis	Interview Results	Interview Analysis
RQ1. What are the perceptions of freshman seminar professionals of the freshman seminar purpose and structure?	Based upon information collected from the survey, results indicated respondents perceived the purpose and structure of first-year seminar to be a combination of orientation of campus resources, connection with the institution, develop academic skills, and self-exploration personal development. However, the findings of the survey aren't to populations outside of the sites included in this study.	Descriptive statistics calculated.	First-year seminar professionals structure the course to address the immediate and future needs of the students. Moreover, the professionals explained the purpose of the course to build academic skills that can bridge a student's success in and out of college. .	Data coded and categorized to arrive at themes/patterns of interviewees' experiences.
RQ2. What are the perceptions of freshman seminar professionals on seminar program implementation	Based upon information collected from the survey, first-year seminar professionals perceive adjuncts mostly implement the course. However, the findings of the survey aren't to populations outside of the sites included in this study	Descriptive statistics calculated.	While the survey answered who implemented the course, interview responses indicated first-year seminar is implemented based on connecting and building relationships with students. Being a source of support based on their college success needs.	Data coded and categorized to arrive at themes/patterns of interviewees' experiences.

Research Question (RQ)	Survey Results (SR)	Survey Analysis	Interview Results	Interview Analysis
RQ3. What are the perceptions of freshman seminar professionals on instruction and pedagogy of seminar courses?	Based upon the information collected from the survey, first-year seminar professionals perceived first-year seminar as a course for all incoming freshman. However, the findings of the survey aren't to populations outside of the sites included in this study	Descriptive statistics calculated.	The pedagogy and instruction utilized in first-year seminar exposes students to information that was disseminated in a manner whereby students can understand and engage the material. In particular, pedagogical styles included lecture alternatives such as discussion, in class activities, and group projects.	Data coded and categorized to arrive at themes/patterns of interviewees' experiences
RQ4. What are the perceptions of freshman seminar professionals on professional development of seminar professionals?	Based upon information collected from the survey first-year seminar professional perceived academic materials as a form of professional development. However, the findings of the survey aren't to populations outside of the sites included in this study	Descriptive statistics calculated.	The experiences of first-year seminar professionals painted a different picture, as indicated from survey responses, regarding professional development. First-year seminar professionals practice is developed through lived personal and professional experiences.	Data coded and categorized to arrive at themes/patterns of interviewees' experiences

Interpretation

Given the results of the analysis of the interviews and survey responses and the review of course syllabi, the researcher concluded that (a) course programing is prioritized to fit the students served, and (b) first-year seminar is not just a transition into a course; it is entry into a community.

The central focus of the course has been squarely on supporting students' success, particularly during the freshman year, but also through subsequent years. First-year seminar professionals program the delivery of the course based on the student's needs.

Student support services are not new. However, study participants placed a value on identifying their interactions not as a duty or an obligation, rather a calling; and their calling helps provide the energy to support the sometimes non-traditional needs of the students. The implementation of first-year seminar included meeting needs that went beyond traditional academic support, and interviewees emphasized the importance of building a culture of community. Finally, students may come in with academic deficiencies, but the professionals do not shrink away from assisting these students. First-year seminar professionals used their class to holistically build academic skills among all students.

It should be noted that the finding that course programing is prioritized to fit the students it serves is in line with the literature reviewed for this study. In particular, the finding coincides with the reviewed literature which suggested that first-year seminar should address the needs of the students (Weissman & Magil, 2008). Additionally, both findings (*Course programing is prioritized to fit the students it serves*, and *First-year*

seminar is not just a transition into a course, it is entry into a community), were connected with mission, purposes, and practices of HBCUs (Harris, 2012).

The finding, *First-year seminar is not just a transition into a course, it is entry into a community*, was not in line with the literature reviewed for this study. For instance, the lens used to conceptualize the work of first-year seminar professionals often emanates from a combination of the program structure, theories involving retention and persistence; or mission, and/or purpose of the first-year seminar. Faculty interviewed suggested several times that their work is a calling. This highlighted their belief that not just anyone could do the work they are able to do with their students. The researcher found that this finding explained the unique results associated with Sub-research Questions 1 (purpose and structure) and 2 (implementation).

Purpose and Structure

In this study the first-year seminar professionals reminded the researcher that students' desires do not always amount to the academic ability to succeed in college. In fact, from the narratives shared, scholastic problems were often times signals of other societal issues. Recall the experience of the professional who discussed the incarcerated student. Upon being released from jail, the student turned to the instructor to seek guidance and direction.

This story reinforces what Harris (2012) referred to as the strength of HBCUs. Harris reported that HBCUs are a system with a mindful focus on having the power to strategically support students. The expressed hope of interviewed participants was to

enable students to be successful in life and learning. As such, the professionals used the latitude of their course to respond to both parts, life and learning, of the parallel needs of students. Additionally, interviewed participants believed educational preparation was the indisputable key to helping to equip students to navigate both worlds. This belief is why, regarding the purpose of first-year seminar, respondents replied that the purpose of first-year seminar was all encompassing. Essentially, they were using the course to meet various needs, academic and non-academic, as both are important parts of the students they serve.

Regarding the structure of first-year seminar, HBCU professionals not only shouldered the enormous task of increasing students' ability to adequately survive college, but also to prepare students to enter into the workforce. First-year seminar professionals' stories were filled with a devout and undying dedication to support career success. As such, the structure of their classes centered on developing a number of different skills.

Though many professionals identified the structure of their class as academic, as evidenced in survey responses, interviews indicated otherwise. Moreover, participants spoke significantly about improving and building basic study skills. As such, the description of class structure seemed to draw a paradox with the reviewed literature. For example, Padgett and Keup (2011) listed the main characteristic of an academic seminar as a research focused course, and the academic seminar had the distinction of serving the needs of high performing students.

In retrospect, the seminar model that best coincided with the information provided in the interview was the Basic Study Skills model Padgett and Keup (2011). It should be noted, for those who have an interest in teaching first-year seminar at a Florida HBCU, the most widely used course model is the Basic Study Skills model. In this model, professionals devote a lot of time to building the academic skill level of students.

Implementation/Mission of HBCUs

Regarding Research Question 2, the findings of the qualitative section mirrored Jordan's (2008) findings which suggested the mission of Historically Black Colleges and Universities take into account learner's capacities to learn as a means for developing coursework. As such, in the case of this research study, the implementation of the first-year seminar at Florida HBCUs was inextricably linked to the historic mission of the schools. The researcher discovered that research participants at each site believed in creating an educational environment that met the needs of the student.

Instructional implementation, however, was unique, and a one-size-fits-all approach would be inappropriate. Respondents were well aware of the challenges often facing their first-year students, yet they showed no fear as they helped freshman adapt from one educational structure, secondary, to a new and unfamiliar one, post-secondary. The results of this research revealed that implementation of the first-year seminar was divided into three areas: (a) school cultural history, (b) academics, and (c) co-curricular activities. Culturally, the means of implementing the class contradicted the reviewed literature. In the case of first-year seminar professionals, they valued the school's

identity, acknowledged and explained what an HBCU was, and made students understand and “feel” the HBCU experience as a part of their course work.

It should be noted that no participant talked about program implementation without first reflecting on the type of students taught. Additionally, first-year seminar is a transition program intervention initiated to facilitate freshman student collegiate success. The shared experience among HBCU first-year seminar professionals was consistent: determine the needs of the student, and utilize the class to assist them. The implementation of first-year seminar considered the learning capacity of the student. Though first-year seminar professionals’ perceptions of professional development were mixed, it should be noted that the researcher gained an understanding of the HBCU model for implementing the first-year seminar.

Discussion Summary

Overall, the type of support provided by first-year seminar professionals was important. Faculty’s approaches regarding their experiences teaching first-year seminar might suggest a new method for supporting student success. The researcher found that relationships were key. Specifically, supportive relationships between the first-year seminar instructors and students transformed students’ learning.

To explain these concepts further, it is important to note that the collected reveals how faculty approached initiating HBCU students learning process. First-year seminar professionals’ willingness to build relationships with students sparked learning and, in many cases, motivated student success. Though students entered the classes with

different needs, the presence, attitude, and caring approach of the first-year seminar professionals was the catalyst for helping students transition into college. In order to formalize this observation and illustrate the dynamics of the researcher's observations, the Community Classroom Model (Figure 8) is proposed.

Community Classroom Model Supporting Student Success

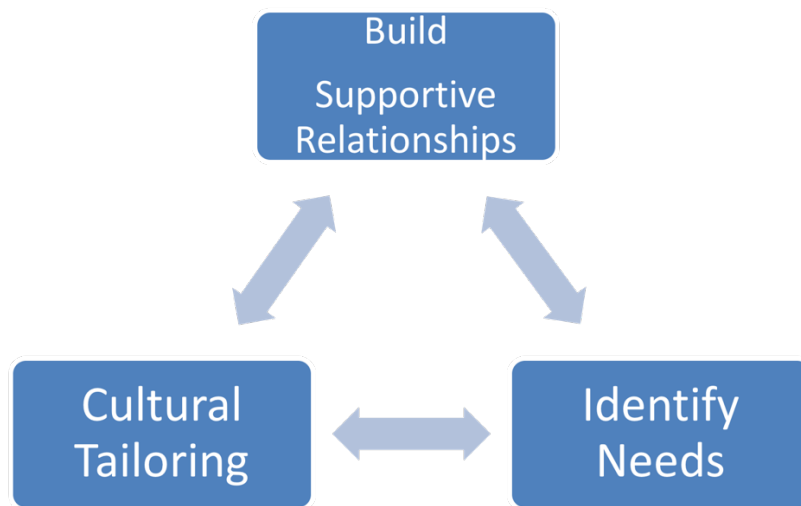


Figure 8. Community Classroom Model (CCM)

The purpose of CCM is to illustrate the nature of the educational environment that appears to enable faculty to support student success in Florida HBCUs first-year seminars. The Model consists of instructors building supportive relationships with

students to better understand their needs so that they can become better academic advocates. Next, by developing relationships, instructors can understand the needs of the students. Finally, the instructor reinforce instruction of the class within the context of students' needs.

Goldstein and Noguera (2012) suggested that teaching can be targeted to the population of instruction. The researcher suggests utilizing Goldstein and Noguera surface cultural tailoring approach is consistent with the research findings. The previously stated pedagogical approach focuses on recognizing a student's heritage and understanding their lives outside the educational environment to capture their academic interest in the classroom.

Implications and Recommendations

The following section contains the researcher's recommendations regarding the study. Recommendations were created that speak to different stakeholders of this study to include Florida HBCU first-year seminar program directors and/or faculty, Florida HBCU Institutions, the Florida Legislative System, and finally the National Research Center for First Year Experience and Second Year Transition and Researchers.

Recommendations for Practice

Given the low compensation, high workload and responsibility, first-year seminar programs at Florida HBCUs must investigate how they can incentivize the work of the professionals beyond employment compensation. The researcher observed first-year seminar professionals who are truly the unsung heroes working within, and outside of,

the prescribed classroom structure to help their students transition into college, by any means necessary.

It is incumbent upon seminar administrators to consider establishing tangible extrinsic incentives. As a result of the dialogs with research participants, the researcher has outlined three specific areas in which first-year seminar professionals' work can be incentivized: (a) an annual award; (b) creation of a statewide online interactive knowledge based community; and (c) more diverse types of first-year seminars offered at Florida HBCUs.

As an initial step, first-year seminar administrators would be wise to create an annual award for campus first-year seminar professionals that honors and highlights the instructional work of the most outstanding professional. Additionally, programs can use the award in a variety of ways. For instance, first-year seminar professionals can learn specific instructional practices that have been effectively used to support students.

Compared to learning teaching techniques from any first-year seminar, the benefits of the award would be several. Individuals who work in the same environment with similar students can strengthen their skills based on best practices from peer-professionals. Also, the award system would enlarge the professional development tools one could use in order to structure first-year seminar courses.

Next, first-year seminar professionals within the Florida HBCU system should explore creating an online professional development community. Utilizing the power and benefits of peer learning in asynchronous online environments, first-year seminar professionals can be a great source of support for one another. The narratives of Florida's

HBCU first-year seminar professionals revealed commonalities regarding the students they serve, the care they have for their students, and their collective desire to see students succeed to graduation. To enhance how these professionals serve their students in their most critical years, the Florida HBCUs should create a shared online forum that develops and cultivates strategies to increase student progression to degree attainment. In recent years, think tanks have been vital forces in creating an organization that could disseminate knowledge tied to an issue. The recommended online professional forums magnify the strength of think tanks as they allow multiple partners to collaborate on common efforts. Furthermore, in the future, the online professional development community may serve as a model for enhancing first-year seminar courses at the more than 107 HBCUs in the national HBCU system.

Finally, the first-year seminar is critically important, as it supports transitioning students in their first year of college. According to the data, no single strategy was identified in this study to teach the various students the first-year seminar professional served. Data Record-002 summarized that students are “individuals from different backgrounds, different majors, and different concerns” (Data Record 002, 2016), acknowledging that all freshman were not alike. Yet, interviewed participants commonly and collectively described the classroom model as addressing basic study skills. For this reason, the researcher recommends, in addition to the basic study skills course model, that first-year seminar administrators should consider creating different types of first-year seminar courses to accommodate a broad array of students who might take the course. Specifically, first-year course administrators, along with first-year seminar professionals,

should consider reviewing Pagett and Keup's (2011) models of freshman year seminar as a guide to review and select course models based on their specific institutional and student needs.

