

Section Two: Second Year Experience Purpose

Second Year Experience Purpose

Second Year Experience aims to improve the retention levels within fraternities and sororities while helping members within their second year of membership build stronger connections in the fraternal community and with members in other chapters and councils. By hosting large scale structured events each month, creating a mentorship program, and providing second year members the opportunity to connect with each other and campus resources, this program aims to be a catalyst for growth for these members on their fraternal journey and as they become the next generation of leaders in their chapters, councils and community.

The overall purpose of Second Year Experience is to help members within the fraternal community create a stronger sense of belonging as fraternity or sorority members while helping these members further develop their sense of purpose to their organizations, councils, and the FSL community. The three pillars of Second Year Experience are retention, community, and connection.

Retention focuses on ensuring that the chapters and the councils can retain the members within the community and help the members create a stronger sense of belonging. By creating a stronger sense of belonging, these members will be more inclined to step up for their chapters and councils, and help the Fraternity & Sorority Life community be a thriving and positive influence on Florida Gulf Coast University.

Community focuses on building relationships among different chapters and different councils. Second Year Experience puts an emphasis on members meeting members in other chapters and councils and creating connections that will go beyond the member experience, and impact the organizations directly. By creating a community that develops awareness and appreciation for other chapters and councils, these members will be more inclined to collaborate and build a stronger community for all FSL members.

Connection focuses on helping second-year members create connections with each other, with their mentors, and with campus partners that can help them succeed in their future. Second Year Experience puts an emphasis on members creating authentic connections to help them build the strongest relationships that will help them grow to be the best leader and member they can be. By creating authentic connections with each other and other entities, these members will be able to build their network while building their sense of belonging within the fraternal community.

Second Year Experience Learning Objectives

Learning objectives for Second Year Experience include the following:

- Recognize the value that the member has within their organization, and the impact that they can make on other members within said organization.
- Develop and apply best practices in leadership dynamics, relationship building, critical thinking, and collaborative programming, to best set the members up to take on future leadership roles within their organizations and councils.
- Create an ongoing sense of purpose for those members that are in their second year of membership in a fraternity or sorority in order to create a values-centric community that fosters the ideals of their organizations and councils.
- Identify organizational and campus stakeholders that can support the expectations and visions set by the members, and help the organization progress in their initiatives.
- Develop and strengthen cross-community connections for the members and organizations to allow for stronger relationships and more collaboration.
- Increase organizational retention levels within the Fraternity & Sorority Life community to develop healthy organizations that strive to accomplish their mission and purpose.

Florida Gulf Coast University Survey Data on Retention & Engagement

With a focus on retention and engagement, the Second Year Experience Steering Committee reviewed data from Florida Gulf Coast University in the form of the Entering Student Survey and the New Student Survey from Fall 2021. These surveys were sent out to First Time in College (FTIC) students prior to beginning their first semester in college (Entering Student Survey) and close to the conclusion of their first semester in college (New Student Survey). Because Second Year Experience will be working directly with those students who joined within the Fall 2021 semester or Spring 2022 semester, a good portion of members who joined their organization completed the surveys that were sent out.

Both surveys were conducted by the Office of Retention & Graduation Services and summaries from each survey were shared with the Second Year Experience Steering Committee to help the committee best plan for Second Year Experience. Below are data points from both surveys that are relevant to Second Year Experience

- 38% of incoming students that started in the Fall of 2021 are first-generation students, compared to 15% of students who completed the same survey in the Fall of 2020.
- 24% of incoming students said they would participate in a fraternity or sorority (Entering Student Survey) while 11% of these students ended up participating in a fraternity or sorority within their first semester (New Student Survey).

- 56% of incoming students said they spent more than 5 hour a week socializing with their friends in high school (Entering Student Survey) compared to 38% of students saying they spent more than 5 hours a week socializing with their friends in their first semester of college (New Student Survey).
- 19% of incoming students said they were very or extremely concerned with making new friends and meeting new people prior to their first semester (Entering Student Survey) compared to 28% of students saying they were very or extremely concerned with making new friends and meeting new people after their first semester (New Student Survey).
- 64% of incoming students said it is very or extremely important for them to develop a strong sense of community at FGCU (Entering Student Survey) compared to 32% of students who said they had a strong sense of community at FGCU after their first semester (New Student Survey).
- 70% of incoming students felt confident in their ability to develop close friendships with other students (Entering Student Survey) compared to 39% of students who felt as though they were very or extremely successful in developing close friendships after their first semester (New Student Survey).
- 68% of incoming students felt confident in their ability to feel like they're a part of the university community (Entering Student Survey) compared to 32% of students who felt successful in their ability to feel like they're a part of the university community after their first semester (New Student Survey).
- 63% of incoming students felt confident in their ability to know what events and activities are happening on campus (Entering Student Survey) compared to 30% of students who felt successfully in their ability to know what events and activities were happening on campus, after their first semester (New Student Survey).
- The biggest challenge that students said they faced within their first semester at FGCU was social development with 31% of students listing this option on the New Student Survey. The next highest category listed from students was personal health and wellness at 23%.

