

What are First-Year Seminars?

Nolan Schultheis (00:04):

Welcome to the Center for Engaged Learning special series on first year seminars featuring guest hosts from the Elon University Masters of Higher Education Program.

Megan McMechen (00:16):

In this episode, from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning, we'll discuss first year seminars, what they are, and why they qualify as high impact practice. Hi, I'm your host, Megan McMechen. In recent years, the focus of higher education has shifted from recruitment and enrollment to retention and student success. First year seminars have been introduced to about 90% of higher education institutions in the United States for their benefits in aiding the transition from high school to college and boosting retention rates. Specifically for historically minoritized students. First year seminars are among the 11 engaged learning experiences designated as high impact practices. To earn this title, a learning experience must expose students to the eight elements that characterize experiences as transformative and therefore high impact. These include high expectations for performance, significant investment of time and effort, substantive interaction with faculty and peers, experiences with diversity and exposure to unfamiliar situations, frequent feedback, opportunities for reflection and integration of learning, real world application and public demonstration of competence.

(01:20):

Despite the eight elements being derived from high impact practices and studies done on predominantly white, middle class, traditional college age cisgender students at predominantly white institutions. High impact practice experience typically have compensatory effects for students who are minoritized or less well prepared academically for college due to many factors such as race, ethnicity, familial education status, or socioeconomic class. Not all seminars for first year students are high impact practices. However, when done as high impact practices, first year seminars, introduce new students to critical thinking, writing at the college level, collaborative learning, media literacy, and other key skills for college success. They also create an environment for students to build relationships with their peers and faculty members.

Nolan Schultheis (02:11):

This series is produced by Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning. Learn more about first year seminars and other engaged learning topics at www.centerforengagedlearning.org.

Megan McMechen (02:26):

In our next episode, Lucy Sneader will discuss how first year seminars as high impact practices foster student retention, success, and engagement.