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Identifying First-Year Seminar Curriculum Needs for Generation Z Students

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IDENTIFYING FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR CURRICULUM NEEDS FOR
GENERATION Z STUDENTS: THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF COLLEGE READINESS,
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CURRENT FIRST-YEAR PROGRAM,
AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING A REVISED FIRST-YEAR PROGRAM AT
TRINITY CHRISTIAN COLLEGE AND OTHER SMALLER-SIZED INSTITUTIONS

by

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A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Masters of Science in First-Year Studies
Faculty of First-Year and Transition Studies

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DEDICATION

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”
2 Timothy 3:15

“It's been my experience that you can nearly always enjoy things if you make up your mind firmly that you will.”
— L.M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*

Thank you, Mom and Dad, for reminding me that “this too shall pass” and for keeping me on course when life got crazy. And to Grandma for setting the ultimate example of endurance despite pain and suffering.
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I did not know five years ago that the world of First-Year Experience even existed, much less that it was a position I was going to hold and love. I did not know that when I left teaching without a plan for the next stage of my life, God knew that there was a place that would fit all my gifts and abilities, and where I would once again find Joy. That journey was possible only because of my colleagues at Trinity Christian College, a family that was willing to take a risk with me and allow me to discover where my vocational journey was taking me.

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ABSTRACT

Colleges and universities are constantly facing a changing student population. Just as soon as the faculty and staff at these institutions had figured out how to work with and guide Millennial students, particularly in their first-year seminar programs and the transition into college, the generation make-up once again shifted and Generation Z came on stage. This left colleges and universities, particularly small colleges already stretched in terms of resources and manpower with a need to shift their focus to provide first-year seminar programs that would best serve this new generation. Born out of that, this study was designed to identify the unique characteristics of Generation Z students and use those characteristics to re-envision an existing first-year seminar.

This student demographic shift came at the same time that Trinity Christian College, in Palos Heights, Illinois, began the process of rethinking their first-year orientation course and seminar, called First-Year Forum (FYF 101). In order to ensure that the changes that were being considered addressed the unique demographics of Generation Z while being flexible enough to adjust to the needs of future students, research and data on Generation Z and the students’ perception of the current program had to be acquired in order to give recommendations to shape new first-year seminar programs, both at Trinity and other schools in the process of re-envisioning and reshaping their first-year seminar programs. This study sought to discover the characteristics of Generation Z, particularly focusing on the ways in which they learn, their educational needs, and the areas in which they may struggle in their college transition through student perception data that was collected through quantitative and qualitative methods. Data collected from Generation Z students at Trinity Christian College during the Fall of 2017 and the National Survey of Student Engagement administered in the Spring of 2017 revealed that
students are responding in alignment with Generation Z themes of high anxiety and stress over the practical ins and outs of daily living and thriving on the college campus. In addition, the study revealed that students, as is consistent with Generation Z, are looking for deeper relationships and connections with professors and do not come to college understanding confidently how to write papers or evaluate sources for research. Survey data indicated that participants were looking for a program that prepared them for living on campus and social adjustment more than learning about thematic issues or concepts valued by the college.

Using the collected data, case study examples of schools who seem to have already adjusted their first-year programs to meet the needs of students were examined. In addition, the responses of student participants shaped recommendations for the future of the first-year program at Trinity Christian College and the re-design of the program that will be inaugurated in the fall of 2019, as well as can give guidance to other small colleges and universities as they re-design their first-year programs for this new generation.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Summary

The first-year seminar, “one of the most powerful predictors of first-year student persistence into the sophomore year” (Crissman-Ishler & Upcraft, 2005, p. 42), has been evolving and changing for over 100 years as new data, research, and understanding of student transitional needs has progressed through the work of The National Resource Center for First-Year Experience and Students in Transition at the University of South Carolina and other leading researchers in the field (Cuseo, 2017; Garner, 2012; Greenfield, Keup, & Gardner, 2013; Kuh et al, 2005; Upcraft et al, 2005). First-year seminars are seen as ways to “give an institution the greatest opportunity to begin to shape and educate first-year students from the very outset of their college or university education” (Natalicio & Smith, 2005, p. 170), and have been proven to help students persist to the second year of college, maintain higher grade point averages, feel more comfortable on campus and in relationships with faculty, and overall find more satisfaction in their college experience (Gordon, 1989; Upcraft et al, 2005; Hunter & Linder, 2005). As important as the first-year seminar can be, it is imperative that colleges craft programs that are effective because they fit in with the specific institutional mission and practices of that college, as well as being committed to the students that the seminar serves. Lee Noel (1985) argues that “the more students learn, the more they sense they are finding and developing a talent, the more likely they are to persist; and when we get student success, satisfaction, and learning together, persistence is the outcome” (Crissman-Ishler & Upcraft, 2005, p. 46). While retention and persistence are often goals for a first-year seminar program, the most important goals focus on the student: to provide a program that meets students where they are, helps them transition
smoothly and successfully into the college environment, and is flexible enough to change as student populations change.

This ability to focus on student need and the flexibility to change in a timely manner presents a challenge for many small colleges and universities. With limited resources of time, money, and employee capacity, smaller institutions may fall behind larger universities in their ability to design and re-design first-year seminar programs. They may lack the institutional data support or wide-spread assessment that larger institutions have at their disposal, as well as the time to research changing trends or population shifts, or the financial resources necessary to attend workshops and conferences that can keep faculty and staff up-to-date. Despite the deficits present, small institutions (both public and private) need to find ways to create programs that work well for their size and are nimble enough to respond to change in a timely way to best serve their student population. Part of that change in student population has to do with generational shifts. Currently, the shift is from Millennial to Generation Z students, the first of whom will be graduating in the Spring of 2018. For these reasons, it is crucial to collect and analyze student perception responses to the effectiveness of a first-year seminar program for a new group of Generation Z students and in a small college setting.

**Statement of the Problem**

This need for change and updating becomes problematic in small institutions across the country. Many colleges are making changes to first-year programs in response to recent retention trends or institutional needs, rather than in preparation to meet generational shifts or changes to best practices based on research or recommendations from places like the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition®. This is often due to the fact that smaller institutions are working with limited staffing, with programs led by
Coordinators or Directors who are fulfilling multiple roles on campus or who just do not have the capacity or energy to give to a time-intensive redevelopment or redesign of first-year seminar curriculum due to the other ongoing duties for which they are responsible. This study seeks to fill that gap for smaller institutions. By redirecting first-year seminar design from a response to institutional changes into a proactive method of studying generational-focused change, this study gives small colleges and universities the groundwork and footholds needed to begin a process of re-design that can be updated more quickly to meet the changing needs of students entering higher education in the future.

