

## First-Year Seminars and International Students

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.

Sara Chilton (00:19):

In this episode from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning, we'll discuss how international students are influenced by first year seminars. Hi, I'm your host, Sara Chilton. I hope you've had the opportunity to listen to the previous several podcasts in our series where we define first year seminars, covered the overall research about first year seminars, heard some research regarding first year seminars and first generation students, which included an interview with a first generation student and their experience with a first year seminar. Like what Lauren said in episode three, first year seminars helped students develop skills to succeed in college and the prior episodes. You may have heard some of the benefits of first year seminars, but what about international students taking a first year seminar? Research is saying that first year seminars help ease the unique transition for international students into higher education and environments through addressing challenges such as academic expectations, cultural adjustment, and social integration.

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Some of the research we found, such as Yan and Sendall studied a first year experience course tailored for international students in the college setting. The international students in this study were able to identify the most helpful topics of the seminar in the first year course, such as academics, resources, healthy relationships, cultural diversity, community service, self-exploration, and academic major slash minor. The students did not feel that the first year course helped with overall academic performance due to the students and the instructors being from different major areas. Similarly, Andrade highlighted key elements of the first year seminar, such as building connections with peers, understanding academic expectations, and developing personal skills, all of which contributed to a more positive transition into higher education. Andrade's study emphasized the importance of tailored programs to meet the specific needs of international students and suggested implementations for improving retention efforts in colleges and universities.

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Senyshyn found that the first year seminar was like the focused engagement for international students was effective in helping those students adjust to the university and develop intercultural communication competence for increased success. International students need their separate form of orientation or introduction to college learning specifically with the added cultural context of studying in their non-native countries. Krsmanovic studied how first year seminar course can support the academic transition and learning of international students. From this study, four major themes emerged from the international students who participated in the study, those being new ways of learning, learning as a holistic development, learning through challenge and support, and learning through social and cultural integration. Every participant in this study stated that the first year course had some sort of influence on their first year college learning and academic transition. Overall, our research showed us that the first year seminars are helping international students in various ways, and that successful transitions rely on different approaches to address the specific needs for international students.

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Nolan Schultheis (03:46):

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](http://www.centerforengagedlearning.org).

Sara Chilton (04:00):

Join me in episode six where I'll be interviewing Mary, an international student who engaged in a first year seminar.