



FORM

## Open Pathway Quality Initiative Report

### *Institutional Template*

The enclosed Quality Initiative report represents the work that the institution has undertaken to fulfill the Improvement Process of the Open Pathway.

*Laurie S. Nichols*

*1/5/2017*

*Signature of Institution's President or Chancellor*

*Date*

Laurie Nichols

*Printed/Typed Name and Title*

University of Wyoming

*Name of Institution*

Laramie, WY

*City and State*

The institution uses the template below to complete its Quality Initiative Report. The institution may include a report it has prepared for other purposes if it addresses many of the questions below and replaces portions of the narrative in the template. This template may be used both for reports on initiatives that have been completed and for initiatives that will continue and for which this report serves as a milestone of accomplishments thus far. The complete report should be no more than 6,000 words. Quality Initiative Reports are to be submitted between September 1 of Year 7 and August 31 of Year 9 of the Open Pathway cycle. Submit the report as a PDF file to [pathways@hlcommission.org](mailto:pathways@hlcommission.org) with a file name that follows this format: QI Report No Name University MN. The file name must include the institution's name (or an identifiable portion thereof) and state.

**Date: December 16, 2016**

**Name of Institution: University of Wyoming**

**State: WY**

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## Report Categories

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### Overview of the Quality Initiative

1. Provide a one-page executive summary that describes the Quality Initiative, summarizes what was accomplished, and explains any changes made to the initiative over the time period.

UW's QIP is entitled "Implementing and Assessing First-Year Seminar." Work on the project began in fall 2014 as part of the newly adopted general education program called University Studies 2015 (USP 2015) that went into effect in fall 2015. The QIP was officially approved by the HLC in April, 2015. Over the last 18 months, UW has made great progress on implementing the project as described in its QIP proposal, including:

- Allocated targets for FYS course development and offerings for the six colleges teaching undergraduate students and the Synergy Program.

- Developed 56 unique FYS courses in less than a year (during AY 2014-15).

- Successfully launched the USP 2015 program in August 2015, offering an adequate number of FYS courses to serve the incoming student body in fall and spring semesters.

- Surveyed FYS faculty and instructors twice about their experiences teaching FYS during the inaugural year.

- Collected data about the required student learning outcomes (SLOs), median and types of assignments, and the successes and challenges of FYS during the first year.

- Administered course evaluations to all first-year students about their FYS experience at the end of AY 2015-16. Collected information about SLOs emphasized in classes, skills gained in the class, comparison of workload to other first-year classes, and perception of the value of FYS.

- Collected student work from 20 FYS classes in AY 2015-16 where faculty volunteered to submit student work via WyoCourses (UW's Canvas platform). Evaluated 480 duplicated pieces of student work from 13 classes that the University Assessment Specialist believed were good examples of student work to test the new FYS rubric with the six critical and creative thinking SLOs required of all FYS courses.

- Worked with Information Technology (IT) and Canvas for nine months to develop a customized software package to conduct assessment. The Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI) is now being piloted with faculty and allows for all FYS assessment to be conducted online.

- Streamlined the course approval process to make it less burdensome for faculty and instructors.

- Maintained the employment of the part-time FYS Coordinator during a period of extreme budget reductions. This faculty member received release time, a stipend, and summer salary and works with Academic Affairs, the University Assessment Specialist and Special Assistant for Assessment, the Learning Resource Network (LeaRN), and the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning (ECTL) to maintain continuity and standards in FYS courses, and to offer professional development to FYS instructors.

### Scope and Impact of the Initiative

2. Explain in more detail what was accomplished in the Quality Initiative in relation to its purposes and goals. (If applicable, explain the initiative's hypotheses and findings.)

The goals for UW's Quality Initiative as specified in the original proposal were as follows: (1) to expand opportunities for meaningful first-year experiences for UW students, (2) to provide faculty an opportunity to be actively engaged with first-year students in a meaningful way, and (3) to increase faculty understanding and commitment to UW's new outcomes-based model for general education.

UW also identified the following objectives for the project:

-Develop and approve 65 FYS courses by fall 2015 to ensure that all 1,600 first-year students have the opportunity to take a seminar during their first or second semester at UW.

