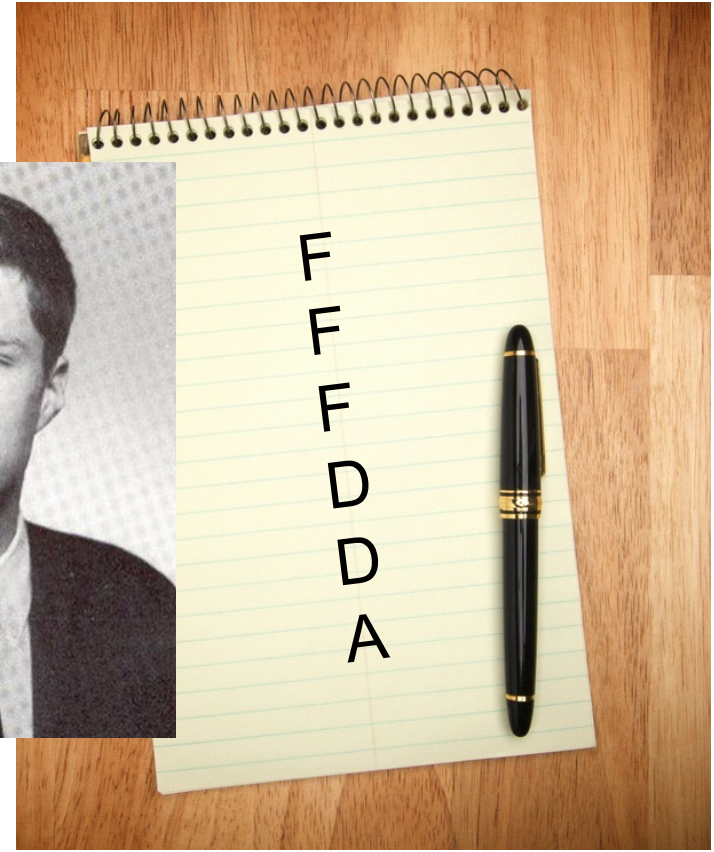
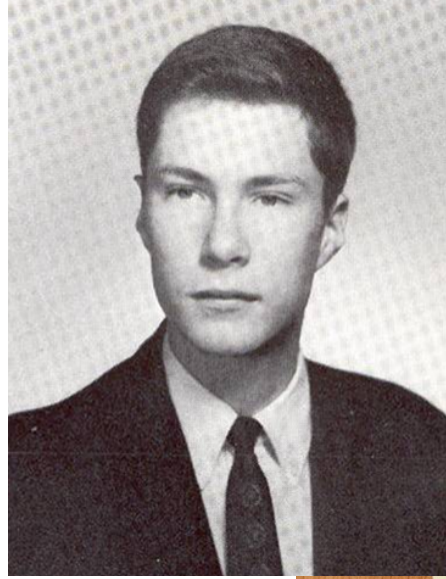


# Momentum for All – or Momentum for Some: The Real First-Year Experience...

John N. Gardner



# My own student experience with gateway courses.



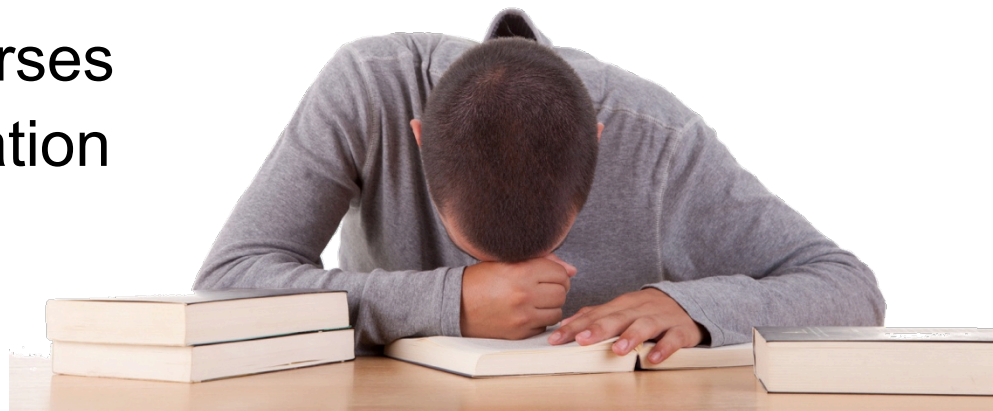


I am here to talk to you about  
American higher education's  
best kept dirty little secret,  
high failure rate gateway courses....

And to implore you to  
do more about this!  
In true CCA fashion,  
this is a call to action

# Gateways Courses Defined

- Foundation-Level
- High-Risk
- High-Enrollment
- “Killer Courses”
- Include Developmental Courses
- Gateways to General Education
- Gateways to the Major



# Survey Course: the Gateway Course

## A Unique American Creation – the Survey Course

- Superficial, boring to students and some faculty
- Absenteeism
- Usually not connected to outside-of-class learning
- Many students have no courses in intended major
- Most students don't do any research
- Little academic work done in teams
- Instruction increasingly outsourced to adjuncts
- Lecture-based

# These courses are the real First-Year Experience<sup>®\*</sup>

I know, I am the creator of the FYE<sup>®</sup> concept (1983)

\* FYE and First-Year Experience are registered trademarks of the University of South Carolina



# Let's look at some data.

This is not the picture of “Momentum for All”!