The problem presented by the case study at Trinity Christian College, like perhaps many other small institutions, is that it is run by a part-time Director, and is a course largely unchanged over its 15-year history. Shortened in length, but becoming denser in curricular content over the years, there has been no overhaul or desire to rethink the course beyond occasion tweaking as content required. Three years ago, a small shift happened seeking to change the perception of the course and regain a level of student work equivalent to the requirements of an academic course. Still only a one-credit course, the level of academic rigor is limited, and the first-year students are perennially unclear about the purpose of the course. Students and their parents are often unaware of the academic requirements of the course as it takes place before the fall semester starts and often gets portrayed as orientation by Admissions Counselors, a small but incredibly important semantic difference. This became evident on course evaluations that have been collected over the past three years, as students commented that the FYF 101 course “interrupted with my school work… and could have been emailed to me and not gotten in the way of my school work,” an indication that students differentiate between FYF 101 and the rest of their ‘real’ courses in the fall semester. Another student indicated that it “felt like a class,” while
others indicated that “I don’t really think orientation needed homework,” and “no homework because it is a one credit class and the 3 page paper was only 10 points so it’s not really worth it, especially since it’s just orientation,” all demonstrating the confusion about the actual purpose of the course. Despite this confusion, Trinity Christian College boasts a 98.5% fall to spring retention for first year students, an 84.2% first- to second-year retention rate, and a 62% 6-year graduation rate (Trinity Christian College Databook, 2017, Tables 4.1, 4.2 & 4.22). In order to maintain or improve on these persistence and retention rates, perhaps the direction of the course needs to re-focus toward improving academic performance and giving students a sense of belonging, while also clarifying for students the academic purpose of the course.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions of students who took the current version of the First-Year Forum (FYF 101) course and how they felt it prepared, or did not prepare, them for their academic journey at Trinity Christian College. In addition, it is designed to find out from students what they perceive would help to better prime them for collegiate academic success through the curriculum in a new iteration of this course. From there, the study seeks to fill the identified gap for smaller institutions desiring to re-design their programs to address changing generations of students, specifically Generation Z, to have resources and recommendations to make that happen. Currently, very little has been published on the correlation between re-designing first-year seminar courses specifically for the needs of Generation Z, so this study seeks to begin to fill that gap as well.

The rationale is that the nation is shifting into a new generation of traditional-aged students in our colleges. A course that has not been assessed or significantly updated in 15 years is likely to no longer meet the learning needs of the current generation of students. If first-year
students are not presented with a course that meets their learning level and style as well as supports them in their academic and social success as they transition into college, colleges, and small colleges in particular, across the United States may face rising attrition numbers. While Trinity Christian College is currently maintaining good retention numbers, it also needs to stay current to meet the needs of the new generation of students before that retention trend changes. This means focusing on the FYF 101 course as not just a retention piece, but a more holistic course to help students become prepared, academically, to navigate their gateway and major courses while developing a sense of identity, belonging, and connection to the college.

The goal is to use the FYF 101 first-year program at Trinity Christian College as a case study for other colleges, as well as share a couple of additional case studies from other smaller institutions as supporting evidence. In this case, the FYF 101 course at Trinity Christian College has not been updated or changed since its creation 15 years ago. In that time, more and more content has been added to the course, but a full day has been lost, leaving the program full, and in the present form, it is a vehicle to introduce academic and transitional topics, rather than have the space to truly teach the concepts and allow students to practice them in a way that solidifies the skills they will use in their other college classes and transitions. This approach leaves students beginning the academic year already exhausted and stressed, but not actually confident or prepared for collegiate academics. In addition, the course has not adapted to changing generational student needs, their different learning styles, or their developmental readiness to enter college. The research problem for this study is to consider recreating the FYF course to be one that is decidedly academic and fulfills the claim to be one-credit, while still maintaining the uniqueness of a program that is technically a retention tool for the college.
This study presents two main questions: how can the course be re-designed to reflect evidence-based best practices in the first-year experience and seminar research and canon, and how can this course meet the learning needs of the current and future generations of students who are decidedly different than those entering college in 2002, both at Trinity Christian College and other similar smaller institutions. For instance, research at the University of Hawaii has indicated that faculty need to “bring to the classroom a repertoire of knowledge and skills to keep the attention of Gen Zers who are prone to boredom easily and quickly,” such as “providing information in small ‘bites’” or the ability to “generate ideas about how to motivate and engage Gen Zers in learning for longer periods of time and extend their attention and focus on assignments/projects that require more than the few seconds they take to read and intake information” (Chun, et al., 2016, p. 6-7). Taking into account more interactive exercises, collaborative projects, virtual applications, or game theory could update this course into one that more immediately connects with this generation of students (and all students in general) and compel them to engage more with the course.

The problem focuses on three areas: relevance, learning style, and information. This study sought to discover what the current generation of first-year students perceives is relevant in terms of what could be covered in a first-year seminar and to prepare them for the academic rigor of college. Secondly, the study sought discover how the course could best be taught to meet what is reported to be the highly visual learning style of this group of students. Are students matching what Rothman (2014) suggests when she states that “because their use of technology has developed the visual ability portion of their brains, visual forms of learning are more effective for these learners…the fast-paced multimedia has affected the ability of these learners to focus and analyze complex information” (p. 1). Thirdly, the study sought to find out where this
generation of learners is situated in their perception of how to use information, particularly digital information and research that students are exposed to daily. This perception will help shape the content of the new course and determine how much digital literacy education needs to be included in the new iteration.

