



The Effectiveness of a 1-to-1 Meeting in Support of First-Year College Students in a Required Orientation Course

Ching-Wen Chang, Missouri State University

Abstract

This researcher's interaction with first-year college students over the past seven years through a required, face-to-face college orientation course has been a rewarding and a thought-provoking experience for one whose regular course load involves graduate students only, in an online setting. This interaction has resulted in an interest in providing research to support the format of this orientation course, as well as substantiate its activities and assignments. This study's focus was an attempt to determine the effectiveness of one of the required assignments, a 1-to-1 meeting with the instructor during the course of the semester. Specifically, the goal was to determine how much support the meeting provides to this student population in terms of transitioning to college life, and reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness often experienced by first-year students. The 88 participants in this study were all first semester, first-year college students in GEP 101, First-Year Foundations, a required college orientation course at a 4-year public university in the Midwest. This researcher and a fellow researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze the responses to a researcher-developed, 17-question survey. The student-participants overwhelmingly indicated that they believe support for transitioning to college life, and reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness that first-year college students may experience was substantially improved as a result of this college orientation course.

Keywords: *1-to-1 student meetings, teacher-student relationship, first-year university students, college orientation course, first-year seminar*

Introduction

One or more sections of GEP 101, First-Year Foundations, a required, face-to-face college orientation course has been taught every fall for the past seven years by this researcher. This student population is very different from this researcher's normal course load consisting of graduate students in an online setting. The interaction with these first-year students has resulted in an interest in providing research to validate the activities and assignments in this course. The particular assignment that became the impetus for this study is the required 1-to-1 teacher-student meeting that takes place the second week of the semester. The face-to-face meetings are 20 minutes in length, and include seven prearranged questions such as "Have you declared a major?", "Are you getting along with your roommate?", among others. The students' responses to these questions typically

generate an open-ended dialogue. The overarching goal of this assignment is to provide this student population (who just a few months earlier were in high school) with a confidant; determining how well they are transitioning to college life; and whether or not the meeting can help reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness often experienced by first-year students.

The course developers state the primary goal of these sessions is for new students to establish a connection with a faculty member they have gotten to know, who they can talk with; as well as to alert the instructor to any potential at-risk situation a student may intentionally or unintentionally convey during the meeting conversation.

The curriculum for this course is fixed for all sections and includes an orientation to the learning management system; weekly reading assignments in the required textbook *College Success: Achieving Your Goals*, exposure to the many university resources including library resources, the counseling center, public safety, multicultural services, international student services, and the writing center, to name just a few. Also included are topics such as stress management, time management, academic success, academic integrity, Title IX information, and attending the annual Majors Fair for undeclared majors.

Determining what works and what does not in a course of this nature with students new to the university environment could play an important role in the success of these students as well as potentially impacting impact student retention (Hardge, 2022). The findings of this study should provide useful data to GEP 101 instructors, those overseeing the GEP 101 curriculum, and other stakeholders, such as administrators involved in student retention.

Research Questions

1. Does a required 1-to-1 meeting serve its intended purpose of providing student support for transitioning to college life?
2. Does a required 1-to-1 meeting serve its intended purpose of reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness that first-year college students may experience?

Limitations

The possibility always exists that some responses may be subject to *social desirability bias*—which is a type of response bias—with any study utilizing a survey research design. This phenomenon is the tendency of a participant to respond with what will make them look good to others rather than providing their true opinions or experiences in their responses (Nikolopoulou, 2023). This researcher was never present in the classroom when the informed consent forms and surveys were distributed, completed, and returned, which should mitigate this type of bias.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Most colleges students who drop out do so in the first academic year (Hanson, 2023). Also, research by Startz (2022) found that 12% first time colleges students do not return for the second term, emphasizing how critical the first semester experience is for new college students. Thus the purpose of the current study was to attempt to determine whether or not including a 1:1 meeting with new college students as part of the required college orientation course might improve the first semester experience and possible help mitigate potential drop-out rates. This study is significant in that the results indicated that the 1:1 meeting with the instructor as part of the overall orientation

course had a positive impact on the first year student-participants. Further, these findings have significant ramifications for the course developers, campus event planners, those involved in student retention activities, and other stakeholders.