Policy Recommendations

According to the Lumina Foundation, degree attainment rates among Florida students peaked at 45.9% (Lumina Foundation, 2016). Though there has been a noticeable increase in the number of sunshine state dwellers with a post-secondary credential, there are still opportunities to make even greater strides regarding graduation rates. For instance, the same Lumina Foundation report indicated African Americans rank nearly last in degree attainment in the state of Florida. For this reason, the researcher recommends that the state of Florida consider creating legislation that appropriates funding to the first-year seminar programs in particular HBCUs.

In the state of Florida, there are a number of programs that are strategically funded by the legislative system, for instance the Black Male Explorer Program (Capital Soup, 2013). Similarly, the Florida Department of Education should explore providing funding to Florida HBCUs first-year seminar programs as a form of educational intervention that supports African Americans students who graduate. HBCUs have unique educational needs and require multiple forms of support to ensure a strong commitment in increasing the number of African Americans with a four-year degree within the state's HBCU system. As such, the Florida Department of Education should

consider creating a companion program at the college level to address African American attrition rates.

National Recommendations

Finally, the researcher recommends that the National Research Center on First-Year Experience and Second-Year Transition continue to emphasize its support of first-year seminar to stakeholders such as the professionals at minority-serving institutions, including HBCUs. In the survey conducted for the present study, nearly 42% of the respondents neglected to select a specific professional development tool. This situation provides the National Research Center a wonderful opportunity to consider structuring professional development programming that meets the needs of first-year seminar professionals at HBCUs as found in this study.

In conclusion, there is room to continue learning, researching, and disseminating information concerning HBCU first-year seminar professionals. Florida might be the first state to attempt to understand the work of these professionals; however, it should not be the only research conducted regarding the experiences of first-year seminar professionals at HBCUs. Thus, the researcher hopes that in light of the recommendations provided, other academics and/or scholars will elect to continue to contribute to empirically investigating first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs as well as HBCUs nationwide.

Limitations

Limitations exist in every research study. In this study, limitations referred to conditions (e.g., issues) that occurred that could not be controlled by the investigator.

Prior to the survey instruments being distributed, the researcher indicated a desire to provide an incentive to the survey participants. The purpose of the incentive was to encourage respondents to complete the survey. During the IRB process, the researcher was notified that gift card drawing, which was the selected incentive form, required additional review from the university legal department. With no specific time frame in place to determine when the review would be complete, the researcher excluded incentives.

This decision may have limited the number of possible survey participants, as the incentive to participate was solely intrinsic in nature. Dillman (2000) noted that including incentives can significantly raise the survey response rate, and the absence of incentives can decrease a participant's motivation to complete the survey. Furthermore, as a result of the survey's small sample size, information captured from the surveys are only generalizable to participants included in the current study (Hackshaw, 2008).

Future Research

The qualitative and quantitative data that emerged from this study were rich. The study provided insight, previously unknown, about the experiences and perceptions of first-year seminar professionals at HBCUs. Following are proposed areas worthy of further consideration for empirical investigations.

Conduct further research on the community classroom model, and conduct a purely quantitative study on first-year seminars at HBCUs utilizing the National Survey of First-Year Seminars and the survey created by the National Resource Center: First Year Experience & Students in Transition (Tobolowsky, 2006; Tobolowsky, Mamrick & Cox, 2003; Young & Hopp, 2012-2013).

First, the research on HBCU first-year seminars could be further developed by examining the perceptions of HBCU first-year seminar professionals nationwide. An excellent conceptual framework to use is that of the National Survey of First-Year Seminars (Tobolowsky, 2006; Tobolowsky, Mamrick & Cox, 2003; Young & Hopp, 2012-2013).

The survey consists of approximately 100 questions that allow participants to share information regarding various characteristics of their programs. These data can further the researcher's knowledge of first-year seminar programming at historically Black Colleges and universities. Moreover, the information could add to the conversation concerning best practices of first-year seminars at specific types of institutions. It would also be interesting to take the Community Classroom Model, developed through this study, delve further into this observation. The purpose of building on the model would be to explore whether the concepts can explain classroom approaches at institutions of higher learning such as HBCUs.

Researcher Reflections

I am eternally grateful to the participants who were willing to share their stories. It is my hope that readers will have a clearer understanding of the work HBCU professionals invest in supporting their students.

I concluded this study with a more powerful understanding of my own academic and developmental journey. My college journey was a crazy rollercoaster ride. I went through twist and turns, ups and downs, as I truly experienced my own coming of age. As a collegian, all of my experiences, both good and bad, liberated me. Initially, I might have enjoyed the experience too much. I often prioritized partying over academics, shopping over scholarship, and life over learning. For many years, I engaged in internal battles that led to feelings of self-guilt regarding my academic progress. I could not seem to navigate using my brilliance to get my degree without the guidance of my parents. I would question, after messing up, what direction to take. I strongly felt that I had failed my future and let my family down.

Kindly recall that I completed a first-year seminar at my HBCU. Truthfully, prior to beginning this research effort, I was not so sure that the rudiments of the first-year seminar course worked for all students, most especially me. I was frustrated that it took nearly a decade to complete my undergraduate studies. Yet, as I reflect upon the narratives of the professionals I interviewed who gave so much to their students it became abundantly clear that that their work was truly not lost on me. I discovered that, on the other side of my college admissions and access, there were strong, hardworking, caring, battled-tested professionals in my collegiate community. They knew that success

awaited students who were willing to work hard. Thankfully, though it took me forever, there was no expiration date on attaining my college credential.

Honestly, my success came as a result of the seeds of support my parents sowed in my life. Furthermore, those seeds were watered by the professionals at my HBCU and pushed me to go farther than any self-inflicted failure. As such, my experiences as a doctoral student have harvested those seeds. In fact, I am reminded of a quote that I love by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. King said: “If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk, if you can’t walk then crawl, BUT whatever you do you have to keep moving forward” King’s reference reminds me that regardless of the obstacles, one cannot miss an opportunity to progress. Recording the lived experiences of first-year seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs refueled me. Collectively, their undertakings made me believe that there is hope for a lofty idealist (like me) who has an incurable love and devotion for HBCUs. I benefited from reaping, now I am ready to plant seeds of success into the next generation of college students

APPENDIX A
USE PERMISSION

Dear Amanda V. Wilkerson,

Thank you for your request. You can consider this email as permission to use the material as detailed below in your upcoming dissertation. Please note that this permission does not cover any 3rd party material that may be found within the work. We do ask that you properly credit the original source, *Research Design*, 3rd edition. Please contact us for any further usage of the material.

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Sent: Monday, January 04, 2016 9:56 AM

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Subject: Permission for Usage

1/4/2016

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Thousand Oaks, CA 91320

Dear Sage Publications,

My name is Amanda Wilkerson. I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education and Policy Studies program at the University of Central Florida. I am requesting permission to reprint illustration from the following work: **Author:** John W. Creswell **Title of the work:** *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*.

ISBN: 9781412965576 Year of publication: 2008

APPENDIX B
COMMUNICATIONS WITH PARTICIPANTS

My name is Amanda Wilkerson, I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education and Policy Studies Program at the University of Central Florida. I write to invite you to participate in my dissertation research study on HBCUs and the First Year Experience program. This study seeks your perspective in order to assess how the program is implemented at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Based upon the information I have obtained through the university website you are eligible to participate in this study because you are an instructor/administrator within the First Year Experience Program. Your participation in this study will require three interactions with the researcher. First, you will meet with Amanda Wilkerson to understand the project in detail. Wilkerson will provide a consent agreement form to officially establish your participation in the study. To begin your participation in the study a HBCU first-year seminar Survey will provided online Finally, Wilkerson will schedule and conduct a conversational interview.

Participation is suggested and not required. You will receive a formal IRB consent form from me once you agree to participate, and prior to receiving the survey.

Should you have any questions about your rights as a participant of the study you may contact the University of Central Florida intuitional review board. If you have any other questions, please contact, Amanda Wilkerson, principal investigator for this study.



Higher Education & Policy Studies (HEPS) Program

March 30th, 2016

Title of Project: Access and Student Success: An Examination of the Perceptions and Experiences of Administrators and Instructors of First Year Seminars of Florida Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

My name is Amanda Wilkerson. I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Central Florida in the College of Education and Human Performance. I am conducting a study that examines the Perceptions and Experiences of Administrators and Instructors of First-Year Seminars of premiere institutions such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities. I invite and welcome your participation in this groundbreaking study.

**SURVEY LINK: http://ucf.qualtrics.com//SE/?SID=SV_7NZcg4z82gOjCfz
(PLEASE COPY AND PASTE THE SURVEY LINK INTO THE WEB-BROWSER)**

Enclosed above is a link to the survey. Please note, the survey should take no more than 7-10 minutes to complete. Your responses will not be identified with you personally, nor will anyone be able to determine which institution you work for.

Kindly, take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Without the help of professionals with your perspective, research on First-Year Seminars professionals at Historically Black Colleges could not be conducted. Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if you do not participate. **PLEASE COMPLETE THE SURVEY BY APRIL 1st, 2016.**

College of Education and Human Performance

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Higher Education & Policy Studies (HEPS) Program

I am excited to share, that within a few days from now, you will receive a request to fill out a brief survey for an important research project I, Amanda Wilkerson-Doctoral Candidate, am conducting.

The focus of the research examines the perceptions and experiences of administrators and instructors of First-Year Seminars at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). As such, I have determined that you make an excellent candidate to participate in the survey as you currently serve as an instructor and or administrator within a First-Year Seminar at a HBCU.

I am writing in advance because I have found many people like to know ahead of time that they will be contacted. Please note, the study is an important one that will aide in providing a rich thick description of the work that HBCUs do to enhance student success.

Thank you for your time and consideration. It's only with the generous help of professionals, such as yourself, that the aforementioned research can be successful.

Sincerely,

Amanda V. Wilkerson

Amanda Wilkerson, M.A
Doctoral Candidate| Higher Education and Policy Studies
University of Central Florida
College of Education and Human Performance
Amanda.Wilkerson@ucf.edu

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Higher Education & Policy Studies (HEPS) Program

Dear Esteemed Colleague:

On Wednesday of this week a survey seeking your perceptions regarding your work as a First-Year Seminar Professional was emailed to you. Your name was purposefully selected as you are listed as an SLS instructor with your institution.

If you have already completed the online survey, please accept my sincerest thanks. If not, I kindly urge you to consider completing the survey today. I am especially grateful for your help. Without the assistance of professionals with your perspective, research on First-Year Seminars professionals at Historically Black Colleges could not be conducted.

Please note, the survey should take no more than 7-10 minutes to complete. Your responses will not be identified with you personally, nor will anyone be able to determine which institution you work for. **PLEASE COMPLETE THE SURVEY BY APRIL 1st, 2016.**

Sincerely,

Amanda V. Wilkerson

Amanda Wilkerson

Doctoral Candidate

University of Central Florida

College of Education and Human Performance

College of Education and Human Performance

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APPENDIX C
EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH, CONSENT, AND ONLINE SURVEY



Explanation of Research

Title of Project: Access and Student Success: An Examination of the perceptions and experiences of Administrators and Instructors of First Year Seminars of Florida of Florida HBCUs.

Principal Investigator: Amanda Wilkerson, Doctoral Candidate

Esteemed Colleagues: You are invited to participate in a groundbreaking study. The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of your perceptions and experiences as a professional regarding the First Year Seminar course at your institution. Moreover, this research is conducted in a manner whereby colleagues at other Historically Black Colleges and Universities throughout the state of Florida will have the same opportunity to share their accumulated knowledge. This research will provide quantifiable data on First Year Seminar professionals at Florida HBCUs.

Please note, the survey should take no more than 7-10 minutes to complete. Likewise, your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and your identity will be kept confidential. If at any point you wish to discontinue your participation kindly let me know.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:

If you have questions, concerns, or comments please contact Amanda Wilkerson, Doctoral Candidate, College of Education, University of Central Florida at 407-823-2042 or by email at amanda.wilkerson@ucf.edu.

IRB contact about your rights in the study to report a complaint:

Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). Please note, this research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407)823-2901.

CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
1. Provide orientation of campus resources and services for students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Provide self-exploration/personal development services concerning students who take the course.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Develop academic skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Assist students with developing a connection with the institution.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<p>Directions: Please rate how much you personally agree or disagree with these statements using the scale found below. Note, there is not a right or wrong answer.</p>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<p>5. Currently, the type of First-Year Seminar at my institution is best described as an Academic seminar that covers various topics.</p>	○	○	○	○	○	○

<p>6. Currently, the type of First-Year Seminar at my institution is best described as Extended Orientation (course that connects students to on campus resources that encourage student involvement).</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>7. Currently, the type of First-Year Seminar at my institution is best described as Professional or Discipline based seminar.</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Currently, the type of First-Year Seminar at my institution is best described as Basic Study Skills seminar.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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<p>Directions: Please rate how much you personally agree or disagree with these statements using the scale found below. Note, there is not a right or wrong answer.</p>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<p>9. New instructors for the First-Year Seminar receive mentorship from veteran instructors in the program.</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>10. My institution supports First-Year Seminar faculty development through ongoing workshops.</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<p>11. My institution supports First-Year Seminar faculty development through ongoing orientations.</p>	○	○	○	○	○	○
<p>12. My institution supports First-Year Seminar faculty development through ongoing peer instructor modeling.</p>	○	○	○	○	○	○

<p>Directions: Please rate how much you personally agree or disagree with these statements using the scale found below. Note, there is not a right or wrong answer.</p>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<p>13. All incoming Freshman are required to take the First-Year Seminar course.</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>14. Undeclared students are required to take the First-Year Seminar.</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<p>15. Students within specific majors are required to take the First Year Seminar.</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>16. First time in college First Generation students are required to take the First-Year Seminar.</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>17. Transfer students are required to take the First-Year Seminar.</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<p>Directions: Please rate how much you personally agree or disagree with these statements using the scale found below. Note, there is not a right or wrong answer. Professional Development</p>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
<p>18. My institution supports First-Year Seminar faculty attending national conferences regarding first year student college transition.</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>19. My institution invests in subscriptions to Peer Reviewed Journals regarding First -Year Seminar for Instructors.</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>20. My institution invests in academic materials (books, training material) for First-Year Seminar instructors and/or administrators.</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<p>Directions: Please rate how much you personally agree or disagree with these statements using the scale found below. Note, there is not a right or wrong answer. Characteristics of First-Year Seminar Instructors</p>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
21. First-Year Seminar is taught primarily by Tenured-track faculty.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. First-Year Seminar is taught primarily by Full-time, non-tenured-track faculty.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. First-Year Seminar is taught primarily by Academic Advisers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. First-Year Seminar is taught primarily by Adjunct faculty.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. First-Year Seminar is taught primarily by Graduate Students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What is your Gender?

- Male
- Female

What is your role with your HBCU First Year Seminar course?

- First-Year Seminar Instructor
- First-Year Seminar Administrator
- Other _____

Please enter your email contact information below ONLY if you would like to be contacted to discuss your experiences regarding First-Year Seminar Course.

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions:
HBCU First/Freshman Seminar Course Programming and Administration

Section 1. Institution Demographic Information

1. What is your institution's name?
2. What city is your institution located in?
3. What are the number of undergraduates located at your institution?
4. What is the average grade point average of incoming freshman students?

Section 2. Survey Respondent Demographic Information

5. Name:
6. Professional Title:
7. Age:
8. Racial/Ethnic Background:
9. Highest Level of Educational attainment:
 - a. Some College
 - b. Baccalaureate degree
 - c. Master's degree
 - d. Doctoral degree

Section 3 First Year Seminar Demographic Information

10. What is the current number of undergraduates registered in the First Year Seminar class at your institution this year (2015-2016)?
11. Please select the type of First Year Seminar offered at your institution:
 - a. Freshman/College Orientation Seminar
 - b. Study Skills Seminar
 - c. Professional Discipline Seminar
 - d. Other (Please specific what type of other First Year Seminar You Offer)
12. How many types of Freshman Seminar courses do you offer at your institution?

(Please provide a current class syllabus for the First Year Seminar)

13. How is the First Year Seminar course offered, select all that apply?
 - a. Online
 - b. Face to face
 - c. Mix mode (please specific how the class is offered mixed modes)
 - d. Other (please specific how the First Year seminar course is offered.

Please continue to the next page

Continue Here

14. What are your institutions specific goals for the First Year Seminar course?
15. What, if any, are examples of how First Year Seminar courses have been institutionalized?
16. Does your institution's First Year Seminar course contribute to graduation goals, if yes how?
17. Who teaches in your First Year Seminar program?
18. What is the average class size of the first year seminar at your institution?
19. What qualifications are required of First Year Instructors?
20. How is the First Year Seminar graded?
21. What academic and or administrative department and/or unit does your institution First Year Seminar report to?
22. Which students are required to take the First Year seminar?
 - a. All Freshman
 - b. Some Freshman
 - c. Other (Please specific what students are required to take the First Year Experience seminar?)
23. What is the level of overall campus support (from administration, faculty, staff, and students for the first-year seminar?)
 - a. Low
 - b. Moderate
 - c. High
 - d. Other (please specify the level of overall campus support your first year seminar receives)
24. What other perceptions of the First Year Seminar would you like to share?

APPENDIX E
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
 Office of Research & Commercialization
 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
 Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
 Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

**From: UCF Institutional Review Board #1
 FWA00000351, IRB00001138**
To: Amanda Wilkerson
Date: March 11, 2016

Dear Researcher:

On 03/11/2016, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination
 Project Title: Access and Student Success: An Examination of the Perceptions and Experiences of Administrators and Instructors of First Year Seminars at Florida Historically Black Colleges and Universities
 Investigator: Amanda Wilkerson
 IRB Number: SBE-16-12120
 Funding Agency:
 Grant Title:
 Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 03/11/2016 12:54:00 PM EST

IRB Manager

APPENDIX F
INTERVIEW DATA TRANSCRIPTIONS

1 **Data Record Number 001**

2 Researcher: How did you get started with First Year Seminar at [REDACTED]?

3 Participant: At the time I was serving as the academic advising coordinator and the need
4 actually arose where we had more sections of the class than we had instructors to cover it.
5 The FYE director at the time asked me, because she thought I would be a good candidate,
6 if I would be interested in teaching [REDACTED]. I was interested in teaching it.
7 I taught it for the first time, I am guessing now, it was such a long time ago, I'm guessing it was
8 around 1996/1997 was the very first time. I've taught it off and on since then. Now it has
9 taken on a different format.

10 R: How would you describe the students you teach?

11 P: I found that I had a combination of students. I had those who are really presenting
12 themselves as if they were in high School and then there were those who were more
13 serious about college and their class. Overall, I think students want to know and I am
14 using air quotations here, why do I have to take this class. So it's been a combination of
15 students. Students who were not paying attention to the reasons why they should be
16 transitioning away from high school type behaviors and focusing on exhibiting the
17 behavior of those who are in higher education. I think it is just a given and that's why it is
18 considered a transitional course. It's part of our role and responsibilities to help students
19 transition because they may not know how to do it on their own. Some are more
20 adaptable than others. That is what I have found.

21 **R: Can you describe what you mean by high school behaviors**

22 **P:** Yes, they came to class unprepared. Sometimes they have a problem getting to class
23 and getting to class on time. Because now you know they are making their own decisions
24 no one is waking them up they are not relying on someone, a mom, or a dad, or whoever,
25 to say come on Tommy time to get up for school. In college no one is doing that. They
26 must rely on themselves. They were also not real serious about the class. You know it
27 was like they do the work if they want to and if not there were no serious consequences.
28 As a part of the class, we explain, as a part of the overall experience that if you don't do
29 well how it will not only affect your GPA and graduation but it has serious ramifications
30 for your financial aid and not in the long term. So again, some high school behaviors is
31 showing up late, not being prepared, not having materials, silly behavior, and a lot of
32 times, or sometimes, students were confrontational. Not in the sense of asking a question
33 or having a debate but confrontational in terms of who is going to have the last word
34 here.

35 **R: How did you structured your class to meet the needs of the student**

36 **P:** Because it more than one student I make general announcements about the
37 importance of being prepared for class. In fact when we use the text book in some of the
38 chapters it spoke to readiness and being ready for class. It wasn't just my own opinion in
39 what you need to be successful; this was carried out throughout the text book in different
40 chapters. I made sure that I would reiterate that often.

41 **R: What do students need to gain from FYS**

42 **P:** They need to understand that they are now in a world where they need to operate at a
43 higher level of thinking and learning and conducting themselves like I mentioned earlier.

44 They also need to understand in higher education the rigor will be different from high
45 school and no one cares if you just do the work, its not just about doing the work. You
46 have to understand that there is a negative consequences for not doing the work and for
47 not doing the work on college level. They also have to understand that it is important that
48 you follow your degree plan. It's okay to ask do I need to take this class. But understand
49 that this plan was set into place and while it may have some options for you to take
50 different courses the students need to understand this is it, you must follow the plan. They
51 also need to understand that even if you came unprepared it's possible that you may be
52 able to move yourself up. But you have to be open to receiving information you have
53 been given. You have to be open to utilizing the resources on campus, the library, the
54 career development center, financial aid, the registrar's office, tutoring, which is always
55 free, your academic advisors and your instructors. I find that a lot of them are reluctant to
56 go directly to the source. They aren't so reluctant to talk with the advisor, because you
57 know they are talking to the advisor often. They will sit with you and will just spill the
58 beans. And tell you everything that is going on. But when the suggestion is made,
59 "perhaps you have to go to the source" because the advisor is limited in what they really
60 know about a particular area and what they can really say about a particular area. I find
61 that they have been reluctant to do that.

62 **R: What does the First year Seminar Course look like at** [REDACTED]

63 **P:** This class is first of all I think of the word orientation, because the first year
64 experience is not just about the class and not just about new student orientation it is a
65 yearlong program, or it can be or should be a yearlong program. It is still orientating

66 students to university life. Because you can only get so much and retain so much
67 information when you do have those few days during new student orientation it is not
68 expected that one would remember all of that so that's why we have continued to
69 reinforce what you have been introduced to. So that you will be prompted to asked
70 intelligent questions because you will be prompted by what came to mind during your
71 exposure to the information we have shared with you from a session. So the course will
72 help you continue to know the university. Know what's required of you as a student at
73 the university. To help you to continue to transition not only from high school into
74 college but in to the next semester and into the sophomore year so it really is a
75 reinforcement course. It's not a hand holding or an enabling type thing its teaches them to
76 be able to be successful after they move beyond freshman year experience and out of the
77 freshman year advising in order to be successful in the remaining years that they have
78 which can be anywhere from three to five years. A year long program orientating
79 students to university life.

80 **R: What would you like the FYS program to look like at** [REDACTED]

81 **P:** I'd like the course to be taught by more individuals who are really empathetic to the
82 freshman plight. I just think that some people are more in tune to meet students who are
83 freshman than others. On one hand you are in higher education but you may be taking on
84 the role of that teacher that they just left in high school without even knowing. They need
85 a lot of stoking. It matters who teach the class. I would like to see people who teach the
86 class not only well versed about the objectives of the course but to be able to deliver that
87 in a non-threatening like way so that the student can continue to use that person as a

88 resource. I'd also hear sometimes we don't have enough sections of the class. We don't
89 know how many new students we are having.

90 R: What type of professional development would best serve professionals at [REDACTED]
91 [REDACTED]

92 The office that is responsible and has oversight for the First Year Experience the course
93 and or the fye program should provide some initial training. Training throughout, but
94 certainly before the class begins. Their needs to be a workshop so that instructor can
95 understand what is expected. Go through the syllabus. Sometimes we have adjunct
96 professors or part time instructors who are teaching the class that have never been a part
97 of our university system and they don't always know how everything works. All they
98 have is a syllabus and text book. They don't know how to input grades they don't always
99 know about the important dates on the academic calendar. I think initial training and
100 training throughout the semester which is key in professional development for people that
101 teach [REDACTED] that's the type of professional development that can occur on campus.

102 Outside of campus there are organizations like NCADA that give opportunities for
103 faculty to participate in conferences especially the national conference where there are so
104 many sessions and so many professional where you can go and see faculty advising is
105 different on different campus. For example, universities may have professional advisors
106 or faculty advisors have sole responsibility for advising. I believe we need to move
107 beyond the campus to find out what's happening and what works as it relates to
108 developing the faculty who teach the class.

109 **R: What is your perspective on how national organizations provide professional**
110 **development for the students you serve on [REDACTED] campus?**

111 P: I absolutely believe they do. Why because they are always diverse. You have
112 information for individuals from all types of institutions. You have resources for small
113 universities, medium size, and large. As a matter of fact through NCADA one of the list
114 serves I subscribe to is small colleges and universities. It's really beneficial. With this
115 national organizations it's like scrapbooking you have all of these possibilities to build
116 how you service the students and they show you that. That it's just not one way or one
117 product you can garner information and ideas from everywhere. Just because you are a
118 small campus doesn't mean you can use something from a larger campus or that we can't
119 be true to ourselves.

120 **R: To what degree do you feel your program works with other HBCUs to fine tune**
121 **how your serve students at [REDACTED].**

122 P: We don't do it. Not to my knowledge. We don't collaborate with any of the HBCUs in
123 the state of Florida not to my knowledge on this course. We are doing our own thing
124 down here.

125 **R: Explain that to me?**

126 **P:** I really am not sure. I can only speak for our program. We are more concerned on how
127 to produce a successful program here for ourselves. I am not saying that we have never
128 consulted other HBCUs or have done research from their website but true collaboration. I
129 am not aware of it happening. Now it doesn't mean that it shouldn't happen. Perhaps we
130 should.

131 **R: anything else you want to share**

132 **P:** the type of individuals who teach the class is so key. These individuals need to have

133 the same type of mind set. They need to have the same type of training so that there can

134 be consistency in delivering the same model of the course for each and every student.

135 Because it is unfair for students to get great or quality information and instruction from

136 me and then in a next section they get a fraction of what they need based on the quality of

137 the instructional delivery. We have to be more on one accord in delivering the contents of

138 the class.

