

**[UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA SOUTHEAST
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE REPORT,
SUMMER 2014]**

Prepared by Lori Klein, Director of the Student Resource Center, on behalf of the First Year Experience Committee.

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1.0 Overview

In early February 2014, Provost Caulfield and Vice Chancellor Nelson formed a collaborative committee of academic faculty and student affairs staff to begin developing a plan to engage the first-year Juneau campus students academically and socially through a first-year experience. The ultimate goal is to increase retention of our first-year students, with particular attention to those who are full time.

The committee included:

- Lori Klein, Student Resource Center Director (Chair)
- Nathan Bodensadt, Residence Life Coordinator
- Dr. Heidi Brocious, Clinical Associate Professor of Social Work (UAF)
- Jonas Lamb, Assistant Professor of Library and Information Sciences
- Dr. Kevin Maier, Associate Professor of English
- Dr. Andrzej Piotrowski, Associate Professor of Mathematics
- Tara Olson, Student Activities Coordinator
- Dr. Amanda Sesko, Assistant Professor of Psychology

The Juneau campus First Year Experience (FYE) Committee met four times between February 10th and April 30th. This report contains a summary of work done to-date and a recommendation for continued collaboration and planning in FY 14-15.

2.0 Profile of a First-Year Student at UAS

The FYE committee worked with Dr. Diane Meador, Institutional Effectiveness Manager to access data about the first-year class at UAS.

First-time freshman students are defined as students in their first semester of enrollment. The data we received from IE represents those students who meet that definition. The data does not include former dually enrolled students or students with advance placement credit who are new to the college environment and are essentially recognized as first-time freshman. Therefore, the committee feels that the profile is incomplete.

We reviewed data from four academic years: Fall 2010, Fall 2011, Fall 2012 and Fall 2013. The profile below represents our most recent full time first-time freshman class (Fall 2013) on the Juneau campus.

Demographic Summary

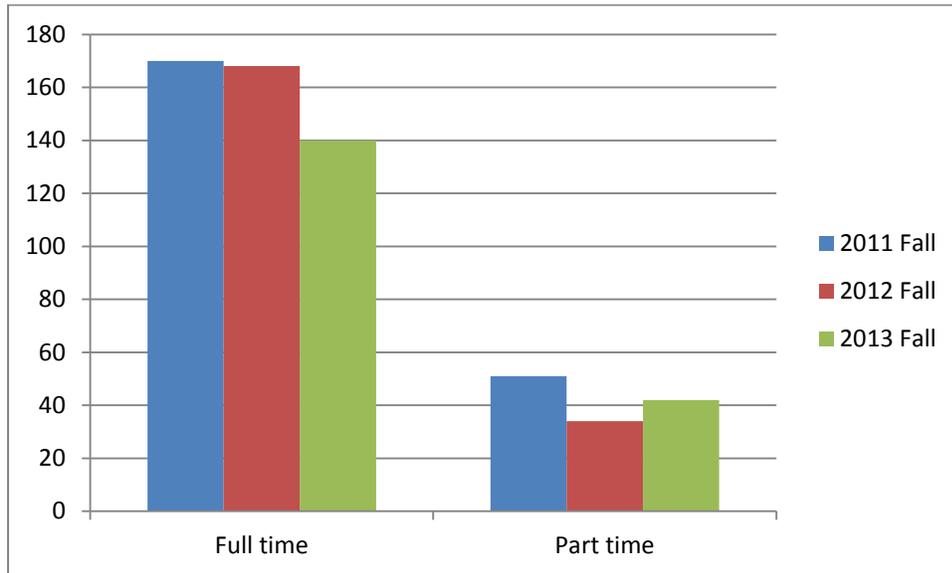
Ninety percent of our first-time freshman class is under the age of 24. In 2013 we had slightly more female students (53%) than male students – a more equitable split than in past years. Ethnicity and race are difficult to determine. The highest percentages were in the “unknown” category. Of race reported, 44% of the incoming class identified as White and 16% as Alaska Native. Ninety three percent (93%) of our incoming freshman class was from Alaska, with 82% of our in-state population from Southeast Alaska.

Academic Profile

Annually, the majority of the entering freshman class in Juneau is admitted to the School of Arts and Sciences (65% in 2013). A good portion of this population (70% in 2013) is admitted to the Associate of Arts program – whether by choice or default. Students applying to any Bachelor degree (BLA, BBA, etc.) who do not meet baccalaureate level requirements are placed in the Associate of Arts program. This does not allow us to have an accurate picture of the intention of the degree-seeking first-time freshman class.