To accomplish this goal, Academic Affairs set targets for new course development and teaching for the six colleges serving undergraduate students and the Synergy program (a learning community for academically at-risk first-year students). These targets were set based on the current number of majors/students per college. Originally, Academic Affairs estimated the need for 71 sections in AY 2015-16. UW ended up offering 93 sections in part because of the addition of 10 sections of non-departmentally based FYS courses, many offered by professionals in Student Affairs and other staff/instructional personnel. Examples of these courses included sustainability, service learning, outdoor leadership, and academic success, just to name a few. The benefit of having additional sections meant available seats in some classes to accommodate students adding or changing classes.

Only 28 first-year students enrolled at UW in AY 2015-16 enrolled in fall 2016 without completing their required FYS. Hence, UW had ample capacity to serve its students, including transfer students and students who needed to retake the course. Of the students who enrolled in FYS, 91% in fall 2015 received a C or better with the remaining receiving D/F/W/I. In spring 2016, however, the pass rate dropped to 80% due to a higher number of students proportionally taking FYS who were on academic probation.

In AY 2016-17, UW estimated the need for 76 sections of FYS; there are currently 94 being offered. While some of the courses taught by Student Affairs professionals were not repeated in the second year due to budget constraints, other new courses were developed such as an outreach course and a course appealing to veterans. UW expects that the majority of students will be served by the current FYS course offerings. At the time of this writing, the pass rates for 2016-17 were not available.

-Offer a wide range of FYS courses for students on various, interesting and contemporary topics and issues that are taught by some of UW's most experienced and engaging faculty and instructors.

UW's FYS courses are topics based courses, but are similar in that every course must address six critical and creative thinking SLOs. In addition, all instructors must teach the research process and include a significant or culminating project. Faculty and instructors have chosen a wide range of topics for FYS courses. Titles range from "Latina/o Popular Culture," "Business Decision-making," "Power of Play," "From Gilgamesh to the Bomb," "Thinking Like a Mountain," to "Taking Control of Your Digital Image."

The faculty and staff teaching FYS vary by college and department. There are instructors from all ranks teaching this course from full professor to academic professional lecturer to Student Affairs professionals. Most colleges asked for volunteers to develop and teach this course. In other

instances, the colleges developed a course that could be taught by different faculty on a rotating basis. For larger colleges such as Arts & Sciences, the departments are rotating FYS so that the same people are not teaching the course every semester. In the Synergy program, instructors come from a variety of departments and programs across campus (they partner with English and Communication and Journalism to co-hire instructors).

According to the FYS faculty and instructor survey administered in spring 2016, 56% indicated that they had 10 or more years of teaching experience. Only 9% had less than two years experience. Approximately 56% also indicated that they had taught first-year students five or more times in the past and for only 9% of instructors, this was their first time teaching first-year students.

While UW does not require professional development at this time for FYS instructors, it is strongly encouraged. UW has offered many professional development activities through the ECTL, LeaRN, the Assessment Specialist, and FYS Coordinator. For example, in summer 2015, 30 faculty received a \$1,000 stipend to develop a FYS course while attending the ECTL's summer institute. During AY 2015-16, UW offered many short workshops each semester. The FYS Coordinator created an online resource bank for current and future FYS instructors. It should also be noted that Synergy's 22 instructors are paid a stipend to attend meetings and professional development colloquia throughout the year.

-Develop a comprehensive plan to evaluate and assess the FYS initiative and courses at UW.

UW created an ambitious, comprehensive plan for evaluating and assessing the FYS initiative as part of its overall plan to assess the new USP 2015 program. This plan took nine months to develop, with the University Assessment Coordinators Committee assuming the lead with the University Assessment Specialist. The plan outlined a specific timeline and process for assessing all SLOs for each USP course category. The completed plan was sent to Academic Affairs and the Faculty Senate. (The report can be found at <http://www.uwyo.edu/accreditation/qip/>). While faculty teaching FYS agreed to participate in the assessment process, up until this point, they did not have the details of what that process would entail.

Additionally, a group of administrators and staff heavily involved in FYS who called themselves the FYS "Kitchen Cabinet" worked with Academic Affairs to flesh out the details of the QIP project including ideas on how to evaluate FYS overall. To date, UW has conducted two different faculty surveys in fall 2015 and spring 2016, and student evaluations in spring 2016, as well as collected informal feedback from the deans. UW's goal was to solve as many problems as possible during the first year through quick decision-making based on the evidence we had collected. The results of these data collection efforts are discussed in detail under Q #4.

