

FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE SEMINARS: HOW CONTRASTING MODELS IMPACT
THE COLLEGE TRANSITION AND RETENTION

by

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ABSTRACT

Most institutions of higher education utilize First Year Experience (FYE) coursework to facilitate college adjustment and student retention. FYE courses are designed to support the college transition by introducing freshman to campus resources that can help them achieve their educational and career goals; however, there is much variation in instructional design across college campuses depending on students' needs and institutional goals. This dissertation examined the differences in student outcomes based on enrollment in either academic content-specific or broad introductory FYE coursework. The first study used a qualitative method to examine resilient Honors students' perceptions of how their introductory FYE course impacted their college transition at the end of their first semester. The second study utilized several quantitative models to longitudinally assess the difference between FYE course enrollment and students' cumulative GPAs, retention, and perceptions during their junior year of college.

Thematic analysis of questionnaire responses revealed that the resilient Honors students believed their broad introductory FYE course supported their social and academic transition to college by relieving stress that is commonly associated with the beginning of higher education. The quantitative study found that students who were enrolled in academic content-specific FYE courses had higher grades, retention, and scored higher on college success strategies and first-year satisfaction factor scores, compared to students who were enrolled in the broad introductory FYE courses. These findings were discussed in relation to the current literature on college adjustment, followed by a discussion of the implications for academic units, limitations of the study, and future directions for research in this area.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The college transition can be challenging for many traditional-age students (i.e., 18-22 years old) (Astin, 1984, 1993, 1999; Goldrick, 2007; Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Lu, 1994; Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson, & Terenzini, 2003; Pratt et al., 2000; Tinto, 2006; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). For example, students commonly struggle with the increased autonomy associated with living on a college campus (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Tierney, Corwin, & Colyar, 2005), and many also find that they were not adequately prepared for the academic rigors of higher education (Hearn, 1991; Collier & Morgan, 2008; Walpole, 2003). Unfortunately, students who have difficulty with their college adjustment often perform poorly academically and are more likely to drop out from the university (Baker & Siryk, 1999; DeBerard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004; O'Malley & Johnston, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 2006; 2010).

Most institutions of higher education utilize First Year Experience (FYE) coursework to facilitate college adjustment and student retention (Barefoot, 1992, 2003; Padgett, Johnson, & Pascarella, 2012). Generally offered in one-credit seminars or colloquia, FYE courses are designed to support the college transition by introducing freshman to campus resources that can help them achieve their educational and career goals (DeBerard et al., 2004; Dougherty, 1992; Gordon, 1991; Jamelske, 2006; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008; Porter & Swing, 2006). However, not all FYE programs are created equal; and indeed, there is much variation in instructional design across college campuses depending on students' needs and institutional goals (Cavote & Kopera-Frye, 2004; Goldey, 2004; Needham, 2012; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005). The Honors College at Southwest University is one such example. Not all of the Honors

students could take the same style of FYE course in 2011 during the Honors College's program development due to resource limitations. Consequently, it was very likely that students were exposed to different opportunities and experiences depending on which FYE course they were enrolled in (Friedman & Marsh, 2009). This dissertation used two separate studies to examine the differential college adjustment outcomes of Honors students who were enrolled in either the Student Success Seminar or Honors Colloquia FYE courses; specifically, grade point average (GPA), retention, and course perceptions, including satisfaction.

Background of the Problem

This dissertation specifically addressed the contrasting models of the Honors College's FYE coursework: Student Success Seminar and Honors Colloquia. Resilient Honors students, individuals who came from underrepresented backgrounds (e.g., first-generation student, low SAT/ACT scores, low high school GPA), yet had demonstrated to Southwest University's Admissions and Recruitment staff their potential to graduate with the Honors distinction despite facing many barriers (Masten, 2012; Werner, 1990), were enrolled into Student Success Seminar. The term "resilient" was also used to describe this special-interest group instead of language with negative connotations, such as "at-risk", to avoid labeling students as being academically inferior to their peers. Each section of Student Success Seminar was led by an upperclassman in the Honors College, with occasional visits from Honors faculty throughout the semester. The upperclassmen instructors, called preceptors, were given a pre-set curriculum to follow and were not responsible for grading the freshmen students' FYE assignments to avoid potential conflicts of interest. All grading was performed by the Student Success Seminar Course Coordinator, and the Associate Dean of the Honors College was listed as the instructor of record. The main curricular focus of Student Success Seminar was to guide students how to identify various

campus resources (e.g., tutoring and counseling centers, student and academic affairs staff) and learning strategies (e.g., help-seeking, note-taking) that could help facilitate their social and academic transition to college. Group activities and discussions, visits to sites across campus, and three one-on-one meetings with their preceptors outside of class were some of the ways Student Success Seminar was designed to help students meet the curricular objectives.

Meanwhile, the rest of the Honors incoming class were enrolled into the academic-themed Honors Colloquia. These FYE courses were special topics classes led by Honors faculty from various disciplines. Although still intended to support Honor students' college adjustment and retention, sections of Honors Colloquia differed from Student Success Seminar in that they provided students with academic content depending on the instructor's area of interest (e.g., literature, stem cell research), rather than specifically teaching student success strategies. Each faculty instructor was responsible for designing their own section and evaluating their students. Regardless of FYE seminar format, both Student Success Seminar and Honors Colloquia were delivered as a one-credit seminar, limited to 20 students per section, and designed for first-year Honors students to take during their first semester at Southwest University.

FYE research has become more prevalent in recent years (e.g., Barton & Donahue, 2009; Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Hunter & Linder, 2005; Jamelske, 2006; Keup & Barefoot, 2005; Pratt et al., 2000); however, it is not clear whether academic content-specific FYE courses impact college adjustment differently compared to broad introductory models because few studies have actually explored how their outcomes are distinct from each other within the same institutional setting (Cavote & Kopera-Frye, 2004; Friedman & Marsh, 2009). It is important to address this literature gap, and to understand how enrollment in either course affects students' college transition.

Another reason that determining best practices for FYE seminars has been difficult is that researchers often do not obtain and control for students' pre-college characteristics (e.g., high school GPA, SAT scores, parental educational attainment, race/ethnicity, gender), which can mediate their college GPA and retention (Cavote & Kopera-Frye, 2004; Farkas, 2009; Hearn, 1991; Karen, 2003; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of over 40 studies exploring the difference in graduation rates based on whether students completed an FYE seminar. Although these studies resulted in an estimated effect size that supported students' graduation rates based on enrollment in FYE coursework by 5 to 15 percentage points (2005), the authors caution that all of the research failed to control for students' pre-college characteristics. These factors likely confounded the effects of the FYE seminars on participants' grades and retention, and therefore future research is required to help understand how this coursework can better facilitate the college transition.

Statement of the Problem

Given the gap in the research literature pertaining to the various styles of FYE coursework and controlling for participants' pre-college characteristics, this dissertation explored the differences between two contrasting models of FYE seminars. Little is known regarding the effects of the placement of one group of incoming freshmen in a broad introductory FYE seminar program while their classmates are placed in academic-themed FYE courses. Therefore, I specifically examined: (1) Student Success Seminar, an Honors FYE program that specifically enrolls resilient, primarily first-generation students, and (2) Honors Colloquia, an FYE program designed to introduce Honors students to specialized academic content areas. This dissertation examined the differences in student outcomes using two separate studies. The first study used a qualitative method to examine Student Success Seminar students' perceptions of how the FYE

course impacted their college transition at the end of their first semester at Southwest University. The second study utilized several quantitative models to longitudinally assess the difference between Student Success Seminar and Honors Colloquia enrollment on students' cumulative GPAs, retention, and perceptions during their junior year of college.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Within the setting of Southwest University, my research questions were:

1. How did enrollment in the Student Success Seminar FYE course impact resilient Honors students' college adjustment and transition? (Qualitative)
2. How did enrollment in either Student Success Seminar or Honors Colloquia affect students' grade point average and retention to their second and third year of college?

H1: Enrollment in either Student Success Seminar or Honors Colloquia will significantly affect students' grade point average and retention to their second and third year of college.

3. Did students perceive that their FYE course provided them with important learning strategies for social and academic success during their first year of college?

H1: There will be a significant difference in students' perceptions regarding whether their FYE course provided them with important learning strategies for social and academic success during their first year of college.

4. Can students' first-year satisfaction with the Honors College be explained by the type of FYE coursework they were enrolled in?

H1: Students' first-year satisfaction with the Honors College will be significantly different depending on the type of FYE coursework.

5. How did students' perceptions of Student Success Seminar change between their freshman and junior year of college?

H1: There will be a significant change in students' perceptions of Student Success Seminar between their freshman and junior year of college.

Overview of Methodology

The methodologies used in this dissertation are briefly outlined below; however, a comprehensive description of each study is described in Chapters 3 and 4 (see Table 1.1).

Using a qualitative approach, the first study in this dissertation (Chapter 3) assessed the resilient Honors students' perceptions of how enrollment in Student Success Seminar impacted their educational experiences at the end of their first semester (Fall 2011). In lieu of filling out a course evaluation at the end of the term, all students who completed Student Success Seminar during Fall 2011 were offered the opportunity to participate in the study. With the assistance of the Co-Principal Investigator and a research assistant, I extracted and analyzed four open-ended questionnaire items from 68 first-generation resilient Honors students who had SAT scores below 1,200. The themes developed from this study provided an initial report of whether resilient Honors students perceived Student Success Seminar to support their social and academic transition to college.

The second study in this dissertation (Chapter 4) utilized several quantitative analyses during the Honors students' junior year (Fall 2013) in order to assess the enduring effects of their

Table 1.1

Research Methodology Overview

Study	Description
Chapter 3 – Qualitative Method	
Cross-Sectional	
FYE Participants	Student Success Seminar
Data Source	Fall 2011 Course Assessment
Outcomes	Students' Perceptions of FYE objectives
Chapter 4 – Quantitative Method	
Longitudinal	
FYE Participants	Student Success Seminar and Honors Colloquia
Data Source	Institutional Records
Outcomes	GPA and Retention
Cross-Sectional	
FYE Participants	Student Success Seminar and Honors Colloquia
Data Source	Fall 2013 Follow-up Survey
Outcomes	Students' Perceptions of FYE objectives
Repeated Measures	
FYE Participants	Student Success Seminar
Data Source	Fall 2011 Course Assessment and Fall 2013 Follow-up Survey
Outcomes	Mean Difference in Students' Perceptions of FYE objectives

enrollment in either Student Success Seminar or Honors Colloquia. Data were extracted from three separate sources: institutional records, the Student Success Seminar Fall 2011 course assessment, and a Fall 2013 follow-up survey that was completed by students who were enrolled in either of the Honors FYE courses in Fall 2011. Multiple data sets were necessary in order to explore the differences in students' GPAs, retention, and perceptions of their FYE coursework. The students' perceptions I was interested in studying include how enrollment in either FYE course affected their knowledge of learning strategies that are necessary for social and academic success during their first year of college, and satisfaction with their first-year experience in the

Honors College. I was also interested in exploring how Student Success Seminar participants' perceptions about their course experiences may have changed between Fall 2011 and Fall 2013. Hierarchical linear and binary logistic regression models were used to analyze the difference in students' grades, retention, and perceptions; and several paired *t*-tests were conducted as a repeated measures analysis of Student Success Seminar participants' change in perceptions after two years.

Significance of the Study

This dissertation contributes to the research literature within the fields of Educational Psychology, Higher Education, FYE programming, Student and Academic Affairs, Honors College outcomes, and high-ability at-risk students. My findings can help inform educational researchers and student affairs practitioners on whether various styles of FYE coursework have the potential to impact student outcomes differently; particularly with respects to enrolling students in a broad, introductory seminar vs. an FYE course with specific academic content. The underlying implication is that students who perceive their FYE coursework to be beneficial and who use the learning strategies throughout their college career will be more likely to graduate (Barefoot, 2003; Duckworth, Grant, Loewa, Oettingen, & Gollwitzer, 2011; Gordon, 1991; Gore, 2006; Keup, 2005; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2010; Tinto, 2000, 2006).

This dissertation can also encourage future research to more thoroughly assess Honors colleges' curricular and social programming initiatives in order to determine how they can support resilient students to develop socially and academically. There has been very little empirical research in this area given that most Honors colleges admit students who were on a strong college-prep track (i.e., high SAT/ACT/high school GPAs) (Rinn, 2005; Scott, 2013). Therefore, my dissertation offers an especially novel examination of the impact of an Honors

FYE course for individuals from underrepresented backgrounds who would have potentially been denied access to Honors programming at other institutions.

Given that a majority of this research was conducted using self-reports in either questionnaire or survey instruments, it was assumed that participants would answer truthfully about their experiences in their FYE course, the Honors College, and Southwest University. It was also assumed that when completing the Fall 2013 follow-up survey, the participants would be able to accurately remember the components of their Fall 2011 FYE course so they could answer the items to the best of their ability.

Organization

This dissertation includes five chapters. I used a hybrid model in that Chapters 3 and 4 were written as two separate journal articles, rather than the methodology and results of one individual study, respectively. The tables are embedded within each chapter throughout the dissertation, with the exception of larger, cumbersome correlation matrices and figures. These are listed in the appendix as noted. Please also note that tables and figures are numbered such that the number to the left of the decimal place corresponds to the chapter in which the table resides, and the number to the right of the decimal place refers to the table's sequence in the article. For example, Table 3.1 is the first table in Chapter 3.

The dissertation is organized with Chapter 2, the Literature Review, following Chapter 1. Chapters 3 and 4 are separate studies that are qualitative and quantitative, respectively. Chapter 5 includes the Discussion where I summarize the main findings and significance from Chapters 3 and 4, seek corroboration between the two studies where possible, and include implications, recommendations, limitations, and future directions for the entire dissertation. Given the hybrid nature of this dissertation, some content will overlap between each chapter where applicable.

For example, some material from Chapter 2 was used to support the writing of the individual studies' literature reviews in Chapters 3 and 4. Additionally, Chapter 5 will review the main findings from Chapters 3 and 4, in addition to providing unique implications for the entire dissertation.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The first year of college is an exciting time with new opportunities and challenges (Côté, 2006; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008; Samuolis, Layburn, & Schiaffino, 2001). Upon entering higher education, many students will move away from home and begin the rite of passage into adulthood. However, most first-time, full-time college students (i.e., 18 – 22 years old) typically face many obstacles when trying to adjust to their new environment (DeBerard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004; Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Fincham, 2010). College adjustment generally falls into three categories: academic, social, and personal-emotional (Astin, 1975; Baker & Siryk, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005); and students who are able to adjust to challenges in these areas tend to have an easier time acclimating to their new environments. Unfortunately, students who have difficulty adjusting to college are much more likely to drop out (Astin, 1999; Tinto, 2006; Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009). In fact, nearly half of all the students who leave college usually do so before their second year (Lu, 1994; Symonds, 2012). Due to the implications of college adjustment on first-year students' persistence and retention, the primary goals of this literature review are to: (1) identify two key theories of student retention, (2) examine the academic, social, and personal-emotional aspects of college adjustment, and (3) explore the role of First Year Experience (FYE) seminars in facilitating the college transition and preventing student departure.

First-year students are often highly motivated to begin their higher education (Noel-Levitz, 2012), but only 57% of students from four-year public institutions will graduate after six years of enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Educational researchers have posited various reasons to understand why many students do not complete their degrees in four years, or

worse, drop out entirely. For the purposes of this literature review, the theories of retention discussed are Tinto's (1975, 1988) Theory of Student Departure, and Astin's (1984, 1999) Theory of Student Involvement. These theories are very prominent in the field of student retention, and have evolved since their inception to continue to inspire a new generation of research.

Theories of Student Retention

Theory of Student Departure

The Theory of Student Departure, also known as the Student Integration Model, was developed to understand why students leave college (Tinto, 1975). There are various reasons why an individual might decide to drop out (e.g., poor academic performance, financial hardship); however, the Theory of Student Departure focuses on students' specific experiences that occur before and during the freshman year of college (Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997). Pre-college experiences include the interactions students have with teachers and family members about college, as well as exposure to additional college preparatory information (e.g., knowledge of the college application process, Advanced Placement coursework). Tinto (1988, 2000) believed that the information about college that students acquire while still in high school is used, in part, to influence college selection, goals for graduation, or academic departure decisions.

Tinto (1975) modeled his theory after sociological research on suicide. Based on Durkheim's (1951) finding that individuals were more likely to commit suicide if they became socially isolated, either by choice or because of peer alienation, Tinto posited that students would be more likely to drop out of college if they did not become integrated into their institution. While Durkheim's research focused on social isolation, Tinto (1988; 2000) has defined integration as both academic and social; and how well students become integrated depends on

their backgrounds, the role of their institution, and their college experiences once classes start. Using the sociological research as an analogy, Tinto (1975) asserted that students became “isolated” from their university if they were unwilling to separate themselves from their past identities from their previous schools, communities, and relationships; and this isolation likely led to the students dropping out. In order for students to become fully integrated, and therefore experience a more successful adjustment to college, Tinto (1975, 1993) believed it was crucial for them to adopt the new social and academic norms and behaviors associated with their institution. These could include, but are not limited to, joining student clubs, forming a study group with friends, participating in extracurricular activities, and interacting with faculty and staff.

As a result of students becoming integrated with their campus, Tinto (1975, 2006) thought their retention rates would improve because these students would likely develop stronger personal goals and institutional commitments. These goals and commitments are imperative for student persistence, and can be specifically thought of as “the extent to which the individual shares the normative attitudes and values of peers and faculty in the institution and abides by the formal and informal structural requirements for membership in that community or in subgroups of it” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 51).

Since its inception in the mid 1970’s, the Theory of Student Departure has received both accolades and criticism. Many studies on college adjustment and transition have used Tinto’s model as a framework to understand persistence and retention (e.g., Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993; Grossett, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983), while others found that the theory was generally a poor predictor of retention beyond the freshman year (Braxton et al., 1997; Neumann & Finaly-Neumann, 1989). Apart from model validation, much of the criticisms regarding

Tinto's seminal work relates to its limited focus on residential college campuses, and predominantly White males. In fact, social justice and racial identity development researchers (e.g., Bean & Metzner, 1985; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Tierney, 2000) refuted Tinto's claim that in order to successfully become integrated at their institutions, racial/ethnic minorities would need to dismiss their racial identity to fit in with the White majority on campus. Fortunately, Tinto has continued to be active in educational research, and was able to respond to these valid critiques.

In reaction to critics, and the growing diversification of students entering higher education since his early research (Hearn, 1991; Karen, 2002), Tinto (1993) expanded his Theory of Student Departure by suggesting students from various backgrounds (e.g., transfer, non-traditional age, racial/ethnic minorities) often had unique circumstances and experiences before and during college that should not be undermined or forgotten. He also acknowledged that students' experiences during college may vary by institution, depending on their different purposes and missions (e.g., community college, liberal arts college, research, residential, public, private), as well as the different communities where the colleges were located (e.g., urban, rural) (Tinto, 2010). Given the many new variables that could affect his theory, Tinto (1993, 2010) posited that in order to facilitate students' integration and their alignment of goals and commitments with their respective campus community, institutions should be held responsible for developing specific retention practices in recognition of these differences. Additionally, in response to the absence of racial and ethnic minorities in his original work, the updated theory stated that it was in fact important for these individuals to keep their connections with family and native communities because this often had a positive influence on their retention, especially at universities with a predominately White student population (Cabrera, Nora, Pascarella,

Terenzini, & Hagedorn, 1999; Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012; Tierney, 2000).

The Theory of Student Departure has played a tremendous role in helping academic faculty, staff, and educational researchers to understand factors that impact college adjustment and retention. However, Tinto's model tends to focus on the processes by which a student drops out of college, and did not initially provide many recommendations for student and academic affairs personnel who are responsible for preventing departure once students start classes. Instead, Astin's (1984, 1993) Theory of Student Involvement, another highly regarded theory of student retention, is more often used in practice on college campuses.

Theory of Student Involvement

Building from the Theory of Student Departure, Astin's (1984) Theory of Student Involvement is also a very commonly used framework to understand why students drop out of college. This model has been adopted by many student and academic affairs practitioners because it has repeatedly demonstrated that students learn, and are more likely to stay enrolled, by becoming involved with campus-related activities (Astin, 1993; 1999; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005). This theory placed less emphasis on students' pre-college knowledge and characteristics, but rather focused on the role students must play in their own development and success once on campus (Astin, 1984). The degree to which students become involved (e.g., extracurricular activities, part-time job on campus, student clubs) is important because it can greatly impact development and retention (Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2010). Additionally, students are often more successful in finding ways to become involved if their campus provides many different outlets (e.g., service learning, athletics, Greek life), but Astin's (1984) theory strongly emphasized that students' agency in

determining when and how to become involved in various activities was more important than campus outreach.

Student involvement can be operationally defined as the physical and psychological energy students devote to their academic experience (Astin, 1984; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009). In addition to this definition, there are five main tenets that comprise the theory of student involvement:

- (1) Involvement can be generalized (e.g., the overall campus experience) or specific (e.g., attending a review session).
- (2) Involvement occurs along a continuum, which may vary for each student.
- (3) Involvement is comprised of both qualitative (e.g., psychological/mental commitment) and quantitative (e.g., amount of time on task) features.
- (4) Students' learning and development is directly related to the quality and quantity of their campus involvement.
- (5) Educational policy or practice is directly related to its student involvement opportunities.