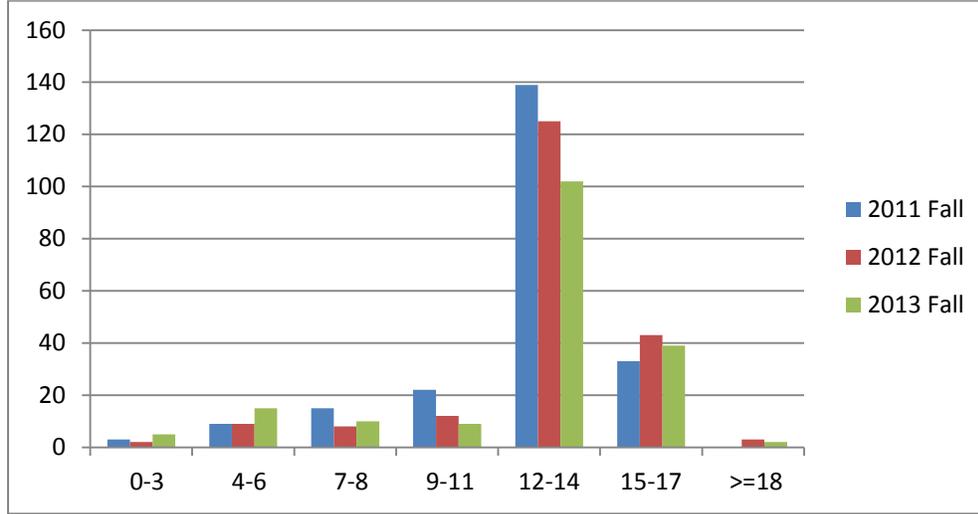
Overall student enrollment has declined in all categories over the last three years, which is also reflected in the first-time freshman population below. We think it is important to note that part-time enrollment in this population is slightly on the rise, but not quite at the same levels as Fall 2011. An increase in part-time enrollment is a national trend, as more students are electing to work and reduce their credit load at college.

Chart 2.1 First-time Freshman Enrollment



While 77% of the Juneau first-time freshman were classified as full-time students, only 23% of full-time students were carrying a credit load of 15 credits or higher. The majority of our incoming full-time freshman take between twelve and fourteen credits. As represented in Chart 2.2 below, this has been an enrollment trend over the last several years.

Chart 2.2 First-time Freshman Credit Load



It is a challenge for students who place in lower level English and math classes to build a class schedule with more than 14 credits. Many general education classes require English 110 or higher for enrollment, and placing a student with low English placement test scores in any college level class runs the risk of setting them up for failure until they can build up critical reading and writing skills. In our current political and economic climate, students are not interested in taking classes that don't apply directly to their degree program. While most understand the necessity of developmental courses in English and math, they have very low tolerance for cobbling together electives to round out a full time schedule.

What does the placement test picture look like for our freshman students?

Table 2.1: English Placement

English Placement	Percentage	Math Placement	Percentage
English 092	9%	Math 054	13%
English 110	21%	Math 055	31%
English 111 or higher	46%	Math 105	20%
No English Placement Taken	24%	Math 106 or higher	10%
		No Math Placement Taken	26%

It is notable that one quarter of our students did not take the English and/or math placement tests prior to their first semester at UAS. Assuming these might be primarily part-time students electing to take other classes their first semester and postpone English or math, we did further analysis. Of the 24% of students that did not take English placements tests, 50% were full time and of the 26% students that did not take Math their first semester, 43% were full time. Failure to take placement tests prior to the first semester again limits the amount of credits first-year freshman can take in their initial semesters at UAS.

