

The First Year Experience at IECC

Building a Strong Foundation for Student Success

By Cassandra Goldman

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Why the First Year Matters

- Research shows first-year success impacts retention and graduation rates. Challenges include academic expectations, social adjustment, and navigating resources.
- First year academic performance, including GPA and credit accumulation, is a strong predictor of continued enrollment and graduation.
- Research indicates that participation in FYE courses positively impacts retention and graduation rates by fostering a sense of belonging, improving study skills, and providing academic support. These courses are particularly beneficial for students from diverse backgrounds, including those who are first-generation or underrepresented.
- First-generation students often face unique challenges in their first year, and research suggests that targeted support through FYE programs can help mitigate these challenges and improve their academic success.
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- WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU THINK OUR NEW STUDENTS FACE MOST?

IECC's Commitment

“Our mission is to deliver exceptional education and services to improve the lives of our students and to strengthen our communities.”

- Our mission aligns with supporting students from day one. FYE is central to our retention and degree completion strategies.
- Quality faculty interactions, including advising, can foster a greater connection to the college and a stronger sense of belonging.
- Faculty and advisors can help students clarify their academic goals and understand the relevance of their coursework, which is vital for persistence.
- Faculty are uniquely positioned to guide students' learning and educational experiences, helping them connect academics to future goals.
- Here is what our student's had to say after last year's NSO:
 - “The staff was great! Super helpful, gentle, and genuine!! Amazing people!” – FCC
 - “Staff was super friendly and helpful with getting started with college.” – LTC
 - “The staff is very friendly and welcoming.” - OCC
 - “Great staff and well organized orientation” – WVC

Overview of FYE at IECC

- It is NOT just a course, it is not just New Student Orientation (NSO), or the first 10 days.
- It is ALL of these and so much more!

- Key Components

Advising

Faculty and Staff

NSO – August 19th

WOW – August 19th – September 5th

FYE Course

Advising & Coaching

- Research indicates that effective academic advising can enhance student engagement, improve retention rates, and help students navigate the challenges of transitioning to higher education.
- Academic advisors are the touchpoint between students and IECC. These interactions span the entire journey for our students. Whether these interactions are face to face, online/video conferencing, or even by phone, they play a crucial role in shaping the overall student experience.
- We also have College & Career Specialists helping to address student needs and promote student retention.
- In addition to our Advisors, every member of IECC plays a role in advising and coaching our students.

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS THAT YOU CAN POSITIVELY INFLUENCE OUR STUDENTS?

New Student Orientation

4 Pillars: Be Informative – Create Community –
Address Fears – Have Fun

2024 WVC New Student Orientation

8:30-9:15 am – Breakfast – Cafeteria

Registration

Student/Faculty/Staff

9:30-10:00 am – Welcome – Theatre

Welcome to WVC – Dr. Fowler

Student Ambassadors – Introduce

Overview of Day - Karissa

10:15 – 11:30 – Campus Journey

BAC1 – Title 9 video

MA101 – Financial Aid/Debt – Disclosures Video

Learning Commons – Disability Support Services/ADA – TimelyCare/Mental Health Video

Community Booths – at various locations throughout Campus

11:30 – Gym Parking Lot

Kyle/Radio TV – Music

Dairy Dee

Outdoor Games

2025 WVC New Student Orientation

9:00-9:30 am – Art Gallery/Theatre Lobby

Registration

Light Breakfast

Student/Faculty/Staff

9:15-9:45 am – Theatre

Ice Breaker activities –

Minute To Win It –

9:45-10:00 am – Theatre

Welcome to WVC – Dr. Fowler

Student Ambassadors/Tour Guides – Introduce

Overview of Day – Karissa

10:00-10:20 – Theatre

Student Panel/Clubs Video

10:25 – 11:30 – Campus Journey

BAC1 – Faculty Panel

Cafeteria – Title 9 video

AA Building – Group Activity – Cassandra Goldman

MA101 – Financial Aid/Debt – Disclosures Video

Learning Commons – Disability Support Services/ADA – TimelyCare/Mental Health Video

11:30 – Gym/Gym Parking Lot

Community Booths – Either Gym or Gym Parking Lot

Kyle/Radio TV – Music

T-Shirt/Survey


Dairy Dee

Cookout


Outdoor Games










Weeks of Welcome! (WoW!)

Be Informative (Academic Preparation) – Create Community/Social Interaction – Address Fears/Campus Navigation – Have Fun