Over time, student integration and involvement have blended together into what higher education researchers and practitioners refer to as student engagement (Kuh, 2003, 2008; Kuh et al., 2008). Student engagement is generally comprised of two components: (1) the amount of time and effort students devote to academic/professional activities (e.g., study groups, attending office hours, internships), and (2) the degree to which institutions reach out to students and encourage them to participate in these activities (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006; Kuh, 2003, 2009; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Consistent with the work by Tinto (1975, 2006), Astin (1984, 1999), and others (e.g., Kuh, et al., 2010; Nelson, Quinn, Marrington, & Clarke, 2012), student

engagement recognizes that students are more likely to succeed in college if they have more interactions on campus that support their educational and career goals. While there are various definitions and components of this construct, student engagement has evolved to represent how students and the institution can work together to achieve the desired outcomes of college (e.g., academic and social development, degree attainment, employment).

The theories of student retention provide an important framework for understanding the implications of the college transition on persistence and retention. Much attention has been given to the first-year transition because understanding how students adjust to college can play a critical role in the development of student success programs and services, in addition to preventing student departure.

College Adjustment

College adjustment refers to how students cope with the new experiences and interactions they encounter during their first year at college (Baker & Siryk, 1999; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Unfortunately, there are many difficulties that new students must face which can make college adjustment a challenging process. In addition to the increasing academic demands, the first year of college may be the first time that most students have moved away from home, been separated from old friends, and now need to learn how to form new social and professional networks (Goldrick, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Tierney, Corwin, & Colyar, 2005).

Though there are many challenges first-year students must navigate in order to adapt to their new environments, higher education has evolved from viewing college adjustment as sink-or-swim to a culture of support and resources. Student adjustment to college is considered an important area in both research and practice because students who are better adjusted are more likely to achieve their educational and career goals (Hunter & Linder, 2005; Kuh et al., 2008;

Porter & Swing, 2006; Tinto, 2010). There are many aspects of college adjustment, but the focus of this literature review will be on three key areas: (1) academic, (2) social, (3) personal-emotional. These primary areas were selected because of the significance of the various educational, social, and psychological demands that can be associated with the first year of college.

Academic Adjustment

Most first-year students share the some common goals when they begin college; for instance, earning good grades, graduating with a baccalaureate degree, and eventually obtaining a job with a higher salary than had they not completed their higher education (Karen, 2002; Padgett, Johnson, & Pascarella, 2012). These goals may seem superficial, but educational psychologists such as Bandura (1993, 1997), Gore (2006), Schunk (1990, 2008), and Zimmerman (1989, 2008) agree motivation and effort are essential for students to excel academically. Unfortunately, many of the students who have difficulty with academic adjustment are those who started their postsecondary education with an unrealistic plan of how to achieve their goals (Collier, & Morgan, 2008).

Students from underrepresented backgrounds (e.g., low-income, minority, first-generation) may be especially prone to come to college academically underprepared because they may not understand, or know very little about, their own academic major or career plans (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). Underprepared students, either due to their own lack of ambition, or possibly a function of their parents' or high schools' socio-economic status (SES), are less likely to be aware of the pre-college course work required for desired degree paths (Astin, & Oseguera, 2004; Karen, 2002; Walpole, 2003). For example, high school students who did not take AP

math and science courses perform significantly lower in their majors once in college compared to students who were not exposed to these classes (Billson & Terry, 1982; Rendon et al., 2000). Unfortunately, many college freshmen do not realize their high school coursework did not prepare them for the rigor of college-level classes until they receive their first mid-term exams halfway through the Fall semester (Tierney et al., 2005; Tinto, 2000). The implications of earning failing grades during the first year of college can result in departure by the way of academic dismissal, rather than choice.

Another area where students may experience difficulty adjusting to college academics relates to their class attendance. According to the 2009 "Your First College Year" survey conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, 62.7% of participants reported that they skip class occasionally (Ruiz, Sharkness, Kelly, DeAngelo, & Pryor, 2010), which coincides with the argument that despite academic ability, many students lack motivation. While this study did not ask students why they decided to skip class, another reason besides the lack of motivation could be their increased responsibilities and autonomy now that they live away from home (Côté, 2006; Kuh et al., 2008). College students commonly experience difficulty with time management once parents and high school teachers no longer remind them of their assignments (Allen & Lester, 2012; Tierney et al., 2005). Therefore, students might miss class because they simply forgot, or were not capable of balancing their other commitments.

College preparation, academic ability, motivation, and time management all facilitate academic adjustment, but higher education requires adjustment in other areas as well. A greater emphasis may initially be placed on maintaining grades and scholarships, but learning how to become socially acclimated is just as important as academic adjustment for new college students.

Social Adjustment

Social adjustment is another significant determinant of persistence and graduation (Baker & Siryk, 1999; Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004). Social adjustment includes any of the interactions and experiences that enable students to feel more socially integrated on their campus (Goldrick, 2007). These interactions are generally split into students' involvement with others (e.g., peers, faculty, staff), and the social experiences associated with larger campus activities and student organizations.

College may be the first time that many incoming students are able to learn about the unique perspectives of people who are different from them (Kuh, 1993; 1995). Interacting in meaningful ways with peers, faculty, and staff from different backgrounds (e.g., race/ethnicity, ability/disability, sexual orientation) can help students develop interpersonal relationships (Hurtado et al., 2012; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). These relationships are important because students who find others who care about their success eventually learn to use this social support system as a resource when they encounter a difficult situation (e.g., being homesick, poor exam performance) that that could potentially cause them to decide to drop out (DeBerard et al., 2004; Pike, 2003).

In order to facilitate social adjustment, many institutions provide first-year programming specifically designed to encourage networking with other students and faculty, such as FYE coursework (Lang, 2007), mentorship programs (Bean & Eaton, 2001), and summer bridge programs (Cabrera, Miner & Milem, 2013). Harvey and Housel (2011), Pascarella and Terenzizni, (1977), and Upcraft and Gardner (1989) believed supporting student-faculty relationships in an academic context is an especially useful intervention for social adjustment

because discussing intellectual matters can enhance students' academic performance, persistence, and future career opportunities.

In addition to the interpersonal relationships first-year students develop with peers and faculty, social adjustment may also be enhanced through involvement in other activities and organizations on campus. Joining clubs, intramurals, varsity sports, and social or professional fraternities/sororities are just a few examples of how new students can become socially integrated on their campus (Kuh, 1993; 1995; Pike, 2003). Conversely, students who are less socially active on campus are more likely to drop out (Astin, 1993; DeBerard et al., 2004; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Tinto, 2006). Although the emphasis on academics is at the forefront of many incoming students' goals for their higher education, they must also dedicate time to social activities in order to ensure further college adjustment.

Personal-Emotional Adjustment

In conjunction with the importance of academic and social adjustment, the college transition can also cause many students to experience stress and anxiety (Bowman, 2010). The new responsibilities of balancing school and more independence (e.g., choosing when to visit with friends) can indeed be psychologically overwhelming (Baker & Siryk, 1999). New students must therefore be able to learn how to keep a steady balance in their schedules and cope with increased stress and anxiety in order to avoid the consequences of a negative personal-emotional adjustment. The repercussions of poor personal-emotional adjustment are often associated with making poor decisions about alcohol and substance use (DeBerard et al., 2004; O'Malley & Johnston, 2002), sexual activity (Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006; Owen et al., 2010), and nutritional habits (i.e., malnutrition) (Davy, Benes, & Driskell, 2006; Ha & Caine-Bish, 2009),

which can have negative implications for persistence and retention as well as far-reaching long-term effects on their lifestyles.

Students' coping skills and awareness of the mental health and emotional support resources available on college campus (e.g., counseling centers, peers and faculty mentors) is one aspect of personal-emotional adjustment. Perhaps a more complicated component is their identity development (Jones, 1997; Samuolis et al., 2001). Developmentally, first-time, full-time freshmen are still adolescents (i.e., 17-19 years old), and therefore are still establishing their own identities (Côté, 2006, 2009; Tierney, 2000). Erikson (1968) believed identity is fully developed when individuals accept themselves in a way that was consistent with how they are viewed by others, and that traditional-age college students must overcome this psychosocial crisis known as identity vs. role confusion. Chickering's (1969) Theory of Identity Development is a seminal framework for understanding identity development during higher education. Although most of the personal-emotional components of his theory are analogous to other identity frameworks (e.g., being able to manage emotions, developing autonomy, maintaining mature interpersonal relationships), he believed that college was a time when students must develop a sense of purpose, or a commitment to future goals and aspirations (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Thomas & Chickering, 1984). Using their sense of purpose as a guide, college students often encounter situations where they must re-evaluate their priorities, beliefs, and how they personally fit into the broader society outside of their institutions.

While Erikson (1968) and Chickering (1969) referred to identity development from a holistic stance, identity can be broken up into many different categories (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity), and many freshmen struggle to understand how they fit into these respective groups (Arnett, 2007; Bowman, 2010; Côté, 2009). It is therefore imperative that

students receive support when they work through these different aspects of identity development in order to enhance their personal-emotional adjustment to college.

The theories of college retention, along with the college adjustment literature, have informed educational researchers, policy makers, and student and academic affairs practitioners about the underlying frameworks and mechanisms that are associated with students' college transition. In recognizing the significance of college adjustment on persistence and retention, many institutions employ interventions to help students become acclimated to their new environments and responsibilities (Bean & Eaton, 2001; Cabrera et al., 2013; Keup, 2005; Lang, 2007). While these strategies may vary within and across college campuses, I will focus on FYE seminars, and their role in facilitating the college transition.

First Year Experience Seminars

FYE seminars can be defined as curricular interventions (Allen & Lester, 2012; Porter & Swing, 2006), or programming tools (Jamelske, 2006; Kuh et al., 2008), used to help improve all students' college transition. Since the goals and commitments of each institution and their respective students vary throughout higher education, FYE coursework varies as well. Barefoot (1992) found the five most common categories are: (1) "extended orientation" seminars that continue to expose students to college resources, (2) seminars with a common academic theme among all sections, (3) seminars with various section-specific academic themes, (4) discipline-linked seminars (e.g., professional development for pre-education majors), and (5) remedial, or basic study skills seminars.

The learning outcomes will vary depending on the FYE category and institutional needs; however, regardless of pedagogical technique, FYE seminars tend to share the following common goals:

- To help students feel a sense of community at the institutions (Cabrera et al., 1999; Carini et al., 2006)
- To encourage student involvement and active engagement in institution and community sponsored activities (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 2003, 2008; Kuh et al., 2008)
- To facilitate students' academic and social integration with campus (Tinto, 1988, 2000)

These goals are usually achieved by including learning objectives that encourage students to discover campus resources (e.g., tutoring, library, career centers, mental health services) (Elliot & Healy, 2001; Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Keup & Barefoot, 2005), and develop techniques and skills that they can apply to their other college classes (e.g., help-seeking, time management, goal-setting) (Allen & Lester 2012; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Ramos-Sánchez & Nichols, 2007). These curricular components can support students in their college transition and persistence to their second year by helping them become more integrated into their new environment at the university (Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Porter & Swing, 2006; Tinto, 1975, 2006, 2010). Additionally, given that most FYE courses are delivered using a seminar format, the reoccurring meetings of a smaller class size provides students with the opportunity to develop interpersonal relationships with their peers for either professional or social purposes (Ciania, Summers, Easter, Kennon & Sheldon, 2008; Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Kuh et al., 2008). Research supported by the theories of student retention (Astin, 1999, Cabrera et al., 1993; Grosset, 1991; Tinto 2000) and college adjustment (Baker & Siryk, 1999; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Kuh, 2009; Lu, 1994; Nelson, Quinn, Marrington, & Clarke, 2012) verify that the opportunity to network with peers and become integrated into the campus community can support students' college transition.

The research literature is less clear regarding how academic content-specific FYE courses impact college adjustment compared to the broad introductory models. For example, Cavote and Kopera-Frye (2004) compared 287 academic FYE participants' grades and first-year retention rates with 263 students at the same institution who did not take any FYE coursework; however, they did not find a significant difference in either outcome regardless of coursework. Friedman and Marsh (2009) specifically compared academic FYE participants with individuals who were enrolled in a college transition/success FYE model, but they also did not find a significant difference in students' GPAs or one-year retention rates. However, participants in the college transition/success course reported a greater perception of how to become engaged on their campus outside of class, as well as greater knowledge of campus policies (2009). These findings indicate that the type of FYE seminar offered is less important on student outcomes if grades and retention are the only consideration. Additionally, while these studies and other FYE research have become more prevalent in recent years (e.g., Barton & Donahue, 2009; Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Hunter & Linder, 2005; Jamelske, 2006; Keup, & Barefoot, 2005), determining best practices to ensure positive student outcomes has remained difficult. Therefore, future research that examines college adjustment and transition outcomes of various FYE models is warranted.

Discussion

This literature review was intended to summarize the mechanisms associated with the college transition. The seminal theories of student retention, college adjustment research, and FYE coursework all support students' acclimation process through identifying the significance of becoming academically and socially integrated in their campus communities. Although there are several theoretical perspectives that attempt to explain the complexity of college student

development, the present review confirms that the late stages of adolescence are a time when many individuals encounter stress and anxiety when trying to understand and define their new identities and social roles (Arnett, 2007; Bowman, 2010; Côté, 2006; 2009; Tierney, 2000). When combined with the pressures of learning how to navigate through the academic, social, and personal-emotional aspects of higher education, identity development can make the college transition a very difficult time. Unfortunately, students who are not able to cope with the various stressors associated with the college transition may choose to drop out rather than overcome the challenges (Astin, 1993; Baker & Siryk, 1999; DeBerard et al., 2004; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Tinto, 2006).

The major implication of understanding the college transition process is the ability to improve persistence and retention rates. Although research on retention began over 40 years ago (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 2006), major changes in higher education have required a sustained focus on improving student success. Notable reasons include responding to the call to increase access for traditionally underrepresented student groups (Astin, & Oseguera, 2004; Farkas, 2009; Hearn, 1991; Karen, 2002; Walpole, 2003), and increasing enrollment to generate higher tuition revenue to compensate for the massive cuts in educational funding from state budgets (Gordon, 1991; Keup, 2005). Institutions of higher education have recognized the differences in students' preparation and adjustment to college by responding with FYE seminars in order to improve retention and graduation rates (Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Kuh, 2009). However, in order to be effective, FYE curricula should be intentionally designed and evaluated to ensure students are given appropriate assistance in their transition to college.

Utilizing the theories of student retention (Astin, 1984, 1993; 1999; Tinto, 1975; 2006) and college adjustment research (e.g., Baker & Siryk, 1999; Bowman, 2010; DeBerard et al.,

2004; O'Malley & Johnston, 2002; Pascerella & Terenzini, 2005) can enhance the ability of FYE courses to help mitigate the difficulties and stress that are associated with students' first year of college. It is recommended that future research more thoroughly assess the specific categories of FYE curricular and programming initiatives (e.g., broad introductory vs. specific academic content), and their ability to support students in their social and academic development. In addition to institutional benefits, the implications of improved retention rates are also economically promising for students as well. It is estimated that college graduates will earn about \$1 million dollars more over their lifetimes than individuals who do not possess a baccalaureate degree (Swail, 2011). Additionally, the unemployment rate for those who hold a recent bachelor's degree is approximately 5% vs. 22.9% for those who only have a high school diploma, and 31.5 % for those without a diploma or GED (Carnevale, Cheah, & Strohl, 2013). By increasing the number of highly skilled, educated individuals entering the work force, a further implication of improving retention is the boost to the economy. With a higher education, students who once may have struggled during their college transition now have a greater potential to contribute to society as they become more financially responsible adults.

Limitations

This literature review identified some of the relevant theories and research that explain college adjustment and student retention, but there are several other factors that contribute to student success during their first year of college. Pre-college characteristics such as family SES, college-prep coursework, SAT and ACT scores, extracurricular activities, racial/ethnic development, gender roles, and first-generation status are just a few examples of how college students vary in terms of preparation, expectations, and ability to adjust (Astin, & Oseguera, 2004; Farkas, 2009; Karen, 2002; Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012;

Tierney et al., 2005; Walpole, 2003). Additionally, the research and perspectives from this literature review primarily focused on first-time, full-time students, many of whom live on residential campuses, or do not have a full-time job if they decide to commute from home. Non-traditional students, those who have family of their own, work more than 20 hours a week, commute, and/or have been many years removed from the education system, are at an even greater risk for low performance with respect to retention and graduation (Pascarella et al., 2003). Since these students spend little time on campus, it is less likely they use, or are aware of, the various student support services provided by their institutions (Borden, 2004). Future research and practice need to continue developing mechanisms to assist these students in degree attainment.

This literature review also only addressed one intervention colleges and universities employ to facilitate student persistence: FYE coursework. There are in fact many interventions and resources available on most college campuses to help students adjust to college. Summer bridge programs, mentorships, academic advising, student clubs, learning communities (in classrooms), residential learning communities (in residence life halls), and the various academic and support staff members found among student support services (e.g., librarians, counselors) are just a few of the resources available to students who need help with their college transition. As with FYE coursework, each of these interventions varies by institution. Therefore, future research must continue to assess programming models in order to recommend the best practices for positive student outcomes.

CHAPTER 3

RESILIENT HONORS STUDENTS' COLLEGE TRANSITION

The first year of college can be a particularly challenging time for many students, especially for those with low scores on college readiness indicators (e.g., SAT and high school grades), or who are the first in their family to attempt to receive a baccalaureate degree (Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson, & Terenzini, 2003; Tinto, 2006; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). Some students struggle with the initial acclimation to life on a college campus (Ceja, 2006; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004), whereas others may have expectations that are inconsistent with what is actually necessary to achieve academic success (Collier & Morgan, 2008). First-generation students may also be less prepared for college because of the absence of information from their parents (Billson & Terry, 1989; Karen, 2002). Unfortunately, these various factors often result in poor grades, conduct issues, and the eventual departure from the university (Baker & Siryk, 1999; DeBerard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004; O'Malley & Johnston, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 2006; 2010).

In an effort to assist students with college adjustment and transition, the Honors College at Southwest University offered the Student Success Seminar First Year Experience (FYE) course for resilient students who were admitted directly after high school. Resilient Honors students were individuals who came from underrepresented backgrounds (e.g., first-generation student, low SAT/ACT scores, low high school GPA), yet had demonstrated to Southwest University's Admissions and Recruitment staff their potential to graduate with the Honors distinction despite facing many barriers (Masten, 2012; Werner, 1990). The Student Success Seminar FYE course was specifically designed to provide a broad overview of how students can achieve social and academic success at the university.

While Student Success Seminar was intended to support students' college transition, there has been very little empirical research on the efficacy of Honors programming with respect to its potential to support students who come from underrepresented backgrounds. Most students enrolled in Honors colleges and programs are individuals who were on a strong academic track during middle and high school (Rinn, 2005; Scott, 2013); and therefore special attention to their college adjustment has not been warranted. However, Southwest University's Honors College accepts new students after reviewing many factors (e.g., admissions essays, teacher recommendations, ACT/SAT scores, and high school GPA), which resulted in the need to create Student Success Seminar to provide access and support for students who would have traditionally been denied admission into Honors at other institutions. In order to address this gap in the research literature, this study utilized a qualitative method to explore students' perceptions of the Student Success Seminar course objectives at the end of their first semester of college.

College Adjustment

For many traditional-age college students (i.e., 18-22 years old), leaving home and moving to an institution of higher education is a rite of passage. This moment marks an important step in the journey towards adulthood, and with it come new freedoms, responsibilities, and challenges (Chickering, 1969; Côté, 2006; Erikson, 1968). The college adjustment research literature examines students' academic, social, and personal-emotional reactions to the challenges of learning how to adapt to their new environment and lifestyle (Baker & Siryk, 1999; Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Tierney, Corwin, & Colyar, 2005). For example, many first-year students struggle with time management (Lubker & Etzel, 2007), studying for exams at the college level (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Ruiz, Sharkness, Kelly, DeAngelo, & Pryor, 2010), becoming involved in campus

activities (Astin, 1999; Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006; Kuh, 2003, 2009; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005), utilizing university resources (Allen & Lester, 2012; Tierney et al., 2005), avoiding conduct issues (e.g., drugs and alcohol) (O'Malley & Johnston, 2002), overcoming homesickness (DeBerard et al., 2004), and making new friends (Goldrick, 2007; Pike, 2003). Unfortunately, students who have difficulty adjusting to college are much more likely to drop out (Astin, 1999; Lu, 1994; Symonds, 2012; Tinto, 2006, 2010; Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009).

The college transition can be challenging regardless of one's background, but high school students who were not on a college-prep track are much more likely to have a difficult adjustment compared to their peers (Astin & Oseguera 2004; Hearn, 1991). Tierney et al. (2005) found that individuals with low high school GPA, SAT scores, or who are the first in their families to attend college, face many obstacles upon matriculation into higher education. They earn lower grades, are less involved on campus, and experience higher rates of drop-out (Astin, 1999; Billson & Terry, 1982; Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997; Padgett, Johnson, & Pascarella, 2012; Pascarella et al., 2004; Tinto, 1988, 2000). This is especially true for first-generation students because even when controlling for college-prep coursework (i.e., Advanced Placement (AP)); they still have lower retention rates than non-first-generation students (Ishitani, 2006; Somers, Woodhouse, & Cofer, 2004). One possible explanation is that due to the absence of information from parents who did not attend college themselves (e.g., information on the college transition process), many first-generation students suffer academically during their first year of college because they are not aware that there are resources on campus designed to mollify their social and academic struggles (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012). Developing methods to assist underrepresented

students' college transition is important in order to promote their academic resilience (Floyd, 1996; Masten 2012; O'Connor, 1997; Werner, 1990).