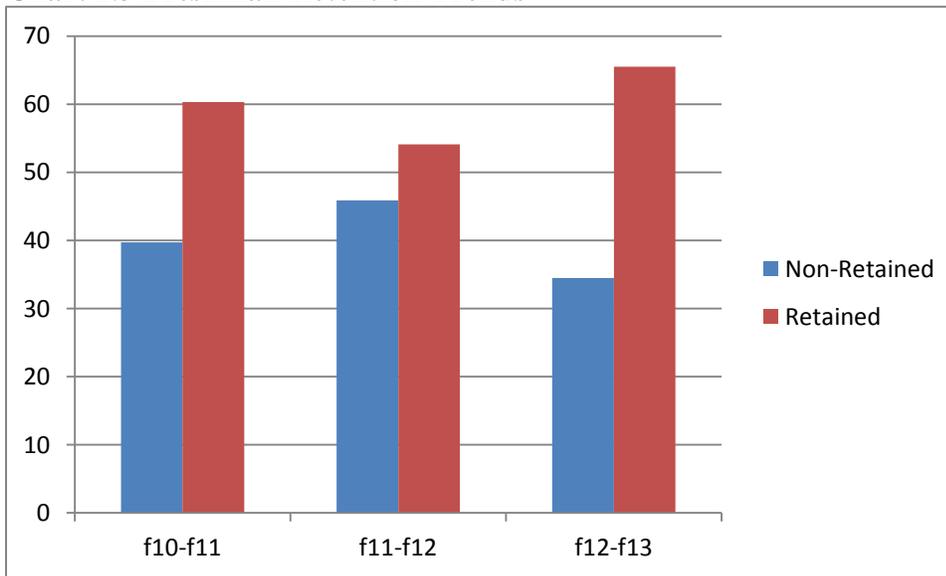
The FYE Committee consulted with the Juneau professional staff academic advisors on this issue, and a number of important anecdotal points are worth mentioning here. While we do not have access to actual numbers for each of these explanations, together they might represent the population of students who aren't taking English and/or math their first semester.

- Dually enrolled students (taking college credits while in high school) are counted as first-time freshman if they graduate from high school and attend UAS. These students may have begun working on college level English or math before graduating high school. This same rule applies to students with advanced placement credit.
- There is a small population of students who score high enough on their ACT or SAT to receive English GER credit, and therefore choose not to take an English class their first semester.
- It is more common for students to skip math their first semester (anxiety related reasons) than it is for them to skip English. One way to guarantee that math won't be an option is to simply not take the placement test.
- Students pursuing a career in Applied Technology programs often forgo English and math their first semester in favor of core subject courses.

Retention Profile

A full picture of the retention of our Fall 2013 class won't be available until Fall 2014. The data below represents the retention of Juneau first-time freshman from Fall 2012-13, unless otherwise noted.

Chart 2.3 Freshman Retention Trends



Our first-time freshman retention rate in Fall 2012-13 was the highest it has been in the last four years. Of the 65% of first-time freshman retained, 91% were full time and 51% lived on campus their freshman year. In fact, retention of our students who live on campus was at its highest level in Fall 2012-13 in comparison to the three previous years.

As noted above, we do not have a complete picture of ethnicity and race of our incoming first-year class. Of the first-time freshman students retained: 17% are Alaska Native, 44% White and 34% unknown. Of the first-time freshman students not retained: 30% are Alaska Native, 30% White and 31% unknown, resulting in a disproportionate amount of AK Native students not retained. While there are undoubtedly many reasons for this, we were unable to extract any relevant data from the report we received from Institutional Effectiveness. We hope to continue probe placement test data and other academic measures as they relate to ethnicity and race.

Research shows that minority students have a much harder time with transition to college than their non-minority peers. Anecdotally, we see that play out at UAS, primarily with our Alaska Native students. Compared to many of our rural villages and small communities across Alaska, Juneau is a “big city.” We are seeing a trend of small groups of rural and Alaska Native high school graduates coming to UAS together, requesting to live together in Housing, and ultimately, insulating themselves socially. Many of these students do not attend campus events at the same rate as the average student, and many remain unaware of resources throughout the year. In addition, cultural expectations of speaking and sense of authority can lead many of these students to avoid resources even if they are aware of them.

The First-Year Experience Committee will continue to work with the Institutional Effectiveness Office to mine data from our first-year cohort populations. In addition, we’d like to implement an assessment that will provide additional data about why students choose to attend, why they stay and perhaps, why they leave.

3.0 Components of a Successful First-Year Experience

The FYE Committee was charged with crafting a definition of or a mission statement for a First-Year Experience at UAS. During our short time together, we were unable to do that. However, we did discuss, at length the best-practice components of a first-year experience*. Below is a summary of the best practice components highlighted at the first-year experience conference as compared to what UAS currently has in place. This list gave framework to our committee discussions.