-Conduct the first round of assessment of the student learning outcomes required of the FYS courses.

UW began assessing the six SLOs required of all FYS courses in fall 2015 as soon as the program launched. After offering numerous professional development workshops to explain the new assessment process, Academic Affairs solicited instructor volunteers to both submit examples of student work via WyoCourses and then to evaluate student work in teams later as a pilot project. In fall 2015, 20 faculty and instructors volunteered and a significant subset offered to assist with the assessment process. In spring 2016, Academic Affairs selected eight instructors to assist with a semester long pilot project. During this project, the University Assessment Specialist and FYS Coordinator held three work sessions with the volunteers to agree on the process, revise the rubric to assess the six critical and creative thinking SLOs, evaluate their assigned

student work using the rubric, and discuss the process itself and the preliminary results. Based on this pilot, Academic Affairs made some minor changes to the assessment process for this year. Overall, the process was successful and yielded some very positive results including the developing of the LTI to give UW the ability to conduct all aspects of its assessment processes online using WyoCourses. UW is in its first semester using the LTI with faculty and plans on continuing to evaluate student work with the same faculty group to develop more assessment expertise.

-Conduct an overall evaluation of the FYS initiative.

First and foremost, Academic Affairs had to be nimble in the months leading up to the launch of USP 2015 as there were many questions and issues that required an immediate response. After the launch, UW collected systematic information from the various constituent groups regarding FYS. First, Academic Affairs and the University Assessment Specialist sent a survey to all faculty teaching FYS in fall 2015 regarding how the SLOs were integrated into their courses, which SLOs were mapped to which assignments, how many assignments were required of the class, etc. This information was important to ensure that the SLOs were being integrated into the assignments as planned and to determine the range in workload for FYS courses. From this survey, UW discovered that the SLOs seemed to be equally distributed across assignments, but that many assignments addressed multiple SLOs, something that we realized after the first assessment process was not realistic or necessarily reflected in the student work. Academic Affairs also discovered that the number and types of assignments varied across sections and that there were some outlier classes that either had very few or too many assignments.

UW deployed a second survey in spring 2016 to all faculty who taught FYS in AY 2015-16. The goal of this survey was to collect information regarding the FYS during the inaugural year, Specifically, UW wanted to know how the SLOs were integrated into courses, which SLOs were most difficult to address, and what the challenges of teaching FYS were. This survey produced invaluable information about the SLOs and assignments and the numerous comments generated a lot of discussion among faculty during subsequent professional development workshops.

The last survey UW conducted was a student evaluation, an addendum to the regular course evaluations conducted during spring 2016. All students enrolled in FYS during fall or spring were asked to respond. This survey asked students to reflect on the six SLOs and give feedback as to which were most important and which were emphasized in their particular FYS class. Students also were asked about the usefulness of FYS in preparing them for other classes and developing college transition skills. From the results, UW identified several issues including the range of rigor in FYS courses, the variation in number of assignments, and appropriate mapping of SLOs to assignments (i.e. failing to show evidence of the SLO in an assignment).

-Determine changes that need to be made to the FYS and articulate the evaluation and assessment findings to Academic Affairs, the Faculty Senate, and the University Studies Program Committee.

This objective is still in progress as we write this report. The FYS Coordinator held a Spring Colloquium in May 2016 to share findings of the surveys and evaluations with instructors, and to discuss ways to improve the results. 30% of instructors attended. The FYS Coordinator made the summary report available on the FYS Resource site. We have yet to collate all findings into a single report for university distribution. UW has, however, made several changes and improvements to FYS based on what was learned. For instance, UW streamlined the course approval process, developed the LTI for assessment, revised the FYS rubric, worked with faculty to identify a primary SLO for each assignment, expanded FYS course offerings for target populations, developed special sections for students retaking FYS, and developed faculty

development opportunities to address issues discovered through these evaluation and assessment processes. UW is considering the formalization of a first-year experience advisory committee where this information could be shared more regularly.

3. Evaluate the impact of the initiative, including any changes in processes, policies, technology, curricula, programs, student learning and success that are now in place in consequence of the initiative.