Many colleges and universities have responded to the call of supporting students in their college transition with the implementation of FYE seminars (Allen & Lester, 2012; Barefoot, 1992, 2004; Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Keup & Barefoot, 2005; Ramos-Sánchez & Nichols, 2007). Although FYE curricula vary between and across institutions, these seminars are generally designed to encourage students to learn about university resources (e.g., tutoring centers, mental health services), and to develop techniques and strategies they can apply to their other classes (e.g., time management, goal-setting, help-seeking) (Jamelske, 2006; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008; Porter & Swing, 2006). Based on the higher education retention and persistence research literature, the learning objectives outlined by FYE seminars appear to help students acclimate to the university setting and promote social and academic development (Astin, 1993, 1999; Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Gordon, 1991; Hunter & Linder, 2005; Tinto, 1975, 2010). However, there is very little research on resilient Honors students, so it not yet known whether an Honors FYE course can support student outcomes. Regardless of institutional setting, Kuh (2007) recommended that Honors colleges and programs should research and disseminate best practices in order to guide student and academic affairs personnel across university campuses. Given the admissions process at this particular university's Honors College, this population of individuals from underrepresented backgrounds presents an especially important opportunity to explore the impact of an FYE course on resilient Honors students' college transition.

Student Success Seminar

Student Success Seminar's instructional design objectives were to improve students' persistence to degree attainment by incorporating lesson plans and extracurricular opportunities that promoted social and self-regulated learning (e.g., goal-setting, time management, help-seeking) (Bandura, 1977, 1989; Ramos-Sánchez & Nichols, 2007; Schunk, 1990, 2008; Wolters & Taylor, 2012; Zimmerman, 1989, 2008; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Class size was limited to 20 students per section to allow the upper-level undergraduate Honors student instructor (called a preceptor) to utilize group-work activities and class discussions that served as a forum for critical thinking and self-reflection (Boice-Pardee, & Shirvanian, 2004; Ciania, Summers, Easter, Kennon, & Sheldon, 2008; Schunk, 2008). Many class activities in this one-credit seminar were designed to present students with the opportunity to address difficult situations commonly associated with the typical first-year experience (e.g., preparing for exams, making new friends). Students were therefore given many outlets to discuss and discover how to balance their academic and social obligations, and to practice navigating the many academic and professional development opportunities available at a research university.

Rationale and Research Question

Given the gap in the research literature pertaining to how an Honors colleges' curricula explicitly impacts underrepresented student outcomes, as well as the need to assess specific styles of FYE coursework, this study explored resilient Honors students' perceptions of the Student Success Seminar upon completion of the course. Within the setting of Southwest University, the research question is:

- How did enrollment in the Student Success Seminar FYE course impact resilient Honors students' college adjustment and transition?

Methodology

Participants

Participants were drawn from a larger dataset of Honors students who had completed the Student Success Seminar course assessment questionnaire at the end of the Fall 2011 semester. Due to the quasi-experimental nature of this research, not all students who completed Student Success Seminar in Fall 2011 truly matched the resilient profile for which the course was designed. For example, many of the first-generation students had high scores on the SAT (e.g., above 1,200), ACT (e.g., above 26), high school GPA (e.g. above 3.5), and/or were enrolled in college preparatory coursework (i.e., AP or International Baccalaureate). For the purposes of the present study, I only selected the students who most closely matched an underrepresented and at-risk profile based on the student departure research literature (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Therefore, the sample consisted of 68 first-generation students who had scored below 1,200 on the SAT, which was the average score for the Honors College's 2011 Freshman Class (see Table 3.1 for a complete description).

Procedures

In lieu of filling out a standard course evaluation at the end of the term, all Honors students who completed Student Success Seminar during Fall 2011 were offered the opportunity to participate in the study and completed a course assessment instrument that was co-developed by myself and the co-PI based on the related research literature in college adjustment and transition (Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992; Goldrick, 2007; Pascarella et al., 2004; Tierney et al., 2005; Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009), and social and self-regulated learning (Bandura, 1977, 1993, 1997; Ramos-Sánchez & Nichols, 2007; Thompson & Musket, 2005; Vuong, Brown-Welty, & Tracz, 2010; Wolters & Taylor, 2012; Zimmerman, 1989).

Table 3.1

Student Success Seminar Demographic Characteristics

	Student Success Seminar (<i>N</i> = 243)	Study Participants (<i>N</i> = 68)
Arizona Resident (%)	77.8	85.3
Pell Grant Eligible (%)	51.9	69.1
SAT Composite Score Above 1,200 (%) (Verbal and Math)	36.6	0.0
Female (%)	67.9	80.9
Race/Ethnicity (%)		
African American	1.2	1.0
Asian	10.3	20.1
Asian Indian	1.2	0.0
Hispanic	21.0	30.0
Native American	17.7	16.0
Pacific Islander	0.8	0.3
White	45.3	29.7
Two or More Races	2.5	2.9
Fall 2011 GPA	3.31	3.27

The course assessment contained many survey items pertaining to college adjustment and educational psychology constructs, but the present study used a qualitative approach to analyze the resilient Honors students' responses to four open-ended items from the questionnaire portion

(Table 3.2). A qualitative method was chosen to capture greater detail and further explain the complexity of how the FYE course impacted students' college transition.

Table 3.2

Fall 2011 Student Success Seminar Assessment Instrument Questionnaire Items

1. Describe your perceptions of how the Student Success Seminar course impacted your educational experiences this semester.
 2. Do you perceive that your Student Success Seminar course had an impact on the quality of your academic success? Please explain why or why not.
 3. Describe your perceptions of how Student Success Seminar impacted your long-term educational goals.
 4. Describe your perceptions of how students (peers) impacted your learning environment in this course.
-

Analysis

There were multiple levels, or tiers, of analysis used in this qualitative research. First, a research assistant and I individually developed a set of open codes from the participants' responses to the questionnaire items. We deliberately chose to use an open coding method (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011), as opposed to coding from a particular theoretical perspective or framework (e.g., identity development), to avoid limiting our interpretations based upon a list of pre-existing criteria. The data ranged from blank responses, from which we were not able to analyze, to full paragraphs. Typical responses were two to three sentences in length, and we were able to open code multiple components from these sentences depending on the context of the response. For example, both college stress relief and time management were codes used to describe a response such as, "learning how to manage my time better helped relieved a lot of stress I was having about college". We then each independently developed hierarchical macro

themes and micro subthemes based on the results of our open coding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Next, the Co-PI, who was not involved during the initial coding process, then individually created her own set of hierarchical macro themes with corresponding micro subthemes. Finally, she calculated a percent of agreement among the three sets of themes, which was estimated at about 78.0%.

Findings

The analysis of the four open-ended questionnaire items yielded one overarching theme: Stress Relief. Additionally, four other major themes emerged related to participants' experiences in Student Success Seminar: (1) Small Classes, (2) Goal-Setting, (3) Resources, and (4) FYE Impact (Table 3.3).

Stress Relief

The findings indicated that an overarching theme, Stress Relief, emerged regarding the impact of the resilient Honors students' enrollment in Student Success Seminar. As previously identified in the college adjustment research literature, the beginning of college is often associated with new stressors for many first-time, full-time students living on campus (Baker & Siryk, 1999; Bowman, 2010; Braxton et al., 2004; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Tierney et al., 2005). Many students must therefore learn how to survive academically (Allen & Lester, 2012; Ruiz et al., 2010), socially (Kuh, 1993; 1995; Pike, 2003; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005), and emotionally (Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006; O'Malley & Johnston, 2002). This increased stress clearly resonated with the participants in our study who reported that their enrollment in Student Success Seminar enabled them to better understand the novelties of the first year of college, and learn how to cope with the new pressures they were experiencing. The following quotes represented students' consciousness of Student Success Seminar's role in relieving their stress:

Table 3.3

Qualitative Hierarchical Themes, Subthemes, and Selected Representative Student Responses

Overarching Theme: Stress Relief		
Theme	Subtheme	Representative Response
Small classes	Peer Interaction	“They were all very friendly and were going through the same hard things I was, which made me feel more comfortable,” and “It was nice to hear how others were struggling and what helped them.”
	No Impact (peers)	“My peers did not impact my learning experience,” and “None, there wasn’t much peer interaction in this course.”
Goal-setting	Educational and Career Planning	“I have set goals to achieve in the future, like study abroad,” and “Highly impacted my long term goals; I definitely want a Master’s degree now.”
	Reflection and Exploration	“This class made me think of what I really want to do, instead of what people expect of me,” and “Student Success Seminar made me self-analyze how to study and make changes in order to succeed in college.”
Resources	Campus Resources	“Before taking this course, I did not know much about my resources and opportunities until now,” and “Student Success Seminar helped me learn about more resources than I knew of at Southwest University.”
	Learning Resources	“Student Success Seminar helped me implement very basic study skills all college students should have,” and “I procrastinate less and have better time management because of Student Success Seminar, which in turn helps my grades.”
	Student Success Seminar Preceptor	“One-on-one preceptor meetings helped me narrow down some future coursework I am interested in taking,” and “My preceptor was great and helped me learn a lot about Southwest University!”

Note: Table continued on next page.

(Table 3.3 continued)

Theme	Subtheme	Representative Response
FYE Impact	Positive Impact	“Really impacted me on how everyone thinks and perceives information in their own way” and “Opened my eyes to strategies on how to be successful: getting out there and making things happen for myself.”
	Negligible Impact	“A lot of the material discussed was very basic, things that I think college students, especially honors students, should have already known,” and “I do not feel like this class was very beneficial. I think a lot of the material covered were things I already knew and was forced to learn again.”

“Student Success Seminar helped me adjust to college and relieve stress.”

“This class allowed me to understand college better and how to adapt to the challenges.”

“It was nice to have a small class to get used to college and classes.”

“Helped me meet my professor, which helped me feel more comfortable.

These quotes have several implications. First, the presence of stress induced by the first-time college students’ lack of ability to navigate their new environment is evident.

Additionally, some participants reported that they felt uncomfortable approaching faculty either inside or outside of the classroom. These findings are not surprising, given the research literature pertaining to individuals who are considered at-risk and have low scores on college readiness measures (e.g., Billson & Terry, 1982; Braxton et al., 1997; Padgett et al., 2012; Pascarella et al., 2004). These participants were first-generation students, so it is possible that they were not prepared for what to expect during their first year of college if there was a lack of information passed along by their parents. However, these quotes also demonstrated the role that Student Success Seminar played in relieving their college stresses, both globally and in

specific situations. The FYE course's ability to provide a broad overview of the college experience, as well as resources and transition strategies, played an important role in reducing students' stress. This overarching theme was repeatedly reported in the following sections.

Small Classes. The first major theme was Small Classes. Student Success Seminar was a small colloquium-style class with sections of 20 students or less. At a large public research university such as Southwest University, enrollment in a 100-level class this small is fairly atypical (Ciania et al., 2008; Kuh et al., 2010) This colloquium-style setting allowed participants to meet new friends and observe differences in their peers' perspectives. For example, with respects to making friends, participants reported:

“Everyone is easy going and friendly.”

“The students in this class made it easier to make friends.”

“They were all very friendly and were going through the same hard things I was, which made me feel more comfortable.”

“I made more friends due to the small class size.”

Most of the participants agreed that Student Success Seminar was a relaxed atmosphere where they could get to know each other throughout the semester. This was a unique outcome given that students are usually enrolled into large lecture-style introductory general education courses (i.e., with at least 50 students) during their freshman year where it is difficult to interact with classmates. First-year students might also be too shy or timid to approach their peers in these other settings compared to an informal colloquium (Barefoot, 2003; Kuh, 2007; Nelson, Quinn, Marrington, & Clarke, 2012). Continuing with the overarching theme of Stress Relief, the smaller, welcoming seminar made it easier for participants to make friends. These newly formed friendships were significant because they have the potential to support students in their

college transition and relieve stress (Bowman, 2010; DeBerard et al., 2004; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). This was especially apparent in the Peer Interaction subtheme as evidenced by the following quotes:

“Interesting to hear different perspectives and study habits.”

“Allowed me to see things from a different perspective.”

“It was nice to hear how others were struggling and what helped them.”

“Talking with the other students in class helped with academic and non-academic struggles.”

Student Success Seminar fully utilized the colloquium-style classroom setting by incorporating several opportunities for group work and classroom discussions. These opportunities allowed students to share their college transition experiences, as well as listen to how their peers' outlook on different issues may have differed from their own perspectives. These conversations appeared to have served multiple purposes. College is an opportunity for students to be introduced to other people who are from diverse backgrounds (Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012; Tierney, 2000; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005), and therefore participants were exposed to different outlooks and ways of thinking. Student Success Seminar gave the resilient Honors students an outlet to respectfully observe and explore these differences in perspectives. However, the participants found that although they had differences in perspectives, many of them were trying to solve the same types of problems; specifically, the academic and non-academic struggles associated with their college transition. They repeatedly reported that they found comfort in the camaraderie shared with their classmates who were also experiencing difficulty with various components of their first year of college. Student Success Seminar allowed students to discuss their common struggles, discover that they were not alone in

overcoming new obstacles, and relieve stress by sharing their feelings and the transition strategies that were found to be most successful.

Most participants reported that their peers in Student Success Seminar positively impacted their college transition, yet a subtheme emerged from participants who reported that their peers had no impact on their experience in the course. For example,

“My peers did not impact my learning experience.”

“None, there wasn’t much peer interaction in this course.”

There were sixteen different sections of Student Success Seminar, so it is very possible that not all of the participants were grouped together with talkative classmates. This is especially probable for the sections that took place during the early morning when students are tired. There was also a different preceptor responsible for leading each section of the course. Depending on the instructor, some participants may have been enrolled in a section that utilized less group discussions and collaborative learning activities.

Goal-setting. Goal-setting was strongly associated with students’ responses to two recurring subthemes: Educational and Career Planning, along with Reflection and Exploration. With respects to the former, participants indicated that Student Success Seminar encouraged them to start thinking about activities such as study abroad, research, and applying for graduate school:

“Helped me focus on planning and to senior year.”

“Highly impacted my long term goals, I definitely want a masters degree now.”

“I have set goals to achieve in the future, like study abroad.”

“Research positions to be competitive for grad school.”

“It got me thinking about graduate school.”

“Motivated me to think about my senior thesis and research opportunities.”

A common source of stress for first-year college students is major and career exploration (Brooks, Cornelius, Greenfield, & Joseph, 1995; Hinkelman & Luzzo, 2007). Students may either feel completely uncertain about their future direction now that they have enrolled at the university, or overwhelmed by all of the opportunities and next steps needed to take in order to be competitive when entering the job market. However, these quotes represented that the goal-setting activities participants completed during Student Success Seminar impacted their educational and career planning by breaking down their next four years of college into more realistic and tangible components. Goal-setting served not only as a motivating force to help them meet these objectives, but also had the potential to relieve stress as participants realized they had more control over their college experience.

Most participants discussed goal-setting and motivation in terms of their educational and career planning, but how they actually initiated setting those goals was described in the subtheme: Reflection and Exploration:

“This class made me think of what I really want to do instead of what people expect of me.”

“Student Success Seminar made me self-analyze how to study and make changes in order to succeed in college.”

“It made me actually look at them [goals] as reality and not just a dream in the distance, and helped me see that they are coming up fast.”

It is evident from these quotes that several resilient Honors students entered Southwest University’s Honors College with a limited or restricted outlook on how they were going to effectively utilize their higher education. This finding is consistent with the overall theme of

Stress Relief because many participants reported that their college-induced stress was relieved through Student Success Seminar once they became more aware of what to expect during their experience as college students. In order to become more aware of their role as college students, participants were challenged to reflect on their interests, values, and skills, as well as which educational and career paths they wanted to pursue while studying at the university. This enhanced sense of purpose may have contributed to relieving the tensions associated with the first-year transition (Park, 2010; Schunk, 1990, 2008; Thompson & Musket, 2005).

Resources. Participants also reported that Student Success Seminar introduced them to various resources which facilitated their college transition. These resources can be divided into three subthemes: (1) the physical on-campus resources, (2) learning resources such as academic success strategies, and (3) personal relationships such as peers, preceptors, and faculty. The following quotes reveal participants' reactions to Student Success Seminar and its broad overview of the available campus resources:

“Before taking this course, I did not know much about my resources and opportunities until now.”

“Student Success Seminar helped me learn about more resources than I knew of at Southwest University.”

“I can better utilize the resources here.”

While “campus resources” is a deliberately broad phrase in order to accurately represent participants' word choice, these resources are usually the various departments on campus that are devoted to supporting student success (e.g., the library, counseling center, tutoring center, research laboratories, career center). One of Student Success Seminar's group assignments was for students to visit various campus resources in order to learn more about the services that are

offered to undergraduates. Students then relayed this information back to their peers during class time as a group presentation. The Think Tank, or campus tutoring center, was a commonly mentioned resource which the resilient Honors students stated they did not know about prior to Student Success Seminar, but subsequently utilized frequently in order to improve their grades.

In addition to campus resources, participants also wrote that they were introduced to various academic success strategies, or learning resources, during Student Success Seminar. For example:

“Student Success Seminar helped me implement very basic study skills all college students should have.”

“All the tips and information have been very beneficial for my education, making my experience better.”

“I learned about old habits to break and new habits to form.”

“I had better time management, so I was able to better prepare for classes.”

“I procrastinate less and have better time management because of Student Success Seminar, which in turn helps my grades.”

As noted above, the academic success strategies that participants stated were valuable learning resources consisting of very fundamental study skills. These ranged from note-taking, forming study groups, attending faculty office hours, and most importantly, time management. It is very common for students to have difficulty with time management given that they have discovered major differences in their leisure time between high school and college (Goldrick, 2007; Lubker & Etzel, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tierney et al., 2005). This group of resilient Honors students indicated that they also need to continue developing these skills. Once participants were able to become more organized, they had better control over their schedules

and responsibilities, such as preparing for class and maintaining their grades. Subsequently, many participants felt relieved after learning how to manage their time and schedules, which offers another means of stress relief.

The final resources participants discovered during Student Success Seminar were the personal connections they established over the course of the semester. The most evident of these connections was through the preceptor, an upperclassman in the Honors College who led an individual section of Student Success Seminar. The following quotes demonstrate participants' reactions to having a peer instructor:

“Meeting preceptors who are close to our age was helpful to ask them questions.”

“My preceptor was great and helped me learn a lot about Southwest University!”

“One-on-one preceptor meetings helped me narrow down some future coursework I am interested in taking.”

“My preceptor was a motivating force and supported me in my goals.”

In Student Success Seminar, students were able to learn from each other as well as their preceptor in a relaxed small group setting, but they also met with their preceptor outside of class for one-on-one meetings throughout the semester. Their responses were largely positive regarding preceptors' helpfulness, common experiences, and advice. Since preceptors were also Honors students at Southwest University, they were able to relate more to the participants' social and academic struggles compared to senior faculty who were likely many years removed from the nuances of the college transition. These personal relationships also had the potential to endure beyond participants' first semester (Bandura 1989; Keup, 2005), which may have enabled preceptors to act as a lasting resource when the resilient Honors students needed help in the future.

FYE Impact. The lowest theme in our hierarchy indicated that participants had mixed reactions to how Student Success Seminar had impacted their college transition. Students either reported that the course had a positive impact on their first year of college, or they stated that the impact was negligible. The following responses reflect the positive sentiment:

“Really impacted me on how everyone thinks and perceives information in their own way”

“Opened my eyes to strategies on how to be successful: getting out there and making things happen for myself.”

Whereas these quotes represent how participants thought Student Success Seminar had little impact on their college transition:

“A lot of the material discussed was very basic, things that I think college students, especially honors students, should have already known.”

“I do not feel like this class was very beneficial. I think a lot of the material covered were things I already knew and was forced to learn again.”

“I already knew a lot of the information covered.”

While many participants found Student Success Seminar had some relevance to their college transition, the most likely explanation for the No Impact subtheme of this analysis is due to students’ Honors Identity. In previous research, we have found that resilient Honors students hold very high expectations for themselves because they are enrolled in Southwest University’s Honors College; hence, they strongly associate with an Honors Identity (Holliday, Levine-Donnerstein, & Mendez, forthcoming). However, further research is needed to understand how and why this identity develops. An example of their high expectations was identified in the first quote, which articulated the participant’s rationale that Honors students, as opposed to non-

Honors students, should be especially prepared for college prior to enrollment. Therefore, some participants believed that the Honors FYE curriculum should not be devoted to instructing college transition strategies.

Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the impact of Student Success Seminar on resilient Honors students' college adjustment. The Honors College's Student Success Seminar was of particular interest because course enrollment was intended for resilient individuals who came from underrepresented backgrounds, and were therefore at greater risk for academic departure from the university (Astin & Oseguera, 2004; Billson & Terry, 1982; Braxton et al., 1997; Ceja, 2006; Padgett et al., 2012; Pascarella et al., 2004; Tinto, 2000, 2006; Walpole, 2003). The results from open coding and thematic analysis of the resilient Honors students' responses to four open-ended questionnaire items indicated that the Student Success Seminar course impacted their first semester by primarily relieving the stresses associated with their college transition. The major themes that support this finding were: (1) Small Classes, (2) Goal-Setting, (3) Resources, and (4) FYE Impact. However, the micro theme Negligible FYE Impact, revealed that a few of the participants (about 6%) declared Students Success Seminar had no impact on their transition because they believed they came to college already prepared for the challenges ahead.

