Foundations of Excellence:
A Roadmap for Excellent Beginnings

Why Foundations of Excellence?
While Purdue’s first-to-second-year retention rate has improved significantly over the past few years (from 85 percent in 2007 to 90.6 percent in 2012), our four-year graduation rate still remain well below our peers. University leaders recognized the need to refocus on student success, particularly in the foundational years. The University recognizes our responsibility to deliberately design an academic environment and student experience to greatly enhance learning, competence, confidence, and ultimately student success. Our commitment is to improve what we do and how we do it.

What is Foundations of Excellence?
During the 2011–12 academic year, the leadership of four campus units—Undergraduate Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Housing and Food Services, and Diversity and Inclusion—engaged in the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education’s program, Foundations of Excellence. Foundations of Excellence is a yearlong intentional, extensive, reflective, and systemic self-study of the experience of first-year students. Together, these campus leaders engaged over 200 faculty, staff, and students (representing all schools and colleges, housing, student affairs, athletics, financial aid, and most other offices that interact with our first-year students) in the analytical process that ultimately resulted in 12 recommendations for institutional change and improvement.

What are the Foundations of Excellence recommendations?
• Broadly promote the First-year Philosophy statement across campus to ensure that all faculty, staff, and students operate under its guiding values and principles.

ACADEMIC SUCCESS PRIORITIES
• Ensure that every student has a consistent and coordinated first-year orientation experience.
• Support the implementation and expansion of the core curriculum to improve portability of courses across majors.
• Ensure appropriate availability of course spaces that allow students to make progress toward degree completion.
• Expand admit-to-university opportunities.

INSTRUCTOR, FACULTY, AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES
• Encourage (or Provide) professional development opportunities for all instructors and staff that interact with first-year students.
• Commit to advancing and rewarding research on teaching and learning.
• Establish a coordinated effort to collect and disseminate information on best practices, data useful for faculty instructing first-year students, and assessment to enhance program efforts.

STUDENT SUCCESS PRIORITIES
• Coordinate undergraduate academic advising in the first year.
• Coordinate undergraduate academic success programs.
• Develop programs targeted at removing disparities in success among identified groups of students.
• Oversee the streamlining of communication to first-year students.

What will campus gain from Foundations of Excellence?
• Progress toward higher graduation rates
• Improved time to degree completion
• Engaged students
• Greater ease of movement among majors
• Better use of limited campus resources
• An accepted framework and standard definition of student success
• A stronger culture of assessment
• Mutual accountability among the students, the institution, and the state
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Philosophy Statement
At Purdue, we believe the first-year experience should enable students to build a solid foundation for success, not only at the University, but also throughout their lives.

Through learning experiences and support services, both in and beyond the classroom, students grow intellectually and develop personally. They acquire knowledge and skills to succeed academically, build confidence and resilience to accept and embrace challenges, and develop their personal and academic identity.

Students are welcomed into and expected to participate actively in a vibrant and intellectually challenging community within which all members feel a sense of belonging, irrespective of personal or group status, culture, or ethnicity. They share interests and activities with one another and learn to think, act, and remain openly respectful of diverse views and experiences.

Students are challenged to become globally prepared, interdependent, critical thinkers, with an ever-increasing ability to locate, assess, and apply knowledge resources that help them develop as whole, productive citizens and leaders on campus and beyond.

As a Purdue community, we hold ourselves accountable for providing experiences, support services, access to faculty and staff, and a safe learning environment whereby students can achieve these goals.

DISCOVER—ENGAGE—LEARN