The time has come for a new and more flexible course at Trinity and a more flexible model for other small institutions to follow. In part, because the current version is not formatted in a way that allows for nimble changes or adjustments without intensive overhauling and time investment. Upcraft’s (2005) research assumes that the institution will be able to make changes, as he says “First-year seminars facilitate learning: learning about a subject or combination of topics, learning about the institution, learning about the diversity within campus communities, but most important, learning about oneself and one’s abilities. The very nature of first-year seminars allows faculty to facilitate the growth and development of students while still being flexible enough to accommodate the campus-specific issues that an institution believes are important” (p. 276). The current version of FYF 101 is looking at the first-year transition too narrowly by concentrating on the first two weeks of school, rather than the fact that students will continue to adjust and transition to college over the entirety of their first semester and perhaps even their first year. Upcraft (2005) supports this extended time frame:

Since national data were first collected in 1988, the number of institutions offering first-year seminars has shown a gradual increase (from 68 percent in 1988 to 74 percent in 2000). But while new seminars are created each year, others are dissolved. This is likely to continue as some seminars disappear due to lack of resources or the departure of an influential seminar leader, and others are instituted after a renewed administrative commitment to first-year students. Recent history of first-year seminars has shown a
gradual shift to more traditional academic content. In the early 1990s, almost three-fourths of seminars emphasized extended orientation or college survival material. The most recent national survey saw this percentage decline to approximately 62 percent, while the number of seminars focused on academic topics has increased. Since 1988, the number of institutions reporting basic study skills or remedial seminars has never exceeded 6 percent and currently is about 4 percent of the total number of first-year seminars. The percentage of reported discipline-linked or professional seminars has remained relatively constant at less than 5 percent, but the movement to include discipline-specific content in already established extended orientation seminars is growing. These hybrid seminars, still classified most accurately as extended orientation seminars, address college success topics as well as introduce students to a particular program of study or career field. (p. 281)

Providing more academic contact hours will allow better implementation of Bloom’s Taxonomy and other student development theories, such as Sharon D. Parks’ (2000) Faith Development and Mentorship or the work of Patton, Renn, Guido, and Quaye (2016) on first-generation and social class student development theories, into the curriculum. In addition, the lack of breadth and time in the current program prevents true learning from happening for new students. According to Barr (2003), one of the five essential features of a campus where the learning paradigm is both valued and evident is that “students engage in frequent displays of learning through participation in authentic assessments” (Garner, 2012, p. 19). The current model does utilize authentic assessments, but without making connections to the rest of their academic experience, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Two. According to Upcraft (2005), “first-year seminars should encourage students to define themselves in relation not only to the campus community but also
to the larger polity or culture beyond the campus borders” (p. 184). Since FYF 101 ends before all other classes even begin, it falls short at achieving summative assessment or allowing students to find their place in and beyond the campus borders. Barr adds that students need to be “encouraged to make connections between immediate learning experiences and the long-term big picture. Rather than focusing on learning within a single context, students are also asked to make interdisciplinary connections among their learning experiences” (Garner, 2012, p. 20). The current structure of FYF 101 at Trinity Christian College does not provide sufficient opportunity for students to make connections to courses across the curriculum.

Assessment is also an issue with the current iteration of the course. First-year experience and educational research both show that more authentic assessments in a graded course will do a better job of allowing students time for growth and reflection on their collegiate work, as “quality assessment practices promote higher level thinking and the application of acquired content to a variety of problems and circumstances. Assessment opportunities should be planned intentionally and built into the schedule and flow of the semester” (Garner, 2012, p. 116). In the current model, the assignments and the assessments are not sufficient to develop these skills in first-year students. As Joe Cuseo (2015) states in his paper, “The Case for a Holistic Approach to Promoting Student Success”, a more holistic approach to student transition and a strong connection between curricular and co-curricular components are necessary. Currently, much more time is spent on the co-curricular and social aspects of the first-year transition, despite the one-credit component of the course. In order to fulfill the required hours for a one-credit course based on accreditation standards, the program has to account for 37.5 hours of course work (in-class teaching and out of class work) which does not leave much time for a balanced or holistic transition for students during the four-day program. Cuseo argues that:
The joining together of faculty and student development professionals in the design and delivery of holistic student-support programs may also be an effective vehicle for reducing the historic ‘schism’ or ‘persistent gap’ between academic and student affairs, which creates a deleterious ‘disconnect’ between undergraduates’ curricular and co-curricular learning experiences…First-Year Seminars with a holistic focus—i.e. whose main objective is facilitating students’ academic and personal adjustment as well as fostering an attachment to the institution—had a more significant impact on students’ persistence and overall academic performance than seminars focusing strictly on the development of specific academic competencies. (Cuseo, 2015, p. 3)

In addition, Upcraft, et al., (2005) argue that a first-year seminar program should balance activities during orientation and welcome week. Many colleges give too little emphasis to academic socialization, erring toward activities that are designed to help new students ‘become comfortable’ in their new surroundings and ‘have fun’ with their new acquaintances. As a result, welcome week has become the sole province of student affairs professionals with little involvement by the faculty, sending the wrong messages to everyone about what college is for and what the institution values. If there is one thing students do not need much help with, it is finding ways to have fun. Schools should minimize the amount of time new students are on campus before classes start to a maximum of three days. Any orientation activities that cannot be accomplished are either not important enough or can be accommodated in the first few weeks of the semester. (p. 105)

It is clear that both the socialization and the academic components need to have the necessary time and space to actually benefit students, while also allowing for some assessment to
determine if the program is truly working for students. Unfortunately, at smaller institutions, it is challenging to keep up with the necessary assessment to determine if programs are effective and credible, requiring a method that is more flexible and easily accomplished for part-time or single-person First Year Experience departments.

This credibility and value comes, in part, by making sure the course is graded, which will set the tone for what students will experience in the other courses their first semester. Joe Cuseo (2009) provides research and support for this idea in his paper “How Many Credit Hours (Units) Should the First-Year Seminar (FYS) Carry?” His answer is that “additional evidence for First-Year Seminars that carry more credit hours is provided by research conducted by Swing (2002). Working under the aegis of the Policy Center on the First Year of College, survey-generated data were obtained from more than 31,000 students at 62 different institutions, and it was found that students enrolled in seminars that involved more contact hours generally reported larger gains in learning outcomes than students enrolled in seminars with fewer contact hours” (p. 1).

In addition, research on current student population needs to be aligned with what is taught in this first-year course. Created 15 years ago, the current course at Trinity Christian College is designed for a completely different, Millennial, generation. Even more indicative is the fact that, according to Mohr and Mohr (2017), “most active university faculty are Baby Boomers and Generation-Xers (a.k.a. Busters) who are now teaching primarily Gen-Y and Z undergraduate students” (p. 84-85). This creates a gap between the mindset and educational practices of the faculty and the students in their classes. New traditional-aged students entering college are part of a new, post-millennial generation. Some studies indicate that new generation markers are going to come along as frequently as every 10-15 years, which creates a “challenge for faculty [to] become one of understanding their learning preferences and adopting a range of
teaching techniques responsive to their needs and styles” (Garner, 2012, p. 7). The FYF 101 program at Trinity Christian College needs to be transitioned into a more agile format to allow for those changes to be implemented quickly in future years. Currently the course is too short and compressed to allow for major changes to pedagogy or content to occur periodically to meet students’ learning needs or learning styles. Having the seminar during the semester will allow for more frequent changes, just as faculty tweak and change their course content or syllabus for other courses on a more regular basis.