139

140 Keywords:

141 • College orientation

142 • High school

143 • Freshman year experience

144 • National organization

145 • Professional development

146 • Freshman year

147 • Year long

148 • Faculty advisors

149 • Class

150 • Responsibility

151 • Understand

- 152 • Experience
- 153 • Opportunity
- 154 • Program
- 155 • Institution
- 156 • Instructor
- 157 • Combination
- 158 • Achievement
- 159

1 **Data Record 002**

2 **Researcher: How did you get started with the first year seminar at [REDACTED]?**

3 Participant: I don't remember how I got started. However I began teaching at [REDACTED] as
4 an adjunct in 1992 and as far back as I can remember I've always orientated students. It
5 was just a natural part of the teaching and instruction method. You survey your students
6 and you give them what they need. A few years later in the 2000s the university moved to
7 a more formula college orientation class. Somehow I was invited to become a teacher in
8 that. I think by word of mouth, students always tell others students where to get help. I
9 think even if I'm teaching history a normal thing to do if I am teaching class is survey my
10 students to find out where they are from what's their major you know what is their
11 weakness their strengthens their career goals their personal goals. Finding that basic
12 information is how you begin surveying your course students they don't have to be
13 freshman. When I first heard about the college orientation experience at [REDACTED] at first
14 they were taking volunteers there was a lot of people teaching the class. I really wasn't
15 interested because I thought that it was too important just to have staffers and throw
16 anybody in front of the students. So a few years later after some teachers talked about it
17 especially the advisement component of it, you know you really have to know what you
18 are doing and what you are talking about when you are advising students. So they began
19 to get faculty members to teach the class and I think that's when I, when the university
20 got serious about the class, that's when they reached out and got some people that were
21 serious and who would similarly be serious about what they wanted the program to
22 accomplish.

23 **R: Describe the students you teach?**

24 **P:** Well the majority of the students, at least in the fall, you have the larger number of
25 students in the SLS class. These students are from different backgrounds. They are
26 students from different majors, they are students with different concerns, but many of
27 them still need to know what I call basic information about the educational process. For
28 example, we take for granted that a student may come here knowing the numbering
29 system for classes. For example, understanding or knowing that English 1101 is for the
30 freshman year then you go to the 200s that's the sophomore year, the three hundreds
31 that's the junior year and the four hundreds that's the senior year. Some students may not
32 know that. We take for granted that they may not always coming know that basic
33 information about the college. Financial aid. Sometimes I have to tell my students,
34 because we do financial literacy, you may not understand all of it this semester or even
35 this year but you need to understand these numbers so that you know how much money
36 you have to pay back for your classes. Basic orientation the main students that I teach in
37 the SLS are students who are sometimes uncertain, sometimes they are first generation
38 students, sometimes they are students who are from out of state and need to be connected
39 to some positive people, places and things. SLS class becomes all of those things
40 whatever the student needs we're the nucleus. I say we because we also have peer
41 mentors. That's key because students need to also learn from each other. I teach all kinds
42 of students. The one thing that I struggle with is who should take the SLS class. I struggle
43 with that because those who come in with thirty hours/ transfer students you have already
44 been orientated. I struggle with mandates on who should take the class. And here is the

45 beauty, if we are doing all that we need to do in an SLS class then guess what
46 upperclassman students would want to take the course. Students have told me gosh if I
47 knew I could have taken a college orientation class and that I would learned this in the
48 class I would have done so much more because our first charge is to try and get the
49 student on a path. A path to graduation, a path to a field of study. My goal is to get the
50 student off the “I don’t know path to a path” that focuses on why they are here. I get them
51 on this path by doing research. I have my students look at what they like to do, what your
52 grades are like? And some people may not like this but also if they can’t get what they
53 want here then find a place for them where they can be successful in the long run. For me
54 it is always about what the students need.

55 **R: How do you structure you class to support students?**

56 **P:** Well we do active learning initiatives?

57 **R: Explain what active learning initiatives is?**

58 **P:** Sure. Usually you have a teaching style that is focused on lecturing. Teacher comes in
59 and says did you read the assigned chapters and then pulls up a power point and the entire
60 exchange in the class is between the power point, the teacher and maybe the students.
61 However, if anybody teaches like that to these millennials you are really not sticking with
62 how to engage and foster their learning. What we have learned to do is immerse and
63 engage the student into learning. Make the student responsible for their learning or the
64 learning process. What I have personally done is I am trying to introduce the research
65 method which they learned when they were in fourth grade with the science projects. I
66 am trying to introduce the research method immediately. For example finding a topic,

67 narrow the topic, ask what is it that you want to learn about the topic, compile your
68 research then present it. Those kind of activities are important and I have the students
69 practice it in practical ways. I have them use it to figure out what should their major be
70 what type of college is you major in? Do you have a minor requirement for the major?
71 Helping students plan their academic track and career is just as personal and strategic and
72 individualize as the students finger print. I know that there is the same curriculum for the
73 nursing degree. However the journey the student takes to make it across that stage will be
74 uniquely different. I just think that's what I need to see. What do these students need?
75 Some come to me academically unprepared some come academically prepared but they
76 are shy or aren't comfortable presenting and speaking in front of audiences. Some have
77 no clue what's going on and get lost in the social side of the college arena. And I have to
78 pull them in and talk to them about joining organizations that are professional and more
79 aligned with their academic work. Some are totally closed off to authoritative figures like
80 teachers so when I can't reach them I don't stop there-- I just know that I need to partner
81 them with a classmate or peer mentor. Student come with all kinds of concerns. But the
82 main thing is get them into a major where they are working towards their degree.
83 Sometimes they say I just don't know what I want to do Dr. [REDACTED]. Find with me, that's
84 good they are in the discovery zone and they are at least working towards a small goal
85 that will get them to the big goal of graduating. In my class I am constantly reminding the
86 students that every class you pay for, by the way I talking to kids that are poor, usually
87 they don't have money to throw away taking classes that they don't need. It's not that
88 kind of party. I structure the class so that they are always exploring. I keep telling them

89 that you came to [REDACTED] want to be a pharmacy major but you might explore or take a
90 class meet some people and decide that you might want to go in a totally different
91 direction. I assure them that it's okay to change your mind NOW as a freshman while it's
92 early but you only got a short window. Let's explore in this class but ultimately they need
93 to explore and then get on track, a track where they become a student studying in their
94 field of interest.

95 **R: What does the SLS Program look like as a whole?**

96 **P:** I think that the program has really grown and matured and I am really proud of the
97 program. They are very supportive of faculty, staff, and students they give us constant
98 training we are invited to go to conferences to report back. The provost and the
99 administration has supported the program and it has enabled us to grow stronger over the
100 years. One thing we have to be mindful of is each university is different, initially we
101 didn't have a recruitment and enrollment problem because there was a surplus of students
102 that wanted to go here. As time went on our student population changed. Let me give you
103 an example, at one point and time we were getting National Merit Scholars to attend the
104 university. We had more National Merit Scholars than other schools in the state of
105 Florida and ran second behind the likes of Harvard. We were number one in recruiting
106 the biggest and the brightest minds to our institution. We had a student population that
107 was nearing 15,000 that was during the hay day so we never thought about college
108 orientation because lots of the students came prepared. When I was a student here college
109 freshman came to school two weeks before the semester started. In that two weeks the
110 entire campus belonged to the freshman. We learned were all of the campus resources

111 were at, we learned where each of the college classroom buildings were at, we were able
112 to take test and get registered for classes. When the upper classman came we were ready
113 for school. The university changed the model and that's okay. So their orientating
114 throughout the year and specifically throughout the semester in the SLS class. I do want
115 to say this. We have to ask ourselves how much time does a university have to orientate
116 students especially in this day in age when things are moving at lightning pace and they
117 want students to get out in four years. Currently, our university is looking at a second part
118 of an SLS class it deals with career choices. I promise you the students that I teach don't
119 have the luxury of sitting through another college orientation. We got to orientate the
120 student and get them started, hitting your program of study on all cylinders. Many of my
121 students come to the university playing catch up they are taking college prep classes they
122 are trying to discover their majors and their selves and I tell you what I would like to see
123 as a second part of the orientation is a study skills improvement. Because once the
124 students know the resources the main thing they need to know in order to survive is how
125 do I use these resources. So for example, they know we have a writing lab but now they
126 need to figure how to use it so that they become or improve their writing skills. So the
127 first semester is to learn about all of the resources and the second semester is to learn how
128 to use the resources and getting them in full swing; strengthening their study skills and
129 study habits. I can talk to people about that and folks look at me and say No we want
130 them to pick a career. My focus don't need to focus on picking a career until their junior
131 or senior year. Now they need to focus on how do I stay in school, how do I pass my
132 classes. How do I manage my time. That has to be constantly reinforced. And really that's

133 just not for freshman that's for anybody that needs to improve on their skills. All students
134 need to understand the strategy for studying. Now we do cover study skills in the SLS
135 class. However we hit on it and then we are gone. I don't have a way of constantly
136 reinforcing so that they can practice the skills that they are learning.

137 **R: What are they learning?**

138 **P:** The SLS class is packed with everything. For example, there is a component of the
139 text that talks about academic success. Learning about the career center, and the tutorial
140 labs on campus, weekly study schedule, looking at academic curriculum, time
141 management. The students learn all of these things about academic success. Then we do
142 more connecting this to the university, campus tours, peer mentoring, we also do research
143 presentations. Open forums, tour of the museum, a lot of reflection paper writing, HIV
144 and drug presentation, financial literacy, career development component. I am saying that
145 there is so much going on in the class. I had a student that told me this once you always
146 have a class that going to be tougher than the other classes. You know you going to have
147 to put aside more studying time for the class. More energy more contact for the class.
148 One student told me one day my hardest class is my SLS class. That's not what we want
149 to be. I don't just want to give students work so that they can turn in an assignment we
150 want them to have meaningful experiences that can push them further than I physically
151 can, to do their very best when I'm not around grading.

152 **R: What is your impact on the students that you teach in the class?**

153 **P:** I honestly like to go in the class playing the bad guy. I don't want to be their friend, I
154 don't want to be their buddy I want them to learn. So I focus on academics. When I say

155 academics I mean grading and correcting papers helping with strengthening their
156 presentations, building their confidence. However I get other students to help them with
157 the social side of college. How to dress. If we are doing a campus excursion my peer
158 mentors may say we are going to leave the classroom so everyone needs to dress
159 appropriately. We are all contributing to help the students to adjust from a high school
160 mentality to a college mentality. And so I play the beast. A student in my class cannot
161 give me anything hand written it has to be type written. Formal grammar, spell checked. I
162 am getting them in the habit of seeing me as an academic advocate. I'm just as hard on
163 my freshman as I am my graduate students. So as a result of this approach they raise to
164 the occasion of my expectation. In my class they tell me what they want to be. Some
165 students try to tell you anything because it sounds good. Oh Dr. [REDACTED] I want to be a
166 lawyer. I make them do the work. Go look up what it takes to be a lawyer. Then I address
167 them as such.

168 **R: What has prepared you to serve the students in your SLS class?**

169 **P:** I have no idea. Honestly, when I left [REDACTED] to get my doctorate my mentors here at
170 the university said [REDACTED] we need you to go out and learn all the new stuff and bring it
171 back here to the university and show us. Many times I didn't always know everything but
172 I always kept my goals before me. That's what I do for my students. I keep graduation
173 right in front of them. When they say that they want to be a nurse. I believe them and I
174 call them that in class. Nurse Brown Dr. Such and Such because if I can continually call
175 them by what they want to be it will remind them that they have to work for what they
176 can be. So I call them by their nick names, and it is encouraging and inspiring for them.

177 They being to buy into. Now if they turn in a sorry paper, didn't spell check or grammar
178 check the first thing I am going to say is that you can never be a nurse if you don't put in
179 the work now. They begin to think about themselves as real professionals but you have to
180 remember that this is their first job is to be a professional college student and I expect
181 them to perform at that level. These students rise to the occasion. Also, maybe because I
182 am a black women in America, I know that getting an education is a game changer.
183 Getting an education is not a game for me it is serious. When I go to the classroom I am
184 working just as hard as an NFL football player. I am changing lives. See I knew for
185 myself if I got an education it would change my life. That has prepared me to help my
186 students because if they can get this it will change the quality of their lives, for
187 themselves, their family, the church member that looks up to them, it just too big a risk
188 not to get it right so I am prepared to serve my students because I know what it took to
189 graduate me and I am no different than the students I teach. I came to FAMU as an
190 unprepared, poor black, no money, student and somebody here said [REDACTED] that is not an
191 excuse. So I accept no excuses from my students. These students are highly capable.
192 Sometimes they will say Dr. [REDACTED] you see stuff in me and I don't know where you get
193 it from. That's okay because it's there. When I have a student that says "oh I'm shy I
194 don't want to speak in front of the class." I'll say I will go up with you or I will have
195 other student stand with them because I know getting this education is too important and
196 they have to get use to saying I can because they will soon face a world that will try to
197 tell them that they can't. So they are not alone but they can and they will do even if I
198 have to do it with them. But I am going to push them to do better than what they feel like

199 doing. I start out little but I am going to build up leaders. Okay you don't want to talk? I
200 will have you pass out papers. By passing out the papers she is getting to know everyone
201 is the class. I will find a way to reach my students because someone reached me when I
202 was a student. Another thing I do is encourage the students to look out for each other.
203 First it will start off with looking out for people in the class with the same major, then
204 people who have the same hometown, then people who live in the same dorm. That helps
205 them build this network of support. Because many of my students deal with the concept
206 of being lonely or isolated. I deal with students with mental problems or depression. And
207 I just have to be on it because I know what an education can do for them. If I don't see it,
208 the peer mentors will, or other classmates will. If a student isn't coming to class I see it
209 and I will pick up the phone and say what is going on? You know not attack them but
210 care for them. But that takes committed people. And that's why for me you just can't
211 throw anybody in front of those classes. And I know some classes people are just there,
212 well it can't be the money, but for the money. But they are certainly not there for the
213 students.

