

# First Year Experience Evolution: 2019-2024

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## **Abstract**

*From 2019 to 2024, 738 University of Wyoming first-year students took the one-credit STEP 1102 course, led by professional staff. This course helps students connect with campus resources and explore personal interests. Evaluations revealed key themes, leading to a simplified syllabus, centralized assignments, and alignment with Living Learning Communities. Retention rates for first-generation students enrolled in the class improved by 3%. Student feedback revealed increased appreciation for the role of the instructors due to adaptations in the summer professional development.*

## **Background**

Since 2019 all first-year students have had the opportunity to register for the one-credit First Year Experience course, STEP 1102. This course is designed to provide skills which equip students to interact with University of Wyoming (UW) campus resources, staff, and faculty; to provide tools for academic support and wellness; to give opportunities to explore academic and co-curricular interests; to incorporate personal talents and passions into major and career selection; and to encourage personal reflection of the many new experiences encountered as a first-year student on campus. As you see in Table 1, the goals of STEP 1102 differ from but complement the week zero program run by Student Affairs, Saddle Up (*see table 1*).

Table 1.

*Differences between STEP 1102 and the University of Wyoming Saddle Up Program*

FYE: STEP 1102	Saddle Up
Letter grade, 1 credit	S/U grade, 1 credit
twice weekly for 12 weeks	week zero of semester for five days
Emphasis: Student's Personal Interests and Goals	Emphasis: Tools and Resources for Success in College
Learning Outcomes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learning about Learning</li> <li>2. Brown &amp; Gold Experience</li> <li>3. Personal Growth and Wellness</li> <li>4. Information Literacy (added 2024)</li> </ol>	Learning Outcomes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developing a sense of community at UW.</li> <li>2. Demonstrate the ability to navigate coursework.</li> <li>3. Establish study skills.</li> <li>4. Identify and access UW resources.</li> </ol>
Class capacity: 20	Class capacity: >20

By 2024, 100% of the sections of STEP 1102 were linked to Living Learning Communities (LLCs), also known as First-Year Interest Groups (FIGs). This change came about because UW FIG participants have on average 4.3% higher retention rates than non-FIG participants. The reason for this success lies in the three important concepts for a successful FIG: *Interaction*, *Integration*, and *Involvement*, concepts introduced by Pike (1999).

Comparing FIG to non-FIG students, the importance of *interaction* as defined as memorable experiences by students with professors, peers, and staff, was judged equally as important to college success by the two groups of incoming students. However, post-semester surveys indicate it was experienced more by FIG participants. The evaluation showed that the concept of *integration* had similar results. Integration is connecting course content real world or other course experiences. FIG participants indicated they experienced integration more often than those who were not in FIGs even though the concept was perceived equally as important in the pre-semester survey.

*Involvement* was another concept that was measured. Involvement is defined as joining an extracurricular group or club that is not associated with the FIG and not a part of the FIG

sponsored activities. This concept was valued more by FIG participants before they experienced the events of the FIG. At the end of the semester, FIG participants were also more involved in extra-curricular events and activities than their peers. This may indicate that self-selection into FIGs is more likely to be done by individuals who already perceive that connecting to clubs or other groups is important for college success.

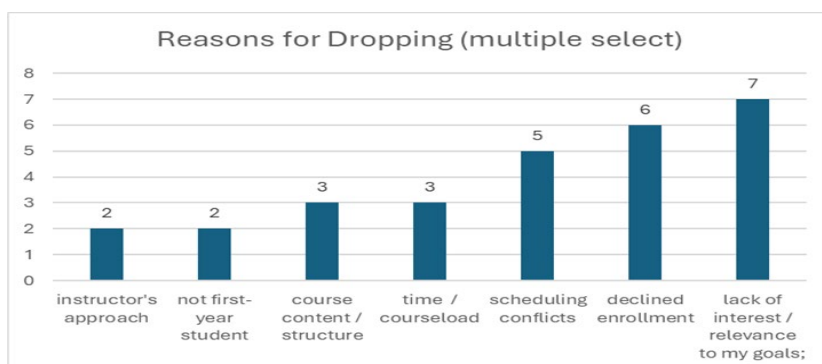
### 2024 Students and Sections

By August 23, 203 students were enrolled in 12 sections of STEP 1102, one section of GEOL 1102, and one section of STEP 3102. After the drop/add period, 2 students added STEP 1102, 5 added the STEP 3102; 31 dropped STEP 1102 and 1 dropped STEP 3102. 178 students remained in the classes. This is a 13% drop in enrollment. Six of those who dropped had been systematically dropped due to declining enrollment, leaving a 10% drop rate. I surveyed those 20 and received 13 responses. Here's what I found:

1. 4 out of 13 never attended a class prior to dropping.
2. The top reason for dropping was “lack of interest or relevance to my goals.”

Fig. 1

*Reasons Students Dropped STEP 1102 in 2024*



The survey of those who dropped only had 13 responses, but one thing noteworthy is that the information about the course that students had prior to day one was perceived by 75% as either somewhat clear (50%) or not clear (25%). Of those who read the syllabus, 87.5% said the syllabus matched their expectations for the course, with only one selecting “not really.”

Fig. 2

*Clarifying Questions and Results About Dropping STEP 1102*

3. How clear was the information provided about the course before you started?

[More Details](#)

very clear	4
somewhat clear	6
not clear	3



4. Did the content in the syllabus match your expectations for the course?

[More Details](#)

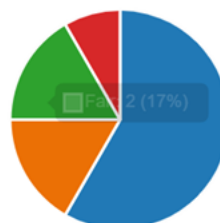
very much so	3
somewhat	4
not really	1
not at all	0
Not Applicable - I did not read t...	5



5. How would you rate the initial communication and support from the instructor?

[More Details](#)

Excellent	7
Good	2
Fair	2
Poor	1



Some answers given to the final question asking for comments s are below:

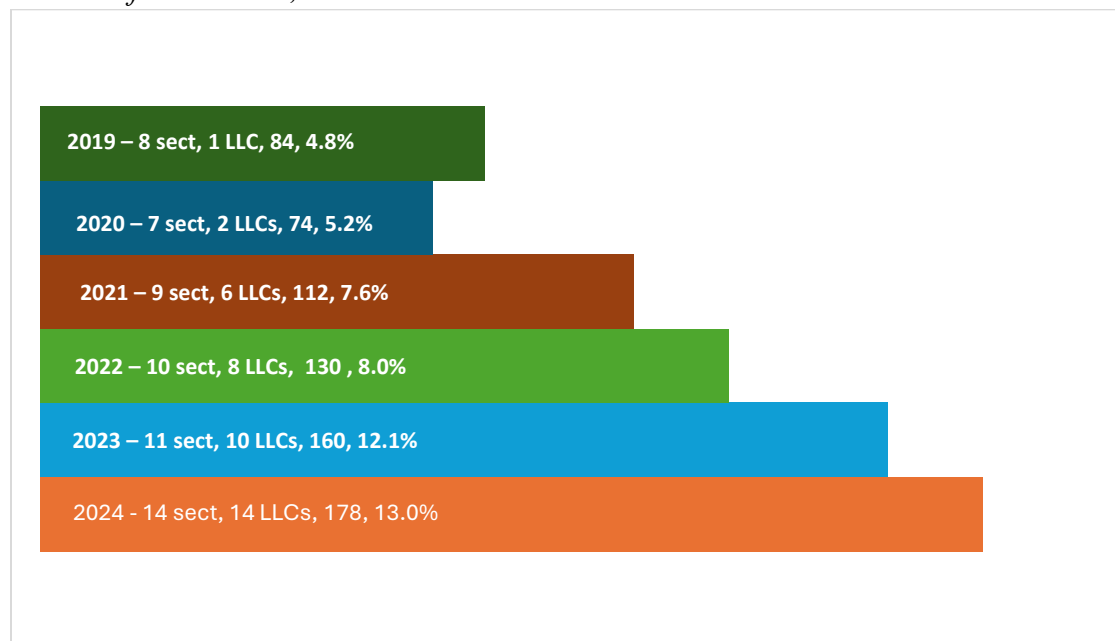
- If the course would have been more about psychology, I would have stayed.
- Saddle Up helped me a lot, so I felt there was no need for the extra class; my professor was a gem. I did not feel like I needed the class
- The class would have been great if it was not on Tues/Thurs. My schedule is full those days.
- I'm no longer a nursing major.