While UW has a sufficient number of FYS sections, we continue to respond to student needs and interests for new FYS courses. As such, UW developed and offered an online FYS in spring 2016 that is now being taught each semester. The target audience is outreach students, but there are a number of traditional and part-time students that find this option affords more flexibility. Also, UW is developing additional FYS courses for veterans, undecided students, and students who have to retake the FYS. UW offered a condensed summer option for FYS for students needing to retake the class in 2016. However, it was canceled due to low enrollment. This year, instead, UW is offering two special sections of FYS in the January intersession for these students. These sections are geared toward students who are on academic probation or having academic difficulties. The topics of these sections include exploring pressing topics in students' majors/ careers and both sections include intensive advising for students.

Historically, UW has had a three-year course approval process for all USP courses. However, with the FYS being a new course, UW required that FYS courses be approved annually so that they didn't drift away from their original intention. After the first year, it became clear to both the USP Committee (the university wide committee charged with the course approval process) and the faculty and instructors teaching FYS that this requirement was burdensome. In the second year, the FYS Coordinator worked with the USP Committee and Academic Affairs to create a checklist form rather than the original narrative form for reapproval. If a FYS was reapproved in the second year, the instructor would then be put on the standard three-year approval cycle for their course. This has been a nice compromise between maintaining quality and balancing workload.

The assessment process has helped to elevate the quality of FYS. After the first round of assessment in spring 2016, Academic Affairs discovered that in some instances, faculty identified SLOs in assignments that were not demonstrated in the examples of student work. As a result, the University Assessment Specialist asked faculty to identify the one primary learning outcome besides SLO 6 (communicating ideas effectively in writing) that was demonstrated by a particular assignment and assess only that assignment for the SLO and SLO 6 when appropriate. This change will help faculty be more explicit with their SLOs in assignments, and more deliberate about which SLO is the primary target in each assignment as opposed to one assignment addressing all SLOs.

Finally, UW developed the LTI for streamlining its USP assessment process. The LTI allows faculty to tag their assignments in WyoCourses with the appropriate SLO. The LTI administrator (in this case, the University Assessment Specialist) can then download these assignments and create course shells for the evaluators. The evaluators can use these course shells to assess the student work using the designated rubric and after the analysis is complete, the LTI can download the assessment results. We see this change as very important to maintaining a strong, ongoing assessment process that is both efficient and effective.

Academic Affairs is exploring the idea of creating a professional development certificate for FYS offered through the ECTL and LeaRN. Upon completion of several professional development units, faculty would earn a credential certifying their capabilities as a FYS instructor and would be able to submit this in their tenure and promotion packets. UW is considering whether this training will be required or if incentives for participation would be offered. We believe a certificate option would be an incentive to increase faculty and instructor participation in professional development activities, which are key to the success of FYS.

4. Explain any tools, data, or other information that resulted from the work of the initiative.

UW administered three stakeholder surveys and conducted its first round of assessment resulting in preliminary data about student learning. Finally, UW built the LTI system to facilitate an electronic, streamlined process for assessing FYS and other USP courses.

The first survey was conducted in fall 2015 and aimed to collect information from FYS instructors about the number and types of assignments they were using in their FYS courses and which SLOs were addressed by which assignments. UW also solicited its first round of faculty volunteers to submit assignments for assessment and to serve as faculty assessment evaluators. From this survey, UW discovered from 51 instructors the following:

- 90% of instructors were using WyoCourses (59% using extensively, 31% occasionally). (This was very important, as WyoCourses was the mechanism to facilitate the entire assessment process).

- The median number of assignments was 10 with a range of 2 to 30.

- There were a wide range of assignments in FYS courses including research papers, reflective papers, other papers, group projects, group presentations, annotated bibliographies, library research/citation exercises/library modules, exams and quizzes, case studies, letter writing, debates, service learning/community engagement projects, interviews, speeches, posters, videos, blogs, lab exercises, group-led discussions, resume construction, magazine covers, budget exercises, threaded discussion analyses, personal leadership philosophy statements, and autobiographies.

- The distribution of the six SLOs across assignments was consistent. The instructors seemed to be covering the SLOs in their various assignments and that no one specific SLO was being omitted.

- UW had over 20 volunteers to submit an assignment for assessment purposes.

A second faculty survey was administered in spring 2016 to 82 instructors who taught FYS in AY 2015-16. Fifty-seven instructors responded with the following:

- 47% went to three or more professional development opportunities for FYS or first-year experience either at UW or elsewhere (e.g. conferences). However, nearly 9% didn't attend any.

