



## Teaching on Level Ground

**R**esearch consistently reinforces the important role faculty play in influencing students and their perceptions of the college experience (Brookfield, 1996; Donohue, 2004; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2010; Tinto, Goodsell-Love, & Russo, 1993). Relevant for all students, this role becomes particularly critical in creating places and spaces where first-generation students and students of color can develop a sense of belonging and succeed in college (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Glass, 2015; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). In this regard, it is important to become aware of customs and practices that may inhibit faculty–student interactions and relationships.

For example, faculty and students often interact on unlevel terrain. Higher education has a longstanding practice of bestowing titles and roles (e.g., doctor, dean, instructor, professor) to members of the Academy. These titles communicate subtle messages related to intelligence, experience, expertise, and influence. Such messages acknowledge the hard work of faculty; however, they also may be intimidating, lessening approachability and negatively affecting interactions and relationship building with students. Many students may be reluctant to approach faculty, initiate contact, or ask questions because of the aura created by their titles.

Ellis and Travis (2007), examining the role of titles in higher education, observed: “One could argue that having students perceive goodness from an educator is more important than having students perceive power and competence” (p. 1180). This observation is not intended to suggest power/competence and goodness cannot occur simultaneously. Rather, it asserts the importance of focusing on goodness as a pathway to creating relationships with students in authentic and transparent ways.

The book *Road to Character* (Brooks, 2015) illustrates a way of thinking more deeply about teaching on level ground. The book describes two types of virtues. *Résumé virtues* are “the skills that you bring to the job market and that contribute to external success” (p. xi). For faculty, *résumé virtues* are reflected by academic degrees, schools attended, presentations, publications, and professional honors.

On the other hand, *eulogy virtues* “are deeper. They’re the virtues that get talked about at your funeral, the ones that exist at the core of your being—whether you are kind, brave, honest or faithful; what kind of relationships you formed” (p. xi). Eulogy virtues are demonstrated through purposeful efforts to build relationships and engage with students in meaningful ways.

“Authenticity is a collection of choices that we have to make every day. It’s about the choice to show up and be real. The choice to be honest. The choice to let our true selves be seen.”

— Brené Brown,  
Social worker,  
author, public  
speaker

All of us can do some basic things to assure that we teach and interact with our students on level ground. Strategies for emphasizing goodness or eulogy virtues in relationships with students include the following:

- inviting students to share a meal at your home;
- learning the names of the students in your classes . . . and calling them by name;
- refraining from touting personal accomplishments and evidence of professional expertise;
- taking time after class to be available for conversation and answering questions, when possible;
- engaging in collaborative research with students;
- admitting when you make a mistake;
- connecting with your students outside the classroom over a cup of coffee;
- holding office hours in a neutral location away from your actual office (e.g., campus coffee shop);
- greeting students as they arrive for class;
- maintaining lines of communication with students;
- listening;
- expressing excitement and enthusiasm when you learn something new during classroom conversations;
- valuing and embracing your students' unique differences;
- embracing transparency by sharing parts of your own story;
- giving positive feedback for classroom participation and contributions;
- responding to student e-mails and inquiries in a timely manner;
- noting individual student improvements in performance or successes with an e-mail, text, or face-to-face encouragement; and
- disagreeing respectfully with students in class, as appropriate, without flaunting your position, title, or role.

**Consider the advantages of teaching on level ground.**

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# What's Happening at The National Resource Center

## Publications

### New Release on High-Impact Practices in the First College Year



First-year seminars have been widely hailed as a high-impact educational practice, leading to improved academic performance, increased retention, and achievement of critical 21st century learning outcomes. While the first-year seminar tends to be narrowly defined in the literature, national explorations of course structure and administration underscore the diversity of these curricular initiatives across and within individual campuses. What then are the common denominators among these highly variable courses that contribute to their educational effectiveness? A new collection of case studies, representing a wide variety of institutional and seminar types, seeks to address this question.

Using Kuh and O'Donnell's eight conditions of effective educational initiatives as a framework, authors describe the structure, pedagogy, and assessment strategies that lead to high-quality seminars. Introductory and concluding essays examine the structural conditions that are likely to support educational effectiveness in the seminar and describe the most commonly reported conditions across all cases. *What Makes the First-Year Seminar High Impact?* offers abundant models for ensuring the delivery of a high-quality educational experience to entering students.

For more information or to order, visit [www.nrcpubs.com](http://www.nrcpubs.com).