Data Conclusions

Based on the data above, the following conclusions were determined:

- Many students expressed interest in joining a fraternity or sorority however not as many ended up doing so. The way that fraternities and sororities market themselves may be an area that needs to be addressed.
- Multiple categories listed above showed students feeling confident in their ability to be social and make friends prior to their first semester but upon the conclusion of the student's first semester, many of those data points decreased significantly.

- Many students indicated they did not feel like they were a part of the university community after their first semester or even understood how to get involved or what events to go to during their first semester.
- Even though there are multiple ways for students to get involved on campus, these numbers show there is significant room for improvement in helping students get involved, make friends, and feel confident being a part of the FGCU community.
- Social development being the number one challenge listed on this survey shows the degree to how serious this issue is and that many students do not feel a sense of belonging at Florida Gulf Coast University.
- A lack of sense of belonging will lead to students transferring to other institutions, not getting the most of their collegiate experience, or dropping out of college all together.

The Why – How Second Year Experience Ties In

Second Year Experience is an opportunity to bridge some of those gaps when it comes to a lack of sense of belonging within the FGCU community. Within the Fraternity & Sorority Life community, we see members dropping from chapters on a consistent basis due to not being able to meet the expectations of the organization, not having that sense of belonging, or other reasons related to finances, mental health, or family. 11% of the participants who completed the New Student Survey indicated they were involved with a fraternity or sorority along with 32% involved with a Registered Student Organization and 16% involved in Club Sports. Even with students involved in different areas like Fraternity & Sorority Life, the statistics on engagement and satisfaction within the FGCU community are low and need to be improved, and Second Year Experience will provide that opportunity to focus on retention levels within fraternities and sororities.

An area that the Office of Fraternity & Sorority Life has been focusing on is members disaffiliating from their chapters. The Office of Fraternity & Sorority Life created a disaffiliation form on EagleLink beginning in the Fall of 2021 to track this data. While more individuals have disaffiliated from organizations, than have been reported, per roster data that OFSL tracks, the ones that have been reported have majorly been related to personal reasons involving not feeling a sense of belonging within the organization or not understanding the expectations of membership. OFSL continues to use this data to understand retention trends and Second Year Experience is an action step designed to help the community increase sense of belonging levels.

Second Year Experience is an opportunity for the Office of Fraternity & Sorority Life and its' partners to address retention levels with existing resources and supporting membership at a time where members may not be getting as much attention. Members often get the most attention when they first join the organization, and when they are close to graduation, however those middle years where the most growth is expected to happen in a fraternity or sorority, does not get as much attention. Second Year Experience will focus on working with second-year members to help them build their

sense of belonging in their organizations and in the FSL community while helping them develop the skills to support future members that are joining their organization. With focuses on social development, professional development, intellectual development, and identity development, Second Year Experience aims to build members into holistic leaders that are ready to take on leadership roles within their chapters, councils and the FSL community.

As Second Year Experience becomes a part of the Fraternity & Sorority Life culture, this experience will yield positive results that will have an impact on the entire community. Positive results will include an increase in member satisfaction, an increase in positive publicity for fraternal organizations, and the development of holistic leaders that not only will give back to the FSL community, but the entire FGCU community. Increased member satisfaction will be visible through higher retention rates in fraternal organizations and a decrease in members dropping due to a lack of sense of belonging. Increased positive publicity will be achievable by creating stronger relationships with campus partners and showing the campus community the impact that fraternal organizations have on the entire lifetime of a member during their undergraduate years. Positive publicity will lead to greater word of mouth of the fraternal organizations and will lead to more interested parties wanting to join the organizations. The development of holistic leaders will allow for fraternal organizations to thrive under strong leadership and will also allow these members to take on leadership roles in non-fraternal related organizations and departments. This further expands the outreach and impact that Fraternity & Sorority Life has on the campus of Florida Gulf Coast University.