Additionally, colleges and universities have long since recognized the need to offer or require a college orientation course for first-year students, given that the transition to college life for new, incoming students can be daunting (Thompson, et al., 2021). Providing such a course can help mitigate the often difficult transition to college life that new students may experience, including feelings of isolation and loneliness, adjusting to being away from home, or adjusting to the pace of university life in general, to name a few (Hardge). Additionally, integration into the social aspects of university life often is just as important as integration into the academic aspects (Wilcox, et al., 2006) and these non-threatening, casual conversations with the instructor very possibly also can help facilitate this much needed social integration.

One of the assignments in this fixed curriculum is the abovementioned required 20 minute face-to-face meeting with the instructor early in the semester, typically the second week of classes. The overall purpose of this meeting is to determine how well this student population is transitioning to college life, and whether or not the meeting can help reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness often experienced by first-year students.

What follows is a review of the current and related literature concerning first-year college orientation courses, defining first-year students, an overview of the first year experience, and the effectiveness of 1-to-1 meetings with the instructor.

Literature Review

Introduction

College and university administrators have been aware for decades of the need to find ways to mitigate the issues that many first-year students experience as they transition to college life. Offering or requiring a college orientation course has become a common practice adopted by most colleges and universities (Hardge, 2022). The purpose of these courses is to guide first-year students through that critical first semester, which also can potentially result in positively impacting new student success and retention.

The following literature review defines first-year students, provides an overview of research on the first year experience, and the effectiveness of 1-to-1 meetings with the instructor.

Defining the First-Year College Student

Who exactly is a *first-year* college student? The State Council of Higher Education (SCHE) for Virginia (n.d.) defines this student population as:

A student attending any institution for the first time at the undergraduate level. Includes students enrolled in the fall term who attended college for the first time in the prior summer term. Also includes students who entered with advanced standing (college credits earned before graduation from high school). (para. 1)

Additionally, the SCHE preferred terminology is *First-time in College* or FTIC. This avoids the use of older terms such as *freshman* which is not considered a gender-neutral term.

At the site of this study, they classify a student as a first-year student when this is their first semester at the institution, but does not necessarily indicate class standing. A new student may bring in as many as 40 Advanced Placement (AP) credits (courses taken in high school that count towards college credit), which would meet the requirements for Junior standing, in terms of class standing.

The First-Year Experience

The first year of college can be a daunting experience for many students, for any number of reasons (Jalalian-Chursky & Tausen, 2024). According to Abrams (2022) today's college students are "juggling a dizzying array of challenges, from coursework, relationships, and adjustment to campus life to economic strain, social injustice, mass violence, and various forms of loss related to Covid-19" (para. 5). Additionally, Turner and Thompson (2014) state that a generational challenge U.S. colleges and universities are encountering is the "persistence and retention of millennial freshmen" (para. 2). Over the past several decades, this variety of challenges has lead college administrators to establish first-year college orientation courses or seminars in hopes of mitigating some of these challenges, and possibly positively impacting student success and retention. Pascarella and Terenzini (cited in Goodman and Pascarella, 2006) "observed that first-year seminars vary greatly in form and function across institutions. Yet these seminars have become quite prevalent and can be found at 95 percent of four-year institutions in the United States" (p. 26).

Hunter (2006) cited a report from the Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education (sponsored by the National Institute of Education in 1984) that greatly increased attention to the first year of college experience. This was arguably the first time a focus and dialogue concerning the first-year experience occurred at the national level. Briefly, the report called for the reallocation of faculty and other institutional resources to increase services to first and second year college students. This report was seminal in creating a recognition of the importance of the first-year experience, and that "the first college year is not 'grade 13'" (p. 4). Goodman and Pascarella (2006) state that "First-year seminars have become ubiquitous in the past two decades, finding homes in institutions of every type and size. We believe that these programs are vital for our students' achievement" (p. 26).

Overall, the body of literature does indicate that first year programs also can positively impact student success and retention (Barefoot, 2000; Madgett & Bélanger, 2008; Schnell & Doetkott, 2002-2005). One study (Jamelske, 2009) found that GPA and retention both improved as a result of measuring the impact of the first-year experience program at a public university in the Midwest. The study found that, "overall, the evidence suggests that students involved in some type of organized first year intervention report higher levels of satisfaction and involvement in campus activities, achieve higher grades and are more likely to be retained and graduate" (p. 376). The findings of a study by Lang (2007) state "the first-year experience course had an overall positive impact on the academic performance, persistence, and graduation rates of the first-semester students in this study" (p. 9).