214 **R: Collaborating with HBCUs?**

215 **P:** Many black colleges don't have the resources like many well-endowed traditional
216 white colleges but we continue to use those colleges as a program model. And though we
217 can't do same thing on the same scale we can use the techniques and strategies and tailor
218 fit them to the needs and interest of students attending HBCUs. For example, students
219 love music and dancing, so one way they can get engaged and learn about the campus is
220 have a talent or fashion show where they can still incorporate what they like doing but

221 relates to what we are teaching. Because they learn through these mediums and so it
222 would be a way to meet them where they are. Technology is another example. Here they
223 use to have mandatory night seminars where students to learn about etiquette. This is one
224 thing I struggled with, night is the primetime either some of the students go to study
225 sessions, they are in extracurricular activities, or they have night classes. Ya'll can put
226 that same information on a webinar and have the students look at it at their leisure. We
227 got to stop thinking about what we need and start thinking about what the students need.
228 Students attending HBCU they need so many different things. When I do my survey at
229 the beginning of the year I use it to figure out who need some self-esteem
230 encouragement, who is the class leaders, who academically astute, I can pull them in to
231 help tutor. What kind of skills do these students have that we can use for our class. So if
232 you are a math major every time we are doing calculations I am going to call on the math
233 man. My main purpose for doing this is to let them know, and some of my students come
234 from horrific backgrounds...but they are here now...is to let them know you can't worry
235 about what is going on at home. We have to meet the students were they are but we
236 cannot allow them to use that as an excuse not to succeed. You have this opportunity. So
237 I don't care what people say about HBCU students. I let my students know you are okay
238 just as you are. You are okay. No matter what they brought into the room, no matter what
239 their academic standing is. Whatever your resources are YOU are okay. We about to
240 build from who you are and where you are. I will tell you this and at a black school you
241 need to do this, I give my students love. Sometimes if a young lady come by my office I
242 will tell her "did I tell you today that you are looking good, that you are gorgeous." I have

243 to constantly tell them that you are beautiful, you are special you can do it, because they
244 hear that so little coming out of their experiences and its okay. And I will hear someone
245 say “oh you know what Dr. Dawson said that I am special.” Or I will ask them what do
246 you want to be and they will tell me that nobody ask me about myself. Or we might have
247 a class forum because some times, and I have to tell you every class is different I’ve
248 never taught sls the same way, I discovered some of my students are trying to have a
249 relationships with their parents, love ones, significant other, and they are struggling and
250 that is because they don’t have a relationship with themselves they don’t like themselves,
251 they are not confident they don’t think that they can do it. Well in my class and at black
252 schools we throw all of that out of the window and show them who they are and how they
253 can be whoever they want to be. Once they are okay, and they know that others around
254 them are going through the same struggle to figure out their major, you are not the only
255 worried about financial aid... Listen these students are resilient. I’ve had older mentees
256 junior or seniors and some of them don’t have no where to sleep themselves they are
257 struggling themselves. When I find out I am shocked. I wonder how do they come in
258 smiling every day and you are going through some serious struggles. These black
259 students help each other. They live together they feed each other. They will help each
260 other get to work. I am proud and inspired by that because we leave the classroom and we
261 are family, we look out for each other.

262 **R: What should I know that I haven’t asked you?**

263 **P:** SLS is a catch all for the students that need it. When I say catch all I mean if you have
264 any problem up here at [REDACTED] come to us, come to this class, we care going to find some

265 options and some solutions. We talk about multiple resources, you need help talk to your
266 advisor, talk to financial aid. Gather all of the information and then come and talk to us. I
267 want you to know that I want my students to be empowered and they are empowered in
268 SLS by information. The main reason why I loose students is not because of not making
269 the grade. We know that they are brilliant and if they are not we know how to build them
270 to brilliance but I lose them because they can't pay the tuition bill. Lots of my students
271 are economically challenged. And I am preparing them for how to overcome that. When
272 they leave me class they take my strategies and the strategies we have learned and go and
273 join the honors college they can make excellent presentations. They get jobs that's what I
274 expect because in reality when you talk about an HBCU black and brown people you still
275 have to be twice as good that's not a myth that's a reality and it is something that I bring
276 into the class with me so that they can take that understanding out into the world and
277 compete. I love that we open the doors of access to students. But once that first door of
278 access is open I am worrying about how to get them through the next door of graduation,
279 the next door of success beyond college. Success can't stop for our students with wearing
280 a cap and gown they become examples of success for their communities. . That looks
281 different and is more complex than just a regular class. I was excited for Barack Obama
282 but he was the first he will not be the only. In my classroom I am building the next.
283

284 Keywords

- 285 • Student
- 286 • College Orientation class
- 287 • Class
- 288 • Peer Mentor
- 289 • Study Skills
- 290 • College Orientation
- 291 • Upper Class Students
- 292 • Career Fair
- 293 • Student Population
- 294 • Financial Aid
- 295 • Active Learning
- 296 • Study Skills Improvement
- 297 • Academic Success
- 298 • Skills Improvement
- 299 • Campus Resource
- 300 • Young People
- 301 • Library Learning
- 302 • Black Colleges

1 **Data Record 003**

2 **Researcher: Describe how did you get involve with the first year seminar?**

3 **Participant:** The first year experience coordinator sent out an email to the entire
4 university asking current professors who had time in their schedules to participate in the
5 First Year experience. So I responded and proceeded from their. The coordinator
6 scheduled the training and added me to the email distribution list for SLS instructors so
7 that I could begin training. I actually taught my first SLS class in 2013.

8 **Researcher: Describe your students?**

9 Impressionable, respective, and smart. My student are young, they are first year students.
10 However they are receptive to the information being presented to them and the strategies
11 for studying and learning about the university especially from someone that they have
12 confidence knows about the history of the university. I've been here for a while and I
13 give the students my story. So they are receptive. And they are smart. The understand
14 many of the things going on in the world today. And the value of some of the points
15 going on in the lecture. Young people are impressionable. That adjective puts more of a
16 responsibility on the instructor because the students are so impressionable it is important
17 that we share with them good, positive, and constructive stories. Because these are some
18 of the first things that they will remember about coming to college. You know,
19 everything about your first-time-in-college is brand new. The students are excited.
20 Everything that happens to you or nearly everything that you experience will more than
21 likely stay with you for many years, if not for the rest of your life surely for the duration
22 of your matriculation at [REDACTED]. So the students are indeed very impressionable.

23 However it is important that SLS instructors take responsibility for how impressionable
24 students are.

25 **R: Can you share exactly what your story is?**

26 **P:** I came to ██████ in the fall of 1993. Marched in the marching One Hundred for a
27 while. However I had to focus on my studies. So after about two seasons of playing in the
28 band I stopped marching to focus on my studies. I graduated with a degree from the
29 Division of Cardio Pulmonary science. Then I went on to get my masters, on a full
30 scholarship to get a degree in public health with an emphasis in epidemiology and a focus
31 on bio statistics. Then they gave me another full scholarship to pursue my doctorate in
32 epidemiology and bio statistics. Since that time I have directed the health academy at a
33 local high school. And then I was asked to return to the university to direct and create a
34 new program called the medical scholars program. The program began in 2012. Then I
35 was asked by the Dean of Science and Technology to start a pre-medical program in the
36 spring of 2016. That's where I am at now. Honestly, I think that administrators should
37 teach an SLS course because I think there is a great deal of specific insight that as
38 administrators we are able to offer a great deal of insight to help get students to get where
39 we are.

40 **R: What do you students gain from a First Year Seminar Course?**

41 **P:** The intent is to gain help and constructive study habits, to learn about the university,
42 the history and the culture of the university and share inside stories of how the student
43 can be successful. I share a lot of my personal stories with my students. I talk about when
44 I was a freshman and stories about my college life over the years. I want them to really

45 gain good study habits. We go a step further and talk about things to be mindful of things
46 to avoid. Things to be careful of both academic and social and to really give student a
47 sense that they have a person and not just a place that they can come to and ask me
48 questions about how to do thing right when issues arise. I think most of the students they
49 look for mentorship. Many of the faculty, staff and administration give a lot of our time
50 to mentor particularly here at [REDACTED]. Many of the students at [REDACTED]
51 come from very diverse and often times very challenging backgrounds and they come to
52 Florida and to college to refine themselves and to improve themselves so that they can
53 have a better life then what they come from. I think it's the responsibilities of the
54 administrators and professors to try and provide mentorship. I know we all have different
55 jobs and hectic schedules but I think it is important to not only provide instruction in the
56 classroom but to also provide mentorship. That helps to fill the gap for young men and
57 women who did not learn or did not receive this back at home.

58 **R: How would you describe the SLS program?**

59 **P:** Our program is coordinated by [REDACTED] and he does a pretty darn good job in doing
60 so. He gets information out to us about when we are going to have our workshops and
61 syllabus sessions. I would say that the first year experience is a good thing because all
62 students need some kind of introduction that attempts to bridge the gap between high
63 school and college. They need a course that is not too demanding because we want them
64 to spend time adjusting. Furthermore, the students are already, as a freshman, are going to
65 have tough classes like their sciences and maths that will present tough challenges for
66 them. So SLS should not be demanding it should be a support and informational course.

67 The SLS for is very helpful for our students in making that transition from high school to
68 college.

69 **R: What impact do you believe you have on the student in SLS?**

70 **P:** Students have indicated that they really enjoy my class. It's not boring. We laugh a lot,
71 we share a lot and I think they feel comfortable. As time goes on they feel real
72 comfortable. They start opening up, they start sharing ideas. So I personally think that my
73 impact has been positive as indicated by the survey that are shared with their feedback
74 with me. You know when professors come in to teach in the program I share with them
75 my approach to SLS and recommend that they take a similar approach. The main thing is
76 not to be too demanding. Not too harsh. Allow the students share and allow the student to
77 open up ad express their thoughts and ideas and it will make them more willing to open
78 up to you when they have problems. And that is really what you want. You want them to,
79 when they have problems, to come to you even long after they have finished the course.
80 If they come to me two and three semesters after they finish the course I think I am doing
81 what I am suppose to.

82 **R: What do the students enjoy about your class?**

83 **P:** They enjoy that we talk about real life situations. I think the way I talk about things
84 make them laugh. I use my culture, the environment I grew in as a kid growing up in
85 south Florida, I speak on things the way that I see them. I pretty much give it to the
86 students the way I got it from my parents and the way I received it in church, and from
87 my mentors. I think the students appreciate the fact that the course is not like a standard
88 lecture.

89 **R: As an instructor what has best prepared you to serve the students you teach?**

90 P: My history at [REDACTED] has prepared me the most to serve the students I teach. I am a
91 [REDACTED]. I bleed [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and I don't think I can bleed anything else and that
92 is simply because I received all my degrees from [REDACTED]. I've been at [REDACTED] since
93 I was a freshman. I know everything about the campus. I came to [REDACTED] under
94 Humphries. Dr. [REDACTED], he was the former president of [REDACTED]. He is
95 largely regarded as one of [REDACTED] greatest presidents. He is known for making [REDACTED]
96 renowned as it is. If you talk to alumni from [REDACTED] who came to the university around
97 the same time I think they would tell you that they are [REDACTED] babies. There is a great
98 deal of pride about the work that he did at the university. During that time [REDACTED] was
99 rocking and rolling all over the place. It was the golden age of [REDACTED] during the
100 [REDACTED] era. Students from all over the nation would come and attend [REDACTED] and they
101 receive national recognition as smart students. I think that my background at [REDACTED] just
102 knowing the campus, know the history and knowing some of the stories that are not even
103 printed in the history of [REDACTED] because I have personal knowledge of how things were. I
104 lived in [REDACTED] Hall for two years. I would go visit my girlfriend in her dorm called
105 [REDACTED] when it was brand new. When we would look out of the window there
106 was nothing but cows and pastures; today that same land has buildings on it. I think being
107 solidly [REDACTED] knowing the university living the history explaining what [REDACTED] was
108 like and giving my student insight to legacy that they are a part of. I can tell them what it
109 was like as a student to stand out in front of Lee Hall when [REDACTED] was voted College of
110 the Year by Times Magazine. I can tell my students what it was like when we first

111 marched on the capitol to take back [REDACTED] law school. These kind of stories are the
112 kinds of stories that only a true [REDACTED] understands. These are the kinds of stories that
113 make the students understand what RATTLER-Ration means.

114 **R: Can you explain what RATTLER-RATION means?**

115 **P:** Its an energy, it's a moment of extreme hype and extreme pride in FAMU. Its most
116 often felt when you are at a pep rally or a football game and you hear the Marching 100
117 playing. The traditional songs. Purple Carnival, Flight of the Bumble Bee, 20th Century
118 Fan Fare, you know when you hear those drums and you hear those trumpets, and that
119 brass you know that you are experiencing a rattler-ration moment of intense hype,
120 intense enthusiasm and intense pride to be a RATTLER.

121 **R:** How do you transfer Rattler Pride into a strategy that will help students learn in your
122 class?