The major finding of Student Success Seminar's impact on students' stress relief is important because stress is a major determinant of whether students withdraw from the university (Bowman, 2010; et al., 2004; Grello et al., 2006; Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Fincham, 2010; Tinto, 2000). The responses from our sample of first-time students were consistent with the college adjustment research literature in that many indicated they had

suffered from academic, social, and personal-emotional stressors. In addition to the typical challenges many first-year students encounter, the college transition may be especially stressful for the participants in this study because they are members of the Honors College. As mentioned, we have found that these Honors students tend to hold extremely high academic expectations of themselves (Holliday, Levine-Donnerstein, & Mendez, forthcoming). Setting high expectations for one's academic performance can be ambitious and motivating (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009; Bandura, 1993, 1997; Gore, 2006; Schunk, 1990; Zimmerman, 2008), but the resilient Honors students may also have created additional stress that could be detrimental to their college transition. Fortunately, these findings revealed that Student Success Seminar positively impacted many resilient Honors students' first semester in college by providing adaptation strategies. This is significant because Student Success Seminar potentially instilled students with a greater sense of resilience (Floyd, 1996; Masten 2012; O'Connor, 1997; Werner, 1990), which could help prevent them from leaving the university.

The thematic analysis revealed that Student Success Seminar supported the resilient Honors students' college transition by encouraging them to become involved in their higher education. Astin's (1984, 1993, 1999) Theory of Student Involvement links student behavior with persistence; students are more likely to stay enrolled and graduate from their institution if they devote time and effort towards academic and professional activities (Cabrera et al., 1992; Kuh et al., 2010; Nelson et al., 2012; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009). In Student Success Seminar, students were encouraged to become more involved in class discussions, which made it easier to make friends, problem-solve collaboratively, and share ideas and experiences. The participants also reported that they spent more time reflecting on their educational and career goals as a result of class assignments. This curricular decision was highly effective in encouraging students to

become aware of their abilities and college purpose, which can also support improved retention and graduate rates (Park, 2010; Ramos-Sánchez & Nichols, 2007; Schunk, 1990; Thompson & Musket, 2005; Vuong et al., 2010).

Implications and Recommendations

Institutions of higher education have recognized the differences in college preparation and adjustment among all first-year students. Many universities have responded with FYE seminars in order to ensure greater access and student success (Barefoot, 2003; Barton & Donahue, 2009; Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Hunter & Linder 2005; Kuh, 2009). However, FYE seminars tend to vary in practice (Cavote & Kopera-Frye, 2004; Friedman & Marsh, 2009; Needham, 2012; Porter & Swing, 2006), so it is important for entities that utilize FYE curricula to evaluate their models to ensure students are given appropriate assistance in their transition to college. With respect to the Student Success Seminar course, not all of the resilient students who participated in the course assessment thought the FYE seminar was useful in supporting their academic success. However, our findings indicated that the Student Success Seminar course assisted most of the first-generation participants in their college transition. Most of the resilient students in our study found networking and community building, goal-setting, and access to resources useful in mitigating the difficulties and stresses that they associated with their first semester of college. This information should be considered by individuals who are responsible for designing broad introductory FYE seminars to help students adapt to their new college environments.

Overall, these findings are especially informative for those interested in an Honors college's ability to assist students from underrepresented backgrounds. However, even though most of the resilient Honors students perceived Student Success Seminar to be beneficial, it is

essential that Honors College personnel implement FYE coursework that ensures buy-in from all students due to the implications of stress relief and enhanced college adjustment on students' retention. For example, our study detected that some students had developed a high-ability Honors Identity, which they used to justify why they did not value the Student Success Seminars' curriculum. It is recommended that future research more thoroughly assess the development of an Honors Identity, and how an Honors college's curricular and programming initiatives support resilient students in their social and academic development. This information can be beneficial to Honors colleges and programs, as well as provide best practices for the universities at large.

This research is also significant because of the evidence supporting the use of FYE seminars specifically designed for at-risk students. While FYE seminars are frequently used in higher education, they can also be framed using a deficit model: students who are labeled as being at-risk are grouped together based on their similar underrepresented backgrounds in order to receive a curricular intervention (Hunter & Linder 2005; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Stephens et al., 2012). The deficit model may reinforce the perception that at-risk students are less academically capable than students who were on a stronger college preparation track. This presents a compromising dilemma for college personnel who are charged with facilitating at-risk students' college transition based upon their predisposition for academic departure (Astin, 1999; Astin & Oseguera 2004; Billson & Terry, 1982; Braxton et al., 1997; Hearn, 1991; Padgett et al., 2012; Pascarella et al., 2004; Tinto, 1988, 2000). Our qualitative analysis of the Student Success Seminar did not reveal any evidence that the resilient Honors students felt they were victims of a deficit model. Some participants did indicate that they thought the course was not necessary, and this was largely due to their belief that they were adequately prepared for their transition to

college. Despite this finding, no participants directly stated that they were treated unjustly by being enrolled in an FYE seminar designed for resilient students. FYE seminars that truly operate from a deficit model would certainly be alienating and disempowering for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, but our study found Student Success Seminar to be effective in promoting students' college adjustment and resilience rather than emphasizing their shortcomings.

Limitations

This study provided assessment for only one FYE curriculum, a seminar designed for resilient Honors students at a single research university. Future studies must continue to explore whether the myriad of FYE interventions within and across various institutional settings of higher education are effectively offering students strategies for college adjustment and degree attainment. Additionally, since the purpose of this study was to capture students' perception of how Student Success Seminar impacted their first semester of college, participants' self-reports on the course assessment questionnaire items are recognized as a limitation because these may not be consistent with their actual perceptions of Student Success Seminar, or other indicators of learning and academic success, such as exam scores and final grades. Interpretation of these self-reports is also cautioned given our low estimate of reliability. Replication of this study using more rigorous coding techniques or software programs could enhance consistency if multiple coders are involved. Mixed-methods research, and longitudinal designs that track students' development and retention over time, can also support research in this field. This information can help inform policy decisions regarding how to support resilient students' access and persistence through their higher education.

CHAPTER 4
FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE SEMINARS' IMPACT ON COLLEGE STUDENTS
GRADES, RETENTION, AND PERCEPTIONS

High school students' transition to college is an important issue in both research and practice because students who are better adjusted tend to persist longer (DeBerard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008; Porter & Swing, 2006; Tinto, 2006, 2010), and are more likely to achieve their educational and career goals (Dougherty, 1992; Karen, 2002; Padgett, Johnson, & Pascarella, 2012; Walpole, 2003). Most institutions of higher education utilize First Year Experience (FYE) coursework to facilitate college adjustment and student retention (Barefoot, 1992, 2003). Generally offered in one-credit seminars or colloquia, FYE courses are designed to support the college transition by introducing freshmen to campus resources and providing academic and social success strategies to help them learn how to navigate the university (Gordon, 1991; Jamelske, 2006).

Although all FYE courses are intended to help new students become acclimated to higher education, they tend to vary in practice within and across college campuses (Cavote & Kopera-Frye, 2004; Goldey, 2004; Needham, 2012). The Honors College at Southwest University is one such example. When the Honors College expanded from an Honors program to academic college in 1999, not all Honors students could take the same style of FYE course due to the limited number of available instructors and other resources. The variation in opportunities and experiences the students acquired during their different FYE coursework is important to address because of the potential to differentially affect outcomes (e.g., grades, retention, satisfaction) (Barton & Donahue, 2009; Friedman & Marsh, 2009; Kuh, 2009).

This study specifically addressed the contrasting models of the Honors College's FYE coursework: Student Success Seminar and Honors Colloquia. Honors Students who came from underrepresented, resilient backgrounds (i.e., first-generation student with low SAT scores) were enrolled into Student Success Seminar, which was a broad college overview that introduced students to campus resources and learning strategies. Meanwhile, the rest of the Honors incoming class was enrolled into academic-themed Honors Colloquia. These FYE colloquia were special topics classes led by faculty from various disciplines. Honors Colloquia differed from Student Success Seminar in that they provided students with academic content rather than specifically teaching student success strategies. Therefore, understanding whether there is a difference in either FYE model's impact on students' college adjustment is extremely important. This study utilized several quantitative models to longitudinally assess the difference in the FYE curricula on students' cumulative GPAs, retention, and perceptions during their junior year of college.

Background

The decision to create two contrasting models of Honors FYE coursework was based on theoretical and practical frameworks. Initially, the Honors College only offered Student Success Seminar. In response to the growing number of underprepared students entering higher education (Barefoot, 2003; Gordon, 1991; Hearn, 1991; Keup, 2005), the Honors College piloted this interventional-style course in the 2002-03 school year based on FYE models at other institutions (see Lamothe et al., 1995; Oppenheimer, 1984; Pratt et al., 2000). In 2004, the Honors College received a Kellogg Fellows Leadership Alliance grant to expand the Student Success Seminar program to all of its incoming students who were identified as being at risk for academic departure based on the student retention research literature (Astin, 1984, 1999; Billson

& Terry, 1982; Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997; Dougherty, 1992; Padgett, et al., 2012; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Tinto, 1988, 2000). The course evolved over time to focus on first-generation students, although other criteria have been used, such as low scores on indicators of college success (e.g., high school GPA, SAT scores), racial/ethnic minorities, Native Americans from reservations schools, students from rural schools, and transfer students. The primary goals of Student Success Seminar were to: (1) bolster academic and social adjustment for first-year at-risk Honors students, (2) promote cognitive development, and (3) enhance retention rates.

In addition to developing Student Success Seminar during the mid-2000s, the Honors College also began to offer limited sections of Honors Colloquia for first-year students in Fall 2008. Honors Colloquia was similar to Student Success Seminar in that it was a one-credit seminar, limited to 20 students per section, and designed for first-year Honors students to take during their first semester at Southwest University. However, the curriculum between the two courses varied widely. Each Honors Colloquia faculty instructor designed his/her course around his/her area of academic specialization (e.g., history, creative writing, stem cell research), whereas the interventional content in the Student Success Seminars focused on campus resources (e.g., locating the tutoring or counseling centers) and learning strategies (e.g., help-seeking, note-taking). Prior to 2011, Honors students were encouraged but not required to enroll in either FYE course as both courses were still undergoing development.

The Honors College was also growing in its number of students as well as the number of its course offerings. In Fall 2011, 1,150 first-time, full-time freshmen (excluding transfer students) enrolled, the largest incoming class size to date (Fact Book, 2013). At this point in time, the Honors College began to require all first-year students to enroll in an FYE course:

either Student Success Seminar or Honors Colloquia. Because of the large entering class of Fall 2011, there were too many students to fit into the various sections of available Honors Colloquia, and there were not enough available faculty to create more sections. A decision was made by Honors administration to enroll the majority of students in Honors Colloquia and the remainder in Student Success Seminar. Consistent with Student Success Seminar's framework (Lamothe et al., 1995; Oppenheimer, 1984; Pratt et al., 2000), enrollment criteria were based on at-risk indicators; specifically, first-generation status and/or low SAT scores.

The decision to divide the Fall 2011 incoming class of Honors students into two separate models of FYE coursework was necessary due to resource limitations; however, providing students either specific academic content vs. broad college success strategies likely resulted in differential outcomes. Although Student Success Seminar was based on theoretical and empirical models, there is little evidence that supports enrollment in an introductory, college success FYE course rather than an academic-specific FYE seminar (Cavote & Kopera-Frye, 2004; Friedman & Marsh, 2009). Therefore, this study contributed to the research gap by exploring the differential impact of either Student Success Seminar or Honors Colloquia on Honors students' grades, retention, and perceptions during their junior year.

First Year Experience Seminars

The following sections describe the purpose and rationale for FYE seminars, as well as two major curricular models. Although FYE seminars are a relatively new course offering at Southwest University's Honors College, attention to first-year programming has become increasingly prevalent nationally since the early 1980s (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996; Hunter & Linder, 2005). This is primarily due to two key factors: (1) the increased admission of students who were not academically prepared for higher education (Astin & Oseguera, 2004, Hearn,

1991; Walpole, 2003), and (2) an expanding push for retention measures from many college and universities (Barefoot, 2003; Gordon, 1991; Keup, 2005; Tinto, 2006). Therefore, campuses searched for ways to improve retention as the rise of first-year students who did not persist to their second year of college became an increasingly alarming issue.

FYE seminars have been described as both curricular interventions (Allen & Lester, 2012; Porter & Swing, 2006) and programming tools (Jamelske, 2006; Kuh et al., 2008) designed to help improve all students' college transition. The five most common types of FYE seminars utilized on college campuses are: (1) "extended orientation" seminars that continue to expose students to college resources, (2) seminars with a common academic theme among all sections, (3) seminars with various section-specific academic themes, (4) discipline-linked seminars (e.g., professional development for pre-education majors), and (5) remedial, or basic study skills seminars (Barefoot, 1992, p. 50). Each type of FYE seminar is designed to produce different outcomes; however, FYE seminars tend to share the following common goals regardless of pedagogical technique:

- To help students feel a sense of community at the institutions (Cabrera, Nora, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Hagedorn, 1999; Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006)
- To encourage student involvement and active engagement in institution- and community-sponsored activities (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 2003, 2008; Kuh et al., 2008)
- To facilitate students' academic and social integration with campus (Tinto, 1988, 2000)

In broad introductory courses such as Student Success Seminar, these goals are usually achieved by including learning objectives that encourage students to discover campus resources (e.g., tutoring, library, career centers, mental health services) (Elliot & Healy, 2001; Barton & Donahue, 2009; Keup & Barefoot, 2005), and develop techniques and skills, such as help-

seeking, goal-setting, and time management, which they can apply to their other college coursework (Allen & Lester, 2012; Ramos-Sánchez & Nichols, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). These curricular components can support students in their college transition, and persistence to their second year by helping them become more integrated into their new environment at the university (Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Porter & Swing, 2006; Tinto 2000, 2010).

The research is less clear regarding how academic content-specific FYE courses, such as Honors Colloquia, impact college adjustment. For example, Cavote and Kopera-Frye (2004) compared 287 academic FYE participants' grades and first-year retention rates with 263 students at the same institution who did not take any FYE coursework, and found no significant differences in either outcome. Friedman and Marsh (2009) specifically compared academic FYE participants with individuals who were enrolled in a college transition/success FYE model and also did not find significant difference in their GPAs or one-year retention rates. However, participants in the college transition/success course reported a greater perception of how to become engaged at their campus outside of class, as well as greater knowledge of campus policies (2009). These findings indicate that the type of FYE seminar offered is less important on student outcomes if grades and retention are the only consideration. However, students' perceptions can also be especially important outcomes for academic departments that offer contrasting models of FYE coursework, such as Southwest University's Honors College.

FYE research has become more prevalent in recent years (e.g., Barton & Donahue, 2009; Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Hunter & Linder, 2005; Jamelske, 2006; Keup & Barefoot, 2005; Pratt et al., 2000), but determining best practices to ensure positive student outcomes has been difficult. In addition to the various FYE curricular models, this is primarily because researchers

often do not obtain and control for students' pre-college characteristics, which can mediate their college GPA and retention (Cavote & Kopera-Frye, 2004). In fact, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of over 40 studies exploring the difference in graduation rates between students who completed an FYE seminar and those who did not. These studies resulted in an estimated effect size supporting students who enrolled in FYE coursework by 5 to 15 percentage points (2005), but the authors caution that all of the research failed to control for students' pre-college characteristics (e.g., high school GPA, SAT scores, motivation, parental educational attainment, race/ethnicity, gender). These factors likely confounded the effects of the FYE seminars on participants' grades and retention (Hearn, 1991, Farkas, 2009; Karen, 2002; Walpole, 2003), and therefore future research is required to help determine best practices for the college transition.

Rationale and Research Questions

Given the gap in the research literature pertaining to the various styles of FYE coursework and controlling for participants' pre-college characteristics, this study explored the differences between two contrasting models of FYE seminars. Little is known regarding the effects of one group of incoming freshmen enrolling in a broad introductory FYE seminar program while their classmates enroll in academic-themed FYE courses. Therefore, I specifically explored the impact of Student Success Seminar and Honors Colloquia on key student outcomes. This longitudinal study examined the differences in students' grades, retention, and perceptions of the Honors College during their junior year based upon their Honors FYE course in Fall 2011. Within the setting of Southwest University, my research questions were:

- How did enrollment in either Student Success Seminar or Honors Colloquia affect students' grade point average and retention to their second and third year of college?
- Did students perceive that their FYE course provided them with important learning strategies for social and academic success during their first year of college?
- Can students' first-year satisfaction with the Honors College be explained by the type of FYE coursework they were enrolled in?
- How did students' perceptions of Student Success Seminar change between their freshman and junior year of college?

Methodology

Data Sources

The data for this research were derived from three separate sources. First, student educational records were obtained from Southwest University's Analytics data system. These records included student demographics as entered during the admissions process (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, SAT score), as well as course registration, enrollment, and college GPA. I specifically used the Analytics system to create a database of the Fall 2011 first-year Honors student cohort to track their grades and retention based on their enrollment in either Student Success Seminar or Honors Colloquia. The second dataset was extracted from a larger dataset comprised of Fall 2013 follow-up survey responses. All Honors students who completed either FYE course in Fall 2011 were invited to participate. The follow-up survey was written based on related theories and research in educational psychology (Bandura, 1977, 1989; Schunk, 1990; Thompson & Musket, 2005; Wolters & Taylor, 2012; Zimmerman, 1989; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992) and college adjustment (Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992; Goldrick, 2007; Pascarella et al., 2004; Tierney et al., 2005; Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie,

2009) (see Measures). In order to account for the quasi-experimental nature of students' FYE enrollment, and to answer the research questions, I only extracted records from Student Success Seminar students who were also first-generation. Likewise, only non-first-generation students were extracted from the Honors Colloquia group. Finally, a third dataset was created by combining the 2013 follow-up survey records with Student Success Seminar participants' Fall 2011 course assessment data. The course assessment contained several items that paralleled the Fall 2013 follow-up survey, and was administered immediately after Student Success Seminar ended in Fall 2011.

Participants

Institutional records were first obtained for the first-generation students who had completed Student Success Seminar and the non-first-generation students who completed Honors Colloquia in Fall 2011 ($N = 935$) (Table 4.1). This resulted in 243 students from Student Success Seminar and 692 from Honors Colloquia. Compared to the Honors Colloquia, there were more students from Student Success Seminar who were Arizona Residents (77.8% vs. 71.1%), eligible for the Pell Grant (51.9% vs. 32.4%), female (67.9% vs. 59.0%), and who had an SAT composite score below the Honors College 2011 cohorts' average of 1270 (63.4% vs. 40.3%). While White students were the majority group in both FYE courses, Student Success Seminar (45.3% White) was more racially/ethnically diverse than Honors Colloquia (67.5% White).

The 361 Honors students who agreed to participate in the Fall 2013 follow-up study generally shared the same demographics of the 935 Honors students from which the institutional records were obtained (Table 4.2). Of the 133 Student Success Seminar participants who completed the follow-up survey, 88% were Arizona residents, 54.3% were eligible for the Pell Grant, 36.1% had an SAT score above 1270, and 51.1% were White. The 228 Honor Colloquia

Table 4.1

Demographic Characteristics of Honors 2011-2012 First-Year Cohort

	Total (<i>N</i> = 935)	Student Success Seminar (<i>N</i> = 243)	Honors Colloquia (<i>N</i> = 692)
Arizona Resident (%)	73.4	77.8	71.8
Pell Grant Eligible (%)	37.4	51.9	32.4
SAT Composite Score Above 1,270 (%) (Verbal and Math)	53.7	36.6	59.7
Female (%)	61.3	67.9	59.0
Race/Ethnicity (%)			
African American	1.2	1.2	1.2
Asian	6.4	10.3	5.1
Asian Indian	2.9	1.2	3.5
Hispanic	12.2	21.0	8.2
Native American	14.7	17.7	13.6
Pacific Islander	1.0	0.8	1.0
White	57.9	45.3	63.2
Two or More Races	3.7	2.5	4.2
Retention Rates (%)			
First Year Honors College	92.6	90.0	93.6
Second Year Honors College	86.0	84.4	93.0
First Year Southwest University	93.4	90.6	93.3
Second Year Southwest University	92.1	90.2	86.7
Average GPA			
Fall 2011	3.43	3.31	3.48
Spring 2012 (Cumulative)	3.45	3.34	3.50
Spring 2013 (Cumulative)	3.52	3.43	3.55

Table 4.2

Demographic Characteristics of 2013 Follow-up Survey Participants

	Total (<i>N</i> =361)	Student Success Seminar (<i>n</i> =133)	Honors Colloquia (<i>n</i> =228)
Arizona Resident (%)	78.4	88.0	72.8
Pell Grant Eligible (%)	39.3	53.4	31.1
SAT Composite Score Above 1,200 (%) (Verbal and Math)	54.3	36.1	64.9
Female (%)	71.5	72.2	71.1
Race/Ethnicity (%)			
African American	3.9	6.0	2.6
Asian	9.7	15.0	6.6
Asian Indian	2.2	1.5	2.6
Hispanic	12.7	21.1	6.2
Native American	0.8	0.0	1.3
Pacific Islander	0.9	2.3	0.0
White	65.9	51.1	76.3
Two or More Races	3.9	3.0	4.4

participants were also similar to the 692 institutional records; 72.8% were Arizona residents, 31.1% were eligible for the Pell Grant, 64.9% had an SAT score above 1270, and 80.7% were White. Participants from both Student Success Seminar and Honors Colloquia were more likely to be female (72.2% and 71.1%, respectively).