The Effectiveness of an Individualized Instructor-Student Meeting as a Part of the First-Year Experience

While not specifically related to student-instructor meetings as a part of the first-year experience, Bingham, et al. (2021) found that the participants in this study most often contacted their

instructors after class, the content of which typically involved “logistical questions, assessment expectations, and clarifying course content” (p. 21). Interestingly, these researchers also found that students find female instructors more approachable.

A study by Schafer and O’Neill (2023) examined office hours as a format for individualized instructor-student meetings. Again, while not specifically related to the first-year experience, these researchers state that “strong relationships between students and their instructor have an undisputed line to positive student outcomes, such as retention, motivation, sense of belonging, and academic achievement” (para. 1) thus corroborating the need for such instructor-student meetings.

This study’s researchers found many studies concerning instructor-student meetings in both face-to-face and online classes in numerous modalities (Brown, 2018; Mandernach et al., 2018) but was unable to find studies specifically concerning individualized instructor-student meeting within the context of a first-year college orientation course assignment. Therefore, we anticipate that the findings of this study will provide useful data on this topic to all those involved in the teaching and curriculum development of first-year college orientation courses.

Summary

For several decades, college and university administrators have recognized the need to offer or require a college orientation course for first-year students, given the often daunting difficulties associated with the transition to college life for many new, incoming students. These courses exist in a variety of formats, length, and titles e.g., UNIV 101, first-year experience, first-year seminar, and first-year foundations, to name several.

This study’s site offers a course titled GEP 101, First-Year Foundations, which is required in the first semester for all degree-seeking, first-year students. The goal of this study was to examine the effectiveness of a specific assignment in this course – the required, individualized instructor-student meeting held during the second week of the semester.

The current body of literature contains numerous studies on instructor-student meetings and their impact, including: curriculum, academic success, retention and persistence, and motivation, among others. However, at the time of this writing, this faculty-research found no existing studies concerning the specific focus of this study, i.e., how much support a 1:1 meeting provides to a first-year student population in terms of transitioning to college life, and reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness often experienced by first-year students. Even so, this study’s researchers believes this gap will make the findings of the current study even more valuable to those teaching first-year orientation courses, course developers, and any other stakeholders.

The methodology used in this study is presented next.

Methodology

The goal of this study was to determine the effectiveness of a required, 20-minute 1-to-1 meeting with the instructor during a required college orientation course. Specifically, to determine how much support the meeting provides to this student population in terms of transitioning to college life, and reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness often experienced by first-year students.

Research Design

This research utilized the quantitative Cross-sectional Survey Research design. “Survey research can be used to gather information about a group’s beliefs, attitudes, behaviors and demographic composition” (Mills & Gay, 2019, p. 202). Additionally, “A cross-sectional survey is one in which data are collected from selected individuals at a single point in time. Cross-sectional designs are effective for providing a snapshot of the current behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs in a population” (p. 202). This study meets these criteria.

Participants

The researchers recruited participants using convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method where researchers “selects individuals because they are available, convenient, and represent some characteristic the investigator seeks to study” (Creswell, 2005, p. 149). In this case, the population the researchers for this study sought to study were new, first semester college students. Convenience sampling was also selected because one of the researchers teaches sections of the course that registers only new, first semester college students, thus providing an accurate sample of the desired population.

All participants were from four GEP 101, First-Year Foundations course sections during the fall 2022 and fall 2023 semesters. The 88 participants in this study were all first-year undergraduate students. In order to qualify as a participant, all of the students were, at the time of data collection, currently enrolled in one of the sections of this college orientation course, either in the fall of 2022 or 2023.

Setting

This research study took place at a four-year, public university in the Midwest, located in an urban area with a population of slightly over 170,000 residents. The institution has six academic colleges, one Graduate College, and 13 schools within the five colleges. The Fall 2022 enrollment was 23,307 students; 60% of whom were female, and 40% male. The average age for undergraduates was 21 years, and for graduates, 31 years; 62.3% of the student population was 21 or younger.

The demographic breakdown by ethnicity included 4.8% Hispanic; 0.3% American Indian/Alaska Native; 2.2% Asian; 3.2% Black/African-American; 0.1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; 77.3% White/Non-Hispanic; and 3.6% two or more races. The remaining were unknown, race not reported¹.

The Fall 2022 First Time undergraduate student population at the site of this study was 9,718 students. The Fall 2023 First Time undergraduate student population at the site of this study was 8,643 students². As mentioned, this institution requires a 12-week, face-to-face college orientation course for all first-year, degree seeking student in their first semester at the university.