Despite the 10% drop, the 2024 enrollment is the highest ever with 13.0% of the first-year student body enrolling in the class. The chart below includes the number of sections offered, the

number of Living Learning Communities associated with sections, the number of students, and the percentage of students enrolled based on the number of students in the first-year cohort.

Fig. 3

*Growth of STEP 1102, 2019-2024*



## 2024 Course Assessment

This course evaluation of 2024 excludes GEOL 1102 because that course was evaluated within the Geology Department. An IRB was obtained to analyze and present on the results of this course evaluation and an extra survey. A total of 131 students completed the Fall 2024 FYE Teaching Evaluations (73.6% completion rate).

First, students identified what was most beneficial about the course. Here are the themes that came up (OpenAI, 2024).

### 1. Instructor Engagement & Support

- **Kindness and Supportiveness:** Many students appreciated how instructors were caring and understanding. Specific praise was for instructor empathy, flexibility, and willingness to offer academic and personal support. Students felt comfortable reaching out with issues and appreciated the teachers' consistent presence and concern for their well-being.

- XXXX was very flexible, caring, and great first-year instructor. She always found a way to keep everyone involved in the class and made it more fun for us in the class.
- Going in and having the positivity of XXX every morning was super fun.
- I found everything that XXXX taught was helpful. I also think she is a great teacher. She did a really good job of being positive all the time and making sure to ask if us students were okay and how we were feeling. This was very helpful because sometimes after a long week you just need someone there to ask how you are doing and to bring up your energy. She was very supportive on things I had to say when we did reflections and other stuff. I really enjoyed this class and I would say the reason being is having such a great teacher.
- I found XXXX's communication and commitment to making sure we were doing okay within our first semester was very helpful. He also provided many resources to us, so we can succeed in our course work or just keep us involved with our new community. I also thought the Office Hours he held were helpful as he helped me add a minor.
- **Interactive Teaching:** Students enjoyed the level of engagement from instructors, including opportunities for discussions, questions, and the active involvement of instructors in class activities. Examples:
  - She is very interactive with the class and asks us our opinions at the beginning of class which helps engage us in class.
  - The interactive activities were very helpful during long lecture times.
  - The most helpful thing to me in this course was XXXX and how much she interacts with us. I also liked all of the activities we did and how much thought she put into it.
  - I appreciated that XXXX found creative and interactive ways to teach the course activities.
  - XXXX made sure to give us fun and interactive assignments which help us develop many life skills, and help us feel involved at UW.
- **Student-Centered Approach:** Several students noted that instructors tailored the class to their needs, offering flexibility, personalized help, and thoughtful activities to engage them.
  - XXXX made the course adaptable for each student's needs was amazing. Having the flexibility to learn things we thought would be helpful was way more than I expected from this course. I also found his study method teachings incredibly insightful.

- What was most valuable to me during this class was learning about goals and setting goals that were personalized to me. XXXX was very helpful and strengthened my confidence in my academic career.
- She took our opinions into account and focused on the parts of topics that we did not know as well.
- I found XXXX to be an amazing teacher because she actually got to know us and our interests. You could have a question or a scenario for her and she would try her absolute best to answer it or get you into connection with someone who could. She was always kind and tried her best to make the class enjoyable. I loved her as an instructor and as a person.
- Some assignments that I found helpful was the individual assignments based on our own personality. And the teaching was made fun and easy.
- Many teachers don't care about you or your personal life and just want to teach you what they want to teach, but XXXX makes sure that you are actually doing well.

## 2. Hands-On Activities & Experiential Learning

- **Active Learning & Field Trips:** Hands-on learning experiences such as campus tours, using the camp stoves, visiting the Wellness Center, and exploring the library were frequently mentioned as valuable. These activities helped students engage with the content in a fun, practical way, providing real-world connections to the course material.
  - I thought that hands-on activities were more successful than PowerPoint where we just sat and listened.
  - The use of hands-on learning materials helped further amplify this feeling of a brain break, often being fun as well.
  - The hands-on lessons and guest speakers have been pretty insightful.
  - I also found the various campus visits useful and will likely be visiting most of the locations shown through the course.
- **Interactive Assignments:** Activities like creating LinkedIn profiles, scheduling plans, scavenger hunts, and the library race were highlighted as enjoyable and educational. These assignments helped students learn how to organize their schedules, manage time, and become more familiar with campus resources.
  - One of my favorite days was the race at the library; it was a blast and a really fun way to learn about library materials, databases, etc. A
  - It was great when we as a class went to visit places like the library, makerspace, or wellness center. I feel like I learned a lot on all of those days.

## 3. Practical Skills & Resource Familiarization

- **Campus Resources:** A major theme across the feedback was the value of learning about campus resources. Students appreciated the introduction to services such as the library, wellness center, campus tours, and the counseling center. The ability to access and utilize these resources was considered one of the most helpful aspects of the course.
  - The most helpful thing in this course was the different resources that came in, and shown to us in class.
  - She taught very well and made sure everyone knows the resources available for people on campus which made me feel safe and made me feel like I was seen.
  - The most valuable thing in this course was the information about campus and the resources available to us. The first assignment about making a map of UW was very useful for this topic.
- **Career & Life Skills:** Students felt that topics like budgeting, time management, and career planning were useful. They mentioned specific career-related activities like LinkedIn profile creation, professional email writing, and career advice sessions with guest speakers.
  - I found that the most helpful unit in this course was creating a LinkedIn profile.
  - I received greater self-knowledge (in terms of leadership skills, personality type, career choices, etc). I've liked the weekly reflection assignments (sort of as a way to better understand/think deeply about what we've learned).
  - I personally felt that the various goal setting skills were the most helpful to me, such as the Atomic Habits lecture.
  - I found the extra "assignments" like creating your own schedule and timing the commute between classes to be the most helpful and valuable aspect of the course. These helped me get organized and stay on track with what I had to do, especially as a freshman.
  - The most helpful thing in this course that I learned was communication with peers, future employers, and professors, promoting self advocacy.
  - I think the career lady that came in and helped us figure out what we need to do to find what fits us best.
  - The most helpful thing in class to me was the assignment on building our plan aheads. This made it easy to create my schedule for next semester.

#### 4. Course Structure & Flexibility

- **Flexibility & Low-Stress Environment:** Students found the course flexible and appreciated the ability to work on assignments during class. This made the workload feel manageable and helped reduce stress, especially in a first-year setting.



- I think the crystal clear communication and the flexibility of the class in the face of other classes really made my life a great deal easier in my first semester. The flexibility was often a life-saver, as some classes tend to be unnecessarily strict and unyielding to coursework, but in a small class like this, the flexibility of things was greatly appreciated.
- I thought it was helpful that it was flexible and we learned in different classes.
- This course was a very stress free environment, which was nice for balancing out some of my other school work.
- I enjoyed that it was more "laid back" class as well as all the fun activities we did and speakers.
- I also really appreciated how he was able to make this class feel like such a safe and comfortable environment.
- **Class Organization:** Many students found the course well-structured with assignments clearly organized in Canvas, making it easy to track progress. The course was seen as an accessible and supportive introduction to college life.
  - I really like that portions of the course were split up into 12 sections that made any assignment easy to find.
  - The Canvas page is easy to navigate.
  - I felt the most helpful thing XXXX did was provide as much information as she had time for in her weekly announcements. This provided weekly course introductions to complete the assignments.
  - The components that were most helpful for me in this course was the workload and the activities we did alongside the lectures.