Finally, research also indicates that the way the first-year seminar is taught makes a big difference in its effectiveness. Currently the course is taught by whoever is willing to teach it from year to year, but very little time is spent in faculty development or training, or even in discussing pedagogy or teaching practices effective for first-year students. A new course affords the opportunity to tap into research and best practices in this area generated during the past 15 years. Currently, in some cases, though certainly not all, faculty teaching the FYF 101 course do not have formal training or experience in varied or effective teaching practices. Groccia and Hunter (2012) argue that “Good teaching matters for first-year student persistence, and participation in quality faculty development experiences can assist instructors in honing their skills. Active, engaged teaching practices, in addition to increasing learning, directly and indirectly affect college attrition… (since) the more instructors use active-learning practices, the more learners feel that the institution is committed to their welfare. This perceived commitment is connected to future persistence” (p. 6-7). In this way, the continued interaction of faculty in the revised FYF 101 course is not only critical, but so is the way in which the course is taught, and additional training would provide that consistency across the program.
Research Questions

1. To what extent did students, who are members of Generation Z, perceive that they were prepared for the academic expectations of college in their first year?

2. How well, based on student perception, did the content of First-Year Forum 101 prepare Generation Z students for academic success and transition into college life at Trinity Christian College?

3. Did the content of First-Year Forum 101, based on student perception, effectively help prepare Generation Z students for their transition into college and academic success at Trinity Christian College?

4. What elements do students feel are necessary to add or subtract from the First-Year Forum 101’s curriculum that will be more effective in helping Generation Z students’ transition into Trinity Christian College?

Significance of the Study

The benefits of the study are primarily for future first-year students at Trinity Christian College, as this is a case study of the specific program currently in place and recommendations for the way it will be shaped in the future. For current students who have participated in the research process however, they will gain the benefits of being part of the academic assessment procedures and having an investment in the retention and success of students at Trinity Christian College in the future. Trinity Christian College does an excellent job of including student voices into policy making, as almost every faculty committee contains representatives from the Student Association. By participating in this research, a wider sampling of students has been given the opportunity to help shape the academic landscape for future Trinity students. This data will also help create a more effective first-year seminar to meet the transitional needs that students
actually demonstrate, rather than what Academic Affairs and Student Affairs professionals assume that they possess. This study will also benefit other smaller higher education institutions who might be struggling with the ability to pursue comprehensive data collection and generational research due to limited resources of time and people as is often typical on small campuses. This study will allow other institutions the recommendations and data to help them find ways to integrate this research into their own re-design or creation of a first-year seminar. The hope would be to help other institutions see how this approach might make their program more nimble, flexible, and adaptable to meet the changing needs and demographics of future students.

**Definitions**

In any field of study, it is always important to define jargon or terminology that may be specific to that particular field. Therefore, it is necessary to define a few of the terms that will be used consistently throughout this research.

*Digital Literacy.* In the most basic definition, digital literacy is the practical ability to use digital devices, such as laptops and smartphones. It includes the “skills and knowledge to access and use a variety of hardware devises and software applications, adeptness to understand and critically analyze digital content and applications, and ability to create with digital technology” (Murray & Perez, 2014, p. 86). For the purpose of this study, it refers specifically to effectively and successfully using digital devices for gathering information for academic purposes.

*Generation Z.* For the purpose of this study, Generation Z will be defined as children who were born between 1995 and 2010. This puts the earliest members of the generation at their college graduation between 2017 and 2018. This definition comes from Seemiller and Grace (2016), who state that “having their world completely shaped by the Internet, they are often also
aptly referred to as digital natives, the Net Generation, or iGeneration. They make up a quarter of the US population and will become a third of the population by 2020. They are the most racially diverse generation to date” (p. 6).

*Information Literacy.* Information literacy is “the ability to evaluate information found online” (Perez & Murray, 2010, p. 130), or “a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the information needed” (Perez & Murray, 2010, p. 130). For the purpose of this study, the term information literacy will refer to the ability to find and evaluate information from digital sources.

*Traditional College Students.* According to Terenzini and Pascarella (1998), a traditional college student attends “college full-time and resides on-campus, a common general education emphasis or shared intellectual experience in the curriculum, and frequent interaction in- and outside the classroom between students and faculty and between students and their peers” (p. 151-152). For the purpose of this research, that means that these are students who enrolled in college immediately after graduation from high school, pursue college studies on a continuous full-time basis, and complete a bachelor’s degree program in four to six years.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

As the purpose of this study has stated, it is important to know who Generation Z students are in order to find out if the current first-year seminar program at Trinity Christian College or current first-year seminars at other small institutions are preparing these students for the demands of college. Are smaller colleges meeting what students are looking for in a first-year seminar to help them be prepared for their college academic experience? If not, what recommendations need to be made to colleges to help shape the creation and revision of the new first-year seminar to meet these changing student needs?

Generation Z students are defined as those children born between 1995 and 2010, who have grown up immersed in the Internet, smart phones, social media, and lives that have been carefully planned and organized by their parents, teachers, and coaches since birth. As Seemiller and Grace (2016) describe Generation Z in their book, Generation Z Goes to College, what has happened in the world since 1995 has made this generation what it is. “As these students entered kindergarten, they saw the newscasts of September 11, 2001. They witnessed the economy crash and saw the unemployment rate skyrocket. They have known only two U.S. presidents and have lived in a world at war for a majority of their lives. And their schools have always been striving to leave no child behind” (p. 6-7). This generation is said to make up a quarter of the population, and will grow to one-third by the year 2020. They are the most racially diverse generation on the planet. They live just as easily in the virtual world as in the physical one. Seemiller and Grace (2016) predict that “Generation Z will have a strong work ethic similar to Baby Boomers and the responsibility and resiliency of their Generation X parents, and they may be even technologically savvier than the Millennials. This leads us to the biggest question: Will Generation Z be the
group that changes the world?” (p. 7). The first group of students from this generation, generally, will be graduating from college in 2018. These are the students, with their unique qualities and needs, at the center of the research and recommendations of this study.