Table 3.1 Best Practices in First-Year Experience Programs

Best Practice	Juneau Campus
Faculty run, content rich, general education first-year seminar class	✓
Peer mentoring program, imbedded in or outside the seminar class	
Collaboration with Student Affairs in first-year seminar class	✓
Assessment of the incoming first-year class/institutional survey	
New student orientation	✓
On-campus housing	✓
Living/Learning Communities	
Campus life programming focused on relationship building	✓
Mandatory advising for incoming students	✓
Early Alert system	✓
Support for students with disabilities	✓
Service learning opportunities	
Support for students in developmental level courses	✓
Common Read	✓
Information Literacy Services	✓
Career Services	✓
Cultural Support Services	✓
Tutoring Services	✓
Academic support classes and programming	✓

* Compiled from attendance at the 33rd Annual Conference on the First-Year Experience, February 2013 and selected readings:
 * Schreiner, L.A., Louis, M.C., & Nelson, D. D. (Eds.). (2012). *Thriving in transitions: A research-based approach to college student success*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.
 * Upcraft, M. L., Gardner, J. N., & Barefoot, B. O. (2005). *Challenging and supporting the first-year student: A handbook for improving the first year of college*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

4.0 Recommendations

The committee was not surprised to see that UAS already has some of the best-practice components to a successful first-year experience. FYE initiatives have been taking place at UAS for years. However, the committee is in agreement that our best practice components are not always well-coordinated. For example, enrollment in HUM 120 has been dwindling in past years, in part because there was a turn-over in advising staff and many did not know how to explain or promote HUM 120 to first-year students.

Nationally there are collaborative trends happening that UAS has not embraced yet. For example, most first-year seminars have peer mentors working with faculty and each class has a “personal librarian” – expanding partnerships with Library and Informational Science.

Based on the research done in Spring 2014, the FYE Committee proposes the following recommendations:

Recommendations

1. Continue meeting in FY 14-15 to prepare for a comprehensive First Year Experience to be implemented in Fall 2015. Committee membership will need to shift based on staffing changes (*see Appendix A*).
2. Develop and present a draft mission statement to administration by Spring 2015.
3. In conjunction with Dean Schmitt, establish faculty coordination of HUM 120 into faculty workload.
4. In conjunction with Dean Schmitt, establish a budget for HUM 120 that is not based on extra student fees, but would cover a field trip and/or service learning opportunity and support one Peer Mentor per section.
5. Establish a partnership between HUM 120 faculty and Career Services at UAS to incorporate “sense of self” (personal and degree exploration) into the “Sense of Place” theme.
6. Build partnerships with the other Schools to a) increase academic buy-in for all first-year students to be engaged in a first-year experience and b) explore content options in HUM 120 (Education? Management?)
7. Develop an assessment tool for incoming first-year students to be implemented Fall 2014 (*See Appendix B*).
8. Explore enhancements in academic advising – loose ideas include a) a centralized advising model where all first-year students, regardless of their declared major, receive advising from a team of similarly trained advisors, and b) creating block scheduling, especially for students placing into developmental level classes.
9. In conjunction with Vice Chancellor Nelson, create a stronger partnership between Residence Life, the UAS Care Team and the Native and Rural Student Center to provide culturally sensitive yet more intrusive support for AK Native and rural students.
10. Collaborate with Campus Life to: a) place HUM 120 in cohorts in the new residence hall (Fall 2014) and b) explore how the Alaska Leadership Initiative (AL-I) can be expanded to all students.

Appendix A

It is the wish of the First-Year Experience Committee to continue meeting in Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 to prepare for a comprehensive program in Fall 2015. Changes in staffing necessitate a change in committee membership. The list below represents the recommendation for committee make-up in Fall 2014, to be revisited in Spring 2015.

Committee Chair: Nathan Bodenstadt

Justification: Nathan has recently been hired, through legislative funding, as a First-Year Advisor. He will be placed in the new freshman residence hall, and have the best strategic perspective of any staff member at representing the first-year experience to the committee. It would be appropriate in his new role to chair the committee.