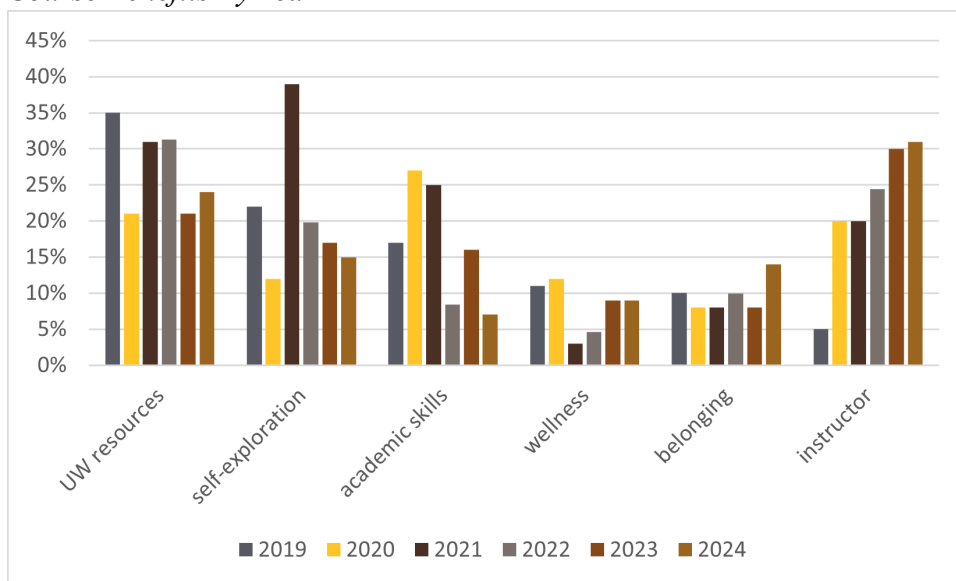
## 5. Community Building & Social Support

- **Peer Connections & Class Cohesion:** Students frequently mentioned the class as a way to bond with their peers and create a sense of community. The supportive environment and opportunities to connect with others were especially helpful in easing the transition to college.
  - I found that this course offered a nice break from traditional classes and lectures, often giving us a chance to put our minds at ease and connect with others in the class.
  - I found that this course was incredibly helpful with bonding and forming a community with the rest of my LLC.
  - The most helpful part of this course was being able to connect with my classmates who are in the same boat with me, it helps to be confident and share your thoughts when you know that the class is also going through or have gone through that.

- the people were nice
- Benefits from this course included making friends with my classmates
- I was able to connect with people that also had the same interests as me and make new friends.
- **Building Relationships with Instructors:** Instructors were also seen as fostering a sense of belonging, which helped students feel more comfortable and supported during their transition to college.
  - Being able to hear from other instructors or people in the business field has been helpful to get an idea of how resources can help in college and after college.
  - Connections with peers and professors on campus.

The input from this question was analyzed over the time to show how the course has changed, and the trends can be seen in *fig. 4* below.

Fig. 4  
*Course Benefits By Year*



The qualitative responses from 2024 indicate the instructor and/or teaching methods to be the biggest benefit (31%). The perception that building a sense of “belonging” is one of the course’s greatest benefits increased from 8% to 14% (*see fig. 4*).

Next, students were asked to identify areas in need of improvement in the course. Here are the common themes that came up (OpenAI, 2024):

1. **Group Work and Student Interaction:**

- Some students felt there should be **more group-oriented assignments** and **peer discussions**. This could help increase collaboration and interaction among students, which they feel was lacking in the current course format.
- There was a call for **less instructor-driven assignments** and a desire for more student-to-student interaction.

2. **Hands-On Experiences:**

- The request for **more hands-on activities** appeared again, with some students hoping for additional opportunities for active learning or engaging experiences beyond lectures and written assignments.
- A few students suggested incorporating **more fun and interactive activities**, particularly around cultural topics, as opposed to reflections or writing assignments. This could help make the class more engaging and memorable.

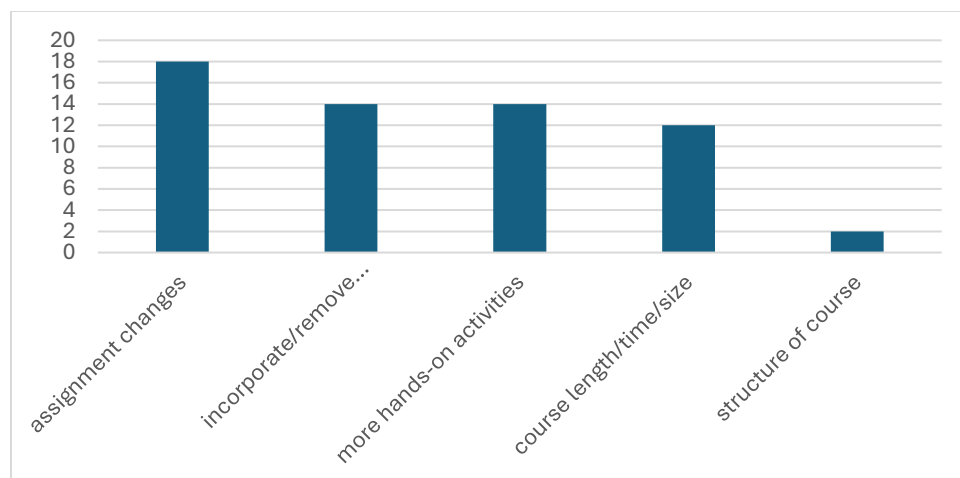
3. **Peer Critique or Presentations:**

- One suggestion was to include a **practice presentation** before the final one, which would allow peers to provide **critiques**. This could help students improve their presentation skills and feel more prepared for their final assessments.

There were **approximately 100 responses (75.0% of responses)** indicating that the class was fine, or students did not feel there were any suggestions for improvement. This represents a portion of the feedback where students expressed satisfaction and felt little needed to be changed. Some of those were very complementary, such as, “I really don’t have any comments to make this course better. I overall enjoyed everything that was done and taught” and “Honestly, she put in a lot of effort and I don't think that there is much she can do better. It was an amazing, fun class that kept me engaged” and “The course was excellent, I really enjoyed it.” For the most part, the suggestions offered were quite specific about assignments, course time, size, or time offered.

Fig. 5

*Suggestions to Improve Course*









The quantitative data is reflected in questions 3-10 in *figs 6-8* below. They indicate that students found the effort they put into the class to not be too much or too little. The instructor's presentation is rated as satisfactory or above (96%). The basis for evaluating students was rated as satisfactory or above (97%). The instructor's interaction with students was rated as satisfactory or above (96%). Of the 33% who visited the instructor during office hours, 100% rated the interaction as satisfactory or above.