It is a challenge to be on the front edge of a generation shift, as is the case with Generation Z, as there is a dearth of research and studies to reference for this particular group of students. Since these students are just beginning to graduate from college, many colleges and universities have not yet had the time to create or modify programs to specifically meet the needs presented by this group, nor have comprehensive studies been conducted yet to see longitudinal trends or significant data for these students. This created some problems for this case study. Despite reaching out to several colleges and universities who have recently revised or overhauled their first-year programs, most of them did so on internal study and not by following data collected that specifically related to Generation Z students. The reality is that there is currently a gap in understanding who Generation Z students are and what they need, and the way first-year programs are being designed and created. The purpose of this literature review and study is to begin to build a picture of these students based on what is currently known, in order to seek to create programs that fit their needs, even as we wait for additional studies and more widespread data to be collected.

Case Studies

While this study was conducted on the front end of Generation Z students attending college (the first class of Generation Z students will graduate college in Spring 2018), it is important to look at what other colleges and universities, particularly small ones, have been doing already to address the generational shift in their first-year programs. Unfortunately, there
is not a lot of information available that shows that programs have recently been re-designed or adjusted in ways that intentionally addressed Generation Z as a factor in the process.

Though not a small university by any means, a first-year program that has recently been redesigned is the first-year program at Kennesaw State University (KSU). While not a small institution, KSU tends to lead the way in program re-design and their ability to meet the changing needs of students. The program at KSU, with a national reputation of being one of the best in the country for the last ten years according to *U.S. News & World Report*, began a strategic analysis and plan in 2012 to determine the direction of their program revision. What emerged, according to the KSU “Strategic Plan 2013-2017” is a program that builds on past success while providing “students with the knowledge, resources, and innovative services necessary to promote personal growth as engaged citizens and emerging scholars” (Kennesaw State University, p. 9). Dr. Nirmal Trivedi, Director of First-Year Seminars at Kennesaw State University, acknowledged this issue in an email conversation about the new First-Year Seminar program at KSU. He stated that with the newness of the research, the new program at KSU which was inaugurated in the Fall of 2017, did not include specific research into who Generation Z students are. However, he did indicate that that “the design of the new seminar has a particular emphasis on what it means to belong and how to persist when faced with obstacles. The specific issues of digital addiction, digital literacy, financial insecurity, stress in dealing with school and family life, and communication especially when working in groups, all are particularly salient for GenZ” (N. Trivedi, personal communication, January 16, 2018).

Additionally, a few other programs are being marketed or published in a way that indicates a clear or specific intention to design the first-year seminar to meet the needs of Generation Z students, but these are few and far between. Mansfield University of Pennsylvania,
in its online “First-Year Seminar Faculty Resource Guide,” does make specific mention of the fact that students coming into their Fall 2017 first-year seminar course are digital natives and members of Generation Z, indicating that they are “confident and optimistic, they tend to be technologically savvy, socially oriented, and interested in community service. They have also been defined with dualistic characteristics that present challenges and opportunities in the educational setting” (p. 4). While the program consists of courses designed by the faculty teaching them and are focused around the “development of academic rigor and intellectual dispositions” (p. 4), it does seek to focus the program to the digital needs of Generation Z students. The faculty guide goes on to explain that the first-year seminar needs to be taught with these “Digital Native” students in mind: “Generation Z…represent the first ones to grow up in a world where Internet access has always been available and plentiful. These hyper-connected and tech-savvy youngsters are changing how educators formulate lessons and interact with students…making technology an integral part of all classroom study” (p. 14). Suggestions are made to faculty to incorporate more interactive devices, collaborative online projects, a bigger focus on visual learning, treating learning as a game, learning in smaller bites, and a focus on problem solving and occupation-based training as ways to create a dynamic learning environment in the first-year seminar for these particular students. Unfortunately, this on-line resource does not indicate the data or research that went into the creation of this document.

**Literature Review**

While a few examples are available, there is a clear need to better develop this canon of research and information to help a greater number of institutions re-design first-year seminar programs using models, studies, and frameworks that focus specifically on Generation Z students. The following literature review, then seeks to find research related to major themes
and trends that have been reported about this generation already. The work done in this study is to see if what has come to light about the educational needs of Generation Z students is consistent with the needs of the student population at Trinity Christian College, and then to identify the gaps in the current FYF 101 program to make recommendations for filling those gaps in a future iteration to better serve these students and students at similar institutions.

First-Year Seminar Programs. Almost from the moment the first institution of higher education, Harvard University, was established in the United States, the need for programs to help students adjust and transition into the world of higher education was also recognized. This connection between a college’s curriculum objectives and missional goals and its need to help students be successful at achieving them, has continued throughout the 380-year history of distinctly American higher education. Education is formational and, according to John Dewey (1966) in Democracy and Education, “formation consists in the coordination and selection of native activities so that they may utilize the subject matter of the social environment” (p. 72). First-year programs are one of the many activities that help in the formation of students during their college experience. While this idea of educational formation remains the same today, the reasons for higher education have changed throughout American’s history, meaning that the programs to help students adjust to and excel in college have had to change as well. “Students’ approaching colleges and universities as consumers is not new; what is changing is higher education’s eagerness to treat them as such” (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 569), and with that comes the continuing need for colleges to meet student needs and help them translate their higher education into something that serves them well in a rapidly changing society and workplace. Through a study of the history of first-year programs in conjunction with the history of higher education in the United States, there is evidence that first-year programs have, and still do, play
an important role in the landscape of higher education in the United States, and will continue to play a crucial, though changing, role in the evolving discourse on college campuses with an evolving demographic and population of first-year students.

The first programs specifically for first-year students’ adjustment and transition came about as American institutions developed in markedly different ways from their European counterparts. Unlike the elite and long-established programs in Europe and England, American colleges had to figure out their own purpose early on. Initially designed to educate clergy for the new religiously focused Colonial communities, as America grew into its national identity and ideals, it entered, as Thelin (2004) explains in *A History of American Higher Education*, a period of extreme innovation and consumerism, with virtually no government accountability or regulation. Yet is was not a period of chaos for higher education, because the colleges displayed a pattern of both initiation and response that was very much in tune with the nation’s changing geographic, demographic, and economic character. (p. 41)

In fact, “one particular characteristic of the colonial colleges in their first decades is that there was little emphasis on completing degrees” (Thelin, 2004, p. 20) which seems to be quite a contrast to the purpose of higher education today. The reason this particular shift in history is so important, is that the changes to higher education’s purpose is precisely what brought about a need for the first-year programs. This shift from education for elite students to give them something to do or show for themselves or purely for religious instruction, to education for more mainstream students who wanted to improve their situations or socioeconomic standings meant that higher educational institutions had to change not only their purposes, but their ability to work with these new populations. Unlike the British colleges, Thelin (2004) demonstrates that in
America, “literary institutions are founded and endowed for the common good and not for the private advantage of those who resort to them for education… [Every] man who has been aided by a public institution to acquire an education and to qualify himself for usefulness, is under peculiar obligations to exert his talents for the public good” (p. 71). That idea definitely opens up higher education to a far broader range of students than just the elite or wealthy.