# Data from Foundations of Excellence®

# Average DFWI Rates for First Year Courses Four-Year Institutions

Academic Year	Institutions	Number of Courses	DFWI Average Rate
2004-2005	20	100	25%
2005-2006	18	90	25%
2006-2007	10	50	28%
2007-2008	17	85	22%
2008-2009	9	45	31%
2009-2010	11	55	21%
2010-2011	6	30	23%
2011-2012	9	45	22%
2012-2013	9	45	22%
overall	109	545	25%

# DFWI Rates by Course: Four-Year Institutions

Field	Number of Courses	DFWI Rate
Economics	6	40%
Math developmental	27	38%
Math college level	63	37%
History	24	31%
Biology	21	28%
Chemistry	11	26%
Psychology	69	25%
Philosophy	7	24%
Political Science	11	24%
Sociology	24	22%
Computer	8	20%
English college level	134	20%
Fine Arts	6	20%
Health/PE	13	19%
FYS/ success	37	16%
Speech	33	16%
Religion	6	9%

# Average DFWI Rates for First Year Courses Two-Year Institutions

Academic Year	Institutions	Number of Courses	DFWI Average Rate
2004-2005	10	50	36%
2005-2006	13	65	36%
2006-2007	13	65	38%
2007-2008	10	50	35%
2008-2009	7	35	33%
2009-2010	19	91	38%
2010-2011	15	74	31%
2011-2012 & 2012-2013	5	24	35%
overall	92	454	35%

## DFWI Rates by Course: Two-Year Institutions

Field	Number of Courses	DFWI Rate
Math developmental	100	44%
English developmental	27	43%
Math college level	16	42%
Sociology	14	37%
History	15	36%
Computer	34	35%
Biology	9	33%
English college level	105	33%
Political science	7	32%
Psychology	57	31%
FYS/ Success	27	28%
Health/ PE	6	26%
Speech	23	24%

Percentage  
of Courses  
with DFWI  
Rate of 30%  
or more

Academic Year	2-Year Institutions	4-Year Institutions
2004-2005	70%	32%
2005-2006	69%	30%
2006-2007	80%	36%
2007-2008	62%	25%
2008-2009	63%	51%
2009-2010	71%	27%
2010-2011	57%	37%
2011-2012 & 2012-2013	67%	21%
<b>overall</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>30%</b>

# Early Lessons from Gateways to Completion®



# DFWI Rates by Course / Area

Column A. Course	Column B. Number of Institutions Working on Course	Column C. Average DFWI Rate for All Students
Accounting	2	43.4%
Biology	8	30.8%
Chemistry	4	31.9%
English – College Level	6	30.3%
History	6	30.3%
Math – College Level	10	35.3%
Math - Developmental	3	49.4%
Psychology	5	30.0%

Now let's look at how  
this picture affects our  
different students  
differentially...



## DFWI Rates & Demographic Subpopulations

Course	Subpopulation	Subpopulation DFWI Rate
Accounting*	White	40.6%
	Female	41.7%
	Course Average	43.4%
	Male	45.8%
	Pell	47.4%
	First Generation	48.2%
	African American	62.0%
	Hispanic / Latino	69.5%

\* Native American classification output omitted because student enrollment less than 10

## DFWI Rates & Demographic Subpopulations

Course	Subpopulation	Subpopulation DFWI Rate
College Math	White	32.9%
	Female	33.6%
	Course Average	35.3%
	First Generation	36.2%
	Hispanic / Latino	36.2%
	Male	38.1%
	Pell	39.4%
	Native American	48.3%
	African American	49.1%

## DFWI Rates & Demographic Subpopulations

Course	Subpopulation	Subpopulation DFWI Rate
Chemistry	White	30.2%
	Female	31.5%
	Course Average	31.9%
	Male	32.3%
	Pell	39.1%
	First Generation	39.1%
	Hispanic / Latino	45.0%
	African American	45.9%
	Native American	79.2%

Correlation with  
retention...gateway  
course success is a  
**DIRECT** predictor  
of retention



# Lessons Learned

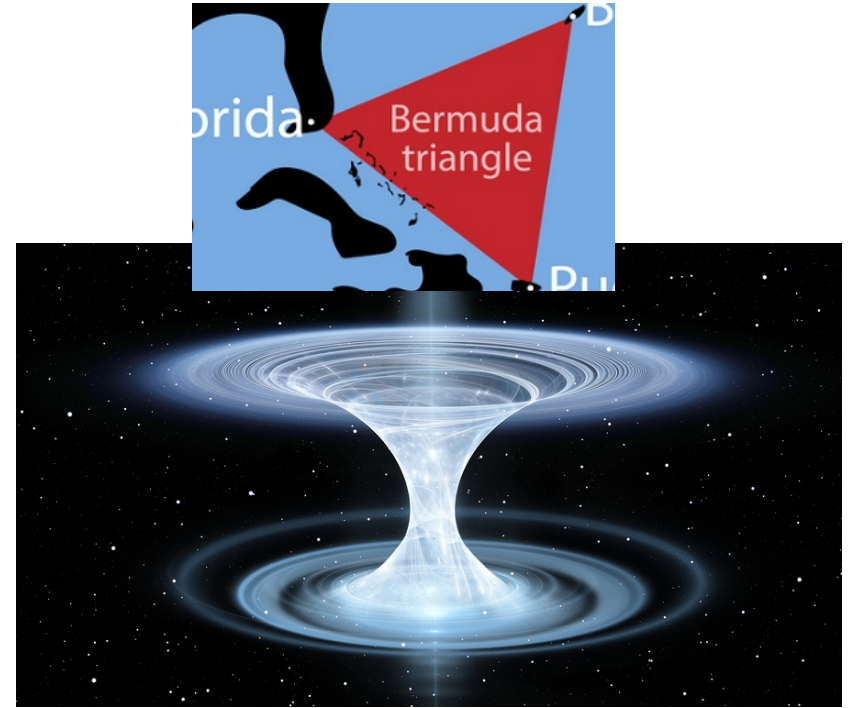
Column A. Course Examples from Individual G2C Institutions	Column B. Average DFWI Rate	Column C. DFWI Rate for Non-Retained Eligible-to-Return Students*
Principles of Accounting I	54.0%	81.6%
Foundation for Physiology / Biology	18.9%	55.0%
General Chemistry	36.3%	73.9%
Writing and Rhetoric I	10.6%	25.8%
Survey of American History	26.8%	67.2%
College Algebra	59.7%	73.5%
Beginning Algebra	24.4%	65.1%
Introduction to Psychology	28.1%	46.1%
<b>Mean of Average DFWI Rates for Examples</b>	<b>32.4%</b>	<b>61.0%</b>

# Gateway courses are the REAL “Bridge to Nowhere”





Gateway courses  
are American higher  
education's Bermuda  
Triangle into which  
thousands of students  
enter never to be  
seen again!



# What Might Explain These Outcomes?

Most common answer? Poor students = blame the victim

Under preparedness

Poor high schools

Poverty

First gen - lack of cultural capital

Student employment

Immaturity

Lack of study habits

Learning disabilities

Physical/emotional health problems

Alcohol/drug use

Refusal to seek assistance

Motivational deficits

# What Roles Do WE Play in Student Failure?

Historic low status of gateway courses

Marginalizing, outsourcing of the faculty

Not a matter of faculty focus/discussion

Not a priority of deans and department chairs

Faculty/collegiate academic Darwinian culture

Belief that failure is inevitable, appropriate

# So what can you do?

# Make reducing gateway course failure rates a higher priority in your...

- Course
- Department
- School/College
- College/University
- University System
- State

Declare war on gateway course failure rates! How can you do that?

# How?

- Start talking about gateway courses at all levels
- Stop being so tolerant of failure
- Collect the data
- Analyze the data
- Share the data
- Discuss the implications of the data
- Focus on the importance of the faculty

# How?

- Conduct rigorous self-studies of high failure rate courses
- Redesign these courses
- Offer redesigned courses
- Assess them
- Refine them



And as you get into the weeds, these are some of the things you need to get into. These are the components of institutional life that affect what happens to students in gateway courses...

Faculty are fundamental.  
(But it is more than the faculty)

It takes a whole village.



This is not about blaming  
the faculty – or anyone.

This is about a vision for  
shared responsibility.



Disclaimer: This is definitely not about offering fewer historically high DFWI rate courses - If anything we may need more of them to reduce class size.

# Who (and What) are in the Village?

# All the Factors You Control

- Policies
- Who teaches
- Assessment and evaluation procedures
- Faculty development
- Faculty rewards systems
- Inculcation of new students
- Raising student expectations
- Preparation for placement procedures
- Placement enforcement
- Orientation
- Academic advising
- Classroom facilities
- Technology utilization
- Technology support
- Academic support for students
- Curricular structures

# Big Pieces of the Conundrum

- General Education
- Pedagogy
- Roles of faculty
- Academic support
- Rethinking role of mathematics
- Peer leaders
- Enhancing the first-year seminar
- Integrating academic and student affairs
- The new profession of “Student Success”

# The Big Take Home Ideas

If indeed the first year is to be “the momentum year” it’s really all about gateway courses.

If we are to achieve momentum for all and thus more social justice for American college students, we must reduce failure rates in these courses.





# The Big Take Home Questions

What can I do to make high failure rate gateway courses more of a priority for my attention, action, leadership to advance the cause of “momentum for all”?

What else can Complete College America and its supporters do about this too?

# Contact

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