Fig. 6







### 2024 Course Evaluation Results, Questions 3







3 - Please rate your ability to access and use the technology and/or digital software required by the class.					
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means
great ability	(1)	84	65.63%	<div style="width: 65.63%;"></div>	1.41
good ability	(2)	36	28.13%	<div style="width: 28.13%;"></div>	
moderate ability	(3)	7	5.47%	<div style="width: 5.47%;"></div>	
a little ability	(4)	1	0.78%	<div style="width: 0.78%;"></div>	
very little ability	(5)	0	0.00%	<div style="width: 0.00%;"></div>	
Response Rate				Mean	STD
128/178 (71.91%)				1.41	0.63
				Median	
				1.00	

Fig. 7  
2024 Course Evaluation Results, Questions 4-5

4 - As honestly as possible, rate the effort you have put into this class.							
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means		
a great deal	(5)	10	7.69%				
a good deal	(4)	44	33.85%				
moderate	(3)	50	38.46%				
a little	(2)	21	16.15%				
very little	(1)	5	3.85%				
				0 25 50 100	Question		
Response Rate				Mean	STD	Median	
130/178 (73.03%)				3.25	0.95	3.00	

5 - How would you evaluate the following for this course?							
the instructor's presentation of materials							
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means		
Unsatisfactory	(1)	1	0.78%				
Poor	(2)	4	3.13%				
Satisfactory	(3)	21	16.41%				
Good	(4)	43	33.59%				
Excellent	(5)	59	46.09%				
				0 25 50 100	Question		
Response Rate				Mean	STD	Median	
128/178 (71.91%)				4.21	0.88	4.00	

5 - How would you evaluate the following for this course?							
the instructor's basis for evaluating students							
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means		
Unsatisfactory	(1)	1	0.79%				
Poor	(2)	3	2.36%				
Satisfactory	(3)	16	12.60%				
Good	(4)	38	29.92%				
Excellent	(5)	69	54.33%				
				0 25 50 100	Question		
Response Rate				Mean	STD	Median	
127/178 (71.35%)				4.35	0.85	5.00	

5 - How would you evaluate the following for this course?							
the instructor's interaction with students							
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means		
Unsatisfactory	(1)	0	0.00%				
Poor	(2)	5	3.97%				
Satisfactory	(3)	8	6.35%				
Good	(4)	27	21.43%				
Excellent	(5)	86	68.25%				
				0 25 50 100	Question		
Response Rate				Mean	STD	Median	
126/178 (70.79%)				4.54	0.79	5.00	









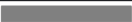














5 - How would you evaluate the following for this course?							
the instructor's ability to make the course intellectually challenging							
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means		
Unsatisfactory	(1)	2	1.56%				
Poor	(2)	11	8.59%				
Satisfactory	(3)	42	32.81%				
Good	(4)	38	29.69%				
Excellent	(5)	35	27.34%				
				0 25 50 100	Question		
Response Rate				Mean	STD	Median	
128/178 (71.91%)				3.73	1.01	4.00	







Fig. 8  
2024 Course Evaluation Results, Questions 6-10

6 - Did you make arrangements for an office visit with Instructor(s) during this semester? -					
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means
Yes	(2)	45	29.22%		1.29
No	(1)	109	70.78%		
				0 25 50 100	Question
Response Rate		Mean		STD	Median
130/178 (73.03%)		1.29		0.46	1.00

7 - If, and only if, you answered yes to the previous question, how would you evaluate the Instructor(s)'s interaction with you during office visit(s)? -					
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means
Excellent	(5)	41	82.00%		4.76
Good	(4)	6	12.00%		
Satisfactory	(3)	3	6.00%		
Poor	(2)	0	0.00%		
Unsatisfactory	(1)	0	0.00%		
				0 25 50 100	Question
Response Rate		Mean		STD	Median
47/178 (26.40%)		4.76		0.56	5.00

8 - How has your interest in the subject matter changed throughout the semester?					
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means
strongly increased	(5)	12	9.23%		3.52
somewhat increased	(4)	51	39.23%		
no change	(3)	62	47.69%		
somewhat decreased	(2)	3	2.31%		
strongly decreased	(1)	2	1.54%		
				0 25 50 100	Question
Response Rate		Mean		STD	Median
130/178 (73.03%)		3.52		0.76	3.00

9 - What grade do you expect to receive in this course?					
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means
A	(5)	104	80.00%		4.72
B	(4)	18	13.85%		
C	(3)	6	4.62%		
D	(2)	1	0.77%		
F	(1)	1	0.77%		
				0 25 50 100	Question
Response Rate		Mean		STD	Median
130/178 (73.03%)		4.72		0.66	5.00

10 - What is your class standing?					
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means
Freshman	(1)	118	90.77%		1.11
Sophomore	(2)	10	7.69%		
Junior	(3)	2	1.54%		
Senior	(4)	0	0.00%		
Graduate Student	(5)	0	0.00%		
Other	(6)	0	0.00%		
				0 25 50 100	Question
Response Rate		Mean		STD	Median
130/178 (73.03%)		1.11		0.36	1.00

Finally, when asked, “Do you have any additional feedback?” students offered a variety of responses, 3 provided further suggestions for improvements, 7 were positive toward the course,

and 2 negative comments which provided no useful suggestions. The responses are below in that order:

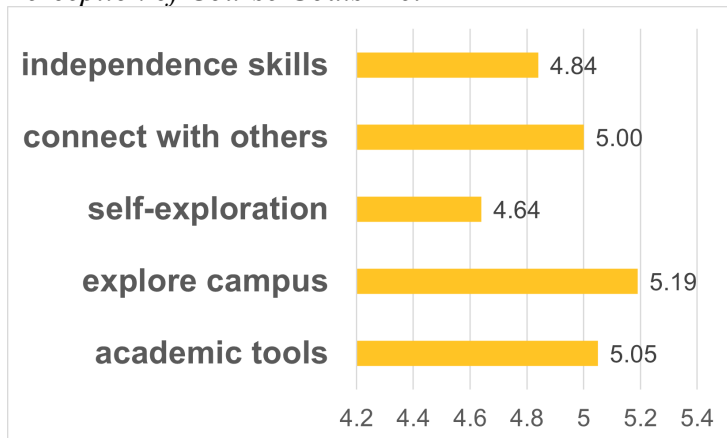
- Adding more announcements to canvas when we change what we are doing in class.
- To make things more interesting by getting the students engaged with each other more than the material.
- The tour around campus was the biggest help for me, this class is basically saddle up for the entire semester, if you had a very good saddle up experience this course should not be taken. One of the easiest courses I've ever taken.
- It was a nice class, but it felt like a three-month-long saddle-up course, and I feel that first-year students should have the option to choose one or the other and not have to do both. I also thought we would discuss different cultures and their backgrounds hence the name "Embrace Cultures" and not go over things that had been talked about during the saddle up week.
- I would recommend running this course very similar to how Ken ran it this semester. He introduced us to so many resources and activities to participate in, and I thought that was more helpful than anything.
- [REDACTED] is a wonderful instructor who truly cares about his students as individuals.
- [REDACTED] was a great instructor, and I hope he can impact other students as much as me.
- N/a, as this class was great enough for me, and met my standards well.
- No I enjoyed the class a lot.
- Overall I thought this course was a good 1 credit hour course.
- The class didn't teach me anything new. Most of the material was things I learned in Saddle Up or in High School.
- This class needs some serious re-working. Otherwise it becomes a waste of time and resources. While the instructors did the best with what they could and made the course as interesting as possible, it was frankly useless. I don't want to be mean about it, but I feel the course is unnecessary. Furthermore, the theme of the course barely fit the class itself. Often, the Hero's Journey was a far stretch. I would try to not relate it to Games and Gamers at all, next time.