As higher education became available for a more diverse body of students, the need for programs to help all students transition into college became more apparent. In 1888, Boston University created the first freshman experience program to help new students transition to life in college. As early as 1909, the president of Harvard University began programs that included segregated dorms for class levels and mandatory contact with advisors to help guide students in their academic progress. As more colleges caught on to these ideas, the rapid growth of colleges including some sort of first year support program rose to 82 colleges by 1916 (Gordon, 1989, p. 185). These programs were designed to be a scaffolding for students transitioning into higher education from a world where they were largely guided by fairly strict rules put into place by parents as well as the very set-up and nature of the high school model. As they now are separate from those more rigid structures, there needs to be, as John Dewey stated in *Democracy and Education*, an “environment which stimulates responses and directs the learner’s course” (Dewey, 1966, p. 180) which is crucial for the first-year student. In the midst of massive transition socially, emotionally, and academically, and at only 18 or 19 years old, students still need our help in turning their focus from more forced interest to true interest and discipline. First Year programs are designed for new college students by helping them find, as Dewey states (1966) “purposeful engagement” (p. 137), eliminating the idea of learning in isolation, giving them the skills to gain the “mastery of the resources available for carrying through the action” (p.
129), and providing the understanding for true discipline as “an activity takes time…many means and obstacles lie between its initiation and completion, [and where] deliberation and persistence are required” (p. 127-128). The need for these lessons became the foundation for the creation of first year support programs in many early colleges.

In the article “The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshman” by Fitts and Swift (1928), the authors explain that

The rapidly increasing body of knowledge in every field which is becoming available to society is creating many new educational problems. For youth generally, and adults frequently, a sense of bewilderment comes with each new revelation. Inventions and discoveries continue to come so thick and fast, ideals and standards in the realm of social relationships continue to ever new and ever changing aspects so swiftly that the high school lad, the youth entering college or university, and even the adult finds serious difficulty in adjusting himself to the new accumulations of knowledge and to the resultant new ideals and standards. (p. 149)

As with students in the early part of the 19th Century, students today are faced with a rapidly changing social and technological world, and with those changes, students don’t always know how to navigate face-to-face relationships, engage in clear communication with peers and faculty, or how to become an adult in their responsibilities and actions. All of those factors today, as was the case it appears in 1928, can create difficulty for students as they enter college. And not just in terms of being able to mentally grasp the concepts that are coming at them. As Fitts and Swift (1928) indicate, the ideals and standards of college life are areas that new students have to be guided through as well. Higher education institutions cannot just throw
students on campus and say that because they are ‘of age’ to be in college, they should be able to make wise choices, manage their time, and accept willingly the requirements of the institution.

How this support is done on any given college campus is, of course, an area of wide debate and continued discussion. Is the college expected to be in loco parentis and set rules and regulations for these new students to prevent them from failure, but perhaps also prevent them from learning autonomy and skills of resilience and coping at the same time? In Dwyer’s chapter “A Historical Look at the Freshman Year Experience” (1989) from *The Freshman Year Experience: Helping Students Survive and Succeed in College*, the quotation by University of Michigan President, Marion LeRoy Burton, pretty much sums up the problem of doing too much for the new student in these first-year programs:

> Remember that the change from high school to college is tremendous. You are no longer a high school boy or girl. You are a college man or woman. The University is a place of freedom. You are thrown upon your own resources. You are independent. But do not forget, I beg of you, that independence and freedom do not mean anarchy and license. Obedience to law is liberty. (p. 35)

The balance comes into play in the fact that many students are not emotionally or psychologically ready for that independence and freedom, and while not wanting to parent the students, the college still plays an important role in continuing to guide them toward those goals. Perhaps put best by Dr. Preserved Smith at Amherst College, in his description of what a new student program should look like, he says “Let us at least show him (the entering student) the whole first. Let us lead him into the universe and turn on all the lights at once, rather than bringing him into it in the dark and throwing a flashlight now into this corner and now into that” (Dwyer, 1989, p. 158). This is what good first-year programs should look like – to bring new
students into college and turn the lights on for them. The programs should be showing them all that there is – support services, requirements, expectations, and how to deal with it all – before setting them loose to try to figure it all out. Good first-year programs, as supported by Fitts and Swift (1928), are ones that set students up for success in all aspects of their college experience.

Over time, a variety of program ideas have developed to fulfill these supporting needs, centered mainly on the two most common options: the freshman orientation program or the first-year seminar. While most colleges probably have one of these programs or both, the reality is that the institution’s beliefs about which program to run is probably as deep as their loyalties to their mascots and athletics teams. The reality is that each institution needs to find a program that best meets the needs of their population, mission goals and outcomes, and whatever unique constraints are placed on the institution by forces internal and external.

The essential differences between these programs lies in their definition. As Virginia Gordon (1989) explains in her chapter “Origins and Purposes of the Freshman Seminar” in *Challenging and Supporting the First Year Student*, that orientation is “adjustment of one’s self to one’s environment” (p. 183) which involves an adjustment not just to the physical and social surroundings that come with beginning college, but also an adjustment to the academic expectations that come with that new level of education. Specifically, this orientation “movement” as it is described by Fitts and Swift (1928), was created to meet the needs of a post-war nation that needed to address the new educational and vocational needs of the new types of students entering college. A variety of orientation programs developed at this time, including ones designed to help student adjust to the mental and social environment of college, ones to teach students how to study and the methodology of thinking, and ones to help orient students socially and intellectually to college life (Fitts & Swift, 1929, p. 180-183). These programs were
most often designed to take place before the student started their educational journey, and still
today these programs tend to be non-mandatory and take place in the summer or immediately
before the semester begins.