Table 4.3

Demographic Characteristics of Student Success Seminar Repeated Measures Participants

	Participants (N=100)
Arizona Resident (%)	84.0
Pell Grant Eligible (%)	51.0
SAT Composite Score Above 1,200 (%) (Verbal and Math)	34.0
Female (%)	79.0
Race/Ethnicity (%)	
African American	5.0
Asian	16.0
Asian Indian	1.0
Hispanic	28.0
Native American	0.0
Pacific Islander	3.0
White	44.0
Two or More Races	3.0

In order to understand how students' perceptions of Student Success Seminar changed over time, a final group of participants was created by matching the Fall 2011 course assessment with the Fall 2013 follow-up survey. There were 100 first-generation students who participated

in both studies (Table 4.3); 84% were Arizona residents, 51.0% were eligible for the Pell Grant, and 34.0% had an SAT score above 1270. This group of participants was also mostly comprised of females (79.0%), and White students were the major racial/ethnic group (45.0%).

Measures and Variables

The measures and variables in this study were obtained from Southwest University's Analytics system of institutional records, the Fall 2011 Student Success Seminar course assessment questionnaire, and the Fall 2013 follow-up survey. I developed these surveys with assistance from my doctoral advisor, the Co-PI, based on constructs and related research from the fields of Educational Psychology and Higher Education. The Fall 2013 survey was actually a revision of the Student Success Seminar course assessment, which was also created in the same manner (Holliday, Levine-Donnerstein, & Mendez, forthcoming). In the previous study, we were particularly interested in how Student Success Seminar exposed students to campus resources (e.g., advisors, student clubs, the counseling center) and help-seeking strategies (e.g., tutoring, faculty office hours, study groups). However, in order to use the Fall 2013 survey for multiple purposes; that is, (1) to compare students' perceptions of how either Honors FYE course may have influenced their perceptions, and (2) to track how Student Success Seminar students' perceptions changed over time, I created two versions with language that was appropriate for the respective seminars. For example, Honors Colloquia participants were asked to respond to the questions based on their experiences in "Honors Colloquia" rather than in "Student Success Seminar". For the follow-up data collection, the surveys were administered online using the Survey Monkey website. The Student Success Seminar Fall 2011 course assessment was administered using paper and pencil in lieu of completing a Southwest University standard

course assessment, and many of these items were used as a pre-post comparison with the responses from the Fall 2013 survey results.

Educational Records. Institutional data were used to measure students' pre-college characteristics, course enrollment, GPA, and retention. Pre-college characteristics were selected based on information that students reported on their Southwest University admissions application. Students responded to Arizona residency as either in-state resident or non-resident, gender as male or female, and race/ethnicity as African American, Asian, Asian Indian, Hispanic, Native American, Pacific Islander, or White.

SAT score and Pell Grant eligibility were used to measure college preparation and socioeconomic status (SES), respectively. The SAT is a standardized, nationally-administered test that many institutions use for admissions purposes because it has been found to predict college students' first-year GPA (Cassady, 2001; Cohn, Cohn, Balch, & Bradley, 2004). The national average SAT score in 2011 was 497 for the critical reading portion and 514 for mathematics (College Board, 2013a), with a resulting average total score of 1,011. Southwest University does not rely on the writing portion of the SAT, so it was not used in the creation of the composite score for this study. Participants' ACT scores were converted to SAT scores as outlined by research conducted by the College Board (2013b) if this was the only college placement test they completed. High school GPA has also been used to predict first-year college transition (Noble & Sawyer 2004), but it was deliberately not used in this study to avoid redundancy as a predictor in regression models (Keith, 2006), and because of the inherent lack of standardization among high schools' curricula and grading procedures.

The Pell Grant was used as an indicator for SES in this study. Only students from low SES families are eligible for the Pell Grant (U.S. Department of Education, 2014), which is

determined by Southwest University's Financial Aid Office using information reported on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Pell Grants are awarded based on: (1) how much a student's family can financially contribute to the costs of higher education, (2) the actual cost of enrollment at the particular institution, (3) whether the student is enrolled part-time or full-time, and (4) whether the student attends classes for a full academic year or less. Although some students may not have completed the FAFSA who were in fact eligible for the Pell Grant, this measure was more accurate than a self-report of their parents combined annual income in the event that they were not aware of their parents' true financial status.

Educational records were also used to determine students' enrollment in either of the Fall 2011 Honors FYE courses, as well as their corresponding GPA and retention at Southwest University and the Honors College. GPA was measured at three time points: initial GPA at the end of the first semester (Fall 2011), cumulative GPA at the end of the freshman year (Spring 2012), and cumulative GPA at the end of the sophomore year (Spring 2013). Student retention data was also extracted from Southwest University's Analytics system. Two separate first- and second-year retention rates were defined by whether students from the Honors Fall 2011 cohort ($N = 935$) returned for their sophomore and junior years at the Honors College and Southwest University. Therefore, each participant had four separate retention scores.

Survey Measures. The original Fall 2011 Student Success Seminar course assessment questionnaire served as the foundation for the Fall 2013 follow-up survey, and both surveys covered a great breadth of information (e.g., perceptions of campus climate, goals/aspirations). However, this study focused on the items specifically asking students to rate their agreement with how campus resources and help-seeking opportunities were embedded in the course curriculum.

Campus resources. The items pertaining to campus resources were written using theory and research from the college adjustment literature which has found that students can become better acclimated to their college campus (Astin, 1984, 1999; Baker & Siryk, 1999; Tinto, 1975, 2000, 2006), and are more likely to persist to graduation (Cabrera et al., 1992; Goldrick, 2007; Pascarella et al., 2004; Tierney et al., 2005; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009) if they utilize the available resources and support services. For example, students were asked to rate how much they agree that their FYE course helped them learn about “academic resources available on campus (e.g., tutoring and the writing center)” and “internship opportunities for undergraduate students.”

Help-seeking. The help-seeking items were written using social and self-regulated learning theory (e.g., Bandura, 1977, 1989; Schunk, 1990; Zimmerman, 1989; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992) within the context of higher education research (Gore, 2006; Ramos-Sánchez & Nichols, 2007; Thompson & Musket, 2005; Vuong, Brown-Welty, & Tracz, 2010; Wolters & Taylor, 2012) because many FYE courses encourage students to practice personal responsibility for their academic and social decisions by learning when and how to ask for help. In general, students who seek help when they encounter difficult situations during their freshman year (e.g., asking a peer or instructor for help with coursework) earn better grades than those who do not (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Karabenick, 2004; Karabenick, & Knapp, 1991; Roussel, Elliot, & Feltman, 2011; Ryan, Gheen, & Midgley, 1998; Padgett et al., 2012). Example help-seeking items used in both Fall 2011 and 2013 instruments include, “Based on your participation in the FYE course, how much do you agree that you ask a friend for help when struggling with your other classes,” or “you attend office hours to ask faculty members questions about course material”. Table 4.4 shows a complete listing of the survey items used in this study.

College success strategies and Honors satisfaction. I was interested in exploring how the campus resources and help-seeking constructs were related to the two key FYE program outcomes: learning strategies necessary for college success and satisfaction in the Honors College. For example, based on their participation in either FYE course, students were asked to rate their agreement with items such as, “The FYE course provided you with the important learning strategies to socially and academically succeed during your first year of college” or “You were satisfied with your first-year experience in the Honors College”. The 2013 follow-up survey contained additional items pertaining to participants’ perceptions of how the learning strategies endured to their second and third year college experiences (See Table 4.4).

Procedures

This study used multiple quantitative models during the Honors students’ junior year (Fall 2013) to longitudinally assess the impact of their enrollment in either Student Success Seminar or Honors Colloquia in Fall 2011. First, pre-college characteristics (i.e. demographics, SAT score, Pell Grant eligibility), college GPA, and retention data were derived from Southwest University’s Analytics system for all 2011-2012 first-year students who completed an Honors FYE course ($N = 935$). Next, participants were purposefully recruited based on their enrollment in either Honors FYE course to complete an online survey with several follow-up items pertaining to their experiences in either Student Success Seminar or Honors Colloquia. After data collection had ended, I only extracted Student Success Seminar participants who were first-generation and Honors Colloquia participants who were not first-generation for the purpose of the present study and to mitigate the quasi-experimental placement of students into either group. This resulted in a sample of $N = 361$. The educational records obtained via Analytics were then matched to the participants’ survey responses using their NetID, an identifier that is unique to

each student at Southwest University. Finally, Student Success Seminar participants' survey responses were also matched to their Fall 2011 course assessment if they had completed both instruments ($N = 100$). The educational records and survey responses were de-identified prior to data analysis in order to maintain participants' anonymity and confidentiality. This study was classified exempt from Human Subjects Review by Southwest University's Institutional Review Board, and all students who participated gave consent before the study began.

Analysis

The first series of analyses addressed the research question: How did enrollment in either Student Success Seminar or Honors Colloquia affect students' cumulative GPA and retention to their second and third year of college? Prior to analysis, data were screened for assumptions of normality and multicollinearity, as outlined by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). Using the educational records obtained from Southwest University's Analytics system, hierarchical linear and binary logistic regression models (HLM) were created to examine how participants' pre-college characteristics and enrollment in either FYE course could explain their GPA and retention. HLM, a multilevel model, was chosen based on research by Astin's (1993) Input-Environment-Outcome (I-E-O) model.

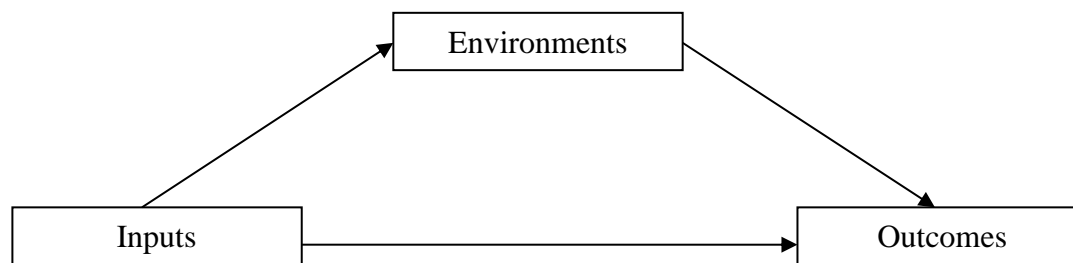


Figure 4.1. Astin's (1993) I-E-O Model.

Input refers to any student background characteristic present at the time of admission, such as demographic characteristics. Environment characteristics include any experience of interest that happens during college that could influence the outcome of interest, such as type of FYE course. Outcomes are the anticipated objectives of the educational program (i.e., grades and retention). HLM allows researchers to control for input variables while studying the effect of the environment on particular outcomes.

The Honors 2011-12 entering cohort's GPA was measured at three separate times: Fall 2011 (first semester), Spring 2012 (cumulative), and Spring 2013 (cumulative). The control variables of students' background characteristics were entered first because they were considered Inputs. Arizona residency at time of admission was coded (0) non-resident or (1) in-state resident, gender was coded (0) male or (1) female, race/ethnicity was coded (0) non-White or (1) White, and Pell Grant Eligibility was coded (0) non-eligible or (1) eligible. The composite of participants' Math and Verbal SAT scores was measured as a continuous variable. Honors FYE course was then entered in the second model as a college environmental factor, coded as (0) Honors Colloquia or (1) Student Success Seminar. Three separate models were then run using GPA from the three terms as the continuous dependent variables, or outcomes. Four hierarchical binary logistic models were also conducted using the same coding as the linear models, but retention was the dependent variable, coded as (0) not retained or (1) retained. The four models explain students' first- and second-year retention rates in the Honors College and at Southwest University.

I also used HLM and Astin's (1993) I-E-O framework to address the two other outcomes of interest: students' perceptions of the college success strategies taught in their FYE course, and their satisfaction with their experience in the Honors College during their first year of college.

These analyses relied on the Fall 2013 follow-up survey data, which had a Cronbach coefficient of $\alpha = .92$. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was first conducted in order to establish factors from participants' responses (Table 4.4). Each survey item's mean was centered to zero prior to running the EFA to ease interpretation of raw scores (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). Four factor scores emerged: Campus Resources ($\alpha = .92$), Help-Seeking ($\alpha = .86$), First Year Honors College Satisfaction ($\alpha = .89$), and College Success Strategies ($\alpha = .95$). Two separate linear regression models were run using either the College Success Strategies or First Year Honors College Satisfaction factor scores as dependent variables. Participants' background characteristics were entered in the first regression model using the same variables and coding as the series of HLM analyses that predicted grades and retention. Similarly, FYE course was entered in the second model as either Honors Colloquia or Student Success Seminar. In order to further understand the impact of the FYE course objectives on Honors Satisfaction or College Success Strategies, participants' College Resources and Help-Seeking factor scores were entered in the third model. Lastly, two interaction variables were added in the final model: the interaction between FYE course and Campuses Resources and the interaction between FYE course and Help-Seeking.

Finally, a repeated measures analysis was conducted with data from Student Success Seminar participants' Fall 2011 course assessment questionnaire items ($\alpha = .90$) and Fall 2013 follow-up survey responses to examine how their perceptions changed over time. A series of paired *t*-tests were run using Bonferroni corrections to prevent committing multiple Type-I errors; that is, rejecting a null hypothesis that is actually true (Howell, 2013; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Four paired *t*-test were conducted using two separate items per test. Thus, eight items total were used to assess how students' perceptions

Table 4.4
Factor Loadings and Reliability for Survey Measures

	Factor Loading (alpha)
Campus Resources	(.92)
<i>Item stem:</i> How much do you agree that the FYE course helped you learn about:	
• Career development opportunities for undergraduate students (e.g., internships, resumes)	.96
• Academic resources available on campus (e.g., the Think Tank & writing center)	.88
• Study abroad opportunities	.86
• Social resources available on campus (e.g., joining clubs and making new friends)	.86
• Research labs that undergraduate students can work in?	.78
• Campus community events (e.g., the performing arts and cultural events)	.70
Help-Seeking	(.86)
<i>Item stem:</i> Based on your participation in the FYE course, how much do you agree that:	
• You attend office hours to ask faculty members questions about course material?	.83
• You seek help from a tutoring service for a difficult class?	.76
• You ask a professor for help when struggling with class work?	.74
College Success Strategies	(.95)
<i>Item stem:</i> How much do you agree that the FYE course provided you with:	
• The important learning strategies for social and academic success during your second year of college	.96
• The important learning strategies for social and academic success during your third year of college	.91
• The important learning strategies for social and academic success during your first year of college	.88
Honors College First Year Satisfaction	(.89)
<i>Item stem:</i> Based on your participation in the FYE course, how much do you agree that:	
• You were satisfied with your first-year experience in Student Success Seminar/Honors Colloquia.	.88

Note: Table continued on next page.

(Table 4.4 continued)

	Factor Loading (alpha)
• You were actively engaged in the learning process of Student Success Seminar/Honors Colloquia.	.81
• You were satisfied with your first-year experience in the Honors College.	.79

may have changed between their freshman and junior year in the following four areas:

Reflection, College Success Strategies, Help-Seeking, and Honors Satisfaction. Participants' scores from Fall 2011 and Fall 2013 were not centered for this repeated measures analysis. The original scale for all items ranged from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (15).

Results

Grade Point Average

The Pearson correlations from the regression models assessing GPA revealed that SAT score ($r = .16, p < .001$), Arizona residency ($r = .12, p < .001$), race/ethnicity ($r = .12, p < .001$), and Honors FYE course ($r = -.12, p < .001$) each significantly correlated with participants' Fall 2011 GPA. Participants with higher SAT scores, in-state residents, White students, and students enrolled in Honors Colloquia had higher first semester GPAs than participants with lower SAT scores, non-residents, non-White students, and students enrolled in Student Success seminar.

The same significant trends followed in the next model explaining participants' cumulative GPA at the end of their first year of college, SAT score ($r = .13, p < .001$), Arizona residency ($r = .16, p < .001$), race/ethnicity ($r = .11, p = .001$), and Honors FYE course ($r = -.12, p < .001$).

However, the factors that endured to significantly explain participants' cumulative GPA at the end of their second year of college were SAT score ($r = .18, p < .001$), Pell Grant eligibility ($r = -.06, p = .041$), gender ($r = .07, p = .025$), race/ethnicity ($r = .06, p = .036$), and FYE course ($r = -.11, p = .001$). Participants with higher SAT scores, non-Pell Grant eligible students, females,

White students, and students who were enrolled in Honors Colloquia had higher cumulative GPAs in Spring 2013 than participants with lower SAT scores, Pell Grant eligible students, males, non-White students, and students who were enrolled in Student Success Seminar (see Table 4.5-4.7 in the Appendix for Pearson Correlation Tables).

Three HLM models were then tested to longitudinally examine whether enrollment in either Student Success Seminar or Honors Colloquia could affect students' grade point average (Table 4.8). The model explaining participants' Fall 2011 GPA was significant, $F(6, 934) = 10.63, p < .001$. Students had a higher first semester GPA if they had higher SAT scores ($\beta = .16, p < .001$), were in-state residents ($\beta = .12, p < .001$), were female ($\beta = .09, p = .005$), or were White ($\beta = .08, p = .014$). Conversely, students had a lower first semester GPA if they were in Student Success Seminar instead of Honors Colloquia ($\beta = -.08, p = .024$). This model accounted for approximately 6% of the variance ($R^2 = .06$, Adjusted $R^2 = .06$, 95% CI [.03, .09]) in students' Fall 2011 GPAs. The same factors also significantly explained participants' cumulative GPA measured in Spring 2012, $F(6, 917) = 10.41, p < .001$. Students had a higher cumulative GPA at the end of their first year of college if they had higher SAT scores ($\beta = .13, p < .001$), were in-state residents ($\beta = .16, p < .001$), were female ($\beta = .08, p = .021$), or were White ($\beta = .07, p = .046$). However, students had a lower first-year cumulative GPA if they were in Student Success Seminar instead of Honors Colloquia ($\beta = -.08, p = .016$). Approximately 6% of the variance in students' Spring 2012 cumulative GPAs ($R^2 = .06$, Adjusted $R^2 = .06$, 95% CI [.03, .09]) was accounted for in this model. The final regression model significantly explained participants' Spring 2013 cumulative GPAs, $F(6, 862) = 8.23, p < .001$. Students who had higher SAT scores ($\beta = .19, p < .001$), or who were females ($\beta = .12, p = .001$), had significantly higher cumulative GPAs at the end of their second year of college than students with lower SAT

Table 4.8

Summary of Hierarchical Linear Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Grade Point Average

Semester GPA	Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Fall 2011 (N=935)						
SAT Score	.01	.01	.18***	.01	.01	.16***
AZ Resident	.15	.04	.11***	.16	.04	.12***
Pell Grant Eligible	-.04	.04	-.03	-.03	.04	-.02
Gender	.11	.04	.09**	.12	.04	.09**
Race/Ethnicity	.12	.04	.09**	.10	.05	.08*
FYE Course				-.11	.05	-.08*
R^2		.06			.06	
Adjusted R^2		.05			.06	
<i>F</i>		11.67***			10.63***	
Spring 2012 _† (N=918)						
SAT Score	.01	.01	.15***	.01	.01	.13***
AZ Resident	.21	.04	.16***	.21	.04	.16***
Pell Grant Eligible	-.05	.04	-.04	-.04	.04	-.03
Gender	.09	.04	.08*	.09	.04	.08*
Race/Ethnicity	.10	.04	.08*	.08	.04	.07*
FYE Course				-.11	.05	-.08*
R^2		.05			.06	
Adjusted R^2		.05			.06	
<i>F</i>		11.27***			10.41***	
Spring 2013 _† (N=863)						
SAT Score	.01	.01	.20***	.01	.01	.19***
AZ Resident	.06	.04	.06	.06	.04	.06
Pell Grant Eligible	-.03	.03	-.04	-.03	.03	-.03
Gender	.11	.03	.12**	.11	.03	.12**
Race/Ethnicity	.04	.03	.04	.03	.03	.03
FYE Course				-.07	.04	-.06
R^2		.05			.06	
Adjusted R^2		.05			.05	
<i>F</i>		9.22***			8.23***	

Note * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, † Cumulative

scores or who were males. Approximately 6% of the variance in students' Spring 2013 cumulative GPAs ($R^2 = .06$, Adjusted $R^2 = .05$, 95% CI [.03, .08]) was accounted for in this model.