In the next question related to meeting course goals, students rated their agreement that the following course goals were met:

- The course provided meaningful experiences that benefit my transition to UW. (Independent Skills)
- The course helped me connect with other students during class. (Connect with Others)
- The course gave me a chance to explore my self-interests. (Self-Exploration)
- The course provided me opportunities to explore campus. (Explore Campus)
- The course introduced me to academic tools that are useful. (Academic Tools)

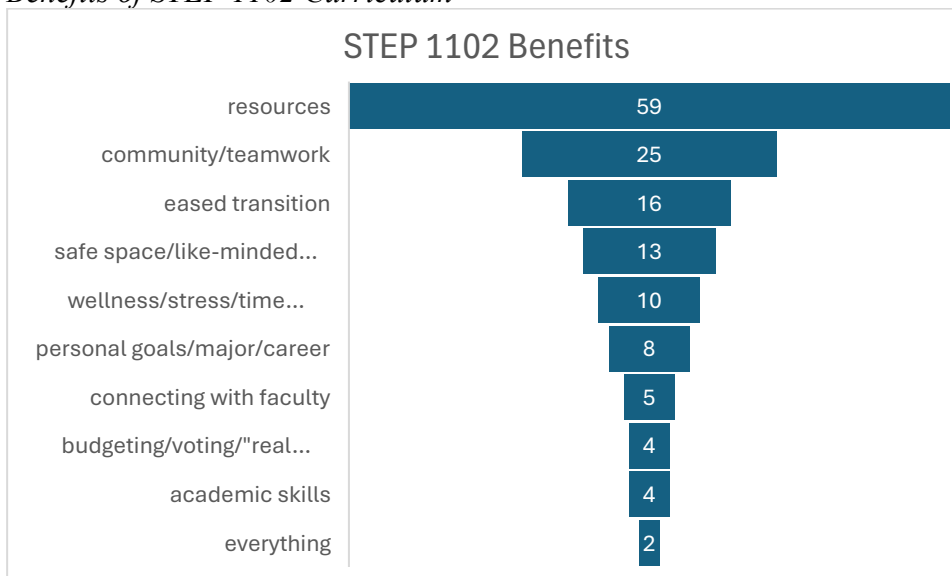
As shown in fig. 9, “explore self-interests” was rated the lowest at 4.64 and “independence skills” such as time management, goal-setting, was rated just slightly higher at 4.84.

Fig. 9

*Perception of Course Goals Met*

Next, students were asked about the benefits of the curriculum. While at first, this question might appear to be a repetition of the first question, this question elicited no remarks about the instructor – instead, they were all directed at the course itself.

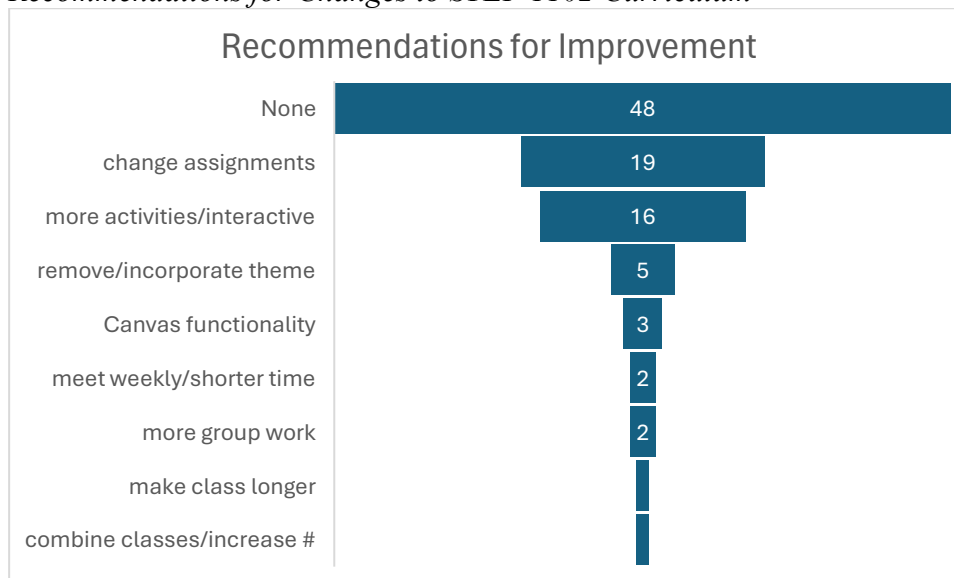
Fig. 10

*Benefits of STEP 1102 Curriculum*



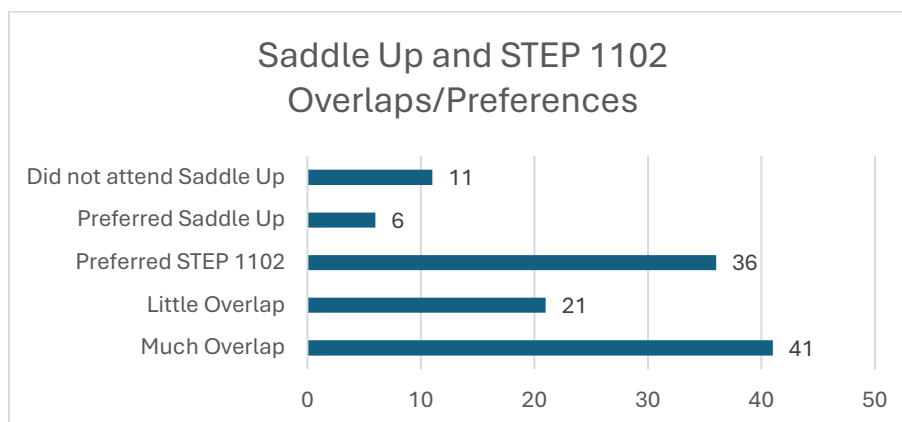
Next, changes to the curriculum were elicited. Of those filling this question out, 48 indicated there is no need for any change (50% of all responses). If including the blank responses, a full 75% had no suggestions for changes, just as the question above indicated.

Fig. 11

*Recommendations for Changes to STEP 1102 Curriculum*

The final question asked students to comment on their Saddle Up experience in relation to your STEP 1102 experience. While the 67% of the responses indicated that there was much overlap (41), a greater majority preferred STEP 1102 to Saddle Up (86%)

Fig. 12

*Saddle UP to STEP 1102 Overlap/Complement*

## Retention

Academic characteristics (first-generation, ACT scores, GPA, and conditionally admission) were taken into account while analyzing fall-to-fall retention. The course is taken by a higher percentage of first-generation students (9% higher), yet retention in first-generation students who took the class is 3% higher than the overall fall-to-fall retention for first-generation students.

Fig. 13

*First-Generation Enrollment & Retention in STEP 1102 vs. Overall*

First-Generation Students				
	% Enrolled		Retained	
Year	FYE	UW	FYE	UW
Fall 2021	35%	28%	67%	66%
Fall 2022	41%	29%	76%	71%
Average	38%	29%	71%	68%

## Discussion

In 2024, the participants rated “instructor / teaching methods” the most beneficial aspect of the course. This may be attributed to continued improvement in the 8-hour virtual summer colloquium series for instructors. The increase in value of “belonging” likely correlates to the fact that 100% of the sections are now linked to LLCs. The smiling faces in *fig. 2* exemplify this.

Students rated “explore self-interests” lowest at 4.64 on a 6-point scale and lower in the open-ended survey. For this reason, a new curriculum, *Create Your UW*, was developed with input from faculty and guidance from the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. The new

curriculum incorporates some aspects of Design Thinking to let students design their experiences.

### **Future Direction**

According to Allaire (2022), one overarching factor that influences emotions in students is their self-perception of belonging. For this reason, all courses will continue to be linked with LLCs. The new curriculum will be implemented in Fall 2025 across 16 sections of the FYE. The new curriculum includes five student-centered units: Reflect, Explore, Create, Act, and Finish.

In the past, instructors were only compelled to complete the pedagogical training sessions if they were first-time teachers, but for the 2025 cohort, 100% will undergo the training so that they are all implementing the new curriculum. Dvorak et al. (2019) describe best practices of FYE administrators. The LeaRN training will aim to build instructors into a community of learners who understand the student population.

There will be follow-up research about student perspectives of *Create Your UW*. LeaRN staff will also be working with instructors to help them better incorporate the LLC theme into the curriculum or remove any theme and subtitle. Finally, retention data will continue to be gathered in order to assess the new curriculum.