Faculty Membership: Dr. Heidi Brocious, Clinical Associate Professor of Social Work (UAF)
Jonas Lamb, Assistant Professor of Library and Information Sciences
Dr. Andrzej Piotrowski, Associate Professor of Mathematics
Dr. Amanda Sesko, Assistant Professor of Psychology
Ernestine Hayes, Assistant Professor of English
Fall 2014 FYE faculty member: Dan Monteith or Sonia Nagorski
A faculty member from the School of Education
A faculty member from the School of Management

Justification: Continuity in this committee will be important, and therefore we would like to ask as many of the faculty members as possible if they would like to return. Dr. Kevin Maier, who has both served as the HUM 120 Coordinator and a member of this committee, will be out of the country. Therefore, we would like to ask either Dr. Monteith or Dr. Nagorski to join the committee this fall, as they are both assigned to teach HUM 120. Assistant Professor Ernestine Hayes has expressed interest in the committee, and the committee would value her involvement. In an effort to expand the scope of the HUM 120 class, membership from the Schools of Education and Management would be essential.

Staff Membership: Tara Olson, Student Activities Coordinator
Lori Klein, Director of the Student Resource Center
A professional staff academic advisor from the Juneau campus

Justification: Again, consistency in this committee is important, and Tara and Lori were involved last spring. The committee also sees value in adding a staff academic advisor to the team. Due to workload issues, this would most likely be either Sarah Arntson or Amanda Triplett from the Student Resource Center.

Appendix B

First Year Experience Survey – Overview and Content

Survey intent

The intent of the First Year Experience (FYE) Survey is to collect data to 1) describe the characteristics, attitudes, and perceptions of UAS first year students, and 2) to predict what factors promote, but also reduce student retention.

Target audience

Participants will be students defined as first year UAS students.

Frequency of survey administration: Throughout the first year

The FYE Survey will be administered three times throughout the first year and will be as follows:

Time 1: Mid-August before the start of fall 2014 semester

Time 2: The end of fall semester 2014

Time 3: The week after spring break 2015

Survey administration

The FYE Survey will be administered online via Qualtrics online survey software. A link to the survey will be sent to students email address at each time point. Students will additionally be informed about the survey during first-year advising meetings and orientation.

Analysis of data

Data will be analyzed by members of the First Year Experience Committee. Importantly, data will be analyzed in aggregate and no individual identifying information will be shared. While students will be providing basic demographic information, their names will in no way be associated with the data. In order to match student responses across Time 1, 2 and 3, students will provide their UAS student ID number at the start of the survey. However, in compliance with human subject ethical guidelines, student ID numbers will not be associated with their data in the final data set. Instead, ID numbers will be encrypted (i.e., scrambled) in a separate file and matched based on encryption. Only one researcher (Dr. Amanda Sesko) will work with the encryption and be responsible to for data protection. In addition, using encrypted ID numbers will allow us to possibly match data from the FYE Survey to other datasets currently in use, but also keep student identity protected. Further, before implementation of the survey, we will receive Intuitional Review Board approval. After completion, data will be written-up and presented to administration and other interested parties.

Instructions: In this survey we are interested in getting your opinions and perspectives on academic life at UAS. Please, note that your answers will be pooled with other student responses and presented as group averages. Thus we are not interested in your individual responses and you will remain anonymous. In order to obtain reliable results we ask that you please answer as honestly as possible.

You will be completing this survey three times over the year. In order for us to match your data overtime, we need to identify you. To do so we ask that you enter your UAS student ID number below. However, please note, as mentioned above you will remain anonymous and we are looking at group averages, not at your individual responses. To ensure your anonymity, your ID number will be encrypted (i.e., scrambled by an algorithm) and kept separate from the final data set.

Please enter your UAS student ID number here: _____

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SECTION 1: Why are you here?

Using the scale provided, please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

	1- strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7- strongly agree
I chose UAS because:							
1. It was my top choice among all universities I applied to.							
2. UAS graduates get good jobs.							
3. It is a small school.							
4. It is close to home.							
5. It is a good school.							
6. It is reasonably priced.							
7. I did not know where else to go.							
8. I was awarded a financial aid/and or scholarship package.							
9. The location was desirable.							

10. If none of the answers above, adequately describe why you chose UAS, please indicate in the space provided why you chose to come to UAS.

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SECTION 2: Evaluations of UAS/Personal Fears

Now, we would like you to answer the following questions about your impressions and experiences at UAS using the scale provided.

