

60-Second SoTL

Episode 53 – Historically Marginalized Students and the First-Year Experience

(Piano Music)

0:03

Jessie L. Moore:

Welcome to 60-Second SoTL! This week's episode is part of a short series by students in Elon University's Masters of Higher Education program. The students are exploring first-year experiences as meaningful or high-impact learning experiences. Listen for the other podcast episodes in their series wherever you subscribe to 60-Second SoTL.

(Piano Music)

0:26

Emma Calhoun:

How do students' perceived sense of community vary in a first-year seminar? That is the focus of this week's 60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning. I'm Emma Calhoun.

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In "Mileage May Vary: How Sense of Community in First-Year Seminars Varies Across Student Identities and Modes of Instruction," published in the *Journal of The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition* Kelsey Metzger, Jake Wright, Robert Erdmann, Bronson Lemer, and Rachel Olson investigate changes in students' reported sense of community in first-year seminars across different students' marginalized identities and 2 differing modes of instruction.

1:08

As we enter a new age of hybrid learning and record highs of diversity in college classrooms, Metzger and colleagues work to isolate the functions of high-impact practices by exploring students' sense of belonging. By highlighting the importance of places of belonging and their role in helping students develop relationships with the work they're doing, foster student motivation and self-efficacy, the authors assert that first-year seminars can serve these needs conveniently.

1:38

This study takes place at the University of Minnesota Rochester, a small Midwestern institution with a total enrollment of 570 undergraduate students. A mixed-methods approach was used to test significant changes in students' sense of community across two sample groups, one being in 2019 and the other in 2020 (where students participated virtually). Data was collected using the Community and School Community Inventory research instrument, with surveys administered at the beginning and end of the one-semester course.

2:12

By looking across 4 dimensions of community: classroom, school, social, and learning, the authors found that participation in the first-year seminar led to an increase in students' sense of classroom community but not in school community, a finding found in both cohorts. Given students' perceptions of the school were most likely shaped by factors beyond their seminar experience, this specific finding directly supports the positive effects of the seminar. In addition, the authors found that students' sense of social community was most increased for women, students of color and first-generation college students, but only when instruction was face to face.

2:52

Findings suggest the first-year seminar course positively impacted students' sense of classroom community, particularly among students from historically marginalized groups, and that this impact was more pronounced in face-to-face instruction compared to online instruction. Both sentiments align with proposed cumulative benefits of high impact practices, when done well. With that in mind, when interacting with this study, Higher Education personnel should consider the results and potential shortcomings first year experiences may present without the consideration of nuanced perceptions and needs across different student populations.

3:31

To learn more about the student experience regarding first-year seminars, see the full citation in our show notes to read this article and review our supplemental episodes on this topic.

3:42

Join us next week for another snapshot of recent scholarship of teaching and learning on **60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning**. Learn more about the Center at www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org.

(Piano Music)