

Title: An Evaluation Study of First-Year College Students Persistence:
Effectiveness of Peer Leaders Within a First-Year Seminar

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This case study design evaluated the program outcome effects of a peer leader program within the First-Year Seminar (FYS) on first-to-second year persistence, grade point average performance and academic and social integration levels of first-year, fulltime students. Differences in the characteristics of students on gender and race on the outcome measures were also considered.

Analysis from six-year institutional data indicated that the Peer Leader Component option had significant benefits to the FYS Program. Female, male, and Majority students in FYS Programs with the Peer Leader Component had significantly higher first-to-second year persistence and GPA levels than female, male, and Majority students in FYS Programs without the Peer Leader Component. Further, male and Majority students enrolled in FYS courses with a peer leader had significantly higher academic and social integration factor means than male and Majority students in FYS courses without a peer leader. The data provided by this study offered additional educationally significant support for the utilization of peer leaders in the FYS. Minority students in FYS Programs with the Peer Leader Component had higher first-to-second year persistence and GPA levels than Minority student counterparts in FYS Programs without the Peer Leader Component. Further, many to most female and Minority

students in FYS with a peer leader had higher retention rates, GPAs and academic and social integration levels than their counterparts in FYS without a peer leader, with some populations of statistical significance.