### **Acknowledgements**

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## Appendix: Raw Data

### Benefits:

- The benefits helped us become more aware of things on campus and help us get comfortable with being on campus
- Meeting people and learning about resources.
- The course eased me into the college experience, and set my expectations for later courses.
- benefits of this course were learning where my resources are around campus.
- idk or N/A (3)
- I thi k the benefits are that you get help finding resources that directly apply to you and it is easy to request things and ask for help.
- I think the benefits to the course were getting to connect with students of the same major and hearing about their experiences with classes I might want to take in the future. I also found it helpful to
- be connected to different resources on campus.
- Helped me to learn the useful resources that students have on campus.
- I got to meet several of the people on my floor and learn more about them, as well as meet several staff members of the college of business which was very nice.
- Informed me on things I didn't know (like how to navigate campus and WyoWeb) or had questions about regarding things like internships.
- This course helped to snap quite a few things into perspective: my career (I sort of learned what it would be like to work within the Park/Forest Service---in terms of responsibility, leadership,
- medical alert, and the less glamorous side), the resources available to me (the library, Wellness Center, etc), and, most of all, the fact that college isn't so bad (the guest speaker presentations have
- really helped to aid in my understanding of college life; they've shown me that I'm not really "on my own": there is a multitude of people ready to catch me if I fall).
- I benefited a lot from this class in many different ways.
- It helped me know the help on campus.
- It focused on some more practical skills such as time management
- Learning UW
- The insights to programs and things around campus that helped me grasp UW better
- I got to meet other people with the same intrest in going into the medical feil. As well as haviing a hour that was made a safe space where I could say whatever whenever and not be judged or
- hated for it.
- I made some friends
- I thought that this course was very good for getting to know and understand UW.
- Benefits from this course included making friends with my classmates, knowing what resources are avabile on campus for my course work and extra-curriculars, and establishing my goals for this
- first year and throughout the rest of my college carreer.
- The benefits form this class was the access to different on campus materials that we learned about throughout.

- When and where I can find resources whenever I need them the most, such as counseling and tutoring.
- I was given the proper tools to fully embrace UW and everything available on campus
- I got to learn a lot about UW, its opportunities and its institutions that I can use, and it made transitioning from high school to college a lot easier.
- Figuring out where valuable resources are and how to use them.
- Some benefits from my perspective were being shown the resources i could use around campus.
- having a class that focused on the social and academic aspects of college was very helpful and helped me feel more comfortable in my other classes. More so, having a small class of people with a
- relatively simulator goal to mine was nice and helped me feel comfortable and happy in the class, I deeply enjoyed this class and I looked always looked forward to attending it.
- The benefits from this course were the programs and resources that were provided such as going to the Outdoor Program or the Coe Library.
- Being able to learn more about campus, as well as the benefits found in the wellness center.
- Benefits from this course were that it helped me ensure personal wellness, while also learning to balance college classes, and stay connected with resources on campus.
- Opportunities to explore campus, positive influence, exploring self interests
- should me some good recourses
- I learned a bunch of valuable information that I get to carry with me throughout all my college years.
- It gave me new resources to help me navigate freshman and first gen life
- Helped me with better studying habits and my time management.
- Being able to connect with other students
- Learning new tools
- being able to find certain resources for the future
- The events that were going on at the time and how to reach all your resources
- We learned about real life issues, not just textbook coursework like all of my other classes.
- The Plan Ahead assignment
- Teaching us how to budget, communicate, team work, and goal setting.
- LinkedIn Profile, familiarizing myself with campus
- I feel that it was a good course to expose me to people and resources I may need on campus.
- gave me lots of resources
- College baseline, how to access LinkedIn what goals you want to set for the upcoming semester and what to expect out of college.
- Helped me acclimate to a typical workload
- Having an outlet as a class that did not bring me added stress but instead a class to look forward to.
- Team building and interactions, helpful tips
- Lots of the people on my floor had this class, so it was nice that I could meet and talk with them.

- Connections with peers and professors on campus.
- Being able to learn about resources that I otherwise would not have known about.
- I learned where campus resources are how to use them.
- Planning and learning about resources.
- Just learning a lot more about surviving collage life with tools and resources found all around campus.
- nothing everything we did went over in class was stuff i went over i high school and/or saddle up
- This course was incredibly good at helping connect with the rest of my floor and other people in school as well. It was very useful for connecting with others and starting to bond with other students
- and really make a community. Our teachers both went tell out of their way to try and interact with the class and work with them in specific.
- I was able to work with some wonderful instructors, and reach out to other people.
- I was able to explore more places on campus. I was also able to socialize with people that have similar interests to mine.
- the class was later in the day. I have a hard time waking up even if I sleep for 12 or 13 or even 14 hours so it being later in the day was helpful.
- We learned about some of the resources available on-campus. We got to visit some cool places, like the makerspace or the american heritage center.
- I think the course helped to ground me as a first year student and get me organized. It somewhat helped me build community with people on my floor, and the halloween event was a blast. I loved
- visiting different parts of the campus, and I thought that the work tied in with our llc pretty well.
- It helped put all the little things into perspective while also helping me realize that I'm doing exactly what I need to be doing and I'm ahead of my time.
- Just being able to step back and look at all the classes your taking and just have a second to breath.
- Learning of all the oppurtunities on campus and college as a whole.
- Being able to learn more about the campus.
- Learning about the resources available on campus.
- I was able to acclimate to college more readily
- I started going to the UW counseling center
- Being able to navigate the countless number of websites we need as well as how to do many things in college.
- Understanding the campus and its resources and benefits. There are so many things here, but you just don't see them because they are all hidden or "behind the scenes."
- I was able to connect with people that also had the same interests as me and make new friends.
- I was able to learn about resources offered at this school
- This class helped acclimate me into the college life and taught me what to college level classes looked like and what to expect. It also helped me get to know campus a lot better and showed me
- the different resources on campus.

- This class helped me learn more about UW and myself. It showed me resources and showed me that a lot of other students are similar to me in the ways of how they are doing academically and
- has helped me connect with other students.
- I really enjoy having a class with people who live on my floor, I think it gave us all a sense of community that we can build on next semester.
- I met a lot of new people and got introduced to a lot of resources on campus that can help me with whatever I may need.
- During this course I was able to really think about who I am and the values and traits I want to hold as a person.
- Learned about dealing with stress
- Time management and procrastination tools.
- I think the benefits of this course were that it helped bring to mind things that probably wouldn't be at the top of my mind as a college freshman, and that helped my overall transition into college.
- This course allowed for me to have a dedicated time to getting comfortable and orientating myself in the college life.
- The benefits from this course in my perspective was that I learned about all the resources I have available to me if I need something.
- The benefits of this course were that it allowed me to get the hang of college while still having somewhat of a guide on how to go about college.
- Benefits of this course were learning how to manage time and stress
- rock climbing
- I learned way more about the outdoors and fun stuff to do in the outdoors.
- learning time management
- They allowed me to integrate into college life much better.
- The benefits of this course are learning how to effectively take notes and learning the process to vote in Wyoming.
- Getting to know facilities on campus that I wouldn't normally explore on my own.
- The major benefit of this course is learning all the fine details about academic writing.
- I obtained a broader knowledge of the school, resources offered, and various cultural aspects.
- Learning about campus organizations for help outside the classroom and strategies for personal and mental wellbeing.
- A better work ethic and make more things to look forward to on campus.
- Helped me find places to get help with homework on campus and help me explore campus safely and effectively.
- I think I benefited from learning about the resources on campus, and the impact that culture has on every individuals life.
- Being Exposed to the campus and its resources.
- Some of the benefits of this course is to have a small enough class that is dedicated to learning more how to be successful in college and some of the resources that it provides
- It was a nice class to use as a transition to my first year in collage.
- got to meet more people and see how the outdoor program works
- I wouldn't rember