- The biggest challenges for faculty were teaching all six SLOs with 24 students, thinking of assignments to map to the SLOs, and building student motivation to complete the work successfully.

-Students struggled most with SLO 6 (communicate ideas in writing) followed by SLO 5 (analyzing one's own and others assumptions) and SLO 4 (recognize and synthesize multiple perspectives.)

-Faculty reported successes with helping students transition to college, appreciating and applying their thinking skills, and getting excited about ideas, concepts, and big picture thinking.

A student survey, deployed in spring 2016, was administered as an add-on to the standard course evaluation. It was sent to all students who enrolled in FYS in AY 2015-16. There was a 32% response rate for students who reported the following:

-When asked about the emphasis of the SLOs, up to 76% of students said that the class emphasized each of the six SLOs with SLO 1 (access diverse information through focused research) receiving the highest percentage (76%) and SLO 5 (analyzing one's own and others assumptions) receiving the lowest percentage (59%).

-Students indicated that SLOs 1 and 6 (communicate ideas in writing) were most useful to them as a learned skill.

-When asked about the workload compared to other FYS courses, the results varied with nearly the same percentage of students reporting their FYS class had more work than a typical first-year class, as reported it had less work.

-When asked about the value of the FYS, 47% agreed that the class was of value with 29% disagreeing with this statement.

-The student comments reflected the dichotomous nature of the survey results. Many students praised their FYS instructor or class and others indicated that the class was not needed. The difference in perspective may be attributed to different types of students enrolled at UW. Some students felt these transitional skills were helpful and necessary while others felt they had learned these skills in other college classes (transfer students) or in high school.

Further information on these surveys can be found at <http://www.uwyo.edu/accreditation/qip/>.

Finally, UW conducted its first round of assessment in spring 2016. In fall 2015, 18 faculty submitted assignments for a total of 450 pieces of student work. The University Assessment Specialist along with eight volunteers examined the student work carefully and revised the original rubric developed in 2014 to fix inconsistent language and to remove parts of some outcomes that could not be reasonably evaluated outside of the classroom experience. The faculty then reviewed 240 pieces of duplicated student work with two reviewers examining each piece of student work and evaluating the corresponding SLOs using the revised rubric. Our findings revealed the following:

-SLO 6 (Communicate ideas in writing) was evaluated the most and SLO 5 (analyzing one's own and others assumptions) was evaluated the least.

-The revised rubric worked well. At this time, Faculty reviewers have not recommended any further changes to the rubric.

-It was difficult for raters to see all of the SLOs in various assignments (e.g. instructors said an SLO was in assignment, but reviewers couldn't see it clearly).

-It was difficult to evaluate four to six SLOs per assignment.

-Sometimes assignment details were not always clear.



Even though raters struggled a bit with the ratings, overall the ratings were consistent between raters (0 vs. 1 or 1 vs. 2 or 2 vs. 3).

-Expertise is needed to develop consistency in rating student work over time.

Based on this experience, Academic Affairs teamed up with IT and the ECTL to enter into a contract with Canvas, the maker of the WyoCourses platform, to develop the LTI. Fall 2016 is the first semester of broad use of the LTI with instructors. While there are a few bugs to work out with Canvas, UW is very excited about this tool as an efficiency measure, allowing for the collection of most student work electronically and for an electronic process to store the results of assessment over time. UW plans to use the LTI for other USP 2015 assessment as well.

5. Describe the biggest challenges and opportunities encountered in implementing the initiative.

With every challenge comes an opportunity for improvement. Some of our larger challenges were in regard to assessment, faculty development, and the organization of the UW first-year experience.

The assessment processes that UW has implemented have gone well so far. Of course, there are bugs to work out of any process. Even so, we now realize the turnaround time is long for getting information back to the faculty to make meaningful improvements to FYS courses. UW is already one year into its process and has been able to share preliminary assessment results from only one semester. We hope to find ways for faculty to have meaningful discussions about how to improve these courses for future students in a timely manner.

Also related to assessment, we recognize the need to do a better job of talking about the SLOs with faculty and students. Faculty and instructors need to know the SLOs well and be able to integrate them appropriately into assignments and explain the importance of the SLOs to students. In addition, faculty and students need to talk more about the transferability of the skills learned in FYS to other classes at UW. We want students to see the value of the skills they are learning well beyond the FYS. To address this, all instructors teaching FYS must refer to the SLOs throughout the semester in all assignments rather than simply mentioning them on the course syllabi at the beginning of the semester.