Retention

The Honors College. Four binary logistic regression models were tested to longitudinally examine whether enrollment in either Student Success Seminar or Honors Colloquia could affect students' first- and second-year retention in either the Honors College or Southwest University. A test of the Honors College first-year retention rate full model against a constant-only model was statistically significant, $\chi^2(6, N = 935) = 35.87, p < .001$ (Table 4.9). Collectively, the predictor variables reliably distinguished between being retained and departure from the Honors College. However, Nagelkerke's R^2 was .09, which indicated a relatively weak relationship between the independent variables and retention prediction (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The Wald criterion demonstrated that Arizona residency ($p < .001$) and FYE course ($p < .046$) each made a significant contribution to the retention prediction. The EXP(B) values, also known as odds ratios, indicated that in-state residents were 4.36 times more likely to be retained by the Honors College than non-residents, and Students Success Seminar participants were .57 times less likely to be retained than those who were enrolled in Honors Colloquia. The second logistic regression analysis tested the Honors College second-year retention rate full model against a constant-only model, and was also statistically significant, $\chi^2(6, N = 935) = 21.91, p = .001$. However, Nagelkerke's R^2 was once again very low ($R^2 = .04$), indicating a very weak relationship between the predictors and prediction. Arizona residency made a significant contribution to the retention prediction ($p = .001$), as did SAT score ($p = .039$). The EXP(B) value indicated that in-state residents were 2.02 times more likely to return for their junior year

Table 4.9

Summary of Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Honors College Retention Rates (N=935)

Retention Rate	Model 1				Model 2			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	Wald	EXP(B)	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	Wald	EXP(B)
First Year Retention Rate								
(constant)	.73	1.44	.26	2.07	1.28	1.48	.75	3.61
SAT Score	.01	.01	.77	1.00	.01	.01	.35	1.00
AZ Resident	1.42	.26	29.51***	4.12	1.47	.27	30.92***	4.36
Pell Grant Eligible	-.43	.26	.26	.65	-.37	.27	2.00	.69
Gender	-.23	.28	.13	.80	-.21	.28	.58	.81
Race/Ethnicity	.09	.26	.26	1.10	-.02	.27	.01	.98
FYE Course					-.57	.28	4.00*	.57
Nagelkerke's R^2		.08				.09		
Second Year Retention Rate								
(constant)	-.68	1.10	.39	.51	-.34	1.13	.09	.71
SAT Score	.01	.01	5.50**	1.00	.01	.01	4.28*	1.00
AZ Resident	.68	.20	11.09**	1.96	.70	.20	11.82**	2.02
Pell Grant Eligible	-.18	.20	.84	.83	-.15	.20	.53	.87
Gender	-.19	.20	.81	.83	-.18	.21	.74	.84
Race/Ethnicity	-.34	.20	2.89	.71	-.40	.21	3.78	.67
FYE Course					-.31	.22	1.93	.74
Nagelkerke's R^2		.04				.04		

Note * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

in the Honors College than non-residents, and students were 1.00 times more likely to return during their junior year with each unit increase in their SAT scores.

Southwest University. The next two logistic regression models examined participants' first- and second-year retention rates at Southwest University (Table 4.10). The first-year retention rate full model against the constant-only model was statistically significant, $\chi^2(6, N = 935) = 31.74, p < .001$. As a combined set, the independent variables reliably distinguished between being retained and departure from Southwest University. Nagelkerke's $R^2 = .09$, indicating a weak relationship between the predictors and prediction. The Wald criterion demonstrated that Arizona residency ($p < .001$) and FYE course ($p < .028$) each made a significant contribution to the retention prediction. The EXP(B) values indicated that in-state residents were 4.28 times more likely to be retained by Southwest University than non-residents, and Students Success Seminar participants were .52 times less likely to be retained than those who were enrolled in Honors Colloquia. The fourth logistic regression analysis tested the Southwest University second-year retention rate full model against a constant-only model, and was also statistically significant, $\chi^2(6, N = 935) = 35.67, p < .001$. Nagelkerke's $R^2 = .09$, again indicating a weak relationship between the predictors and prediction. The Wald criterion demonstrated that Arizona residency ($p < .001$) and FYE course ($p < .042$) each made a significant contribution to the retention prediction. The EXP(B) value indicated that in-state residents were 4.17 times more likely to return for their junior year at Southwest University, and participants from Student Success Seminar were .57 times less likely to return for their junior year than Honors Colloquia.

College Success Strategies

In the College Success Strategies HLM model, there was a significant positive correlation between participants' College Success Strategies factor score and Arizona Residency ($r = .12, p =$

Table 4.10

Summary of Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Southwest University Retention Rates (N=935)

Retention Rate	Model 1				Model 2			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	Wald	EXP(B)	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	Wald	EXP(B)
First Year Retention Rate								
(constant)	.80	1.51	.28	2.23	1.42	1.55	.84	4.12
SAT Score	.01	.01	.80	1.00	.01	.01	.37	1.00
AZ Resident	1.39	.27	29.51***	4.00	1.45	.28	27.47***	4.28
Pell Grant Eligible	-.35	.28	1.60	.71	-.29	.28	1.06	.75
Gender	-.18	.29	.41	.83	-.16	.28	.31	.85
Race/Ethnicity	-.05	.27	.03	.95	-.18	.28	.42	.83
FYE Course					-.65	.30	4.85*	.52
Nagelkerke's R^2			.07				.09	
Second Year Retention Rate								
(constant)	.11	1.40	.01	1.12	.64	1.43	.20	1.89
SAT Score	.01	.01	1.85	1.00	.01	.01	1.17	1.00
AZ Resident	1.37	.25	29.66***	3.94	1.43	.26	31.18***	4.17
Pell Grant Eligible	-.21	.26	.69	.81	-.16	.26	.36	.85
Gender	-.24	.27	.81	.79	-.22	.27	.68	.80
Race/Ethnicity	-.10	.26	.16	.90	-.21	.26	.66	.81
FYE Course					-.56	.28	4.12*	.57
Nagelkerke's R^2			.08				.09	

Note * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

.014), SAT score ($r = -.22, p < .001$), Campus Resources factor score ($r = .80, p < .001$), Help-Seeking factor score ($r = .76, p < .001$), and the interactions between FYE course and Campus Resources ($r = .51, p < .001$) and FYE and Help-Seeking ($r = .45, p < .001$). Participants were more likely to perceive that their FYE course educated them about the important learning strategies that are necessary for social and academic success if they were in-state residents, had low SAT scores, scored high on the Campus Resource or Help-Seeking factors scores, or were enrolled in Student Success Seminar and also had high Campus Resources or Help-Seeking factor scores (see Table 4.11 in the Appendix for the Pearson correlations).

HLM was then used to longitudinally examine whether enrollment in either Student Success Seminar or Honors Colloquia could affect students' College Success Strategies factor scores (Table 4.13). The final model was statistically significant, $F(10, 360) = 100.75, p < .001$. Students had a higher College Success Strategies factor score if they had higher factor scores in Campus Resources ($\beta = .54, p < .001$) or Help-Seeking ($\beta = .40, p < .001$). However, enrollment in Student Success Seminar led to lower College Success Strategies factor scores compared to enrollment in Honors Colloquia ($\beta = -.20, p < .001$) (see Figure 4.2 in Appendix). The FYE by Campus Resources interaction term indicated that Student Success Seminar participants who had higher Campus Resources factor scores also had higher College Success Strategies factor scores compared to Student Success Seminar participants with a lower Campus Resources factor score ($\beta = .12, p = .028$) (see Figure 4.3 in Appendix). However, the FYE by Help-Seeking factor score interaction term was significantly negative ($\beta = -.11, p = .037$). Examining the means indicated that Student Success Seminar participants with low Help-Seeking factors scores had slightly higher College Success Strategies factor scores than Honors Colloquia participants with low Help-Seeking factor scores (See Appendix). This relationship reversed for individuals with

Table 4.13

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting College Success Strategies from FYE Course (N = 361)

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
AZ Resident	.23	.13	.10	.23	.13	.10	.09	.07	.04	.11	.07	.05
Pell Grant Eligible	-.23	.11	-.11*	-.22	.11	-.11*	.04	.06	.02	.03	.06	.01
Gender	-.01	.12	.01	-.02	.12	-.01	.01	.06	.01	-.01	.06	-.01
Race/Ethnicity	-.14	.11	-.07	-.15	.12	-.07	-.04	.06	-.02	-.05	.06	-.02
SAT Score	-.01	.01	-.22***	-.01	.01	-.22***	-.01	.01	-.15	-.01	.01	-.01
FYE Course				-.02	.12	-.01	-.39	.07	-.19***	-.41	.07	-.20***
Campus Resource Factor Score							.62	.04	.60***	.55	.05	.54***
Help-Seeking Factor Score							.37	.04	.35***	.42	.05	.40***
FYE x Campus Resources										.20	.09	.12*
FYE x Help-Seeking										-.20	.09	-.11*
<i>R</i> ²		.07			.07			.74			.74	
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²		.06			.06			.73			.74	
<i>F</i>		5.38***			4.48***			124.09***			100.75***	

Note * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

high Help-Seeking factor scores, with Honors Colloquia participants scoring higher on College Success Strategies than Student Success Seminar participants. This model accounted for approximately 74% of the variance ($R^2 = .74$, Adjusted $R^2 = .74$, 95% CI [.70, .79]) in students' College Success Strategies factor scores.

Honors College First Year Satisfaction

The Pearson correlations from the Honors College First Year Satisfaction model indicated that there was a significantly positive relationship between Satisfaction and participants' Campus Resources factor score ($r = .54, p < .001$), Help-Seeking factor score ($r = .53, p < .001$), and the interactions between FYE course and Campus Resources ($r = .47, p < .001$) and FYE and Help-Seeking ($r = .44, p < .001$). Participants had a higher Honors College First Year Satisfaction factor score if they also had higher Campus Resources or Help-Seeking factor scores, or if they were enrolled in Student Success Seminar and also had higher Campus Resources or higher Help-Seeking factor scores. Conversely, there was a significantly negative correlation between Satisfaction and Pell Grant eligibility ($r = -.09, p = .05$), SAT score ($r = -.10, p = .03$), and FYE course ($r = -.13, p = .01$). Participants had a lower Honors College First Year Satisfaction factor score if they were eligible for the Pell Grant, had higher SAT scores, or were enrolled in Student Success Seminar compared to participants who were not eligible for the Pell Grant, had lower SAT scores, or were enrolled in Honors Colloquia (see Table 4.12 in the Appendix for the Pearson correlations)

There was also a significant model that explained participants' Honors College First Year Satisfaction factor scores, $F(10, 360) = 29.24, p < .001$ (Table 4.14). Students had a higher Satisfaction factor score if they had higher factor scores in Campus Resources ($\beta = .30, p < .001$) or Help-Seeking ($\beta = .24, p = .001$), compared to students with lower scores in either area. The

Table 4.14

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting First Year Satisfaction with the Honors College (N = 361)

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
AZ Resident	.45	.13	.06	.21	.13	.09	.10	.10	.04	.16	.10	.07
Pell Grant Eligible	-.23	.11	-.11*	-.17	.11	-.09	.02	.09	.08	-.03	.09	-.01
Gender	.03	.12	.01	-.01	.12	-.03	.01	.09	.01	-.01	.09	-.01
Race/Ethnicity	.03	.12	-.01	-.14	.12	-.06	-.06	.09	-.03	-.07	.10	-.03
SAT Score	-.01	.01	-.10	-.01	.01	-.14*	.01	.01	.02	.01	.01	.02
FYE Course				-.38	.12	-.18**	-.65	.10	-.31***	-.71	.10	-.34***
Campus Resource Factor Score							.44	.06	.43***	.31	.07	.30***
Help-Seeking Factor Score							.29	.06	.27***	.25	.07	.24**
FYE x Campus Resources										.38	.13	.22**
FYE x Help-Seeking										.08	.13	.04
R^2		.02			.05			.42			.46	
Adjusted R^2		.01			.04			.40			.44	
F		1.76			3.18**			34.48***			29.24***	

Note * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

FYE by Campus Resources factor score was also statistically significant ($\beta = .22, p = .004$). Student Success Seminar participants had a higher Honors College First Year Satisfaction factor score if they also had a high Campus Resources factor score (See Appendix). However, enrollment in Student Success Seminar alone decreased participants' Honors College First Year Satisfaction factor score compared to the Honors Colloquia participants ($\beta = -.34, p < .001$). Approximately 46% of the variance in students' Honors College First Year Satisfaction factor scores ($R^2 = .46$, Adjusted $R^2 = .44$, 95% CI [.38, .53]) was accounted for in this model.

Student Success Seminar Repeated Measures

A repeated measures analysis was conducted to assess how Student Success Seminar participants' perceptions may have changed between their freshman and junior years of college (Table 4.15). Eight items from the Fall 2011 course assessment and Fall 2013 follow-up instruments were separated into four construct areas and analyzed in a series of separate paired *t*-tests; specifically, two items were used in each of the four tests. A Bonferroni correction of $p = .025$ was used to avoid multiple Type-I errors. For the purposes of the repeated measures analysis, the item scores were left in their original scales of measurement, which ranged from 1 (very strong disagreement) to 15 (very strong agreement). The first paired *t*-tests examined participants' perceptions of how Student Success Seminar influenced reflection of their interests. There was a significant increase in participants' agreement over time regarding how much they actively considered their educational and professional interests by an average of $M = 2.70$ points with $SD = 4.67, t(99) = -5.77, p < .001, r^2 = .25$, as well as their personal interests by an average of $M = 2.55$ points with $SD = 5.13, t(99) = -4.98, p < .001, r^2 = .20$, based on their participation in Student Success Seminar. The next paired *t*-test examined items pertaining to college success strategies. There was a significant increase in participants' agreement over time that Student Success Seminar provided them with important learning strategies for social and academic

Table 4.15

Paired Differences in Participants' Responses to Survey Items in 2011 and 2013 (N=100)

	Fall 2011 M (SD)	Fall 2013 M (SD)	Paired Difference M _D (SD)	<i>t</i>
Reflection				
Based on your participation in Student Success Seminar, how much do you agree that you actively consider your educational and professional interests?	8.14 (4.51)	10.83 (3.83)	-2.70 (4.67)	-5.77***
Based on your participation in Student Success Seminar, how much do you agree that you actively consider your personal interests?	7.77 (4.59)	10.32 (3.74)	-2.55 (5.13)	-4.98***
Help-Seeking				
Based on your participation in Student Success Seminar, how much do you agree that you attend faculty office hours to ask questions about course material?	8.94 (4.46)	9.25 (4.21)	-.31 (5.12)	-.61
Based on your participation in Student Success Seminar, how much do you agree that you seek help from a tutoring service for difficult class	7.49 (5.03)	7.68 (4.22)	-.19 (5.05)	-.38
College Success Strategies				
How much do you agree that Student Success Seminar helped you learn about academic resources available on campus?	8.54 (4.37)	9.10 (3.67)	-.56 (4.63)	-1.21
How much do you agree that Student Success Seminar provided you with important learning strategies for social and academic success during your first year of college?	7.72 (4.13)	8.79 (4.46)	-1.07 (4.55)	-2.35*
Satisfaction				
How much do you agree that you were satisfied with your experience in Student Success Seminar?	9.34 (4.26)	8.87 (4.63)	.47 (4.14)	1.14
How much do you agree that you were satisfied with your first-year experience in The Honors College?	10.95 (3.19)	9.41 (4.53)	1.54 (4.65)	3.31**

Note * $p < .025$. ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, $df = 99$, Scale range is 1-15

success during their first year of college by an average of $M = 1.70$ points with $SD = 4.55$, $t(99) = -2.35$, $p = .021$, $r^2 = .05$. There was no significant change in how participants responded to the help-seeking items, but there was a significant decrease in their agreement that they were satisfied with their first-year experience in the Honors College by an average of $M = 1.54$ points with $SD = 4.65$, $t(99) = 3.31$, $p = .001$, $r^2 = .10$.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to assess the longitudinal impact of two contrasting models of Honors FYE courses on students' cumulative GPA, retention, and perceptions during their junior year of college. A series of HLM models revealed that Honors Colloquia students earned higher GPAs at the end of their first semester and first year of college even when controlling for SAT score, Arizona residency, gender, Pell Grant eligibility, and race/ethnicity. By the end of their second year of college, the only two predictors that had an enduring impact on students' cumulative GPA were SAT score and gender. Four binary logistic regression models were used to predict students' first- and second-year retention in either the Honors College or Southwest University. Arizona in-state residents and students who were enrolled in the Honors Colloquia FYE course were more likely to be retained after their first year in the Honors College than non-residents and Student Success Seminar participants. The second model demonstrated that in-state residents and students with a higher SAT score were more likely to remain enrolled in the Honors College after their second year. With respect to Southwest University, in-state residents and Honors Colloquia students were both more likely to be retained after their first and second year compared to non-residents or students who were enrolled in Student Success Seminar. These retention findings are consistent with college adjustment and transition research literature because students who were enrolled in Honors Colloquia were generally on a stronger college-prep track compared to a majority of the individuals from underrepresented backgrounds that were enrolled in

Student Success Seminar. Although the Student Success Seminar coursework was designed to help support these students in their college adjustment, it appears that they are still prone to dropping out when compared to their peers in the Honors Colloquia.

Students' perceptions of college success learning strategies and satisfaction with the Honors College were two other outcomes thought to be affected by the Honors FYE coursework. I was particularly interested in how students' perceptions of the campus resources and help-seeking techniques taught in their FYE course could explain their perceptions of college success strategies and first-year satisfaction in the Honors College even when controlling for background characteristics (i.e., SAT score, gender, SES, race/ethnicity). I found that students had a higher College Success Strategies factor score if they also had high factor scores for Campus Resources or Help-Seeking. This meant that students were more likely to perceive that their FYE course exposed them to learning strategies that were important to achieve social and academic success during their first, second, and third year of college if they also believed their course taught them about useful campus resources (e.g., tutoring, internships, counseling center) or help-seeking skills (i.e., asking friends or faculty for help). However, students had a lower College Success Strategies factor score if they were enrolled in Student Success Seminar instead of Honors Colloquia, which could be interpreted to mean Honors Colloquia has the potential to support resilient Honors students more effectively than the Student Success Seminar FYE course. Student Success Seminar participants' lower College Success Strategies Factor score could also be explained by their first-generation status. It was not measured in this study, but many first-generation students are less aware, compared to non-first generation students, of campus resources and college success strategies prior to coming to college (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Harvey & Housel, 2011; Padgett et al., 2012; Pascarella et al., 2004; Ramos-Sánchez & Nichols, 2007). Therefore, two interaction terms were included in the final model to understand how either FYE course could impact students' perceptions of

campus resources and help-seeking. There was a statistically significant result for both the FYE by Campus Resources and FYE by Help-Seeking interactions. Student Success Seminar participants who had higher scores on the Campus Resources factor score also had higher scores on College Success Strategies compared to Student Success Seminar participants with low scores on Campus Resources.

The first interaction helped explain that Student Success Seminar participants could have a higher College Success Strategies factor score provided that they also perceived that their FYE course included information about how to find and use important campus resources. The FYE by Help-Seeking interaction is less clear, but appears that the Honors Colloquia students perceived that there were many help-seeking opportunities offered in their course, and they may have used this information when rating the items pertaining to the College Success Strategies factor score on the follow-up survey. In addition to content, the biggest difference between the two FYE courses was that Honors Colloquia was led by faculty rather than student preceptors. It is possible that Honors Colloquia students learned first-hand from their instructors that faculty members are actually approachable and a good source of help for assignments or exam review, whereas Student Success Seminar students were merely told this information by their preceptors who were upperclassmen in the Honors College.

The second regression model using Fall 2013 survey data examined how Campus Resources and Help-Seeking could explain participants' Honors College First Year Satisfaction factor scores when controlling for pre-college characteristics. Once again, regardless of participants' FYE course, Campus Resources and Help-Seeking each uniquely explained an increase in students' satisfaction in the Honors College during their first year of college. However, Student Success Seminar participants had a lower Honors College First Year Satisfaction factor score than the Honors Colloquia participants. The FYE by Campus Resources and Help-Seeking interactions were tested again, but only the former was statistically significant. Student Success Seminar students who had higher scores on Campus Resources

also had higher scores on Honors College First Year Satisfaction compared to Student Success Seminar students with low Campus Resources factor scores. It appeared that participants' perceptions of the campus resources they learned about in Student Success Seminar were partially responsible for an increase in their satisfaction with their first-year experience in the Honors College. This is important because of the interventional nature of Student Success Seminar and the implications for improved retention rates; it is advantageous to the Honors College if students from underprepared backgrounds associate the FYE course objectives with their satisfaction as Honors students so they continue to remain enrolled.

The final analysis used a repeated measures design that explored how Student Success Seminar participants' perceptions of the course outcomes changed between their freshman and junior year of college. The first paired *t*-tests examined participants' perceptions of how Student Success Seminar influenced reflection of their interests. Two years after they completed the Fall 2011 course assessment, the students had a significantly higher agreement with the statement that their participation in Student Success Seminar led them to actively think about their educational, professional, and personal interests. Although many college students spend time thinking about their futures as a result of their higher education (Brooks, Cornelius, Greenfield, & Joseph, 1995; Hinkelman & Luzzo, 2007; Kuh, 2003; Kuh et al., 2010), this finding is significant because it appears that the participants attributed their introspection to their experiences in Student Success Seminar. Perhaps the exposure to campus resources and the goal-setting activities that were embedded in the Student Success Seminar curriculum motivated students to actively consider their own interests, which in turn could increase their involvement in campus activities and functions that help support persistence and retention (e.g., student clubs, study abroad, internships) (Astin, 1984, 1999; Kuh, 2003, 2008; Kuh et al., 2008; Nelson et al., 2012).

The students also reported a significantly higher agreement with the statement “Student Success Seminar provided you with important learning strategies for social and academic success during your first year of college” on their Fall 2013 follow-up survey than in Fall 2011. Students might have responded with a higher agreement during their junior year because they had more time to reflect, and because they were only half way done with their freshman year of college when they completed the Fall 2011 course assessment. It would have been difficult for them to truly evaluate if the learning strategies were helpful in achieving success, at least academically, during that time. Nevertheless, these learning strategies (e.g., help-seeking, note-taking, study groups, goal-setting) are highly related to improved adjustment and persistence during the first and second year of college (Allen & Lester, 2012; Lubker & Etzel, 2007; Goldrick, 2007; Tierney et al., 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005 Ramos-Sánchez & Nichols, 2007), so it is very informative that the Student Success Seminar students perceived that the FYE curriculum did provide strategies to facilitate their social and academic success.