- it helped me to meet some good friends

### **Suggested Changes**

- Add more creative assignments during class.
- Change the way it is taught and include more activities
- do more activities that are actually enjoyable and will get our attention
- Do not call it games for gamers when that only takes up like 5% percent of class
- Eliminate the side activities and focus on actual business resources that will help us throughout college. For example we visited the art museum and I think that was pointless.
- going outside and doing things that are actually outdoors
- Have the course activities actually function.
- Honestly, I would love even more trips around campus to get introduced to places we might not know about. I also think having more visitors would help build a sense of community and show that the University is interconnected. The reflections often felt like busy work, and even if the point was to reflect, I didn't always feel like I got much out of it. I didn't feel motivated to put a lot of effort into the coursework, mostly because I didn't think we would have coursework. Going into the class, I had no idea what an llc class would entail. If that was explained a little better, or if the class was optional, I think that would help students like me.
- I do not have any recommendations. (or variation) (multiple)
- I really enjoyed the course activities I have no recommendations.
- I think it would be much more fun with more activities during the class, to engage students.
- I think just a little more study time would be nice. One day a week we explore campus or explore the resouces we need for success and the second day of the week it's study hall time.
- I think just more fun activities.
- I think that going around campus more would be a good addition.
- I think the course activities were good and need little if any revision.
- I would have a more organized course and the ability to see grades
- I would like more hands on classes vs having people come and talk to us.
- I would recommend to maybe combine some STEP classes to increase student interaction and attendance.
- Just more games if possible I know it was a hard fit as it was.
- Lots of downtime, I think that we could have only had class once a week and still covered all of the same material.
- make it a bit shorter
- Make sure the kids in the class are all supposed to be there. This class was so unnecessary for me, but I could see it helping the others in the class, so I know it is needed and helpful, just not for all.
- make the activities a little more challenging
- Make the assignments less tedious.

- Make them actually meaningful/educational. The coursework and subjects covered felt like they were aimed at middle schoolers rather than college students.
- Make them more interactive
- Making the class times a bit longer.
- Maybe do more of the activities in person while we are in class.
- Maybe having more fun activities instead of videos and reflection papers.
- maybe more group work with peers in the class, I really wish I talked and worked directly with my peers as to make a couple of friends.
- maybe we play a little games once in a while
- More applicable lessons to everyday life
- More group-oriented discussions and assignments amongst the students instead of the course primarily being the instructor talking about a topic
- more hands on learning
- More hands on work.
- more intractive
- More navigation of UW sites and aid on class registration would help
- My only recommendation would be talk about healthcare more, but that would be kind of tough to do in all honesty.
- No recommendations for changes or improvements, I liked the course
- None it was perfect
- None, as we did everything such as explore campus, and go into buildings to learn more about what's provided,
- None, really; everything we've done seems pretty on-brand for the class.
- Not doing activities that don't matter like the card activity.
- Online organization could be better.
- Overall, I really enjoyed all the class activities and think they all helped to grow myself as a student and a person.
- Please refrain from going to the art museum, business kids and abstract art do not mix when the questions about the artist are "is this artist on drugs?"
- Possibly making the classes more interactive
- Probably go more in-depth on a few of them to teach more about them.
- Some course activities could be mandatory.
- some more engaging activiteswould be great, there were alot of activities on some days and others it was really bland and did not make themselfe relavent to my day.
- Some of the activities provoked no motivation and seemed like a waste of time.
- The course activities often felt unnecessary. However, they helped occasionally.
- The course needs to be reworked entirely for it to be considered a college-level course, in my opinion. Right now, it is rudimentary at best. Things that are taught in this course are things we learn in high school.
- The title of the class is misleading. For being called "Games and Gamers", the activity we do and the theming of the class doesn't really reflect that.
- to have them be more specific.

### **Saddle Up Comparison to STEP 1102**

- A few things overlapped, like the greendot and wellness wheel

- Both are business classes.
- Both helped with future skills and introduced us to skills used in and out of the classroom.
- Due to not being able to attend most of the Saddle Up events, STEP 1102 gave me the information that I missed.
- Going over where things on campus are and how to use them properly.
- got to see the campus, meet new people, and learn new tools.
- Helped me figure out pretty quickly how to balance the workload with a social life.
- helped me learn more about campus
- I did not attend Saddle Up, I was in Europe, but from what I've heard of Saddle up, this class was a lot more helpful than saddle up would have been.
- I did not attend saddle up.
- I did not do saddle up
- i did not like it at all it was so boring
- I did not like Saddle Up, it was too busy and very boring. This class is fun and helpful in my everyday life it assists me both in academics and socially.
- I did not really enjoy saddle up, and thought it was kind of irrelevant to my major as I was in the college of engineering. This course feels much more appropriate.
- I didn't attend saddle up
- I didn't see a lot of overlap
- I don't know. Not really overlapping, they were both easy.
- I enjoyed my STEP 1102 experience more than Saddle Up because It helped me in very similar ways but was more spread out and not put into a week. I feel like I learned about very similar things in Saddle Up and in STEP 1102.
- I feel like step was Saddle up continued. It was a great transition for me as a freshman to be reminded of everything in Saddle up as well as well as dive deeper into some of the basic information provided.
- I felt like they were almost identical and this class could have been altered to be more engaging
- I felt that saddle up and this course were very similar, almost the same.
- I had most of everything already covered in saddle up step just gave me a little extra.
- I hated saddle up but I feel like this course was an extra addition to that but it had helped me understand just a little bit more than I did understand before.
- I have learned more this class because during the saddle up my co pack leader was not helpful at all
- I think STEP was more useful in that it gave me more knowledge about resources on a longer basis, than the quick and fast format of saddle up which I did not enjoy.
- I think the step class just went into more detail on the things that saddle up covered. Sometimes it felt like we were just going over things I already knew, but I also took college classes in high school, so I don't know if I'm the best candidate for feedback.
- I think they overlapped a lot in the beginning, this class definitely felt like a repeat of saddle up, it has the potential to be a useful course but it needs more work.
- I think this class was way more effective than saddle up.
- I was unable to attend saddle up.
- I wouldn't know

- I'm one of the odd ones out who are part of the class, but do not live on the FYE floor. As such, my Saddle Up experience did not really overlap at all (in terms of coursework) with that of my STEP 1102 (as an Undeclared major, I kind of got thrown into a random Saddle Up class about the Energy Transition---not super relevant, but I enjoyed it nonetheless). I suppose, however, they have overlapped in their efforts to make me feel welcome at college: they've both introduced me to resources, they've both made me part of a mini-community, and they've both acted as a sort of introduction to what the next four (well, three-and-a-half-ish now) years will look like.
- many of the speakers that came into the class were people that most of us already heard from during saddle up
- Many of the things we did in Saddle Up transitioned into STEP 1102 which was helpful, but also a bit annoying because we had to complete many things for Saddle Up, but had to redo them when we went to STEP 1102.
- Most of the things that were taught in this class, were already taught in a shorter and more enjoyable time in Saddle Up.
- My STEP 1102 class was much better than saddle up, I learned more in this class than during saddle up
- N/A
- n/a
- N/A - was doing marching band
- Neither was very helpful in preparing me for college; both just re-taught stuff that high school had already gone over. They overlapped quite a bit in terms of material presented - mental health, campus resources, study skills, etc.
- No overlap as I was much more challenged and found the saddle up to be significantly more fun except for the lectures about mental health which I didn't need.
- none
- Not too much overlap but them together helped me feel more prepared
- Saddle Up and STEP overlapped a little. But I would say STEP did a great job of going more into depth on certain topics, that Saddle Up only had the time to breeze over.
- Saddle Up and this class are carbon copies of one another, if you feel confident about college life, do not take this course.
- Saddle Up helped gave a base to some of the stuff that we would learn in this class. Saddle Up was more about giving the most essential information while STEP is more about some of the minor stuff that would prove to be helpful later on in college
- Saddle up helped to teach the very basics of campus and resources while STEP compounded on those lessons.
- SADDLE UP made the begging of this class feel redundant. However as time went by this feeling decreased
- Saddle up was a lot more intensive and I felt like I learned a lot more about the college experience through saddle up. This could also be because Saddle Up was the very first week I was here. I do not know if Step was needed because I already had Saddle Up.
- Saddle up was a waste of my time and STEP was not, during saddle up you take a class that does not resemble a real college class at all. The teacher for the course started with a late module and assigned us homework and the class was way too long. The activities

like the glow dance and the rec day were so fun and saddle up should focus on making friends and team building rather than repeating the same things over and over.