UW has offered a lot of professional development for its faculty and instructors teaching FYS. Most of the training is done through the FYS Coordinator and University Assessment Specialist with some help from ETCL staff about using WyoCourses. An ongoing challenge with professional development is to get people to attend the workshops and events. It appears that longer summer events are more successful, in part because people have more time to devote to the task at hand. Workshops during the academic year, even when offered at multiple times/days, have sporadic attendance. At this point, UW does not have mandatory training for faculty (except for Synergy instructors). UW is considering how to change this, perhaps via offering a certificate program where faculty could showcase their achievement during the tenure and promotion process.

As UW continues with its FYS initiative, we realize that FYS needs to be situated within a true first-year experience. This would serve as a transitional experience for all UW students, connecting them to many of the programs UW offers to help them succeed. Right now, there are a lot of islands rather than one big community working collaboratively on first year issues. If UW could pull together these services under some umbrella organization and leadership, we believe this would be better for students. This would include the activities taking place in Academic Affairs

with FYS, the assessment of FYS, LeaRN, Synergy, STEP Center, and the Center for Advising and Career Services. These efforts currently span both Academic and Student Affairs. There are efforts underway to reorganize student retention and success structures under Academic Affairs, which will likely be accomplished by summer 2017. We believe this will provide a jumpstart to the first-year experience discussions.

Related to this leadership issue, UW currently has a part-time FYS Coordinator. After two years of implementing FYS, we realize that more leadership/coordination is needed. Our current FYS Coordinator is a true expert and doing a fantastic job. However, it is unrealistic that the current structure of their duties is sustainable. With new, stable leadership and the worst of the budget situation behind UW, the time is ripe to articulate a vision for a First Year Experience.

### **Commitment to and Engagement in the Quality Initiative**

6. Describe the individuals and groups involved at stages throughout the initiative and their perceptions of its worth and impact.

There were many individuals and groups of people instrumental in making FYS a success. First and foremost, the FYS initiative would not have been possible without the commitment of faculty and instructors to develop and teach these courses. In addition, the commitment of LeaRN and Synergy to providing instructors to the FYS program was crucial.

The FYS has largely been facilitated through the Office of Academic Affairs, which, during the inception of the FYS, hired a FYS coordinator. The FYS coordinator has been instrumental in the success of the FYS, and has worked closely with the Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Education, the University Assessment Specialist, and the USP Committee to successfully implement the required suite of courses and addresses problems and challenges along the way. There was also significant coordination between the Registrar and the Enrollment Management Committee to ensure that students were registered in the appropriate classes and that UW managed wait lists properly. UW also collaborated with the seven Wyoming community colleges to ensure that transfer students could navigate the new USP program easily.

As expected, different constituent groups had different perceptions of the new FYS. In the first series of summer orientations, new students seemed genuinely excited about FYS. Nearly a year later, when UW surveyed students about their FYS experiences, there were different perceptions of the value of FYS. Some students understood the purpose while others questioned its purpose and reported that the class was less than useful to them. Some of the comments were indicative of the need for faculty to better integrate the SLOs into their courses and remind students more frequently of the course purpose. Students also expressed interest in having more diverse course offerings. As such UW is in the process of developing additional FYS courses including a section for veterans, Native Americans, exploratory studies, international topics, etc.

As for faculty and instructors teaching FYS, UW has many committed to the mission and intent. They are enthusiastic about teaching first-year students. There is also a lot of enthusiasm for teaching this class by new faculty. At the same time, there have been a few faculty members who taught FYS and realized that this was not the class for them. We expected to see some natural attrition so this was no surprise. In some departments, there is a rotation schedule so instructors teach their FYS class once every other year as opposed to once a year. In addition to the faculty

within departments, 21 Synergy instructors teach FYS. They are extremely committed people who receive ongoing training and are used to working with first-year students.

The community colleges in Wyoming appear to be very supportive of UW's first year efforts including the development of FYS. While not required, at least two of the colleges (Laramie County Community College and Casper College) are in the process of developing a FYS that will transfer to UW. This has required coordination between the community colleges and UW, which has gone extremely well. UW is currently sharing an FYS resource bank with the community colleges and is actively looking for ways to include community college instructors in professional development efforts where logistically possible.