On the other side is the first-year seminar, defined by Hunter and Linder (2005) in their chapter “First-Year Seminars” as courses designed to meet the individual needs of entering students while also expressing the expectations of that particular institution to the new students. It is designed to “assist students in their academic and social development in their transition to college” (p. 275) while also creating a “positive correlation between student learning and a student’s engagement in the learning process” (p. 276) which is developed and continued beyond the first week of school, which is when most orientation programs leave off. First-year seminars meet the rationale set up originally by Barefoot and Fidler (1996), and outlined in Hunter and Linder’s “First-Year Seminars” chapter in Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student (2005), in that they are

offered for academic credit…centered in the first-year curriculum…involve[s] both faculty and student affairs professionals in program design and instruction…include[s] instructor training and development as an integral part of the program…compensate[s] or otherwise reward[s] instructors for teaching the seminar…involve[s] upper-level students in seminar delivery…include[s] ways of assessing their effectiveness and disseminating these assessments to the campus community. (Upcraft, 2005, p. 277)

These seminars are also often designed to teach students to be academically successful while integrating students into the life of the college. Upcraft (2005) states that over half of the institutions, which total about 74% of college campuses today according to Hunter and Linder (p. 276), that offer these types of programs do so to foster academic goals or to get students
thinking. “Most first-year seminars aim to help students become better assimilated to and engaged in college-level learning” (Upcraft, 2005, p. 283), while also “easing the transition to college” (Upcraft, 2005, p. 283). Many of these seminars are also designed to encourage students to begin thinking about and discussing social problems of the day, learning how to be engaged citizens in the world, and introducing big picture topics to help students make connections between their academic classes and the life they will lead after college. In *Challenging and Supporting the First Year Student*, Upcraft (2005) states that “It has been argued that first-year seminars are perhaps the most assessed and measured of all undergraduate curricular interventions (Barefoot & Gardner, 1998; Cuseo, 2000). The overwhelming majority of first-year seminar research has shown that these courses positively affect retention, grade point average, number of credit hours attempted and completed, graduation rates, student involvement in campus activities, and student activities and perceptions of higher education, as well as faculty development and methods of instruction (Barefoot, 1993; Barefoot et al, 1998)” (p. 287-288).

In more recent years, first-year seminar courses have begun to shift, according to Greenfield, et al. in *Designing and Sustaining Successful First-Year Programs* (2013) into “a more central position within the academic side of undergraduate operations. Indicators of this shift include a move toward ‘more traditional academic content’ in first-year seminars to complement or replace life-skills topics, offering the course for academic credit, use of letter grading, and involvement of tenured and tenure-track faculty in the administration and instruction of the course (Hunter & Linder, 2005, p. 281). In addition, the flexibility of these courses as a first-year intervention is being more readily accepted” (Greenfield et al., 2013, p. 91).
Overall, no matter which path a college decides to take, the outcome of having first-year programs for students is better retention rates for the institution. “If we can prepare first-year students, and equip them with what they need to know about the university, they’ll have a better chance of success” (Kuh, 2005, p. 56). This is a recurring theme across the gamut of authors, researchers, and practitioners. It is agreed that this should be a comprehensive program, not just a couple of disconnected initiatives to arrive at the retention and persistence goals that colleges are looking for. This means remembering that it is about the first year, not just the first weeks or months. In the end, there is always room for improvement, and as George Kuh concludes in Student Success in College, “although DEEP [Documenting Effective Educational Practice] schools are doing many things right according to their higher-than-predicted engagement and graduation indicators, they can become even better. And so can many other institutions” (Kuh, 2005, p. 317). In order to continue the powerful impact that first-year programs have on retention, institutions need to continue to seek ways to keep these programs updated and meeting the changing needs of the next generation of students entering higher education.

**Generation Z Students.** The majority of students entering college currently are known either as Generation Z or the iGeneration. Though there are a few non-traditional students entering Trinity as full-time undergraduates and Trinity Christian College does not have specific data on how many students would fall into this category, the clear majority of first-year students fall into the Generation Z criteria. Though opinions differ somewhat, most researchers agree that these students were born between 1995 and 2010 (though some place the earlier date closer to 1993), though there is probably about a five-year transition period where Millennials and Generation Z students intermingle. Despite the fact that higher education has worked with these students for only about four years and the transition from one generation to another is a fluid
process, there have already been some extensive studies done to learn about these students and how they present themselves in the classroom.

As with any look at a generation of people, there is going to be a lot of generalization at first, in determining trends, attitudes, values, and needs for this group. In general, these students are bringing with them a new set of needs and foci that need to be addressed. First, it appears that students coming to college today are coming for the purpose of being well-off financially, rather than for developing a meaningful philosophy of life. For them, college is a stress-filled four years plagued by figuring out how to pay back their crippling debt after graduation. Kerry Cronin (Boston College), at the NetVUE Regional Conference at Benedictine University (2017, October), shared highlights from the Fall 2016 American College Health Association’s National College Health Assessment, which is a ”national research survey organized by the American College Health Association (ACHA) to assist college health service providers, health educators, counselors, and administrators in collecting data about their students’ habits, behaviors, and perceptions on the most prevalent health topics” (p. 2). In the 2016 survey, students were asked about the “following factors affecting their individual academic performance, defined as: received a lower grade on an exam, or an important project; received a lower grade in the course; received an incomplete or dropped the course; or experienced a significant disruption in thesis, dissertation, research, or practicum work” (p. 5) and their responses were startling. The top areas that affected their academic performance were listed as Stress (34.4%), Anxiety (26.5%), Sleep Difficulties (22.4%), and Depression (16.4%). They are more affected by Cold/flu/Sore throat (14.3%) than by alcohol or drug use combined (4.8%). Concern for a troubled friend or family member was equal to how participation in extracurricular activities (both 10.6%) affected their academic performance. In the mental health set of questions, students reported that 30% felt
hopeless in the past 30 days, 56% felt overwhelmed in the past two weeks, 70% felt overwhelmed in the past 30 days, and 70% felt emotionally and physically exhausted in the past 30 days (p. 13-14). They are driven by FOMO (fear of missing out) and often curate different social media accounts as a performance for different audiences (one for parents, one for everyone that only contains filtered and edited pictures of a great life, and a secret one for the truth that only a very small group of people are allowed to see).

Kerry Cronin (2017) went on to report that for these students, their GPA does not begin to tell the story of how accomplished they are, as 87% reported that they have a B average or higher. They do not know what they are truly good or bad at, as they have been continually told that they are good at everything. This group is incredibly intense, anxious, depressed, overwhelmed, lonely, and sad. Cronin (2017) stated that they have a huge fear of failure, fear awkwardness and awkward situations, and have been “organizationalized” their whole lives, a busyness that our campus cultures actually celebrate and encourage as we push involvement, engagement, and résumé building activities. They are risk averse, physically safer but less happy than previous generations, more tolerant of other beliefs and lifestyles, are never alone as they carry their whole tribe with them on their phone, and have always depended heavily on their parents intervening and smoothing the way for them. Cronin (2017), in her research at Boston College and work with these students, argues that what they are looking for is authenticity and coaching. They want to know honestly what they are and are not good at, and do not tolerate inauthenticity or hypocrisy. After lifetimes of working with coaches, they are still looking to be coached and have someone listen to their stories.