AUGUST 19-SEPTEMBER 4, 2025



 <p>August 19 9-1</p>				<p>21 THURSDAY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classes Start First 10-Day Duck Hunt - Find and return lost ducks to the Learning Commons in exchange for prizes. The Learning Commons: Not Your Grandparents' Library. Explore resources like games, massage chairs and study pods. 11-3: Free Popcorn, Learning Commons 	<p>22 FRIDAY</p>  <p>11-1: Free Cookout & Games, Student Union/Patio Hosted by Lady Knights Basketball Menu includes: Smoked pulled pork sandwiches, chips, cookies and drink</p>
<p>25 MONDAY</p> <p>CLUB RUSH</p> <p>11-1: Club Rush, Main Entrance Patio, Wattleworth Hall Explore campus life! Discover clubs, meet new friends and get involved at OCC.</p>	<p>26 TUESDAY</p> <p>7:30-10: Donut Stress with TRIO SSS, Student Services Lounge Enjoy a donut with us! Find out about TRIO and if you qualify.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Learning Commons: Not Your Grandparents' Library. Explore resources like games, massage chairs and study pods. 11-3: Free Popcorn, LC 	<p>27 WEDNESDAY</p>  <p>1: Alumni Spotlight, Learning Commons Mark Richardson is a former Blue Knight Basketball player who serves as a wealth strategist for TrustBank in Olney.</p>	<p>28 THURSDAY</p>  <p>12: Self-Care 101 with Jamie Barbee, Learning Commons Enjoy pizza while getting tips for excelling, not just surviving.</p> <p>BOARD GAMES</p> <p>2-4: Board Games, Learning Commons</p>	<p>29 FRIDAY</p>  <p>1: Wiffle Ball Game, OCC Softball Field Kick off the holiday weekend with some fun in the sun! Join the Lady Knights Softball team for wiffle ball and snacks.</p>	
<p>1 MONDAY</p>  <p>HAPPY LABOR DAY</p> <p>No classes - college closed</p>	<p>2 TUESDAY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Learning Commons: Not Your Grandparents' Library. Explore resources like games, massage chairs and study pods. 11-3: Free Popcorn, Learning Commons 	<p>3 WEDNESDAY</p>  <p>12: Students, Faculty & Staff Ping-Pong Tournament, Student Union Show off your skills, cheer on your friends and battle for campus bragging rights and prizes.</p>	<p>4 THURSDAY</p> <p>8-4: First 10-Day Survey, Learning Commons Complete your survey and register for giveaways.</p> <p>11-3: Free Popcorn, Learning Commons</p> <p>1: Diversity & Inclusion Presentation with Kristine Lisy, Learning Commons Join us and enjoy pizza!</p>		

First-Year Experience Course

- Covers academic skills, goal setting, career exploration, and resource awareness.
- Planning to make this a graduation requirement beginning in Fall of 2026
- FYE 1198 College Success! – Currently EDU 1198 for Fall 2025
 - 1st semester, 1 credit course
- FYE 1199 Professional Career Development
 - 2nd semester, 1 credit course

Content Comparisons

FYE 1198

College Success!

- Exploring College
- Time Management
- Managing Priorities
- Reading and Notetaking
- Understanding Financial Literacy
- Planning Your Academic Pathway
- Engaging in a Healthy Lifestyle
- Learning Styles
- Study, Memory, and Test Taking
- Understanding Civility and Cultural Competency
- Thinking
- Communicating
- Plan for Your Future
- Group Project for Stress Less Week
- University Visit
- Be There Training and Certification

FYE 1199 - Professional Career Development

- Reconnecting with Your Goals
- Resume Development
- Cover Letter Development
- Teamwork
- Interviewing Like a Pro
- Networking
- Fact Checking
- Database Searches
- Job Searches and Informational Interviews
- Building Your Personal Brand
- Savings, Expenses, and Budgeting
- Taxes
- Health and Wellness
- Self and Cultural Awareness
- Reflections and Next Steps
- Group Project – Community Service
- Mock Interview and Informational Interview
- College and Career Fair (February 18th at OCC)

Student Engagement: Student Clubs and Organizations

- Involvement in college student clubs and organizations significantly impacts the first-year experience, fostering a stronger sense of belonging, academic success, and personal development. These involvements can lead to increased social connections, improved academic performance, enhanced well-being, and stronger career readiness. Student Clubs and Organizations, Weeks of Welcome activities, athletics, and other events throughout the year help students connect.
- **Please show your support by attending our club recruitment events on each campus and encourage students to attend:**
- FCC Club Rush is Tuesday August 26th from 11 am – 2 pm
- LTC Club Rush is Monday, August 25th from 11 am – 1 pm
- OCC Club Rush is Monday, August 25th from 11 am – 1 pm
- WVC Find Your Tribe is Wednesday August 27th from 11:30 am – 1:30 pm

Measuring Impact – March 2025

Student Engagement Focus Group

Favorite activity or event on your campus?

- Craze Daze, Fall Fun Day (LTC)
- Freshman Orientation, Xmas Movie, PTK, Spring Fling, White Lies theme night (OCC)
- Midterm Meltdown, Spring Fest, Movie Night with Pizza (WVC)

What do you wish you knew about student activities/ events on your campus during your first week on campus?

- “Get more involved right way, early on”
- “To know about all the clubs at orientation” (sooner than the club rush/find your tribe events were held),
- “Students should be encouraged to come to sports games” on campus.
- “I wish I knew how simple it is to join” a student organization.
- “Have student club information on a list for students” at NSO.
- Have “videos on campus” promoting the student organizations. Yes, “30-90 second videos” of each student organization “at NSO.”

What activity or event would you like to see on your campus in the future?

- “Movie on campus”, “Getting a speaker for an all-IECC event”, “LTC’s soup and study at OCC”, “or ice cream and study”, “make your own pizza night”, “Have the PTK chapters from all campuses get together for some events.”

What are we already doing that you would like to see more of? Less of?

- “Less of – nothing”
- More of: “Study pods”, “coffee bar”, “administration participating in more events”, “more efforts to increase student engagement”, “more advertisements for student events”

Campus Resources

- Research consistently demonstrates a strong positive correlation between the availability and utilization of student resources during the first year of college and student success, including academic performance, retention, and overall satisfaction. Stronger support systems, both academic and social, are linked to increased student engagement, a greater sense of belonging, and improved academic outcomes.
- Learning Commons: testing, F2F tutoring, study pods, coffee bar, massage chairs, games, laptops loans, computer lab, disability support services, and traditional book loans
- NetTutor online tutoring
- HelpDesk for tech support
- Food program on each campus
- TimelyCare and connections to community based services
- Adult Education, Perkins V, and TRIO programs

Quick Take-Aways

- Every role matters.
 - There are actions everyone can take to support our students.
- Get Involved.
 - How to participate.
 - Whom to contact.

Thank You for All You Do for Our Students!

For more information, contact:

Cassandra Goldman, Dean of Students

x3510

goldmanc@iecc.edu



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