Finally, UW's new president, Laurie Nichols, is committed to the university's first year efforts. She wants to see the university expand its efforts to enhance retention and persistence. While there is commitment at UW for a coordinated effort to continue and expand first-year services, UW needs to address outstanding structural and coordination issues, including clarifying the vision of these efforts, determining how and where these functions would be housed institutionally, and discussing coordination between academic and student affairs. UW hopes to address these issues in the new strategic plan that is currently under development.

7. Describe the most important points learned by those involved in the initiative.

Despite changing leadership over the past four years, UW was able to successfully implement FYS through the hard work and dedication of a core group of people committed to the success of the project. This demonstrates the strengths of a grass roots community within the university. The lesson is that the show must go on.

However, despite these past efforts, in order to take FYS to the next level, UW needs to see the emergence of the FYS within a first-year experience in the development of its new strategic plan. Unless FYS becomes an institutional priority within the planning process, it will be difficult to sustain the program adequately to ensure that people stay committed.

FYS will require ongoing resources to properly implement. With the current budget situation requiring UW to cut \$41 million from its budget, Academic Affairs has had little money to spend on the program. However, UW is fully aware that the long-term success of FYS will require resources for a FYS Coordinator, assessment, and faculty development, and for integration into a first-year experience as previously described.

With increased emphasis on the first year experience, UW is seeing its retention rates increase and its academic probation rates going down. While UW's fall-to-fall retention rate is holding steady, the fall-to-fall academic probation rate from 2014 to 2015 dropped from 21% to 17%. Based on these encouraging initial results, we hope to continue to see a rise in our retention rates (currently 76%) over time with the integration of services for first-year students.

## Resource Provision

8. Explain the human, financial, physical, and technological resources that supported the initiative.

There were a number of individuals and groups of people that engaged in this project in order to make it successful. This included Academic Affairs, the ECTL, LeaRN, Synergy, the Registrar, the USP Committee, IT, the college deans and faculty willing to teach FYS courses, the university assessment specialist and the FYS Coordinator.

As for technological resources, Academic Affairs created and is maintaining a FYS resource bank online that provides information to faculty, staff, students, and those outside of UW. Academic Affairs and the assessment office also spent \$4,000 on faculty stipends to coordinate the first round of assessment. IT also invested \$49,800 plus \$6,000 annually in the development of LTI for assessment as a separate contract with Canvas. Finally, Academic Affairs has funded the FYS Coordinator position for two years for approximately \$40,000. In summer of 2014 as a kickoff, the ECTL spent \$46,000 on 30 faculty attending the Summer Colloquium with national FYS expert Brad Garner to develop the initial round of FYS courses.

### Plans for the Future (Feature Milestones of a Continuing Initiative)

9. Describe plans for ongoing work related to or as a result of the initiative.

With the FYS firmly off the ground, UW is turning its attention to fine tuning the FYS program. UW is committed to continuing with the assessment of FYS and working with faculty to improve the content and delivery of instruction through enhanced professional development and the expansion of the FYS Coordinator position. In addition, UW is currently engaged in conversations about the place of the FYS within a larger first-year experience. All of these issues have been thoroughly discussed in the responses to former questions.

10. Describe any practices or artifacts from the initiative that other institutions might find meaningful or useful and please indicate if you would be willing to share this information.

UW has already created an online resource bank on our website that has information broken down into sections targeted toward students, faculty, and community colleges. This is the main hub of information about UW's FYS initiative. Information that can be found on this website includes: course approval process, list of approved courses, SLOs, policy memos, FAQs for students and faculty, and info specific to the community colleges. We also have information online regarding complementary programs for first-year students including LeaRN, Freshman Interest Groups, and Summer Bridge.

In addition to this online information, UW has been working with the Casper College and Laramie County Community College to develop a FYS unique to their college, but that meets UW's transfer standard for FYS. We anticipate that several FYS courses will be developed by Wyoming community colleges over the next year, which will give more flexibility to transfer students. Once information is available about these courses, we would be willing to share the process and final products.

Finally, something that might be of interest nationally is the LTI to conduct assessment. As previously described, the LTI is a custom built add-on to Canvas that allows UW faculty to flag their assignments for assessment and allows UW assessment administrators to download them into newly created course shells for selected faculty evaluators. This custom made tool has streamlined the FYS assessment process and UW plans to use it for assessing its general education program.