123 **P:** First of all we start of the year talking about what rattlers do. We contrast that against
124 what Rattlers DON'T DO. Now this is always a friendly competition and it's never meant
125 to be mean. It is having pride in [REDACTED] and using our traditional school rivalry with
126 other institutions as a contrast. Our rivalry is with Bethune Cookman. Florida State
127 University has a rivalry with University of Florida. [REDACTED] has a rivalry with Bethune
128 Cookman. So I tell my students this is what Rattlers do compared to what Wildcats do.
129 When I instill that concept in them over and over and they understand their professor
130 loves their university. They totally get behind that because it's the pride in the school that
131 becomes like a prize for learning. I really get them into the concept of school pride. I
132 refer to my students as fellow rattlers because that is what they are. When I am in class

133 we are classmates. I have a different role but we are still classmates. They are a part of
134 something bigger than SLS. They are Rattlers.

135 **R: What does professional development look like for instructors who teach at**
136 **FAMU?**

137 **P:** Well our program leader puts together workshops, we have student success
138 symposium in the summer time. It actually gives the professors additional information
139 on how to structure things like the syllabus. Also during the meeting we are given
140 different strategies on how to teach the course. There are professionals and outside
141 speakers and experts come to the university and share some of the cutting edge trends in
142 technology for facilitating students learning which helps the professor select from tools to
143 improve how they current teach the course. Mr. Brown does a great job coordinating the
144 professional development. We have outside professionals as well as university wide
145 administrators who come in and share and discuss the direction the university is going
146 and what the university wants to get out of the SLS courses. The kinds of information the
147 university want to strengthen for the students. **FAMU** administration does a good job of
148 telling us what they believe will help integrate these students into the university during
149 their Freshman Year.

150 **R:** How does the professional development impact you?

151 **P:** I am considered to be a veteran instructor with the program. However every time I go
152 to our training meetings I am always learning something new that really gives me great
153 ideas on how to help the students. The last time I was there we had an expert come to
154 show us how we could use online video to enhance learning for the students in class. It's

155 a simple program. Its called "I-jot" and I used it to create video to convey messages to
156 students where they could always have access to the information. That was something
157 where I can send the link to the students. They could access it from their emails and play
158 it over and over. Some of the video I sent explained different things that would help them
159 for class. There is always something to learn. The professional development is good and
160 the information is always current especially for people that have been teaching the
161 students for a long time.

162 **R: Any other information you would like to add?**

163 **P:** When it comes to the students in SLS they are not dumb no matter how young they
164 are. The most important way you can approach an SLS course is with a true and sincere
165 regard and love for your students, you start there. Everything else will work out fine but
166 you have to start there you have to be in it for the student. Think about having a child or a
167 young brother or sister. You approach everything that you try to teach them with love
168 because of how much you care about their future, because of how much you love them,
169 because of how much you care about them and how much you care about their ability to
170 have a great future. If you go into an SLS class with that belief with that conviction
171 everything else is going to really work out. There is no one way to teach an SLS class.
172 But if you start with that basic component, with that basic convection love for who you
173 are teaching and what you are doing the student will be ready no matter what their needs
174 are they will have the best chance at an education if you provide those things.

175 Title: Director of the Office of Pre Medical Advisement.

176 Racial Background: African American

177 How many sections of SLS do you teach: I usually teach in the fall. I've been teaching
178 since 2013.

179 How is your course offered: Face to Face

180 Average Class Size: 25 students

181 How do you grade the seminar: Letter Grade?

182 The portfolio is a part of the class and they have to complete certain assignments during
183 the semester to complete their portfolio. At the end of the semester their complete and
184 turn in their portfolios. We give lectures throughout the semester for strategies for
185 studying, strategies for working through very difficult courses but their final submission
186 for the semester is their portfolio. If they have been going to the seminars
187

188 Keywords

- 189 • Student
- 190 • High School
- 191 • Study Habits
- 192 • Scholarship
- 193 • Rivalry
- 194 • University
- 195 • Portfolio
- 196 • Responsibility
- 197 • Professional
- 198 • Administrators
- 199 • Professors
- 200 • Conversations
- 201 • Impressionable
- 202 • Semester
- 203 • College
- 204 • Experience

1 **Dissertation Data 004**

2 **Researcher: Tell me how you got involved with First-Year Seminar?**

3 **Participant:** Well first, the university advertised positions for the program. Also, the
4 interim Dean mentioned to me that, [REDACTED], there are several classes coming out for First
5 Year Seminar Instructor and they are looking for some good people and I think you
6 should apply and I did. Prior to the course really coming out as a part of the First Year
7 Experience I actually taught “overview and orientation.” They wanted to take a look at
8 my syllabus and curriculum that I created and they used many of the materials from the
9 overview and orientation class for the new SLS courses. That’s how I really got started
10 with the First Year Seminar Course here at FAMU based off of somethings I already put
11 into place.

12 **R: Describe the students that you teach?**

13 **P:** These students that come to the course are freshman, or fresh out of high school so
14 they are fresh. They have no inkling of what the college environment is, sometimes they
15 come sort of clueless about the expectations, and they think it’s like high school then they
16 get a wake-up call. They are transitioning. I really believe the students are not college
17 material yet but they think they are. That’s why I say they are fresh because they are
18 coming right out of high school. They are transitioning from high school to college. They
19 are clueless. They really have no clue about what they will need to give in order to be
20 successful.

21 **R: How do you structure your class to teach the students you just describe?**

22 **P:** I first start with the basics. What I mean by basics is an open forum. I want to give
23 students an opportunity to open up and discuss college as a baseline to see where they are
24 at. Once I find out where everyone is at in terms on knowing their new environment and
25 answering their questions that they are not sure about in terms of college life, because
26 when I first start off with my freshman I am really welcoming them to college, then I
27 move into creating a classroom space where lectures takes place. However, I do activities
28 so that the environment is interactive.

29 **R: Why do you structure your class with a welcome, lecture, and activities?**

30 **P:** Welcoming gets their attention better than a straight out lecture. I use the welcoming
31 as a way to say this is your new learning space. I want to give the students a sense that
32 they have a say so in what they do in the class. It's not just me lecturing to them. Students
33 get to share and you know put their own two cents in to the conversation. I know some
34 say well students can do that in general. However, a lot of students don't start off wanting
35 to use the class to dialogue and discuss. So the welcoming of the students helps me to
36 listen to them allows them to speak up without them thinking "oh all she is going to do is
37 lecture at me." No we are going to get to know you first. It's like an Icebreaker and I
38 loosen them up to participate. By interactive classroom activities it can be an exercise
39 where they all participate and they are all doing things where it will allow them to further
40 understand what has been said in the lecture. So then they get a chance to act upon that
41 and say "oh that's what that means." The activity is there. It is their help reinforce what
42 they have been taught in the lecture.

43 **R: What do you think the students gain from the class?**

44 **P:** My class gives them a sense of being able to fit in to the university environment. As
45 well as give them resources. Because a lot of students that have not taken this class don't
46 always know where to begin. They may know the basics. Like where the library is.
47 However, I want my students to get resource of being a well-adjusted, college freshman.
48 Well Roundedness.

49 **R: What do you mean by well roundedness?**

50 **P:** To have the students know about all of these services we provide on campus, you
51 know how to go to counseling center, you know how to present in class, you know how
52 to get to the health center and essential resources so that they can function in a university
53 setting.

54 **R: Describe the First Year Seminar at your institution?**

55 **P:** Our first year seminar really focuses on getting the student acclimated to the
56 environment or the campus. As well as being able to make life long friendships, having a
57 greater insight to resources to that are available to them while they are in school.

58 **R: How long have you taught SLS?**

59 **P:** 4 years

60 **R: What impact do you have on your students?**

61 **P:** When they first get to know me some of them grumble that they don't want to be in
62 the class. They say this teacher is complex and she is making the class too hard. Some tell
63 me you know I didn't like this class at first but after they complete the course and go on
64 to other courses they take at the university they will come back and visit me and say "Ms.
65 [REDACTED] this was the best class I could have had. I didn't understand that when I took the

66 class because this is a no nonsense class.” You know they come back later and they say
67 they enjoy the class because it helps them in their other classes to be able to know that
68 study habits are important, time management is important, test taking skills are important.
69 I am able to take my test with more confidence.

70 **R: Given your experience as an instructor what do you believe has best prepared**
71 **you to instruct your students?**

72 **P:** Personal and Academic are both of the things that give me the best practice to teach
73 the students. Because of my own educational experience I am able to tie that in to my
74 class. So I don’t just have to rely on what the author, from the book, says about a topic, I
75 make it personal and give them scenarios or examples of what I did and how I overcame
76 obstacles and sometimes had to learn the hard way to get to where I am trying to lead
77 them to.

78 **R: Can you describe your personal experience that you share with the students?**

79 **P:** I will tell them that I did not want to go to college. You know I hated school. I really
80 did not like school in general. But my mom said no you either are going to go to school
81 or you are going to work. So I decided that I was going to go to school. I only went to
82 school because someone told me I had to go. So when I got to school I played around a
83 lot. I mean I was in and out of school. Then a light bulb clicked and maturity kicked in
84 and I said to myself you have to decide what you are going to do. So I use my own
85 personal stories and I explain to them that college is not for everyone you have to grow
86 up, and college is where you can prove that you are grown. But I also encourage them not

87 to waste their time going through the motions if you are not sincere about it. I use some
88 of the lifelong experiences I have had to kind of expand on the topics that we go through.

89 **R: Why is it important that they get these stories from you?**

90 **P:** They need to know that they have a teacher right in front of them that has gone
91 through some of the things that they are going through and it's not something they are
92 reading out of the book. Its real life and they can look at me and think she made it and I
93 can make it too.

94 **R: Which style of teaching support the students learning the most?**

95 **P:** interactive. They engage more deeply in the material where they are engaged.

96 **R: What professional develop does you institution provide?**

97 **P:** Yearly workshop and faculty development. The program brings people to come in
98 from the outside to share ideas for what works in the classroom. We are also engaged in
99 seminars with the University Office of Retention.

100 **R: Can you give me an example of what the workshops focus on?**

101 **P:** Sure, using technology in the classroom and how you can use items like I-pad.
102 Assessment data keeping us abreast on students who are entering college for the first
103 time.

104 **R: How do the workshops help with the students you teach?**

105 **P:** It gives me insight to think a little bit more out of the box. It allows me to rethink
106 things that I have done a certain way or restructure some of the things I've done or even
107 drop the things that haven't worked quiet as well. It makes me think of how I can help the
108 students.

109 **R: Is there anything else that you want to share that I haven't already asked?**

110 **P:** I honestly believe in the First Year Seminar program and Freshman should be required
111 to take the course and all schools should offer this course because it really does benefit
112 the student in so many ways because by the time get the sophomore junior year they got
113 the skills to keep going.

114 Demo Questions

115 Title at the University: Assistant in Academics and Administration/Adjunct Instructor

116 Racial Background: African American

117 I've been at [REDACTED] for 34 years

118 Highest Level of Educational Attainment: Master's

119 Did you attend an HBCU? Yes, [REDACTED]

120 Sections of FYS: 1

121 Course offered: Face to Face

122 Average Class Size: 25

123 How is the FYS Graded: Traditional Grading Scale?

124

125 **Discussion Key Words:**

- 126 • Student
- 127 • High school
- 128 • Seminar instructor
- 129 • Higher education
- 130 • Personal experiences

- 131 • Professional development
- 132 • Helping students
- 133 • College orientation
- 134 • Interactive activities
- 135 • Academic experience
- 136 • African American
- 137 • Class
- 138 • School
- 139 • Administration
- 140 • Instructor
- 141 • College/University
- 142 • Experience

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Researcher: How did you get started with the FYS program at [REDACTED]?

Participant: I've only been working here for 8 or 9 months. I actually came to campus as a part of a training I was offering a professor. During our training we talked about some of the challenges they were having. I came here to interview for a total different position but once they saw my resume they interviewed me for this position and the rest is history. That's literally how I did it.

Researcher: How you describe the instructors you supervise?

Participant: I am going to say diverse, grassroots, and passionate. We have a diverse group of instructors, Hispanic, Black, Caribbean whatever the case maybe. Also the individuals that were selected we're selected because of their ability to be grassroots. Meaning they are more natural of the HBCU plight and the HBCU experience. To be honest with you most of the instructors attended an HBCU or worked at an HBCU. Then passionate, an unwavering desire to see our students succeed.

R: How is the program structured to support instructors?

P: Everything that we do here is to have a common outcomes. We do a training in the beginning and we provide the professors the actual material they are going to teach, we have feedback session periodically thorough out the semester. In the sessions, we figure out what works what doesn't work, also getting a sense of where the students are what the feel is, what the mode is, and we go from there.

R: What do you think instructors need to get from you?

22 **P:** Structured curriculum, well thought out and designed programming. And I would say
23 generally support that they need for the student success.

24 **R:** Explain general programming

25 **P:** Well [REDACTED] class is attached to [REDACTED] Experience. In addition to the class we have
26 workshops, seminars, learning communities, things of that nature that we want
27 (instructors) to promote and attend when necessary.

28 **R:** Explain what is [REDACTED] 101?

29 **P:** [REDACTED] 101 is a critical thinking based, leadership designed class that is geared towards
30 first generation freshman students. It's geared to aide students' matriculate in [REDACTED] 102
31 which is second semester course that directly connects them to their degree field.

32 Students complete portfolios, we provide life skills training, as well as sharing the history
33 of the university and information about university resources availability to the student
34 through the university.

35 **R: What impact do you have?**

36 **P:** on the students I think I have more of a realistic experience that students can relate to.
37 On top of the fact that I have over 20 years' experience on behavioral modification.