1. Office of Institutional Research; Fall 2022.

2. Headcount and Credit Hour Enrollment Summary by Student Classification for Fall 2023 & Fall 2022 Census.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

Prior to the recruiting of participants, the distribution and collection of the informed consent forms or the survey, and before any data was collected, Institutional Review Board approval (IRB-FY2023-205) was received.

A researcher-created, paper-and-pencil survey instrument titled *The Effectiveness of a 1-to-1 Meeting in Support of First-Year College Students in a required College Orientation Course* (see Appendix A) facilitated data collection for the study. This 17-question survey consisted of eight demographic questions; eight questions on a 5-point Likert scale specifically addressing the two research questions; and one optional, open-ended question. A Likert scale or rating system is an attitude scale of measurement used in research to evaluate attitudes, opinions and perceptions (Mills & Gay, 2019). Developed in 1932 by Rensis Likert, for each question the respondents typically choose from a 5- or 7-point ordinal scale to rank the degree to which they agree or disagree with the question (Sullivan & Artino, 2013).

For those who chose to participate, the instructor (one of the researchers) explained the process during class time then left the room. The Peer Leader assigned to this class distributed the paper-pencil voluntary informed consent forms to the participants and collected them. Consenting participants had to sign the form to indicate their voluntary consent to participate in the survey. After collecting the signed consent forms, the Peer Leader distributed the paper-pencil survey to the participants. The survey took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete and collect.

In order to maintain anonymity and privacy, the Peer Leader distributed the surveys and collected the completed surveys, placing them in an envelope while the researcher was out of the classroom. At no point in this study could the researchers identify individual participants; no names or any other identifying information was requested on the survey. Any data displayed or published will be in aggregate; no individual participant could be identifiable.

The researcher gave participants in-class time to complete and return the survey. There were no incentives offered for participating. Of the 116 surveys distributed, 88 participants submitted valid responses, which an experienced Graduate Assistant who was not associated with the student-participants later manually entered into Qualtrics for statistical analysis.

The researchers utilized descriptive statistics to analyze the data. The following section discusses the results of the data analysis in detail.

Data Analysis and Results

In this study, participants, all of whom were first-year students at a Midwest university, answered questions concerning the required 1-to-1 meeting through a researcher-developed paper-pencil survey (see Appendix A). Specifically, whether or not the meeting serves its intended purpose of providing student support for transitioning to college life, and reducing feelings of isolation that first-year college students may experience.

Demographic Data

The researchers analyzed the data collected from the 88 valid responses to the survey using descriptive statistics. The demographic data provided by the participants is presented below.

Table 1: *First-Generation College Student*

First-generation	N	Percentage
Yes	19	21.50%
No	69	78.41%

The Federal government defines first-generation college students as undergraduate students whose parents did not complete a bachelor's degree, and are a population who drop out of higher education institutions at a disproportionate rate (Alger, 2024). Therefore, the researchers thought it valuable to determine whether or not a significant portion of the sample population were first-generation college students, which could be useful data for a future study.

Table 2: *Age of Participants*

Age Range	N	Percentage
16-17	5	6.00%
18-19	79	90.00%
20-21	2	2.00%
22-23	1	1.00%
24-25	0	0.00%
26 or older	1	1.00%

Including age in the demographics allowed the researchers to better understand the effects of this variable on the findings, and identify any potential biases or disparities that may exist. Since 90.0% of the participants were in the same age range, this variable was not considered a concern. The age ranges of the participants corroborate the institutional demographics provided in the Settings section above, indicating that the participant group was made up of a representative sample of the population.

Table 3: *Gender of Participants*

Gender	N	Percentage
Male	24	27.27%
Female	61	69.32%
Non-binary/third gender	3	3.41%
Other	0	0.00%
Prefer not to answer	0	0.00%

With gender as a demographic, the researchers again wished to have a better understanding of the effects this variable might have on the findings, and identify any gender bias or disparity that may exist. The gender indicator variable of the participants corroborates the institutional demographics provided in the Settings section above, once again indicating that the participant group was made up of a representative sample of the population.

