QEP Proposal 10

Title: Second Year Experience @ UTC

Summary: Second Year Experience (SYE) at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga will be designed to support and empower second year students to become more involved and engaged with the UTC campus community, enhance their academic and professional success, engage with faculty, and develop a personal identity and purpose. During the second year of college, students begin to take on added responsibilities and make decisions that will affect the rest of their lives. It is during the second year that students struggle with major choice, academic self-efficacy, career development, faculty connections, motivation, financial viability, social integration, and involvement, and developing purpose and identity. SYE @ UTC looks to help second-year students as they navigate this pivotal year in their college career by offering a variety of resources, events, and opportunities. SYE serves students who identify in their second year either in college or at UTC.

Rationale/Problem Statement/Growth Opportunity: Since 2010, data collected through the Sophomore Experiences Survey have proven a steady increase in the percentage of sophomores who are struggling with aspects of the second-year experience, with one-third of respondents in 2017 reporting that they are "barely surviving" this important transition year (Schreiner, 2018).

Second year is intentional being used because the designation of sophomore status is only based on credit hours accumulated. When creating programs and services to help students thrive in their second year of college then an important aspect is paying attention to more than the course credit earned.

Barriers to Second Year Students Success

Academic:

- Many second-year students are in between completing general education credits and entering the core of major coursework; the progressive pedagogy of first-year seminars may be lacking in the second year, contributing to academic disengagement. (Hunter, Tobolowsky, Gardner, & Associates, 2010). Engaging with the learning process is predictive of student success.
- Courses are often intentionally designed to distinguish between those students who are well prepared to continue in the major and those who will be gently recommended selecting another major, which can lower motivation and confidence toward coursework (Hunter, et al, 2010; Schreiner, 2018). Combined with findings that second years study less than other years, sophomore year is crucial to academic success and persistence (Gardner, 2000).
- Meaningful student-faculty contact is a strong indicator of student persistence as well as outcomes related to intent to re-enroll, intent to graduate, efficacy and career/major decisions (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). A national survey revealed that a third of sophomores have never talked to a faculty member out of class (2007).
- By the end of the second year, the biggest gaps between students who leave and stay for their third year are in areas of:
  - Progress toward degree
  - Academic performance (GPA), and
  - Curricular engagement (Hunter et al, 2010).

Career and Major

- Students learn that answers are less "black and white" and grayer, which can be confusing as they make decisions about their majors and careers (Pattengale, 2000).

- Satisfaction with the second-year experience is a major predictor of re-enrollment for their third year (Pattengale, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).
- Second year students are usually in the stages of focused exploration, reflecting on their experiences and seeking possibilities, or tentative choice, where they make initial decisions about potential careers and jobs (Schaller, 2005).
- Second years are less likely to engage in the classroom and less likely to discuss their major with their peers until they have selected one (Pattengale, 2000). Students may also discover they are not eligible for their first-choice major (Richmond 1987).
- Academic advising is one of the most crucial factors for sophomore retention (Nealy, 2005). At this time, students are more likely to be dissatisfied with getting incorrect information, difficulty making advising appointments, and confusion over prerequisites and major requirements.
- This time is most important for exploring student values, life goals, reasons for being in college, and how to connect those ideas to an ideal "future self" to create actionable plans and meaningful goals.

Engagement

- Second year students feel less excited about the college experience after first year and are more likely to be disappointed by university services and experiences (Cuseo, 2005).
- After first year, where programs tend to provide a lot of support, second years feel abandoned by the institution and have a lower sense of guidance (Hunter et al, 2010; Schreiner,2018).
- As students return to college their second year, they are more selective about how they will get involved. Student groups become more aligned with personal interests as opposed to a place to make new friends (Hunter et al, 2010).
- Students who were able to connect their strengths to academic success were also more likely to connect meaningfully with faculty during office hours, see advisors more, take on leadership roles, engage in class (Nealy, 2005).

Financial Well Being

- Financial aid is a strong predictor of student persistence and success (Kennedy & Upcraft, 2010). Many second years move off-campus their second year and experience many financial realities about loans, loss of first-year scholarships, and living costs that can create financial pressure regarding re-enrollment and completion in 4 years.
- Students may be living on their own for the first time off-campus and struggling to become self-sufficient and autonomous as well as interdependent with a support network (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).
- Students must continue to practice self-care in concert with balancing their work, including physical and mental health.

Key factors that yield second year success (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Hunter et al, 2010; Schreiner, 2018).

1. Living on-campus and staying connected to campus community and opportunities

2. Being engaged in co-curricular activities

3. Working part-time on campus

4. Involvement in undergraduate research

5.   Utilizing career counseling and advising services

Expected Outcomes/Impact on Student Learning or the Learning Environment: By the end of the second year, we hope students who participate in this program gain a greater:

Sense of Purpose:

- Students with a sense of purpose have a clear understanding of why they are at the UTC and what direction they are heading.
- Students have experienced success in the classroom and engage in the academic life of the campus.
- Students have enthusiasm for their academic path and understand right career options.
- Students have set realistic and obtainable goals for themselves.
- Students have hope and optimism for their remaining two years at the University.

Sense of Community:

- Students with a sense of community feel like they belong at the UTC.
- Students have the support they need to be successful from peers, faculty, and staff.
- Students are engaged in campus life and feel a sense of ownership in creating their own University experience.

Sense of Self

- Students with a sense of self have increased their overall self-awareness.
- Students experience a safe, supportive, and respectful environment in which to explore aspects of their own identity and the diversity of others.
- Students have improved their overall well-being relating to financial, physical, spiritual, career and academic aspects of their lives.

Strategies/Actions to be implemented: SYE @ UTC Engagement

1.   Implement a second-year residential live on requirement for Fall 2023

2.   RAs who have worked for two semesters as an RA will be eligible to become Academic Peer Advocates (APAs). The role of the APAs is to provide support and guidance from a student perspective to second year students as they navigate major selections.

3.   Provide intentional opportunities for faculty interactions (i.e., Faculty in Residence, Faculty Fellow, and Undergraduate Research)

4.   Focused Career Explorations using the Strengths Quest for Students

5.   Monthly Second Year Student Summit: Co-Curricular activities may include academic advising, seminars, experiential learning activities, cultural explorations, and community service.

Students: The second year is defined as any student who has completed one year of college at UTC or are in their second year of undergraduate studies (transfer students). This program is geared towards residential students; however, some programs may be extended to any second year students.

Assessment: Benchmark: March to May 2022 - Administer the Sophomore Experiences Survey (https://www.thrivingincollege.org/ses-2020) to gather UTC data

Retention data from 2nd to 3rd Year

GPA

Graduation rate

Skyfactor Student Success & Program Assessment

Resources Needed: $250 Sophomore Experiences Survey (Developed by Laurie Schreiner at Azusa Pacific University)

SYE Coordinator Position ($38,000)

5 Academic Peer Advocates ($1000 Scholarship)

Research/Best Practices Gathered to Date: