ACHIEVING AND SUSTAINING INSTITUTIONAL EXCELLENCE FOR THE FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE

Praise for Achieving and Sustaining Institutional Excellence for the First Year of College

“This book brings to life the theory and research on student success. The thirteen campuses profiled in this study of excellence offer example after example of structures and programs to support first-year students. From learning communities to first-year experience courses to common reading initiatives, orientation, and more, these authors have compiled rich descriptions of best practices into a must-read for presidents, provosts, academic administrators, student affairs professionals, faculty, and staff across institutional types.”
— JODI LEVINE LAUFGRABEN, associate vice provost, Temple University

“Betsy Barefoot and John Gardner have been telling us for years what works for first-year students. Now they and their colleagues provide the missing link—examples of schools that actually do it well!”
— GEORGE D. KUH, Chancellor's Professor of Higher Education and director, Center for Postsecondary Research, Indiana University

“In this wonderfully timely book, Barefoot, Gardner, and their colleagues do higher education a great service. They provide concrete, evidence-based examples of how a diverse array of colleges and universities are redesigning first-year experiences to meet the needs of students and promote their success. We learn that leadership matters, that data can drive improvement, and that relentless focus and the courage to transform will win the day.”
— KAY MCCLENNEY, director, Community College Survey of Student Engagement, University of Texas at Austin

“Achieving and Sustaining Institutional Excellence for the First Year of College is destined to become a classic, a vital handbook for every college and university that aspires to maximize the life-changing possibilities for America’s first-year students.”
— DAVID W. WARREN, president, National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, Washington, D.C.

“Achieving and Sustaining Institutional Excellence for the First Year of College” is a comprehensive guide to helping colleges and universities create successful first-year experiences that improve student outcomes. This book provides practical strategies and examples from leading institutions across the country, allowing educators to learn from each other’s successes and failures. It covers topics such as improving retention rates, enhancing academic success, and fostering social and emotional development among first-year students. With a focus on evidence-based practices, this book is an essential resource for college presidents, provosts, academic deans, and other institutional leaders who are committed to improving the quality of their students’ experiences.
Achieving and Sustaining Institutional Excellence for the First Year of College
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Foreword

The late Nevitt Sanford told a wonderful anecdote that contains the essence of why this book is so important for college educators who strive to improve the quality and impact of undergraduate education for their students, especially beginning with the first year. The anecdote was about the encounter between a dean at Brown University and a group of prospective parents.

The dean was explaining to the assembled audience the benefits that would result from a Brown University education for the lives of their young men and women if they decided to spend four years as undergraduate students at Brown. Since the institution had chosen carefully which of the deans would speak to audiences of prospective parents, the presentation was eloquent, thoughtful, and extended. At the end of the talk came time for questions. One obviously skeptical mother held up her hand for recognition and asked the truth-in-advertising question: “This sounds just wonderful, but how can we parents be assured that these changes will actually occur?” The dean’s apocryphal reply was both vintage Sanford and why this book is so important: “Madam, we guarantee results or else we’ll refund the child.”

The long-sought-after holy grail of higher education is to bring together entering first-year students and institutions of higher education in a seamless transition toward an undergraduate experience with a lasting impact. The pitfalls along the way, however, are so very numerous: what the student is actually seeking is often not really what the institution can offer; what the institution really excels at teaching is sometimes not what the student can or wants to learn; or the tasks in the process of transformation from high school to upper-division status are neither sufficiently well presented by the institution nor sufficiently well understood by the entering student to make the transformation from high school to