Table 4: *Ethnicity of Participants*

Ethnicity	N	Percentage
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	2.27%
Asian	2	2.27%
Black	4	4.55%
Hispanic or Latino	4	4.55%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0	0.00%
White	76	86.36%
Prefer not to answer	0	0.00%

Integrating ethnicity in the demographics allows the researchers to better understand the effects of this variable on the research outcomes and how that information might influence the analysis and interpretation of the data. Representation by ethnicity also was important to the generalizability of the study findings. The ethnicity of these participants generally align with the institutional demographics provided in the Settings section above, again indicating that the participant group was made up of a representative sample of the study population.

Table 5: *Residency of Participants*

Resident	N	Percentage
In-state	66	75.00%
Out-of-state	19	21.59%
Resident of a country outside of the US	3	3.41%

Including residency in the demographics allowed the researchers to determine how many international students were included in the study population. This was a potential concern since international students experience unique challenges concerning their social and academic adjustment to college life (Martirosyan, et al., 2019). Given that the number of international students in the study was small, the researchers determined that this variable would not impact the findings.

Table 6; *Major Declared of Participants*

Declared Major	N	Percentage
Yes	75	85.00%
No	13	15.00%

Whether or not the participants had declared a major was a part of the demographics and allowed the researchers to determine the number of students in the study population who had and who had not declared a major. It was presumed by the researchers, based on years of previous experience with this college orientation course, that students who had declared a major were typically more active in their learning, and generally more prepared for college. Given that only 15.0% of the participants had not declared a major, the researchers determined, again from previous experience with this course, that this variable would not impact the findings.

Survey Data

As mentioned, the purpose of this study was to determine if the required 1-to-1 meeting serves its intended two-fold purpose of providing student support for transitioning to college life, as well as reducing feelings of isolation that first-year college students may experience. Two research questions guided the research to assess the perceptions of first-year students regarding whether or not the 1-to-1 meeting accomplishes its intended purpose. Below the researchers analyzed in detail the Likert-scale data from the survey.

Research Question 1

Does a required 1-to-1 meeting serve its intended purpose of providing student support for transitioning to college life?

Table 7 below provides the responses to questions 9-12 of the survey which asked students whether the required 1-to-1 meeting effectively fulfills its intended purpose of providing student support for transitioning to college life.

The findings, as shown in Table 7, clearly indicate that the participants found the 1:1 meeting beneficial and worthwhile regarding the transition to college life. About 88% strongly agreed or agreed they are more comfortable about college life. Eight-five percent believe they are better able to communicate with their professor. The participants also believe that new information was gained concerning resources, academic requirements, and graduate school. And, 61% considered themselves more confident about their first year experience as a result of the 1:1 meeting.

Table 7: *A Required 1-to-1 Meeting Serves Its Intended Purpose of Providing Student Support for Transitioning to College Life.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9. I feel more assured and comfortable about college life after the 1-to-1 meeting.	43 (48.86%)	35 (39.77%)	10 (11.36%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
10. After my 1-to-1 meeting, I believe I can always contact my GEP professor for assistance.	75 (85.23%)	11 (12.50%)	1 (1.14%)	1 (1.14%)	0 (0.00%)
11. I learned new information about academic requirements, graduate school, and college resources during my 1-to-1 meeting.	55 (62.50%)	24 (27.27%)	2 (6.82%)	2 (2.27%)	1 (1.14%)
12. I feel more confident about my first year in college after the 1-to-1 meeting.	54 (61.36%)	29 (32.95%)	1 (4.55%)	1 (1.14%)	0 (0.00%)

Research Question 2

Does a required 1-to-1 meeting serve its intended purpose of reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness that first-year college students may experience?

Table 8 below provides the responses to questions 13-16 of the survey which asked students whether the required 1-to-1 meeting effectively fulfills its intended purpose of reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness that first-year college students may experience.

As indicated in Table 8, the survey results indicate that the study participants found the 1:1 meeting positive and useful concerning reducing the feelings of isolation often experienced by first-year college students. Over three-quarters of the participants believe they feel more of a connection with their professor. Eighty-four percent of the students strongly agreed or agreed that they were more confident about making social connections. Slightly over 80% believe they are comfortable asking questions and asking for help from their professor. And, 84% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that they find the campus environment more welcoming and supportive as a result of the 1:1 meeting.