Finally, there was a significant decrease in students’ rating of their satisfaction in the Honors College during their first year. This finding is consistent with the regression model in that Student Success Seminar participants had lower Honors College First Year Satisfaction factor scores than Honors Colloquia participants; however, this longitudinal analysis indicated that participants became even less satisfied with their first-year experience in the Honors College during the passage of time. This repeated measures design was not able to detect what other factors besides time may have caused participants to self-report lower satisfaction with their first-year Honors experience, but this finding alone is especially significant for the Honors College. Ensuring students are truly satisfied with their experiences is important to increase retention within the Honors College (as opposed to Southwest University) (Astin, 1999; Elliot & Healy, 2001; Serenko, 2001), which can then result in more students graduating with the Honors distinction. Increasing the number of Honors College graduates is important

from a strategic planning perspective, as well from the perspective of financial development via alumni donations. Therefore, future research is needed to validate and explore how Student Success Seminar participants become less satisfied with their Honors experience over time.

Recommendations

The finding that Honors Colloquia students had higher GPAs and retention rates than those enrolled in Student Success Seminar is consistent with the college adjustment research literature (Baker & Siryk, 1999; Collier & Morgan, 2008; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Pascarella et al., 2004; Terenzini et al., 1996). By the nature of the FYE course enrollment criteria, most Honors Colloquia students were more prepared for their transition to higher education than the students in Student Success Seminar, and therefore it is expected that they would demonstrate higher grades and retention rates. However, the findings from the Fall 2013 follow-up survey that Honors Colloquia students also had higher ratings of both College Success Strategies and Honors College First Year Satisfaction is especially interesting. Even though the Pearson correlations and interactions terms indicated that there was a significantly positive relationship between Student Success Seminar enrollment, Campus Resources, and Help-Seeking, it was the Honors Colloquia participants who seemed to have the better experience in their FYE course, and the Honors College during their freshman year. Given these key differences in course outcomes, and the finding that the Student Success Seminar participants' satisfaction with their first-year Honors College experience decreased over time, it is recommended that the Honors College administration review whether offering two contrasting styles of FYE course is necessary. Thus, when considering the trade-offs between offering broad introductory FYE courses vs. content-specific models, my findings imply that the content-specific model is more effective in supporting students' college adjustment and satisfaction with the Honors College.

Limitations

Although this study assessed two separate FYE programs, Honors Colloquia and Student Success Seminar were unique to the needs of the Honors College at Southwest University. Therefore, my findings must be taken under consideration when generalized to other models of FYE coursework. Additionally, a major limitation of this study was that there were no true comparison or control groups given the quasi-experimental nature of this research and how I selected participants based on their enrollment. I would have ideally wanted to compare Honors Colloquia and Student Success Seminar participants with Honors students from similar backgrounds who were not enrolled in an Honors FYE course. Unfortunately, these individuals did not exist. There are also other factors that contribute to college adjustment, such as identity, psychosocial development, and institutional commitments (Bowman, 2010, Chickering, 1969; Côté, 2006; Erikson, 1968; Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012; Tierney, 2000). However, measuring these factors was beyond the scope of this study.

Participants' self-reports on the Fall 2011 course assessment and Fall 2013 follow-up survey are also recognized as a limitation. The individuals who chose to participate in the study may not be able to accurately evaluate the survey constructs I was interested, such as whether their FYE course did actually teach them important learning strategies for social and academic success. The longitudinal nature of this study may have also made this more difficult if the participants could not actually remember what happened during their FYE course two years prior to completing the follow-up survey. Conversely, the individuals who chose to participate in this study may also have been vulnerable to participant bias (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010); that is, they may have responded to items according to how they thought I wanted them to respond. Future research should more thoroughly address how FYE coursework impacts students' grades, retention, perceptions, and satisfaction by replicating this study's design and

confirming the validity and reliability of the survey items used in this research. Developing accurate and reliable measures of program outcomes can help establish best practices regarding college adjustment strategies, and allow for a better understanding of the trade-offs between offering students broad vs. specific FYE coursework.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

First Year Experience (FYE) coursework has many important implications for college students' transition and adjustment to higher education, most notably, grades and retention (Barefoot, 2003; Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Jamelske, 2006; Keup, 2005; Porter & Swing, 2006; Tinto 2000, 2010). However, there is little standardization across FYE programs nationally; FYE program instruction differs at every campus depending on the student population and goals of the institution (Cavote & Kopera-Frye, 2004; Goldey, 2004; Needham, 2012; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005). The Honors College at Southwest University is an example of an academic unit that offered two different styles of FYE courses at the same time, which provided an excellent opportunity to compare and contrast methods. Not all Honors students could take the same style of FYE course in 2011 during the Honors College's program development due to resource limitations. Consequently, it was very likely that students were exposed to different opportunities and experiences depending on which FYE course they were enrolled in (Friedman & Marsh, 2009). This dissertation used two separate studies to examine the differential outcomes of Honors students who were enrolled in either the Student Success Seminar or Honors Colloquia FYE courses; specific outcomes included grade point average (GPA), retention, and course perceptions, including satisfaction.

Resilient Honors Students' College Transition

The first study of this dissertation aimed to identify the impact of the Student Success Seminar course on resilient Honors students' college adjustment measured at the end of their first semester of college. A resilient Honors student was defined as an individual from an underrepresented background (e.g., first generation student, low SAT/ACT scores, low high school GPA), and was therefore at greater risk for academic departure from the university (Astin, 1989; Billson & Terry, 1982; Braxton, Sullivan,

& Johnson, 1997; Padgett, Johnson, & Pascarella, 2012; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Tinto, 1988, 2000). Following a qualitative analysis of the resilient Honors students' responses to four open-ended questionnaire items on a Fall 2011 course assessment, the over-arching theme was that Student Success Seminar course impacted students' first semester by primarily relieving the stresses associated with their college transition. The major themes that support this finding were: (1) small class size, (2) goal-setting, (3) resources, and (4) FYE Impact. However, a small number of participants reported that Students Success Seminar had no impact on their college transition because they believed they came to college already prepared for the challenges ahead.

The major finding that Student Success Seminar positively impacted students' stress relief is important because stress is one of the main reasons students decide to drop out of college (Baker & Siryk, 1999; Bowman, 2010; DeBerard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004; O'Malley & Johnston, 2002; Tinto, 2006; 2010). Although participants reported that they experienced various academic, social, and personal-emotional stressors in their transition to college, many students referenced their experiences in Student Success Seminar as a foundation to help them overcome these obstacles. For example, some students mentioned that they did not know much about the campus' resources before taking this seminar, and that it was inspiring to hear about their classmates' struggles and the strategies they used to solve their problems. Exposure to these resources is significant because Student Success Seminar potentially instilled students with an even greater sense of resilience to overcome adversity (Floyd, 1996; Masten 2012; O'Connor, 1997; Werner, 1990), which could help to prevent them from leaving the university.

Similar to the experiences of most first-time college students, this sample of resilient Honors students reported that they encountered many challenges in their transition. However, adjusting to the expectations of university coursework may have been especially stressful for the participants in this study because they are members of the Honors College. Previous research on students who were

enrolled in Student Success Seminar indicated that they tend to hold extremely high academic expectations of themselves (Holliday, Levine-Donnerstein, & Mendez, forthcoming). Setting high expectations for one's academic performance can be ambitious and motivating (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009; Bandura, 1993, 1997; Gore, 2006; Schunk, 1990; Thompson & Musket 2005; Zimmerman, 2008), but the resilient Honors students may also have inadvertently created additional stress stemming from these high expectations. Fortunately, this study found that Student Success Seminar positively impacted resilient Honors students' first semester in college by providing many adaptation strategies.

FYE Seminars' Impact on College Students' Grades, Retention, and Perceptions

The second study specifically addressed the contrasting models of the Honors College's FYE coursework: Student Success Seminar and Honors Colloquia. Honors Students who came from underrepresented backgrounds were enrolled in Student Success Seminar, which was a broad college overview that introduced students to campus resources in order to help them achieve social and academic success. All other incoming Honors freshmen were enrolled into the academic-themed Honors Colloquia. These FYE courses were special topics classes led by faculty from various disciplines. The Honors Colloquia curriculum differed from Student Success Seminar in that it provided students with academic content rather than deliberately teaching student success strategies. The following quantitative models assessed the longitudinal impact of the FYE curricula on students' cumulative GPAs, retention, and lasting perceptions of the coursework during their junior year of college.

GPA and Retention. A series of hierarchical multiple linear and binary logistic regression models explored how enrollment in either Student Success Seminar or Honors Colloquia could affect students' GPAs and retention rates. Compared to Student Success Seminar students, I found that Honors Colloquia students earned higher GPAs at the end of their first semester and at the end of their

first year of college, even when controlling for SAT score, Arizona residency, gender, Pell-grant eligibility, and race/ethnicity. By the end of their second year of college, the only two predictors that had an enduring impact on students' cumulative GPA were SAT score and gender. This finding was consistent with research advocating the SAT's ability to predict students' GPA (Cassady, 2001; Cohn, Cohn, Balch, & Bradley, 2004), as well as the difference between males and females' college GPAs (Bridgeman & Wendler, 1991; Conger & Long 2010; Duckworth & Seligman, 2006). Four binary logistic regression models were then used to predict students' first- and second-year retention in the Honors College and Southwest University. With respect to the Honors College's first-year retention rate, I found that Arizona in-state residents, or students who were enrolled in the Honors Colloquia were more likely to be retained than non-residents or students from Student Success Seminar. In-state residents and students with a higher SAT score were more likely to remain enrolled in the Honors College after their second year. The Southwest University's first-year retention results were similar to the Honors College: in-state residents and Honors Colloquia students were both more likely to be retained after their first and second year compared to non-residents or students who were enrolled in Student Success Seminar.

The finding that Honors Colloquia students had higher GPAs and retention rates than those enrolled in Student Success Seminar supports prior research in college adjustment (Baker & Siryk, 1999; Collier & Morgan, 2008; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Pascarella et al., 2004; Terenzini et al., 1996). By the nature of the Honors FYE course enrollment criteria, most Honors Colloquia students were more prepared for their transition to higher education than the students in Student Success Seminar in that they had higher SAT scores and were not first-generation students. Although the resilient Honors students from Student Success Seminar may have been more likely to drop out when compared to their peers in the Honors College, they did demonstrate higher retention rates compared to all of the students in

Southwest University's Fall 2011 cohort: 90.6 % vs. 80.1% for first-year retention rates and 90.2% vs. 71.8% for second-year retention (Fact Book, 2013). However, these comparisons should be interpreted with caution given the quasi-experimental nature of this study; it is difficult to determine if these differences in retention are due to students' enrollment in the Student Success Seminar FYE course, or the fact that they were also members of an Honors College.

College Success Strategies. In addition to grades and retention, I also wanted to explore the differences in students' perceptions of college success learning strategies and satisfaction with their first-year experience in the Honors College. These outcomes were measured on the Fall 2013 follow-up survey. I created four factor scores using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) from the follow-up survey results prior to analyses: Campus Resources, Help-Seeking, College Success Strategies, and Honors College First Year Satisfaction. I was particularly interested in how students' perceptions of the campus resources and help-seeking techniques taught in their FYE course could explain their perceptions of college success strategies and first-year satisfaction in the Honors College even when controlling for background characteristics (i.e., SAT score, gender, socio-economic status (SES), race/ethnicity). I found that Campus Resources and Help-Seeking each uniquely contributed to a higher College Success Strategies factor score when controlling for all other variables. This meant that exposure to campus resources and help-seeking opportunities during FYE coursework explained an increased perception of the acquisition of learning strategies that were important to achieve social and academic success during the first, second, and third year of college. However, I also found that students had a lower College Success Strategies factor score if they were enrolled in Student Success Seminar instead of Honors Colloquia. Therefore, two interaction terms were also included in the final hierarchical model in order to understand how the relationship between FYE course and students' perceptions of campus resources and help-seeking could affect their Campus Resources factor score. There was a statistically significant

result for both interactions in FYE by Campus Resources and FYE by Help-Seeking. Student Success Seminar participants who had higher scores on the Campus Resources factor score also had higher scores on College Success Strategies compared to Student Success Seminar participants who scored low on the Campus Resources factor score. This interaction helps explain that Student Success Seminar participants could have a higher College Success Strategies factor score provided that they also perceived that their FYE course included information about how to find and use important campus resources. The FYE by Help-Seeking interaction is less clear, but it appears that the Honors Colloquia students perceived that there were many help-seeking opportunities offered in their course, even though the course was not specifically designed to teach success strategies. One explanation for how this could have happened is that Honors Colloquia were taught by faculty instead of preceptors. Perhaps the colloquial setting of the FYE course allowed Honors Colloquia students to become more comfortable asking their faculty instructors for help with course assignments.

Honors College First Year Satisfaction. The second regression model examined how Campus Resources and Help-Seeking could explain participants' Honors College First Year Satisfaction factor score when controlling for pre-college characteristics. Regardless of participants' FYE course, higher Campus Resources and Help-Seeking factor scores each uniquely explained an increase in students' satisfaction in the Honors College during their first year of college. However, Student Success Seminar participants had a lower Honors College First Year Satisfaction factor score than the Honors Colloquia participants. The FYE by Campus Resources and Help-Seeking interactions were tested again, but only the former was statistically significant. Student Success Seminar students who had high scores on Campus Resources also had higher scores on Honors College First Year Satisfaction compared to Student Success Seminar participants with low Campus Resources factor scores. Therefore, participants' perceptions of the campus resources that they had learned in Student Success Seminar were

partially responsible for an increase in their satisfaction with their first-year experience in the Honors College. Again, this is significant because exposing students to campus resources can facilitate their college transition and adjustment (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Harvey & Housel, 2011; Kuh et al., 2008; Padgett et al., 2012; Pascarella et al., 2004; Ramos-Sánchez & Nichols, 2007; Rendon et al., 2008).

Student Success Seminar Repeated Measures. The final analysis used a repeated measures design that explored how Student Success Seminar participants' perceptions of the course outcomes changed between their freshman and junior year of college using data from their Fall 2011 course assessment questionnaire and Fall 2013 follow-up survey. The first paired *t*-tests examined participants' perceptions of how Student Success Seminar influenced reflection of their interests. The students had a significantly higher agreement with how their participation in Student Success Seminar led them to actively think about their educational, professional, and personal interests in Fall 2013 than in Fall 2011. They also reported a significantly higher agreement with the statement "Student Success Seminar provided you with important learning strategies for social and academic success during your first year of college" in Fall 2013 than in Fall 2011. Since the Fall 2011 course assessment was administered before the end of the participants' first year of college, they might have responded with a higher agreement in 2013 because they had more time to reflect on their experiences and utilize their newly learned strategies. In fact, the Fall 2011 course assessment was administered before students completed their first final exams. Some students may have had difficulty evaluating whether the learning strategies were helpful in achieving social or academic success during this time. Nevertheless, these learning strategies (e.g., help-seeking, note-taking, study groups, goal-setting) are highly related to improved adjustment and persistence during the first and second year of college (Allen & Lester, 2012; Goldrick, 2007; Gore, 2006; Lubker & Etzel, 2007; Ramos-Sánchez & Nichols, 2007; Tierney et al., 2005; Pascarella &

Terenzini, 2005). It is an important finding that the Student Success Seminar students perceived that their FYE curriculum did provide strategies to facilitate their social and academic success.

Finally, there was a significant decrease in the participants' agreement with their satisfaction in the Honors College during their first year. This finding is consistent with the regression model in that Student Success Seminar participants had a lower Honors College First Year Satisfaction factor score than Honors Colloquia participants; however, this repeated measures analysis indicated that as a within-samples group, participants became even less satisfied with their first-year experience in the Honors College during the passage of time. The paired *t*-test design was not able to detect the specific factors that may have caused participants to self-report lower satisfaction with their first-year Honors Experience, so further research is needed to explore why students have become less satisfied over time.

Corroboration. Although the two studies in this dissertation were conducted using data from different time points and had different research questions, both studies shared the common goal of further understanding the impact of FYE coursework on students' college adjustment and transition. Therefore, I sought to corroborate the qualitative findings from Chapter 3 with the quantitative models from Chapter 4 where applicable. Given the limited information that was provided by the paired *t*-tests from Chapter 4, I decided to corroborate these models with the themes that emerged from the Fall 2011 course assessment open-ended responses in order to enhance the validity of my findings (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011).

In the repeated measures analysis, participants reported a higher agreement in Fall 2013 than in Fall 2011 with statements that asked them to rate how much they actively considered their educational, professional, and personal interests based on their participation in Student Success Seminar. This is an interesting finding because of its implications for increasing students' academic and professional motivation (Bandura, 1989; Gore, 2006; Schunk, 1990, 2008; Thompson & Musket, 2005; Zimmerman,

1989, 2008; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992), as well as their involvement on campus in activities related to their interests (Astin, 1993, 1999; Kuh, 2003, 2009; Nelson, Quinn, Marrington, & Clarke, 2012; Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009). That is, college students who actively think about their educational and career interests likely devote more time and energy towards achieving their post-graduation goals. After reviewing the themes from the open-ended Fall 2011 course assessment to understand how Student Success Seminar could have impacted students' consideration of their interests, it seems the goal-setting activities may have influenced these perceptions. Goal-setting and motivation were described in terms of their educational and career planning, but most participants reported that they actually initiated setting these goals because Student Success Seminar facilitated their self-reflection and self-exploration. Student Success Seminar focused on helping students break down their educational and career plans into more realistic and tangible components, which may have inspired them to think more about their own educational, professional, and personal interests as they progressed through college (Bandura, 1989, 1993; Duckworth, Grant, Loewy, Oettingen, & Gollwitzer, 2011; Gore, 2006; Schunk, 1990, Zimmerman, 2008, Zimmerman et al., 1992).

Participants also reported a stronger agreement in Fall 2013 that Student Success Seminar provided them with important learning strategies for social and academic success during their first year of college. I found that the learning resources (i.e., academic success strategies) sub-theme from the qualitative analysis supported this paired *t*-test result. Students reported that they highly valued such strategies as note-taking, forming study groups, attending faculty office hours, and most importantly, time management. The corroboration of these findings is significant because success strategies are useful in helping students become adjusted to their new roles and responsibilities on college campuses (Allen & Lester, 2012; Barton & Donahue, 2009; Keup & Barefoot, 2005). Therefore, Student Success

Seminar potentially supported resilient Honors students' college transition by including learning strategies in the curriculum.

I also attempted to corroborate the significant decrease in Student Success Seminar participants' satisfaction during their first-year experience in the Honors College with the qualitative themes. However, the four open-ended questionnaire items were all specific to the FYE course rather than participants' holistic first-year experience in the Honors College. A possible relationship could be found using the minor qualitative theme in which some students felt Student Success Seminar had no impact on their educational experiences or long-term goals. Particularly, some students responded that most of the curriculum was very basic, and comprised of material that Honors students should have already known. Some Fall 2013 follow-up survey participants may have become less satisfied with their first-year experience in the Honors College if they were responding with their negative sentiments towards Student Success Seminar in mind. However, more research is needed in this area to further understand the decrease in Student Success Seminar participants' satisfaction with their first-year experience in the Honors College.

Implications

Resilient Honors Students. There has been very little empirical research on Honors programming and its effectiveness in assisting students from underrepresented backgrounds in their college transition. In fact, in a review of the literature, no articles were found that specifically addressed both Honors colleges and this special interest group of students. This is likely because most Honors colleges and programs in the United States admit students who were on a strong college preparation track and deemed to have "high ability" as evidenced by scores on college placement exams (i.e., SAT and ACT) and high school grades (Rinn, 2005; Scott, 2013). However, Southwest University's Honors College is unique in its admissions decisions because incoming students are reviewed based on many

factors (e.g., multiple admissions essays, teacher recommendations, ACT/SAT scores, and high school GPA). The corresponding admissions decisions created greater access to Honors coursework for students who would have traditionally been denied admission at other institutions. In addition to this dissertation's purpose of examining contrasting models of Honors FYE courses at Southwest University, a more in-depth analysis of Student Success Seminar was especially important due to its implications for resilient Honors students and their college adjustment.

The qualitative analysis from Chapter 3, and repeated measures analysis from Chapter 4, revealed that Student Success Seminar supported the resilient Honors students' college transition by encouraging them to become involved in their higher education, and practice learning strategies. Astin's (1984, 1993, 1999) Theory of Student Involvement links student behavior with persistence, so the main implication for the Honors College is that the resilient Honors students will likely have higher retention and graduation rates if they understand how to effectively spend time and mental energy towards their academic and professional goals. Many of the ways that I found Student Success Seminar encouraged participants to become more involved at Southwest University was by using concepts from the field of educational psychology, such as help-seeking, social learning, and self-regulated learning in the form of goal-setting and reflection (Bandura, 1989, 1993; Duckworth, et al., 2011; Gore, 2006; Karabenick, 2004; Karabenick, & Knapp, 1991; Schunk, 1990, 2008; Zimmerman, 1989, 2008; Zimmerman et al., 1992). With respect to social learning, participants stated that they valued meeting with their preceptor to learn from their experiences, as well as listening during class time about their peers' common struggles with their college transition. Help-seeking was evident throughout the course as many discussions and activities stressed the importance of forming study groups, joining clubs, attending structured tutoring on campus, and networking with faculty. Students also reported they spent more time reflecting on their educational and career goals as a result of class assignments. Embedding these

learning strategies within the Student Success Seminar curriculum was therefore highly effective in encouraging students to become aware of their abilities and college purpose.

Although it was not measured in this study, another major implication of supporting resilient Honors students' college transition is the potential to increase their social capital after they graduate from college (Ceja, 2006; Karen, 2002; Nuñez, 2009). It is estimated that college graduates will earn about \$1 million dollars more over their lifetimes than individuals who do not possess a baccalaureate degree (Swail, 2011). Additionally, the unemployment rate for those who hold a recent bachelor's degree (5%) is much lower than individuals who did not pursue their higher education (22.9%), or for those without a high school diploma or GED (31.5 %) (Carnevale, Cheah, & Strohl, 2013). By increasing the number of highly skilled and educated individuals entering the work force, a further implication of improving retention is the boost to the economy. Through achieving a higher education, students who once may have struggled during their college transition now have a greater potential to contribute to society as they become more financially responsible adults.