38 Which for the student and for me is the front runner to success because from my
39 perspective education is a little bit more about behaviors than it is about intellect. As far
40 as the instructors are concerned it's honestly being an administrator slash supervisor and
41 being willing to self-assess myself as well as the program on a continuous basis and I am
42 always open to feedback. As far as my faculty is concerned they always know that the

43 leadership is there, the leadership is open. I have an open door policy. If you have an idea
44 and you come in and talk to me it's going to be implemented as long as it makes sense.

45 **R: How do you self asses the program?**

46 **P:** The beginning of the semesters we layout the outcomes. Each class has a pre and post
47 assessment. We pick five pieces that we believe the students should know and receive
48 from the class. We want continuity of the services in the classes. We start again with the
49 pre and post assessments, then the midterm and final exams. Amongst the professors we
50 do assessments, that's more verbal meaning talking about best practices, what has worked
51 what has not worked. Then again, getting a sense of where the students are and what they
52 need. Then we bring it back to the drawing table we recoup and figure out what we need
53 to change and how we move forward.

54 **R: What has prepared you the most to serve in the capacity you serve in?**

55 **P:** Years of experience dealing in behavioral modifications. That is my bread and butter.
56 TCI training those kind of things helped me specifically for this university and this
57 population of students. They are a little bit more needed than your traditional students.

58 **R: Explain that, what do you mean?**

59 **P:** A prime example is in [REDACTED] 101 I double up on items. What I've learned to do is
60 rehash, make it cyclical and rehash go over and over again. The students require so much
61 more energy and effort and the students come with a larger deficit.

62 **R: Explain deficit?**

63 P: An academic deficit in reading, writing, math, being able to notate being honest with
64 you the basics of being able to go to school. You know critical thinking and being able to
65 understand basic concepts. That a deficit.

66 **R: How do you believe the program help students with an academic deficit?**

67 P: Technically the [REDACTED] 101 program was designed specifically with our students in
68 mind. It was designed little over a year ago. The entire program was design for our
69 students. On top of the fact that we have early alert systems we have assessments. We
70 have several things in place to ensure that students are successful.

71 **R: Tell me about the academic background of the instructors?**

72 P: All of the instructors have at least a bachelors, a few have a masters and some are
73 professors so they have Ph.D.

74 R: How do feel the academic credential of the instructors?

75 P: It really truly depends on the professor. If they come from an HBCU they tend to be
76 more tolerant of the students behavior and actions and more patient in dealing with
77 students as far as getting them successful. I feel like individuals who come from
78 traditional universities come with idea that the students are supposed to fit that criteria.
79 They kind of struggle with the disconnect of whether not a student can actually live up to
80 that standard.

81 **R: most rewarding aspect of the job?**

82 P: I did a leadership workshop the other day, two students came in the next day after the
83 workshop to give me advice on how more structured in my meetings. Considering that
84 they participated in the leadership training and they honestly are decent students that's

85 probably one of the best things that has happened to me those far. I emailed my boss and
86 said I got great feedback from two students. That's kind of sad because I would imagine
87 that adults would have told me about this a long time ago.

88 **R: most challenging aspects of the job?**

89 **P:** The most challenging aspects of the job is getting individuals to change from the
90 mindset that we use to be and to be open to a different kind of mind set that will allow us
91 to be more successful. I'm sorry that is it that is literally our problem. We need to be
92 meeting. We know all of the issues, we know all of the problems but we're just not
93 implementing them. If you want my truth, that's my truth.

94 **R: describe a management style you believe helps your program?**

95 **P: Can I go leadership style?**

96 **R: Sure?**

97 **P:** Honestly, I started off as mainly transformational leadership and service leadership.
98 Coming in I focused more on the service piece. I knew coming in I would be more
99 effective if individuals saw what I could do and what I could not do and saw my energy
100 and all of the effort I was willing to put it in they would be more receptive to doing it too.
101 What I basically did was, and I literally did this, I came in a catered to my staff. I would
102 say what do you need to be successful, what do you need to be successful, how can I
103 help, how can I help? What do you need me to do, how I can I do this, how I can I help
104 you do that? And what it did was help them buy in to what I was trying to sell. Which
105 was three contacts per semester with the student. It is the only contact that matters. A

106 phone call doesn't matter, an email doesn't matter, you need to physical meet with the
107 student. We are doing pretty good at that.

108 **R: What do you do to professional develop you?**

109 **P:** I read every single day. At least four or five articles. Anything to do with retention,
110 leadership, HBCU Experience, to be honest with you anything with Leadership, HBCU
111 Experience and Retention those are the three top things that I am reading about every
112 day. Then I have about two or three individuals that work at other universities that I am
113 always going back to for feedback and advice along with the mentor I have on campus.

114 **R: What is the benefit of having peers who work in similar positions?**

115 **P:** Honestly for me is the comfortability of being able to voice opinions about issues and
116 concerns. The ability to get open and honest feedback. Those external friends are a lot
117 more open minded than internals.

118 **██████████?**

119

120 Keywords:

- 121 • Student
- 122 • College orientation
- 123 • Critical thinking
- 124 • Student led
- 125 • Behavior modification
- 126 • College orientation

- 127 • General programming
- 128 • Leadership
- 129 • Assessment
- 130 • Administrator
- 131 • University
- 132 • Instructors
- 133 • Perspective
- 134 • Instruction
- 135 • Class
- 136 • Background

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Data 006

Researcher: tell me about the students that you serve at EWC?

Participant: I teach three classes here part time. I would say in comparison to my prior experiences you are dealing with a variety of students with different backgrounds. Some local, some statewide, some national. I think we have international students. You have a mix of students who are really trying hard. Some are giving you effort and other are coasting by. One of the things I try to do is try to make them more accountable for their actions and responsibilities. If you do things half way then you are going to achieve those kinds of results. I don't make them feel bad. If they miss class, I say this is what you absences are and this what you can do to make up the grade moving forward. Giving the guilt trip isn't going to change anything. So I try to make them take on responsibility. If you want to leave early, you can go ahead and leave early. You are an adult I cannot make you physically stay in class but I am also going to mark you for not being here so it's up to you. If you want to leave you know where the door is, if you want to be here and get your money's worth then here we are let's have class. That is what I have learned about them. I also found that the more I've gotten to know them, they have felt comfortable with me, the better results I am able to get from them. So if you develop that connection, they almost feel bad when they fail. Because they know that they are letting you down. So it's like oh I'm so sorry as oppose to oh she failed me. So that is what I have experienced so far. Like my other students I love them. They are like my babies. As an educational professional I do this because I love it. And I can't help but be

25 emotionally invested into their success. Again I am not going to make them do it. I give
26 them all of the tools they need to be successful. It's up to them to take advantage of those
27 tools and utilize me as a resource. So I want them to be successful, I want them to get it, I
28 want the light bulb to click. In the process of getting to know each other my emotional
29 connection develops.

30 **Researcher: How do you structure your class to meet the needs of the students you**
31 **just described?**

32 **P:** One of things I did, is taking away from the traditional model of teaching. I wanted to
33 engage them more in a real world economic situation and prepare them for real jobs. So
34 instead of just a traditional lecture class, I mean I have some of that, but we also did
35 round robin seminar discussions where we learn and discuss a specific real world theme
36 at length during the entire class. Students get to ask questions work on their
37 communication skills, work on their problem solving skills, thinking skills which of
38 course is very important in all jobs. In addition their finals and midterms are not multiple
39 choice answers. I don't know any job that will require you to do multiple choice answers.
40 So I've really focus on helping them do presentations in connection between what they
41 have learned and their major and today's world or just problem solving. I think that's just
42 more topical and real as much I can make it.

43 **Researcher: What are the needs of the students in a First Year Seminar?**

44 **P:** Basics. They need to know basics, whether it is what to email the professor or how
45 and the manner in which that they should address the professor. Say hello introduce
46 themselves. Tell me what class you are in. Then describe your problem or concern. Then
47 tell me what you need from me. More or less it becomes like a text message. They used

48 text speak in an email. I don't know who they are because their email is sugar mama
49 something something dot com. So you can't just throw papers in emails and expecting
50 things to happen. So they need to learn that. And we go back to the basics. They also
51 need basics in showing up to class on time and being prepared for their task, some paper,
52 or a note book, THE BOOK for the course. Any of those things they don't understand
53 that they have to have them. They also don't know how to really take notes so we have to
54 teach them how to take notes. Even little basic things like indenting a paragraph is
55 beyond their knowledge because in texting, you just hit the return or space button so that
56 it creates a space rather than indenting format. A simple computer class would be nice.
57 The computer class we have here is different it's a little bit more advance than learning to
58 type. So I do presentations on how to get into Moodle our program. How to submit a
59 document using Moodle. And when I return the document once I am done grading, I have
60 to teach them how to look at the comments. So little basic things that I think that they
61 miss for some reason.

62 **R: What has professionally prepared you to teach FYS?**

63 **P:** I have a K-12 background so I found that a lot of those are the strategies that I am
64 using. I am one of the first classes that they take on campus and they are fresh out of high
65 school so I try my best to relate to where they just came from but I escalate the
66 interaction to where they are. Building higher expectations. It's a continuous struggle you
67 have to work with them throughout the year but I understand where they came from not
68 just school wise but community. I learned a lot through theoretical and practice. To me
69 the fundamentals do apply no matter what environment you are in to education students.

70 Classroom management, differentiated instruction all that kinds of stuff helps me with
71 my students.

72 **Research: what should I need to take away from this conversation?**

73 **P:** I think you need to know that this is the most important institution in [REDACTED]

74 Look at where we are at. We are in the middle of the black neighborhood. This school

75 captures students, that I don't know what they would be if it had not been for a [REDACTED]

76 right here in a familiar setting that can take them as they are and help them get a degree. I

77 have had students that come from jail. Then they come here get educated and become

78 productive members of society. We have students that are under an enormous amount of

79 pressure to take care of their family their own children and go to school. Listen we are

80 happy to have them here and to make them out of something. You are not just a teacher,

81 you are up in front and they are down there. Teaching here is for posterity. I am not

82 expecting to see that they go through in class have an effect for years to come. It's when I

83 look on Facebook and see oh wow this person just completed law school. I was a part of

84 that and that feeling is amazing. I look forward to looking ten years down the line to see

85 what my students have accomplished.

1 **Data Record 007**

2
3 **Researcher: tell me about the students that you serve at EWC**

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5 **Participant:** One of the things I would say about our students is that a majority of them
6 are first time generation college students. They come to us without having the experience
7 of a mom or dad who can say this is what college is like and this is what is expected of
8 you. Often times our students come and they themselves are trying to take care of family
9 members at home believe or not. They are saddled with those issues that are going on at
10 home. I have heard several students often times say when they get their refund checks
11 they are having to send that money, if not all or a portion, of that money home. To help
12 parents or grandparents or whomever. While some of them definitely do come from
13 affluent backgrounds that's not the majority of our students the majority of our students
14 actually do come from what you might say are improvised backgrounds or improvised
15 communities. You kind of see the results of that in a sense that we really are having to
16 help them understand what this experience is about because no one is really there to do it.
17 A lot of our students struggle with fitting in the college environment because if you think
18 about it the majority of the people that you are hanging around have not gone to college
19 then it's that sense of I know I fit in at home but how do I really fit in here and find a
20 comfortable space in this setting. Those are some of the things that I noticed about our
21 students. It might be a little different than the students that I encountered when I was
22 teaching at FSU for example. Because there you are dealing with majority of the students
23 that are walking in and their parents, grandparents, great grandparents went to college. So
24 somebody somewhere along the way said this is what you are expected to do. This is

25 what you are doing and this is where you are going to do it at. They walk in, there is a
26 little bit of a difference there, you are not having to get them over the hump of what is
27 expected of you in this environment.

28 **Researcher: How do you structure your class to meet the needs of the students you**
29 **just described?**

30
31 **P:** My students struggle when they first come to me with conflict resolution. How to
32 speak with each other. For me they will give me a little bit more grace because I am their
33 instructor. But it is important to me that they learn how to communicate with each other.
34 You can disagree with each other without the tone and without the angry tone. Or saying
35 that's stupid. So giving them the tools so they can use to say okay I hear your point, I
36 don't really agree, but let me tell you why I don't agree. You can still disagree without
37 being angry and they will carry that in every class they go into. The other advantage is I
38 have the advantage of growing up in the Hip Hop culture. I am also not a native
39 Jacksonville person I am a New Yorker and I have also had the experience of living in
40 different places. When I am with my class I let them know that this is how we are going
41 to learn today. These are my expectations, not because that is what the school require or
42 because that's what I am supposed to say, no that's what I am expecting of you. I believe
43 in social action. I believe in social justice. You have to be better. Because I need to live in
44 this world and I want my retirement money and if you don't work I don't get that. Let's
45 be clear that's a joke. But once I make them see that everything is really about helping
46 them, they laugh they are more comfortable. It truly really is about them. I expect them to
47 be better. I expect them to learn more than what I know. I expect them to do great things,

48 why not? The alternative is being mediocre and we already have enough mediocre people
49 in the world why would you want that? Who aspires to mediocrity? It's these little things,
50 these little empowerment moments that really help my students; then infuse that with the
51 academics. You know, alright let's have a conversation ladies and gentlemen about
52 question number 17. Why did everyone get that wrong? And if you make the classroom a
53 place of safety and comfortability they will tell you any and everything. My name is not
54 only Ms. [REDACTED], its mama, its aunty, its sister, its friend. They will come to me and tell
55 me things I don't want to know. Very personal things. They feel comfortable doing that
56 and it will give you insight to how they learn and why they do the things they do. Why
57 they write the way they write. Why they maybe moody or not as engaged in certain
58 discussions. Sometimes you can get ahead of that and say listen let me talk to you.
59 Tomorrow we are going to be covering drugs and alcohol I know you just got out jail but
60 this lecture isn't about picking on you. But if it's going to be a problem let me know I am
61 going to give you an alternate assignment. Or I'd like for you to stay and take the
62 challenge and see how you can work through it. Again without these engagements, don't
63 think you will be able to teach anything.