Table 8: *A Required 1-to-1 Meeting Serves Its Intended Purpose of Reducing Feelings of Isolation That First-Year College Students May Experience*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
13. I feel more of a sense of connection with my GEP professor after having the 1-to-1 meeting.	67 (76.14%)	19 (21.59%)	1 (1.14%)	1 (1.14%)	0 (0.00%)
14. From the information I received during my 1-to-1 meeting I feel more confident about making social connections.	34 (38.64%)	40 (45.45%)	10 (11.36%)	3 (3.41%)	1 (1.14%)
15. I am comfortable asking questions and asking for help from my GEP professor after my 1-to-1 meeting.	71 (80.68%)	14 (15.91%)	2 (2.27%)	1 (1.14%)	0 (0.00%)
16. I feel the campus environment is more welcoming and supportive after my 1-to-1 meeting.	39 (44.32%)	35 (39.77%)	11 (12.50%)	2 (2.27%)	1 (1.14%)

Open-ended Question

There was also one open-ended question which asked, “If you have other thoughts or experiences that resulted from your 1-to-1 meeting that were not mentioned above, please share them here.” Some of the written comments that were received are as follows:

- Enjoyed it, I enjoy the class much more after the meeting.
- Now I feel like I enjoy class more after having one on one time with my GEP professor and feel more at ease talking with her!
- So helpful!
- I enjoyed getting to know Dr. Chang and her friendly manner.
- Best GEP teacher I could ever ask for!
- My professor and I have a lot in common and by the end I had more trust, but also thought she could be a reference in the future.
- was a good ice-breaker

- Isn't totally fair as I was already confident about college due to attending STLCC in high school.
 - several students entered: N/A
- What follows next is a discussion of the results of this study and conclusion.

Discussion, Future Research and Conclusion

The responses to the Likert scale question in the previous section indicate that the first-year college student-participants in this study found that the required 1-to-1 meeting with their instructor did fulfill the intended two-fold purpose of the meeting which, again, is to provide student support for transitioning to college life, and reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Discussion

Concerning Research Question 1

Almost all of the participants (88.63%) strongly agreed or agreed that they feel more assured and comfortable about college life after the 1-to-1 meeting. There was almost unanimous agreement (97.73%) that strongly agreed or agreed after the 1-to-1 meeting, they believe they can always contact their GEP professor for assistance. Concerning whether or not the student learned new information about academic requirements, graduate school, and college resources during their 1-to-1 meeting; almost all participants (89.77%) strongly agreed or agreed. Again, almost all of the participants (94.31%) strongly agreed or agreed that they feel more confident about their first year in college after the 1-to-1 meeting.

Concerning Research Question 2

Almost a unanimous majority (97.73%) of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that they feel more of a sense of connection with their GEP professor after having the 1-to-1 meeting. Eighty-four percent of the participants strongly agreed or agreed, that they feel more confident about making social connections as a result of the information they received during their 1-to-1 meeting. Almost all participants (96.59%) strongly agreed or agreed that they felt comfortable asking questions and asking for help from their GEP professor after their 1-to-1 meeting. Lastly, most (84.09%) of the participants felt that the campus environment is more welcoming and supportive after their 1-to-1 meeting.

Future Research

As mentioned, a college orientation course for students new to the university environment could potentially impact student retention (Barefoot, 2000; Madgett & Bélanger, 2008; Schnell & Doetkott, 2002-2005). If the resources were available, a longitudinal study that tracked first-semester students who participated in a course of this nature through to graduation, in order to correlate with graduation rates, would be a very worthwhile research project.

This 12-week college orientation course was originally a 16-week full semester course. In 2019, due to the pandemic, the course administrators changed it to a 12-week course. It could be very useful to determine if a shorter—e.g., 8-week; or a longer e.g., full semester 16-week course

length would provide equivalent or increased student support for transitioning to college life, and reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness—as compared to a course 12 weeks in length.

Conclusions

Virtually all colleges and universities recognize the need to offer or require a college orientation course for first-year college students because the transition to university life can often overwhelm new students (Jalalian-Chursky & Tausen, 2024; Thompson et al., 2021); and is known that these issues can impact student retention (Davig & Sapin, 2003; Keith, 2022).

As mentioned, this study's site offers a course required for all degree-seeking first-year students in their first semester. One of the researchers has taught this course for seven years. This interaction has resulted in an interest in investigating one of the required assignments; specifically, to determine the effectiveness of the required 1-to-1 student meeting with the instructor. The goal was to determine if these 20-minute meetings positively impacted this student population in terms of transitioning to college life, and reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness often experienced by first-year students.