	1-not at all	2	3	4	5	6	7-very much
1. UAS is a high quality degree program.							
2. UAS has high quality professors.							
3. I feel comfortable around my classmates.							
4. I participate in non-class related campus activities.[Time 1: I plan on participating in non-class related campus activities]							
5. I am aware of financial aid opportunities.							
6. I have been successful at finding friends on campus.							
7. I have enough financial and/or personal income to cover my academic financial obligations.							
8. I have enough financial and/or personal income to cover my non-academic financial obligations.							
9. (If applicable) My on-campus housing roommates help me stay engaged in classes.							
10. (If applicable) My on-campus housing roommates help me stay engaged in campus events.							
11. I am able to effectively balance work and academic obligations.							
12. My family acts as a support system for my academic goals.							
13. UAS provides an appropriate environment for me to succeed.							
14. The course material interests me							
15. I feel comfortable approaching my instructors for help.							
16. I am concerned that I will not do well in school.							
17. I am concerned that my school work will interfere with family obligations.							
18. I feel prepared for college.							
19. I am a good student.							
20. I plan to see an advisor regularly throughout my academic career.							
21. UAS promotes diversity.							

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Do you plan on completing your degree at UAS? YES NO NOT SURE

If yes or not sure, go to Section 3 and skip Section 4

If no, go to Section 4

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SECTION 3: Reasons for staying at UAS

Using the scale provided, please indicate your agreement with the following statements. (If you answered not sure to the previous question, just do your best to answer the following questions assuming you will be staying.)

	1-not at true	2	3	4	5	6	7-very true
You are staying at UAS because:							
1. Your desired major is offered.							
2. The academic program is challenging.							
3. You have financial aid/and or a scholarship.							
4. You have good living arrangements.							
5. The campus location is desirable.							
6. It is close to home.							
7. The social atmosphere is satisfying.							

8. If none of the answers above, adequately describe why you chose UAS, please indicate in the space provided why you are choosing to stay at UAS for your degree.

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Section 4: Reasons for leaving UAS

Are you transferring to another institution (or planning to)? YES or NO

If yes, which institution?

If no, do you plan to return to higher education in the future?

Could UAS have done anything to make you stay? YES or NO

If yes, what?

If no, why?

Please rate your agreement with the following statements regarding why you are leaving UAS using the scale provided.

	1- strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7- strongly agree
I am leaving UAS...							
1. because my desired major/degree is not offered.							
2. because the academic program is too challenging.							
3 due to financial considerations.							
4. due to medical issues.							
5. due to living arrangements.							
6. because the campus is too far away from home.							
7. because the campus is too close to home.							
8. due to a full-time work opportunity.							
9. because of the weather in Juneau.							
10. due a family and/or home-life responsibility.							
11. because the academics are not rigorous enough.							
12. because of dissatisfaction with the social atmosphere.							
13. because I just want a change.							

14. If none of the above reasons adequately explain why you are leaving UAS, please use the space provided to do so.

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SECTION 5: Demographics

Now we would like you to answer some basic demographics about yourself.

1. Please indicate your current degree program, giving both the degree level (Associate, Bachelors) as well as the specific academic program you are enrolled in (e.g., Marine Biology, Accounting, Social Sciences--listing primary, and other two concentrations, BLA—listing both concentrations, etc.).

2. If applicable, if you are planning on changing degrees, what are you planning on changing it to?

3. Please indicate your overall education goal – by degree level (Associate, Bachelors, Masters, Ph.D.).

4. Please list **each** course you are currently in (including the name of the course and the course number—e.g., PSY 101 and the grade you expect to receive in *each* course (A, A-, B +, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D, or F).

5. Is this your first time in school? Yes No

6. How often do you (or plan to) attend class?

Hardly ever

I miss class frequently

I miss class sometimes

I seldom miss class

I always attend class

7. What are you future career plans?

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1. How old are you? _____

2. What is your gender? Female Male

3. What is your race/ethnicity? _____

4. Using the categories provided please indicate your race/ethnicity by checking all that apply.

- White/Caucasian
- Black/African American
- Alaska Native
- American Indian/Native American
- Asian
- Pacific Islander
- Hispanic
- Latina/Latino
- Filipino
- Other

5. Which of the following best describes your relationship status?

- in a relationship
- single
- cohabiting
- married
- divorced
- widowed

6. Do you have children? If so, how many and how old are they?

7. Where are you from?

8. Please answer the following questions regarding your housing status.

- a. on campus
 - off campus, at home with parents
 - off campus, at home with partner and/or children
 - off campus, with roommate(s)
 - off campus, live alone
 - b. I have a roommate(s) I do not have a roommate
- If roommate indicated, then: Have you ever lived with roommates before Yes No

9. Are you in the AL-I program? Yes No