64 **Researcher: What are the needs of the students in a First Year Seminar?**

65 **P:** Wow. It's almost like they don't know what they don't know. But one thing that
66 benefits the students is for them to see the reality of this college life. Not only in general
67 but also here at [REDACTED] So possibly bringing in senior classmen or students who have
68 taken the class before to give their realistic experience. Not what people want to hear but
69 what's the really nitty gritty experience. One thing that bothers me is that there are

70 students who come in here excited and they are excited about their career, fresh, but then
71 if they get in with the wrong crowd you will see a couple semesters later and I mean you
72 can see it on their face that they are not focused, they are not going to class. So really in
73 that college orientation capturing not only what they need to do academically but socially
74 as well. In their social environments linking up with the right people. I like the fact that
75 we do offer the extracurricular, the sports, the Greek life, the music, but also using that as
76 a way to keep them socially engaged on CAMPUS. Because the students that aren't
77 involved in anything they usually get involved in the wrong things. If they are not
78 involved here in extracurricular then they usually have a job or something that is positive.
79 I find that should be highlighted inside the course. And then also teach them how to
80 balance that stuff. Because a lot of our students though they are doing a lot of great things
81 sometimes the sports can get in the way of their academics or they are so focused on that
82 Greek letter organization that they not able to study and they are not able to find that
83 balance between, work life, home life, and social life whatever. Really the course focuses
84 on the holistic approach to being a well-rounded student.

85 **R: What has professionally prepared you to teach FYS?**

86 **P:** What's prepared me is a bit unconventional from others. My preparation came from
87 looking back in retrospect from when I was in school and what I would have like to see
88 from my professors or my instructors. You know I happen to transition into the college
89 environment early on. I taught high school and GED courses for about five years and
90 right after that I became an Adjunct in my mid-twenties. With that I had a very vivid
91 memory of being in college and setting in class listening to a lecture and thinking oh my

92 god this guy is boring me. What's prepared me is being able to see in to where they are
93 remembering when I sat there and what I would have like to do to make the class
94 interesting; that has been very valuable as an educator. My biggest fear is that my student
95 will walk away and say I didn't learn anything in class. It's like nails on the board. So my
96 strategy is to listen to my students. My strategy to prepare me for this work is to
97 understand hey I got to do what I go to do.

98 **Research: What should I take away from this conversation?**

99 **P:** I would say at an HBCU in generally, but especially here, the professionals have to
100 give a certain part of themselves. Forget clocking into work. You don't have a 9 to five at
101 an HBCU, you have a calling. Either you do the work to help these kids and it takes a lot
102 of work or you will find that it will be hard to work here because we always have to do
103 more. You have to be authentic, so the authenticity has to be there for these students
104 because they are the generation that real recognizes real type people. If you pretend to
105 care but you really don't it's going to be hard for you because guess what we got to do
106 the work. This isn't see them in class and teach. You see them in class, after class, at
107 church, in the store we are one community different levels. Did you get that? One
108 community different levels. Going out of your way to help students isn't the expectation
109 baby it's the norm. This whole time I've been talking about the student but really that
110 encourages me. You need to know that I don't hate doing this I love it even if my
111 approach is different, all that matters is that it works. What makes me productive is
112 seeing those kids that came in freshman year walk across the stage dressed in the
113 academic outfits. Then see their families proud of them. It don't make sense to do what I

114 do and not enjoy that moment of that experience too. That relationship, that individual
115 care, it's there that you don't see at other white institutions. I know I graduate from them.
116 They are good but what we do is needed for our students. Sometimes you never really
117 know how you impact students. I don't know that it's always quantifiable or measurable
118 but you know that you are doing your best, one way or another for your students

1 **Data Record 008**

2 **Researcher: tell me about the students that you serve at [REDACTED]?**

3 **Participant:** I would say that I have been here for about two years now and I noticed that
4 a lot of the student population, how they get here is based on their talent, their skill set
5 outside of academics. I have a great student population who are student athletes or who
6 play in the band. This is sort of their way of escape out of something that has been their
7 norm for all their life. Some of them cope with that well others don't I often tell many of
8 them when they come here that you have to determine the type of experience you will
9 have while you are here. Definitely at any college you can see that there are some back
10 doors that students can flow into that might not be the best. I do also notice a change in
11 the type of student I am getting. When I first came here in 2014 there was sort of a type
12 of student that was here. As we are evolving I notice that some students are coming more
13 prepared even though they are coming from various underserved communities or
14 disenfranchised communities. They come a little bit more prepared than they have come
15 in prior years. Another thing I like to mention despite the disproportion that they may
16 come with they have the millennial advantage that I try to pull out of them. When I say
17 that I mean being able to utilize technology in ways that myself I probably struggled with
18 at some point and time. So what I try to do is use these things. They sort of light up when
19 you use those things that relate to their direct environment or to their direct social
20 environment. We do things that have to do with technology and social media. Talk about
21 issues that they care about not only issues that are popular in a subject matter but things
22 that they really care about knowing what they like. They are usually more receptive to
23 that. I would say there isn't a one shoe fits all for our students because we do have

24 diverse population. And all of our students are not African American students. We have
25 other students who come from disenfranchised communities who are not black. They
26 might be Caucasian American. They too were in a low income environment so with that I
27 am really getting them to understand not only who they are but really remember as they
28 go along, because a lot of them come here and get inspired, they get around their social
29 circle and when they get back home there is a disconnect. My students and I we dialogue
30 about this sometimes, not all the time. I would say you never know what you are going to
31 get. One semester you will get this type of student, and then another semester you will get
32 a different demographic. It's definitely changing from when I first came here. And it's
33 not just here at Edward Waters even when I taught in New York dealing with a similar
34 population the student body is constantly evolving. How we connect with them we have
35 to stay on it. Because what they come in with or their experiences that they learn from,
36 you just can't go in there and lecture. You should be able to, but not if you are not
37 infusing technology, if you are not infusing multimedia then they won't connect in the
38 classroom much less learn. It's got to be real world somehow somewhat. It has to relate
39 to their major, their life, and connect it to what they hopefully think they are going to get
40 in the future.

41 **Researcher: How do you structure your class to meet the needs of the students you**
42 **just described?**

43 **P:** Getting them out of their comfort zone. They have been in high school and Jr high
44 school the last ten years. All they know is no child left behind. They have been raised on
45 standardized testing. They world doesn't function of standardize testing. So I got to go in
46 and say okay let's think today. Some of them will say but what is the right answer. And I

47 will tell them it's not about getting the right response I rather all of you give me a
48 thoughtful answer than looking for what's right or wrong. I got to teach these babies how
49 to THINK! I tell them that. I don't make it a secret. I am not trying to belittle you or
50 make you feel bad. You haven't been taught how to do something. That isn't your fault
51 but you are going to do this, you need to know how to think in order to function in
52 society. And when you do that it gives them a sense of accomplishment. You will start to
53 see it in their work you will start to see it in their conversations without being promoted.

54 **Researcher: What are the needs of the students in a First Year Seminar?**

55 **P:** I think one of the things my college students come with is many of them have low
56 confidence. They are very afraid and so they are looking for a place of safety. Some of
57 them don't want to say anything some of them are scared, some will send me a note and
58 say please don't call on me. So my goal is to build a comfort zone and even talk to them
59 and tell them yes you can make it because I think they have heard for a long time oh you
60 can't do it. Trying to get them to know they can make it because some of them say I just
61 want a C. I always go back and say no man why don't you want an A, do you know what
62 they will answer me with oh no I'm just not that type. For me, I try to let them know that
63 they can make it in life. Not just in college but in life. Then you have some students like
64 yesterday I had one who had come from jail and he really just wants to make it. He told
65 me, I messed up but I want to never go back from where I just came from. But then he
66 says he has to work and he has to come to class so he was telling me he has to choose one
67 of the two, His dilemma is he doesn't know how he can choose an education and leave
68 his job. That's a tough one. But I talked with him and tried to make him see that there is a

69 way. There is a way. Did I have an answer for him? My job is to build confidence. I tell
70 you why. When they are confident I can tell you they do well. Stuff I was thinking to
71 myself like how will they make it out of that. If they have a plan and they act bold about
72 it I see them succeed. So I start helping them in my class learn and build confidence. I got
73 to go back to what I first told you. If they come in thinking that they can only get a C I
74 will be okay, they end up getting a D or an F. Okay so I got to show them how to raise
75 the bar. Even if they don't get the A I teach my student and give them the confidence in
76 knowing that they can't be satisfied with that. They may say oh I was expecting a C but I
77 got a B they feel good about that. It's really the little things. I have stickers. You
78 remember the gold stars. When they take test and quiz anyone that has 100 I give them a
79 gold star, a 90 gets a silver star 80 gets a colorful star. 70s don't get stars. I don't
80 celebrate C's I don't discuss D's and F is still a bad word. I know that this millennial
81 generation is what I like to call soft in the middle everyone wants a prize. But I push
82 them to compete. These kids get it. They jump up and say I got a gold star I've never
83 seen a 100 hundred in my life. I'm happy but I feel sad because I'm like wow you've
84 never seen a 100 in your life? And that's hard for me. I have to remember that everyone's
85 journey is different and unique. You know those stickers, those great jobs, anything you
86 kind find to build their confidence goes a long way in class. Some time I will say hey
87 sweetie you looking great today. In other words you have to find something to continue
88 to build their confidence or their self-esteem. I use to teach high school I use to think you
89 only have to do that in high school but they come here and need it a lot more here. They
90 got people that told them how to make it happen in high school because their parents

91 went to the same high school and sometimes had some of the same high school teachers
92 that they had. In college it's a whole different world. Their parents may not know nothing
93 about this environment so it's really scary for them. I guess one of the ways I have built
94 their self-esteem is looking for what they are strong in. I ask them to do things that I can
95 complement them in so that they can start feeling comfortable enough to try new things.
96 Just building on their strength. Be interested in what they have to say maybe people
97 haven't always given them the opportunity to be heard and help them without hindering
98 them baby them. If they feel like you treating them dumb it breaks down their
99 confidence.

100

101 **What has professionally prepared you to teach FYS?**

102 **P:** Okay I have to say this. My college education and I have a doctorate, my college
103 education did not prepare me to teach these students. When I came to teach here I had to
104 tell myself okay you have to shift from teaching in New Jersey and New York and start
105 thinking differently and I did. What can prepare you for understanding how to teach a
106 student who is asking you to help them make a decision between education and work and
107 they just got out of jail. I'm not saying that jail makes you unable to learn I am saying
108 that this scenario was nowhere in a textbook, a case study, a research presentation. I learn
109 and grow all in one. I learn how to change my approach from how the students respond to
110 me. That prepares me a lot. Sometime student will say to me you know you talk too
111 much. We are listening but sometimes we want to talk too...take a breath. At first I would
112 think to myself. That's rude. But ultimately I made the shift and said what they are really
113 trying to tell me. The difference also is I get different types of students who come with

114 different challenges so I am always learning. Students are different now from the time I
115 went to school so I got to keep learning. The thing is here there is a lot of training here. I
116 mean sometime dealing with my students makes me figure out okay is this happening at
117 other HBCUs? I can't get a book about what I dealing with or got to a conference, I got to
118 go and ask those colleagues at other black schools how do you deal with this? Have you
119 dealt with this, what works? Again I must say I am learning on the job. There is not a
120 manual to help me deal with what I am confronted with. Isn't that a novel idea? My
121 preparation is learning from my students. I can go home knowing that I made a
122 difference. I am invested in their success in a unique way that can't really be described
123 but you know it when you see it.

124 **Research what should I need to take away from this conversation?**

125 **P:** Take away from this conversation that this is a roll up your sleeves environment. It's
126 not necessarily a job to get done. You just wake up thinking how can you do better this
127 time. How do I rethink my approach or recapture this particular lesson where everything
128 clicked for the students. For this, this doesn't feel like work. A lot of times we spend with
129 students are after hours or before hours, between hours always available or as much as
130 one can be to help these students period. Standing in front of the SUB (Student Union
131 Building), you haven't seen them in a week and then you catch them and you finally get
132 to talk to them and realize that its more than just the academics they have other things
133 going on but help them realize hey you only got a window of time to be here you better
134 make this work. So it's a roll up your sleeves school you have to be ready for what comes
135 your way no student is the same. It's really not like any other environment. You go over

136 to FCCJ. You go teach your class students come prepare, some do not all, but the
137 majority students are ready you give the content and do what you do and go home. Here
138 it's more so that it might not work out like that each day. You have a lesson plan. But you
139 might get to class and not cover the content because something is more important you see
140 an opportunity to teach life skills, lesson that they will take with them for the rest of their
141 life. It's something that's going on in the environment that you have to address. That
142 might take up you class time but it may be more beneficial to your students

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