- Saddle up was awful compared to this course
- Saddle Up was quite possibly the worst thing. I understand the use of it and why it was done, but it was painfully long and incredibly tiring. I barely interact with anyone in my saddle up group anymore, just because we didn't click as well. In STEP 1102, it's people who were put together for shared interest outside of just major, so it's a lot easier to actually connect with them. It also did a much better job at actually showing where things were on campus, like how to find the wellness center. Saddle Up was more about "Learn how to take a class and study", where STEP 1102 is more "Here's how to actually function in UW and how to find resources you need."
- saddle up was really long
- Saddle up was relatively unaffected by the course
- saddle up was so much better and made this class useless
- Saddle up was super long and had a lot of material, this class is better because it's more relaxed.
- STEP 1102 ended up having a lot of information that I didn't get in Saddle Up. I was worried that a lot of it was going to be repeated.
- STEP 1102 was a better experience compared to Saddle Up, I felt that they both had similar resources shared to us, but STEP 1102 was able to go more in depth about them and let us explore what all campus had to offer.
- STEP 1102 was much more helpful than my Saddle Up experience. I thought that [REDACTED] gave us meaningful resources and assignments that made us better ourselves and have a better transition into college. It was the perfect amount of work-load while Saddle Up was a little bit too much, and not really accurate to what a College schedule looks like.
- STEP and saddle up talk about the same things but STEP was more fun and beneficial
- They did Complement each other but I definitely enjoyed STEP 1102 more.
- The large majority of my work from this class felt like Saddle Up but again, and it felt very unnecessary to have both.
- The Saddle Up experience also taught me about noting taking skills.
- The STEP 1102 repeated most things that were taught in saddle up, such as the wellness center visit, campus help centers, ect.
- There wasn't really any overlap at all, saddle up was kind of useless.
- They almost completely overlapped
- They are very similar, so maybe change it up so it's not a repeat of information.
- They both complimented the different help sources I could use around campus.
- They both had a great way of exploring campus, and teaching us how to reach out.
- They both helped me adapt to campus life and meet other student however saddle up felt a bit redundant to summer bridge.
- They both helped me have a greater understanding of where things are on the campus and how to get help and not to make things harder for myself.
- They both helped the basic needs of college.
- They both provided information for how to navigate as well as use most of campus resources. They also both provided opportunities for students to speak with one another. Saddle Up did more fun activities compared to STEP.

- They both talked a lot about different experiences on campus.
- They both taught us different skills we would need throughout college.
- They complimented and gave me more insight for college life
- They did not overlap
- They did not really overlap each other. The STEP 1102 class made Saddle Up a lot easier because I knew campus a little better and I knew what to expect involving a busy schedule.
- they did only a little not too bad
- they felt the same at points because they introduced us to almost the same amount of resources.
- They overlap a lot, but I had already made this comment up above.
- they overlapped alot in the what can you do on campus area, while saddle up was a great activity were we got to go to each location, step 1102 we only did research and visited a few locations
- They overlapped in almost every way. Many of the days/activities/knowledge were the same, but other weren't.
- They overlapped quite a bit. I did feel at times if this was saddle up all over again
- they overlapped with all the basic information.
- They overlapped/compliments each other well, saddle up and STEP 1102 talked about some of the same stuff and answered all potential questions.
- They shared some of the same informaiton but the step class is more personal and goes more in depth on those topics
- They showed me many of the same resources on campus.
- They were practically the same. Saddle Up and STEP-1102 "taught" me about the college first-year experience. Saddle Up was far more effective.
- They were similar in providing information about the resources there are on campus.
- They were similar with helping get a good feel for college
- They were very similar but personally I think Step 1102 is helping way more.
- they worked nicely in developing on campus knowledge as well as knowing more about on campus resources. They overlapped in many ways and felt like a 'class version' of saddle up, which in all honesty I preferred.
- This class actually replaced my saddle up experience so I don't really have anything to compare it to.
- This class is a lot easier than saddle up was and it has showed me many of the same places and resources that saddle up also showed me.
- This course complements Saddle Up by both the courses teaching about critical thinking.
- This course went into better detail and we were able to actually explore things we were interested in and needed instead of what saddle up did.
- While both were supposed to aid in the transition to college, my STEP class was much more beneficial overall and much more enjoyable than a week of intensive "college simulation".
- Yeah it just really helped with the transition into this new environment

### Other Comments

- Easy course, little to no work and and a carbon copy to saddle up.

- I feel like it wasn't a bad course. The instructors did a great job of using what they had and i feel like the course material just needs to be more flushed out
- I liked most of the time
- I loved being able to get to know the campus and its resources better. I also enjoyed bonding with my classmates and having a very enthusiastic teacher! We were encouraged to engage in activities outside of the class, which was fun, and were always accompanied by our teacher.
- I really enjoyed the course and think incoming Freshman should definitely consider taking a STEP class.
- I recommend this course for all freshmen.
- I think it was kind of a waste of time but has potential to be better
- I think that [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are great, and I would absolutely recommend them for teaching this class again! I loved how they taught the class, I just didn't find it particularly useful or helpful, but I'm sure it was helpful for other students. I just think this class should be optional, and if it is, I think that should be better communicated. My roommate isn't enrolled in a step class, so I don't know if it's required or not. But if it is, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are great teachers! :)
- I think this was a good experience.
- I was under the impression that an outdoor rec class would involve going outside and that was not the case.
- I would recommend this class to many people as a good transition class that also counts for credit.
- It was a fun course that helped me settle into college more easily than without it.
- It was a very fun course and allowed me to make connected with like-minded people and introduced me to many resources I otherwise wouldn't have known about.
- it was an alright class. I didn't really need it
- it was cool to see the campus in person a
- it was ok, it added stress to an already stressful year but it could have been worse.
- It was very helpful for real world issues. I wish it was earlier in the day.
- Its very helpful.
- Make it half a semester? It doesn't need to be nearly as long as it is. Or go further in-depth into topics. I'd have loved to learn more about budgeting, financial wellness, and online resources available to students.
- make it more engaging
- Michelle was so generous, kind, and helpful throughout the course. Although I forgot to schedule a meeting with her for the semester, I would have been comfortable going in and talking to her one on one because of the kindness and warmth she showed every morning.
- Mollie Hand is a very good instructor. She is great at helping students with any questions they may have and helping them find resources if she is unable to answer a question. She made the course engaging and fun while still keeping it educational.
- Overall it could have been done differently and there was little to no excitement or wanting to go to this class.
- The wellness wheel didn't feel all that helpful, and became more of a pain than actually useful for telling how we are doing and what we need help with.

- These classes were greatly appreciated in help those who may not be familiar with college has some idea of what to expect and how to be successful in both short-term and long-term
- this class is made useless by saddle up. saddle up basically did everything this class did but 100 times better.
- This class was an overall fun class to take, and I would recommend it for anyone to take.
- This was my favorite class this semester and I would recommend it to other students.