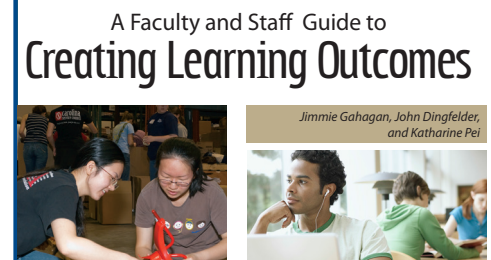
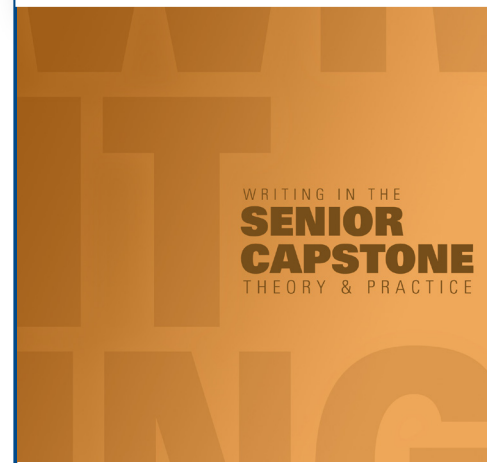
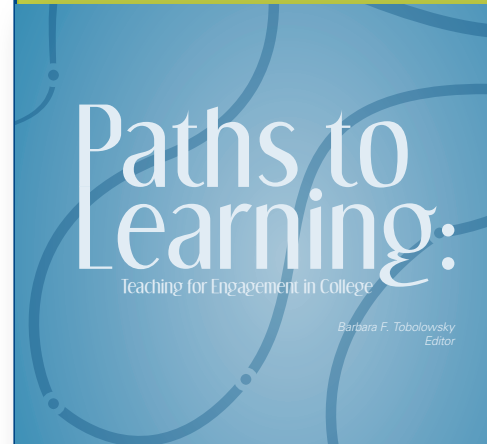
### Reviewer Applications for *E-Source for College Transitions*

The editor seeks three to five highly qualified higher-education professionals to serve as members of the editorial review board for *E-Source for College Transitions*. Review board members will serve a three-year term, advise the editor on suitability of submitted manuscripts for publication in *E-Source*, and provide detailed feedback to authors, offering suggestions for reframing or improving the manuscript. Successful applicants will have an earned master's degree (or higher); a minimum of two years' experience in one or more of the following areas within a higher-education setting: instruction; first-year programs; transfer initiatives; sophomore initiatives; academic support initiatives; retention initiatives; assessment; an affiliation with an accredited college or university; and strong writing and editorial skills.

To apply, submit a letter of interest, highlighting topical areas of expertise/interest related to student transition and describing any previous writing/editorial experience, and a current CV to Dr. Christina Hardin, *E-Source* Editor, at [ESOURCE@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:ESOURCE@mailbox.sc.edu) no later than April 15, 2017. Appointments to the review board will be made in mid-May, with terms beginning June 1, 2017.



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The National Resource Center offers online courses on topics of interest in higher education. The courses provide participants the same content and opportunities for interaction with peers and the instructor as traditional (i.e., classroom-based) learning environments while taking advantage of pedagogy and teaching techniques that are not possible or common in those settings. The courses use tools such as e-mail, threaded discussions or forums, listservs, and blogs. Enrollment is limited to 40 participants. Participants will earn 1.5 continuing education units for each course. Visit <http://www.sc.edu/fye/oc> for more information.

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#### Infusing Emotional Intelligence Learning into Your First-Year Seminar and First-Year Experience Programs

March 27 - April 21, 2017

Facilitated by Korrel Kanoy, Professor Emeritus, William Peace University

#### Online Course: Transitions of the Collegiate Athlete

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Facilitated by Talea Drummer

### E-Source Submission Guidelines

For complete guidelines and issue dates, see [www.sc.edu/fye/esource/guidelines.html](http://www.sc.edu/fye/esource/guidelines.html)

**Audience:** *E-Source* readers include academic and student affairs administrators and faculty from a variety of fields interested in student transitions. All types of institutions are represented in the readership.

**Style:** Articles, tables, figures, and references should adhere to APA (American Psychological Association) style.

*E-Source* does not publish endorsements of products for sale.

**Format:** Submissions should be sent via e-mail as a Microsoft Word attachment.

**Length:** Original feature-length articles should be 750-1,200 words. Annotations of new resources should be no more than 500 words. The editor reserves the right to edit submissions for length. Photographs are welcome.

#### Please address all questions and submissions to:

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National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition

University of South Carolina

1728 College Street

Columbia, SC 29208

E-mail: [esource@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:esource@mailbox.sc.edu)




Research Reports on College Transitions No. 7

**What Makes the First-Year Seminar High Impact?**  
Exploring Effective Educational Practices  
Tracy L. Skipper, Editor

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**What Makes the First-Year Seminar High Impact?**  
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First-year seminars have been widely hailed as a high-impact educational practice, leading to improved academic performance, increased retention, and achievement of critical 21st Century learning outcomes. What are the common denominators among these highly variable courses that contribute to their educational effectiveness? A new collection of case studies, representing a wide variety of institutional and seminar types seeks to address this question.