For this study population, the findings overwhelming indicate that the 1-to-1 meeting is a positive and valuable tool in terms of transitioning to college life, and reducing feelings of isolation. The responses to both the closed-ended, 5-point Likert scale questions, as well as the open-ended question corroborated these results.

Based on these findings, the researchers would strongly encourage maintaining the 1-to-1 meeting assignment in the curriculum for this course; as well as to any stakeholders involved in overseeing the curriculum of their college orientation course at other institutions. Future research would be useful to further support and/or augment the findings of this study.

References

- Abrams, Z. (2022, October 12). Student mental health is in crisis, Campuses are rethinking their approach. *American Psychological Association Monitor on Psychology*, 53(7). <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/10/mental-health-campus-care>
- Alger, R. (2024, Winter). *Drop-out rates among first-generation undergraduate students in the United States*. Ballard Brief. <https://ballardbrief.byu.edu/issue-briefs/drop-out-rates-among-first-generation-undergraduate-students-in-the-united-states>
- Barefoot, B. O. (2000). The first-year experience: Are we making it any better? *About Campus*, 5, 12-18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/108648220000400604>
- Bingham, B. E., Rea, V., Robertson, L., Smith, M. A., & Jacobs, S. (2021). Frequency, topic, and preferences: Tracking student engagement with several modalities of student-instructor contact in a first-year course. *FEBS Open Bio*, (12)1, 12-23. <https://febs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/2211-5463.13315>
- Brown, D. A. (2018). *Instructor-student conferencing as pedagogy: Measuring ISC pedagogy's impact on student writing and self-efficacy* (Publication No. 10937472) [Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2155413744>
- Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*, (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.

- Davig, W. B., & Spain, J. w. (2003, November 1). Impact on freshmen retention of orientation course content: Propose persistence model. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 5(3), 305-323. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2155413744?sourcetype=Dissertations%20&%20Theses>
- Goodman, K., & Pascarella, E. T. (2006, Summer). First-year seminars increase persistence and retention: A summary of the evidence from *How college affects students*. *Peer Review*, 8(3). A publication of the Assoc. of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). https://uca.edu/core/files/2019/07/First-Year-Seminars-Increase-Persistence-and-Retention_-A-Summary-of-the-Evidence-from-How-College-Affects-Students_-_Association-of-American-Colleges-Universities.pdf
- Hanson, M. (2023, October 29). *College dropout rates*. Education Data Initiative. <https://educationdata.org/college-dropout-rates>
- Hardge, M. (2022, September 8). College 101: 7 tips to a successful freshman year. University of Alabama at Birmingham, UAB News. <https://www.uab.edu/news/youcanuse/item/13085-college-101-7-tips-to-a-successful-freshman-year>
- Hunter, M. S. (2006, Summer). Fostering student learning and success through First-Year Programs. *Peer Review*, 8(3). A publication of the Assoc. of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). https://dgm81phhv63.cloudfront.net/content/user-photos/Publications/Archives/Peer-Review/PR_SU06_Vol8No3.pdf
- Jalaian-Chursky, K., & Tausen, B. M. (2024). Teaching resilient mindsets: Developing a model and an active learning workshop for first-year college students. *Student Success*, 15(1), 130-139. <https://doi.org/10.5204/ssj.3268>
- Jamelske, E. (2009, January). Measuring the impact of a university first-year experience program on student GPA and retention. *Higher Education*, 57, 373-391. DOI: 10.1007/s10734-008-9161-1
- Kahn, M., & Kahn, S. (2023). *College success: Achieving your goals*. FlatWorld.
- Keith, B. J. (2022). *The relation between first-year seminar course modality and community college student success*. [Doctoral dissertation, Sam Houston State University]. <https://shsu-ir.tdl.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/6a4db873-e8ea-49e6-9ab9-a2cc34d3fd1d/content>
- Lang, D. (2007). The impact of a first year experience course on the academic performance, persistence, and graduation rates of first-semester college students at a public research university. [Abstract]. *Journal of The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*, 1, 9-25. https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/fyesit/fyesit/2007/00000019/00000001/art00001?utm_source=TrendMD&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=Journal_of_The_First-Year_Experience_%2526_Students_in_Transition_TrendMD_0
- Madgett, P. J., & Bélanger, Ch. H. (2008). First university experience and student retention factors. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 38(3), 77-96. <https://journals.sfu.ca/cjhe/index.php/cjhe/article/view/503/549>
- Mandernach, B. J., Robertson, S. N., & Steele, J. P. (2018, December). Beyond content: The value of instructor-student connections in the online classroom. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, (18)4, 130-150. <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/josotl/article/view/23430/31880>
- Martirosyan, N. M., Bustamante, R. M., & Saxon, D. P. (2019). *Academic and social support services for international students: Current practices*. (EJ1208150) ERIC. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1208150.pdf>

- Mills, G. E., & Gay, L. R. (2019). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications* (12th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Nikolopoulou, K. (2023, March 24). *What is social desirability bias? Definitions & examples*. Scribbr. <https://www.scribbr.com/research-bias/social-desirability-bias/>
- Schafer, E. A., & O'Neill, D. P. (2023). *Work in progress: Improving student-instructor relationships and help-seeking through office hours* [Conference session]. American Society for Engineering Education 2023 ASEE Conference & Exposition. <https://nemo.asee.org/public/conferences/327/papers/39041/view>
- Startz, D. (2022, April 25). *First-generation college student face unique challenges*. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/first-generation-college-students-face-unique-challenges/>
- State Council of Higher Education in Virginia. (n.d.). First-time in college (FTIC). In *Glossary*. Virginia.gov. Retrieved October 25, 2023 from <https://research.schev.edu/info/Glossary/First-time-first-year-freshman-student>
- Sullivan, G. M., & Artino, A. R., Jr. (2013, December). Analyzing and interpreting data from Likert-type scales. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, 5(4), 541-542. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3886444/>
- Thompson, M., Pawson, C., & Evans, Bethan. (2021, June 17). Navigating entry into higher education: The transition to independent learning and living. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 45(10), 1398-1410. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2021.1933400>
- Turner, P., & Thompson, E. (2014). College retention initiatives: Meeting the needs of millennial freshman students. *College Student Journal*, 48(1), 94-104. <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/College+retention+initiatives+meeting+the+needs+Of+millennial+freshman...-a0372252070>
- Wilcox, P., Winn, S., & Fyvie-Gauld, M. (2006, August 15). 'It was nothing to do with the university, it was just the people': The role of social support in the first-year experience of higher education, *Studies in Higher Education*, 30(6), 707-722. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070500340036>

Dr. Ching-Wen Chang is a Professor of Educational Technology and the Director of the Educational Technology Graduate Program at Missouri State University. She has taught both undergraduate and graduate courses in traditional face-to-face settings as well as in online learning environments.

Appendix A

Survey: The Effectiveness of a 1-to-1 Meeting in Support of First-Year College Students in a required College Orientation Course

Demographic Information

1. Student classification:

- ☐ First-year
- ☐ Transfer student

3. Age:

- ☐ 16-17
- ☐ 18-19
- ☐ 20-21
- ☐ 22-23
- ☐ 24-25
- ☐ 26 or older
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

5. Ethnicity:

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ White
- ☐ prefer not to answer

7. Is English your first/native language?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2. First-generation college student?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4. Gender:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary / third gender
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

6. Residency?

- ☐ Missouri resident
- ☐ Out of State, not a Missouri resident
- ☐ Resident of a country outside the United States or a US territory

8. Did you have a declared major in Fall, 2023?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Survey Questions

SA=Strongly Agree; A=Agree; N=Neither Agree nor Disagree; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly Disagree					
	SA	A	N	D	SD
Does a required 1-to-1 meeting serve its intended purpose of providing student support for transitioning to college life?					
9. I feel more assured and comfortable about college life after the 1-to-1 meeting.					
10. After my 1-to-1 meeting, I believe I can always contact my GEP professor for assistance.					
11. I learned new information about academic requirements, graduate school, and college resources during my 1-to-1 meeting.					
12. I feel more confident about my first year in college after the 1-to-1 meeting.					
Does a required 1-to-1 meeting serve its intended purpose of reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness that first-year college students may experience?					
	SA	A	N	D	SD
13. I feel more of a sense of connection with my GEP professor after having the 1-to-1 meeting.					
14. From the information I received during my 1-to-1 meeting I feel more confident about making social connections.					
15. I am comfortable asking questions and asking for help from my GEP professor after my 1-to-1 meeting.					
16. I feel the campus environment is more welcoming and supportive after my 1-to-1 meeting.					

Open-ended Question (optional)

17. If you have other thoughts or experiences that resulted from your 1-to-1 meeting with your instructor that were not mentioned above, please share them here.