Contrasting FYE Models. There will always be trade-offs between offering broad, introductory FYE courses and content-specific models. Despite the differences in participants' grades and retention, which were likely more influenced by their pre-college characteristics than their FYE course (Astin & Oseguera, 2004, Farkas, 2009; Hearn, 1991; Walpole, 2003), I measured other outcomes that may be more informative regarding students' experiences and adjustment during their first semester of college. First, I found Honors Colloquia participants had higher scores on the dependent variables of College Success Strategies and Honors College First Year Satisfaction in the hierarchical linear regression models using Fall 2013 follow-up data. That information alone implies that the Honors Colloquia participants were more likely than Student Success Seminar participants to agree that their FYE course supported their college adjustment and satisfaction with the Honors College. However, I was also

interested in how students' perceptions of College Success Strategies and Help-Seeking influenced their scores on the dependent variables. It appears that Student Success Seminar participants who perceived to learn about campus resources and help-seeking during their FYE course also had higher scores on both College Success Strategies and Honors College First Year Satisfaction. This finding is informative given the implications for resilient students' college adjustment, but it is interesting that the Honors Colloquia participants who had high scores on Help-Seeking had higher scores on College Success Strategies than participants from Student Success Seminar. This is possible because two of the three survey items that loaded on the Help-Seeking factor specifically references seeking help from a faculty member. Honors Colloquia participants' perceptions of help-seeking opportunities may have had a greater effect on their College Success Strategies factor score because their FYE instructors were actually faculty members. Apart from content, the main difference between the two Honors FYE models was that Student Success Seminar was led by undergraduate preceptors. Honors Colloquia faculty were therefore able to actually demonstrate how easily they could be approached when students needed to ask for help with assignments or exams; whereas Student Success Seminar students were merely told this information by the upperclassmen who led their individual course sections. There are many factors that could have influenced participants' perceptions and survey responses, yet a major implication from this finding is that the Student Success Seminar curriculum should include more opportunities for participants to understand the value of help-seeking as a social and academic success strategy due its positive relationship with college adjustment and retention (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Karabenick, 2004; Padgett et al., 2012; Roussel, Elliot, & Feltman, 2011; Ryan, Gheen, & Midgley, 1998).

The Honors College. Although not usually measured as an FYE seminar outcome, students' satisfaction with their first-year experience has many implications for Southwest University's Honors

College. The first reason is specifically related to this dissertation because FYE coursework had a significant relationship with the Honors College First Year Satisfaction factor score; Honors Colloquia participants were more satisfied than Student Success Seminar participants as measured on the Fall 2013 follow-up survey. Additionally, I found Student Success Seminar participants to be significantly less satisfied with their first-year experience in the Honors College over the course of time in the repeated measures analysis. Therefore, the implication is that the resilient students who have traditionally been placed in Student Success Seminar would likely be more satisfied with their first-year experience in the Honors College if they were enrolled with their peers in the Honors Colloquia.

Regardless of the FYE course, it is also advantageous for the Honors College to ensure students are satisfied with their Honors experiences because enrollment in the Honors College is optional; that is, every student in the Honors College is also a member of an academic school or college at Southwest University where his/her major is located (i.e., College of Social and Behavioral Sciences for Psychology majors). In order to meet institutional strategic planning metrics, the Honors College must maintain a number of students who graduate with the Honors College distinction. Therefore, it is important to provide students with a satisfying experience because they could decide to drop out of the Honors College, while remaining enrolled at Southwest University, if they do not perceive the Honors experience to be beneficial (Astin, 1999; Elliot & Healy, 2001; Serenko, 2001). This would have negative implications for the strategic plan, as well as fewer opportunities for the Honors College to seek donations from alumni after graduation.

Providing Honors students with a satisfying experience also has implications in terms of program development. In 2011, the Honors College implemented a program fee of \$250.00 per semester for all of its students. This money has been used to employ more academic advisors, professional staff, and full-time Honors faculty, as well as develop innovative coursework and Honors engagement

opportunities (e.g., alternative spring break, civic engagement). The fee was designed to provide students with an experience that is unique from the other undergraduate opportunities available across the institution, but it is important for the Honors College to know how students' first-year satisfaction is related to the additional program costs that are associated with Honors College membership. Although this relationship was not measured in either study of this dissertation, an important implication is that students may drop out of the Honors College if they are not satisfied with paying the extra fee. The subsequent drop in fee-paying Honors students would then result in less money to be available for Honors programming, which could then cause more students to become less satisfied with their experiences if there are noticeable changes in the quality of Honors programming. Therefore, keeping students satisfied with their Honors experiences should be a primary concern for the Honors College.

Limitations and Future Directions

This dissertation assessed two separate FYE seminar program outcomes, yet Honors Colloquia and Student Success Seminar were unique to the needs of the Honors College at Southwest University. Thus, my findings are limited from being generalized to other models of FYE coursework unless they strongly resemble the dynamics and nuances of an Honors college for both traditional and resilient first-year students. Another major limitation I encountered in this research was that there were no true comparison or control groups given the quasi-experimental nature of the Honors FYE enrollment criteria. I would have ideally wanted to compare Honors Colloquia and Student Success Seminar participants with Honors students from similar backgrounds who were not enrolled in an Honors FYE course. Unfortunately, these individuals did not exist. There are also other factors that contribute to college adjustment, such as identity and psychosocial development (Bowman, 2010, Chickering, 1969; Côté, 2006, 2009; Erikson, 1968; Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012; Tierney, 2000). However, measuring these factors was beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Participants' self-reports on the Fall 2011 course assessment and Fall 2013 follow-up survey were also recognized as a limitation for multiple reasons. First, it may have been difficult for participants to truly reflect on how they thought Student Success Seminar impacted their first-year experiences while they were completing a course assessment. For example, they may not have taken the task seriously, nor had enough time to complete the free-response questions, which could have resulted in responses that did not actually reflect their experiences. Caution must also be used when interpreting the 2013 follow-up survey responses because the survey constructs may have been challenging for participants to accurately evaluate, such as whether their FYE course did actually teach them important learning strategies for social and academic success. The passage of time also could have added more difficulty for the participants if they could not actually remember what happened during their FYE course two years prior to when they were invited to complete the follow-up survey.

Participant bias is also a potential limitation, given that a majority of this research was self-reported. This type of participant bias occurs when the individuals who choose to participate in a study deliberately respond to items according to what they think are the anticipated findings of the researchers (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). In order to prevent participant bias, future research should more thoroughly address how FYE coursework impacts students' grades, retention, perceptions, and satisfaction by replicating this study's design and confirming the validity of the survey items and qualitative analysis used in this research. Developing valid and reliable measures of FYE program outcomes can help establish best practices regarding college adjustment strategies by better understanding the trade-offs between offering students a broader introduction to campus resources or specific area of academic content.

APPENDIX

Table 4.5

Fall 2011 GPA Correlation Coefficients (N = 935)

Variable	Fall 2011 GPA	SAT Score	AZ Resident	Pell Eligible	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	FYE Course
Fall 2011 GPA							
SAT Score	.16***						
AZ Resident	.12***	-.04					
Pell Eligible	-.05	-.13***	.10**				
Gender	.05	-.27***	.05	-.01			
Race/Ethnicity	.12***	.08**	.09**	-.06*	-.04		
FYE Course	-.12***	-.24***	.06*	.18***	.08**	-.2***	
Mean _†	3.43	1,277.76	.73	.37	.61	.62	.74
Standard Deviation _†	.60	120.50	.44	.48	.49	.49	.44
Range _†	0.10- 4.00	870.00- 1,600.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00

Note * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ †Central tendency measures are reported by regression coding

Table 4.6

Spring 2012 Cumulative GPA Correlation Coefficients (n = 918)

Variable	Spring 2012 GPA	SAT Score	AZ Resident	Pell Eligible	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	FYE Course
Spring 2012 GPA							
SAT Score	.13***						
AZ Resident	.16***	-.05					
Pell Eligible	-.05	-.13***	.11**				
Gender	.04	-.27***	.06*	-.01			
Race/Ethnicity	.11**	.09**	.09**	-.06*	-.05		
FYE Course	-.12***	-.25***	.05	.17***	.08**	-.21***	
Mean _†	3.46	1,277.99	.74	.37	.62	.62	.74
Standard Deviation _†	.58	120.03	.44	.48	.49	.49	.44
Range _†	0.00- 4.00	870.00- 1,600.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00

Note * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ †Central tendency measures are reported by regression coding

Table 4.7

Spring 2013 Cumulative GPA Correlation Coefficients (n = 863)

Variable	Spring 2013 GPA	SAT Score	AZ Resident	Pell Eligible	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	FYE Course
Spring 2013 GPA							
SAT Score	.18***						
AZ Resident	.06	-.05					
Pell Eligible	-.06*	-.13***	.09**				
Gender	.07*	-.27***	.08*	-.01			
Race/Ethnicity	.06*	.10**	.06*	-.06*	-.05		
FYE Course	-.11**	-.25***	.07*	.18***	.08*	-.21***	
Mean _†	3.52	1,279.34	.76	.37	.61	.62	.75
Standard Deviation _†	.45	120.40	.43	.48	.49	.49	.44
Range _†	1.58- 4.00	870.00- 1,600.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00

Note * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ †Central tendency measures are reported by regression coding

Table 4.11
College Success Strategies Fall 2013 Survey Correlation Coefficients (N = 361)

Variable	College Success Strategies	AZ Resident	Pell Eligible	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	SAT Score	FYE Course	Campus Resource Factor Score	Help-Seeking Factor Score	FYE x Campus Resources	FYE x Help-Seeking
AZ Resident	.12*										
Pell Eligible	-.06	.12*									
Gender	.05	.09	.04								
Race/Ethnicity	-.08	.01	-.10*	-.08							
SAT Score	-.22***	-.16**	-.16**	-.22***	.14**						
FYE Course	.07	.18***	.22***	.01	-.31***	-.29***					
Campus Resource Factor Score	.80***	.12*	-.06	.03	-.16**	-.25***	.30***				
Help-Seeking Factor Score	.76***	.11*	-.03	.08	-.07	-.31***	.18***	.72***			
FYE x Campus Resources	.51***	.01	.06	.05	-.12*	-.20***	.29***	.63***	.47***		
FYE x Help-Seeking	.45***	.04	.04	.03	-.07	-.21***	.17***	.48***	.60***	.77***	
Mean _r	0.00	.78	.39	.71	.70	1,279.78	.37	0.00	0.00	.13	.07

Note: Table 4.11 continued on next page.

(Table 4.11 continued)

Variable	College Success Strategies	AZ Resident	Pell Eligible	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	SAT Score	FYE Course	Campus Resource Factor Score	Help- Seeking Factor Score	FYE x Campus Resources	FYE x Help- Seeking
Standard Deviation _‡	1.00	.41	.49	.45	.46	124.46	.48	1.00	1.00	.58	.56
Range _‡	-1.61- 1.78	0.00- 0.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00	-1.85- 2.20	-2.56- 1.90	-1.54- 2.20	-2.09- 1.81

Note * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ ‡Central tendency measures are reported by regression coding

Table 4.12

Honors College First Year Satisfaction Fall 2013 Survey Correlation Coefficients (N = 361)

Variable	Honors College First Year Satisfaction	AZ Resident	Pell Eligible	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	SAT Score	FYE Course	Campus Resource Factor Score	Help- Seeking Factor Score	FYE x Campus Resources	FYE x Help- Seeking
AZ Resident	.07										
Pell Eligible	-.09*	.12*									
Gender	.04	.09	.04								
Race/Ethnicity	-.02	.01	-.10*	-.08							
SAT Score	-.10*	-.16**	-.16**	-.22***	.14**						
FYE Course	-.13**	.18***	.22***	.01	-.31***	-.29***					
Campus Resource	.54***	.12*	-.06	.03	-.16**	-.25***	.30***				
Help-Seeking	.53***	.11*	-.03	.08	-.07	-.31***	.18***	.72***			
FYE x Campus Resources	.47***	.01	.06	.05	-.12*	-.20***	.29***	.63***	.47***		
FYE x Help- Seeking	.44***	.04	.04	.03	-.07	-.20***	.17**	.48***	.60***	.77***	
Mean ₊	0.00	.78	.39	.71	.70	1,279.78	.37	0.00	0.00	.13	.07

Note: Table 4.12 continued on next page.

(Table 4.12 continued)

Variable	Honors College First Year Satisfaction	AZ Resident	Pell Eligible	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	SAT Score	FYE Course	Campus Resource Factor Score	Help- Seeking Factor Score	FYE x Campus Resources	FYE x Help- Seeking
Standard Deviation _‡	1.00	.41	.49	.45	.46	124.46	.48	1.00	1.00	.58	.56
Range _‡	-2.09- 1.71	0.00- 0.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00	0.00- 1.00	-1.85- 2.20	-2.56- 1.90	-1.54- 2.20	-2.09- 1.81

Note * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ ‡Central tendency measures are reported by regression coding

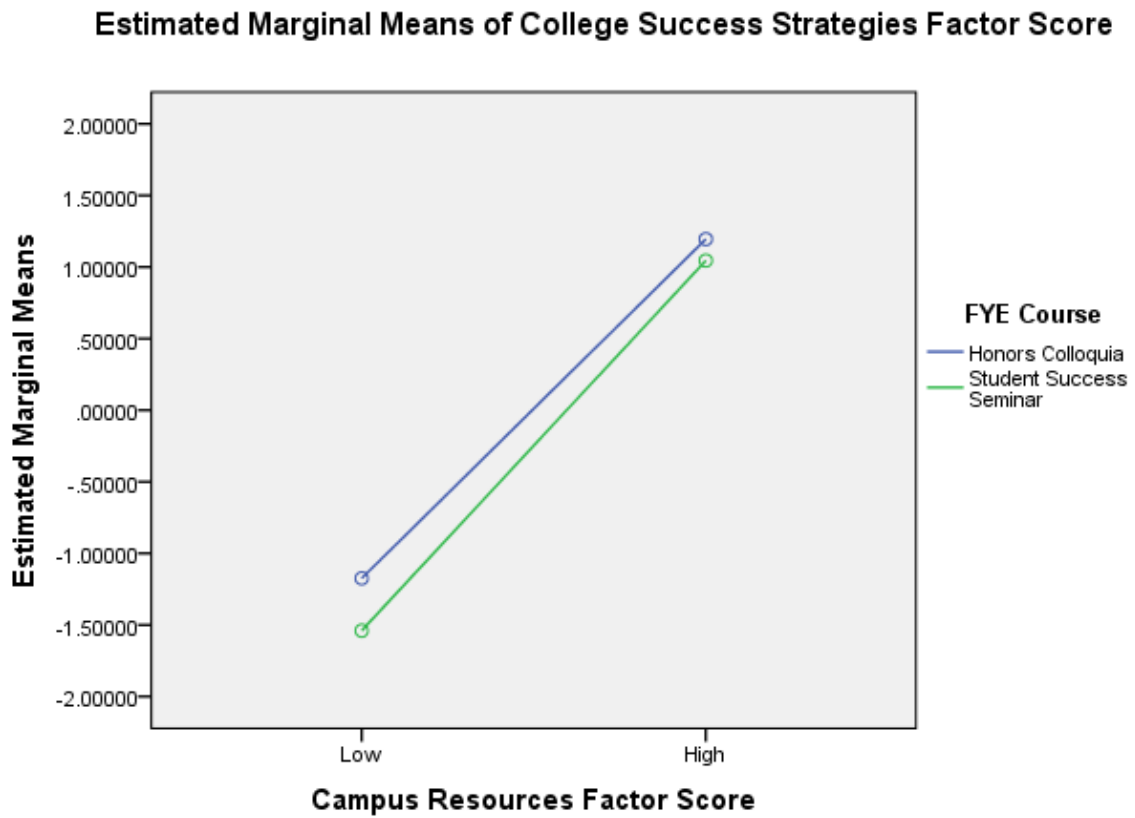


Figure 4.2. FYE Course by Campus Resources Factor Score Interaction Predicting College Success Strategies Factor Score

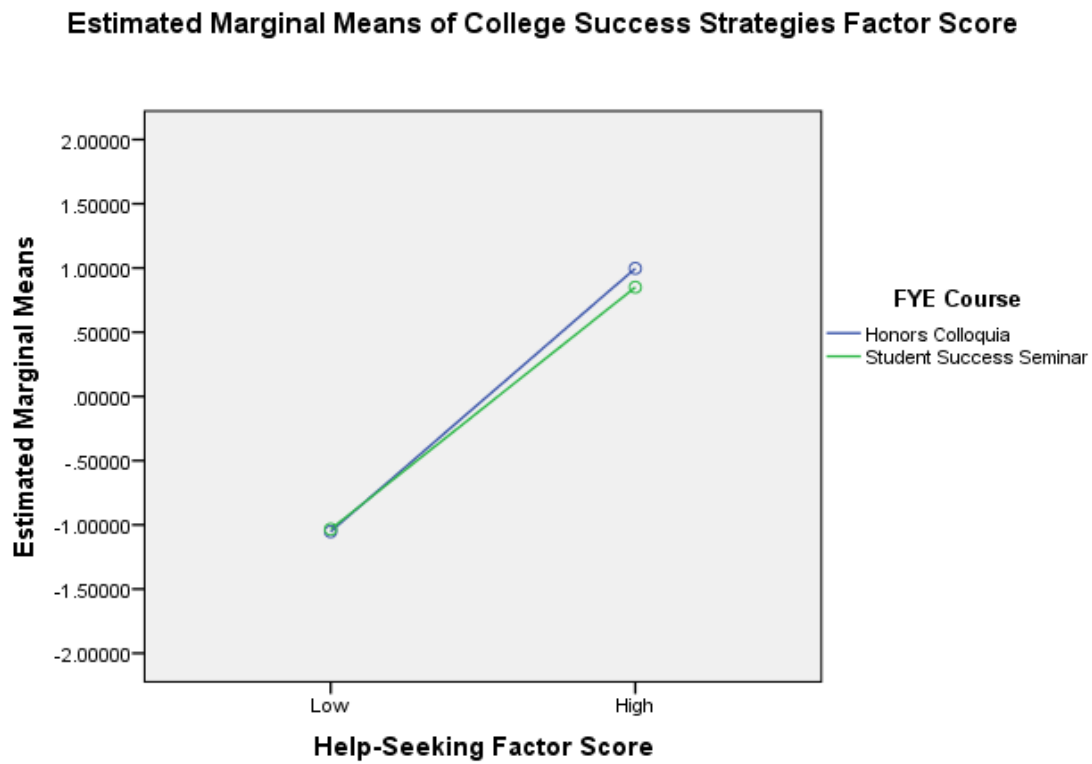


Figure 4.3. FYE Course by Help-Seeking Factor Score Interaction Predicting College Success Strategies Factor Score

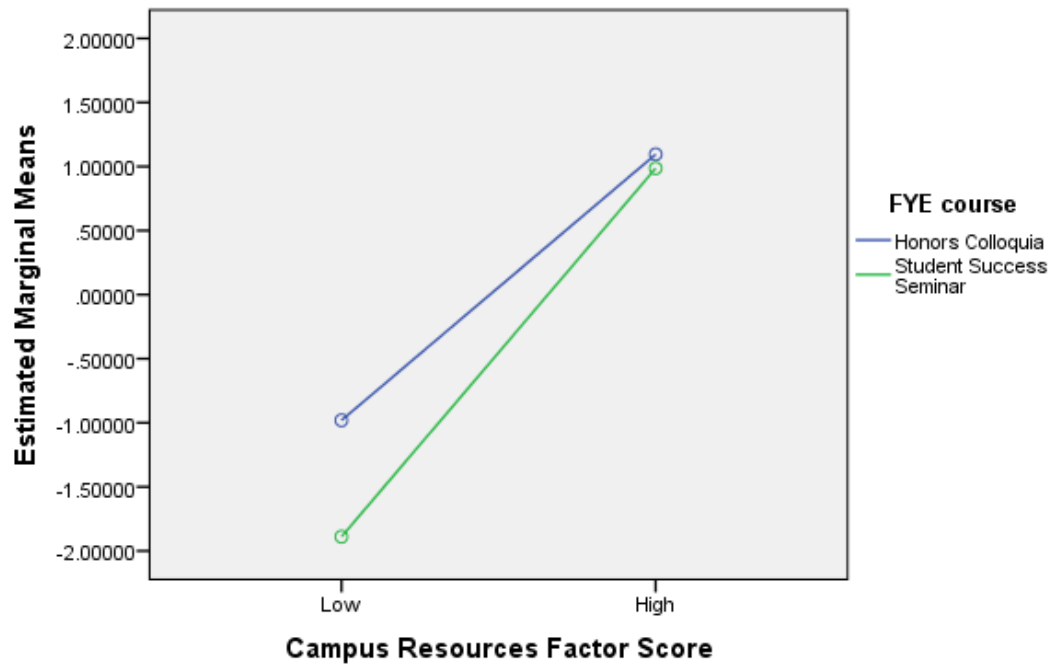
Estimated Marginal Means of Honors College First Year Satisfaction Factor Score

Figure 4.4. FYE Course by Campus Resources Factor Score Interaction Predicting Honors College First Year Satisfaction Factor Score

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