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Looking for new teaching strategies or fresh ideas for first-year seminars? *E-Source*, the National Resource Center's online newsletter for college transitions, offers a wealth of information. *E-Source* also is accepting submissions for the December 2017 issue. To view the archives, review submission guidelines, and receive content alerts for new issues, please go to [www.sc.edu/fye/esource](http://www.sc.edu/fye/esource).

## Awards and Recognition

### Educators Honored for Work on Behalf of First-Year College Students

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition at the University of South Carolina and Cengage Learning are pleased to announce this year's recipients of the Outstanding First-Year Student Advocate Award. The award, now in its 28th year, honors college faculty, administrators, staff, and students for their outstanding work on behalf of first-year students and for the impact their efforts have on the students and culture of their institutions. Ten award recipients were chosen from 110 nominations. This year's recipients were formally recognized February 12, 2017, at the Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience in Atlanta, Georgia.

The recipients of the 2017 Outstanding First-Year Student Advocate Award are:

**Alan Bearman**

Dean of University Libraries and the Center for Student Success and Retention  
– Washburn University

**Lauren Bell**

Dean of Academic Affairs  
– Randolph-Macon College

**Gary Bowling**

Director of Student Success  
– Northwest Vista College

**Herbert Bruce**

Associate Director for Advising and FYE  
– Virginia Tech

**Jodi Calvert**

Director of Learning Initiatives  
– Three Rivers Community College

**Deidre Heistad**

Director of Undergraduate Studies  
– University of Northern Iowa

**Marisel Herrera**

Director of First-Year Success Center  
– Arizona State University

**Beverly Kahn**

Professor  
– Farmingdale State College

**Michael Puma**

Co-director, Messina  
– Loyola University Maryland

**Jennifer Young**

Learning Communities Coordinator/  
Faculty  
– Calumet College of St. Joseph

### 2017 Excellence in Teaching First-Year Seminars Award

College deans or chief academic officers submitted nominations for the Excellence in Teaching First-Year Seminars Award. The award recognizes one individual contributing to the advancement of teaching first-year seminars or other first-year student success courses. Together, the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition and The McGraw-Hill Companies are proud sponsors of this award program.

The recipient of the 2017 Excellence in Teaching First-Year Seminars Award:

**Lori Blanc**

Assistant Professor of Practice  
– Virginia Tech



**Above:** 2017 Outstanding First-Year Student Advocate Award Recipients. Left to right: **Marisel Herrera, Lauren Bell, Gary Bowling, Beverly Kahn, Herbert Bruce, Deidre Heistad, Alan Bearman, Jodi Calvert, Michael Puma.** Not pictured: **Jennifer Young.**



**Above:** 2017 Excellence in Teaching First-Year Seminars Award Winner **Lori Blanc**

## 2017 Jordan Smith Undergraduate Fellowship Recipients

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition at the University of South Carolina is pleased to announce this year's recipients of the Jordan Smith Undergraduate Fellowship. The fellowship program honors undergraduate students for their outstanding work on behalf of first-year students and for the impact their efforts have on the students and culture of their institutions. This year's recipients were formally recognized February 13, 2017, at the Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience in Atlanta, Georgia.

The recipients of the 2017 Jordan Smith Undergraduate Fellowships are:

### Joshua Brown

Kennesaw State University

### Brooke Buttacavoli

Northern Illinois University

### Miranda Cherry

University of Nebraska-Kearney

### Wilma Jackson

Arizona State University

### Jack Van Dam

Washburn University



**Above:** 2017 Jordan Smith Undergraduate Fellowship Award Winners. Left to right: **Joshua Brown, Brooke Buttacavoli, Miranda Cherry, Wilma Jackson, Jack Van Dam**



## European First-Year Experience Conference

Join us in

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EFYE is a group of academics and support staff from across Europe interested in improving the experience of students as they enter higher education. This young and exciting conference partners with the Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience hosted each February by the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. With this supportive environment, you can expect to hear of innovation and excellent projects that put students at the center of the first-year learning experience.



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## The Toolbox

Author: Brad Garner

[brad.garner@indwes.edu](mailto:brad.garner@indwes.edu)

*The Toolbox* is an online professional development newsletter offering innovative, learner-centered strategies for empowering college students to achieve greater success. The newsletter is published six times a year by the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

The online subscription is free. To register for newsletter alerts and access back issues, please visit [www.sc.edu/fye/toolbox](http://www.sc.edu/fye/toolbox).

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