The comprehensive study done by Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace (2016) resulting in the book Generation Z Goes to College states that along with the incredible challenges for
social interaction and mental health among these students, it appears that they are also incredibly loyal (85% self-identify as loyal) and display incredible empathy for those around them (p. 8). They describe themselves as compassionate, thoughtful, open-minded, responsible, and determined. They are ambitious and motivated, though that is often fueled by “not wanting to let others down, advocating for something they believe, making a difference for someone else, having the opportunity for advancement, and earning credit toward something” (p. 15).

Other research literature collaborates the work of Cronin (2017) and the Generation Z students in general. Chun, et al. from the University of Hawaii (2016) found that this group of students is “the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in U.S. history with 61% being white, 19% Hispanic, 14% black, and 5% Asian…the percentage of minorities in our society has been increasing over time from 32.9% in 2004 to 37.9% in 2014” (p. 3). Williams (2015) indicated that among Generation Z young people, the number of biracial children rose 134% between 2000 and 2010. The Hispanic population grew at 4 times the rate of the total population (p. 4).

They “have grown up amid the economic decline in world markets that marks the Great Recession. They have experienced a post 9/11 world with reports of on-going terrorist attacks. They have grown up in an environment where school violence of a horrific scale is now not an uncommon phenomenon” (Chun, et al., p. 4). Rothman (2014) adds that these students have never lived without the knowledge of global recession, global warming issues, rise of mobile devices, and cloud computing. They experienced Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy (and now Harvey and Irma), the 9/11 attacks on America, and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They come from smaller families with older parents who have traditional values and mothers who work outside the home. Their lives have been “tightly scheduled, monitored, and bubble-wrapped
Elmore (2017) states that these students have only known a world of terrorism, recession, racial unrest, corporate scandals, under-employment and uncertainty. Williams (2015) believes that “Generation Z tends to be the product of Generation X, a relatively small, jaded generation that came of age in the post-Watergate, post-Vietnam funk of the 1970s, when horizons seemed limited. Those former latchkey kids, who grew up on Nirvana records and slasher movies, have tried to give their children the safe, secure childhood that they never had, said Neil Howe, an economist” (p. 5). This means that their parents have always emphasized safety and protection, but maybe more telling is how much Generation Z resembles their grandparents and great-grandparents. “Those children of the late 1920s through the early ‘40s, members of the so-called Silent Generation were shaped by war and the Depression and grew up to be the diligent, go-along-to-get-along careerists of the ‘50s and ‘60s” (Williams, 2015, p. 6). With these parallels, the future of Generation Z should be a bright one, as the Silent Generation was the most career-focused and richest generation in history.

As far as technology, Generation Z students reach for a smart phone or digital device every seven minutes. They have only known a world of portable devices, multi-tasking, social media, multiple personas and a complex world where they are more about coping and hoping (p. 1). Mohr and Mohr (2017) call them the most diverse generation yet, are information curators, and rather than holding the “me-centric” spirit attributed by some to Millennials, the Z Generation is considered more “we-centric” (p. 86) Turner (2015) also asserts that excessive amounts of time spent playing video games attribute to an inability to manage frustration, fear, and uneasiness, and to declining grades, which suggests that youth experiencing these symptoms might be missing out on opportunities to learn coping skills for navigating or tolerating difficult situations. “Experiencing these difficulties on a continuous basis, particularly with excessive
video gaming, could lead to problems in fulfilling the tasks of love, work, and friendship” (Turner, 2015, p. 108).

Generation Z is huge, but how huge seems to vary according to various researchers and polls. Williams (2015) notes, “at approximately 60 million, native born American members of Generation Z outnumber their endlessly dissected millennial older siblings by nearly one million, according to census data compiled by Susan WeberStoger, a demographer at Queens College” (p. 3). According to William Strauss and Neil Howe (1991), creators of the “Strauss-Howe generational theory,” this generation was initially titled Post-Millennial by the US Dept. of Health and Human Services and Pew Research, in statistics published in 2016 showing the relative sizes and dates of the generations. “The same sources showed that as of April 2016, the Millennial generation surpassed the population of Baby Boomers in the USA (77 million vs. 76 million in 2015 data), with the Post-Millennials ahead of even the Millennials in another Health and Human Services survey (69 million vs. 66 million)” (p. 1). In 2015, according to Strauss and Howe, Generation Z comprised the largest portion of the U.S. population, at nearly 26%, edging out Millennials (currently at 24.5% of the population). According to Forbes writer Kathryn Dill (2015), in “2015 Generation Z made up 25% of the U.S. population, making them a larger cohort than the Baby Boomers or Millennials” (n.p.). With these numbers, Rothman (2014) states that these students “will flood the workforce like a tsunami by the year 2020, which is the same time that Baby Boomers will retire in large numbers” (p. 1). Beloit College’s Mindset List for the Class of 2021 (2017) indicates that once on campus, they will find that college syllabi, replete with policies about disability, non-discrimination, and learning goals, might be longer than some of their reading assignments. From what is evident already, this group of students may be the most diverse ever, and will be almost impossible to aggregate. All
of this points to the question of how to teach these Generation Z students in a first-year seminar or classroom, and the problems that need to be addressed in creating curriculum that meets their needs.

*Student Identity Development.* Based on personal observation of the types of students who choose to enroll at Trinity Christian College, and perhaps in other small, similar, liberal-arts institutions, there are four main student development theories that can most usefully come into play when thinking about creating a new course to meet the needs of incoming and future students: social identity development, colorblindness and racial identity development, sexual identity development, and faith development.

Students matriculating at Trinity Christian College come from a very diverse and disparate range of backgrounds, meaning that when they enter college, students from both extremes are worlds apart and need to be taught how to talk to each other, learn from each other, and celebrate difference as an asset rather than a division. According to Patton, et al. (2016) in *Student Development in College*, social identity development “is the process by which people come to understand their social identities (ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, and others) and how these identities affect other aspects of their lives…what makes these aspects of identity ‘social’ is that other people, as well as the individual involved, evaluate a person and make judgments based on these identities” (p. 67). Especially in the first year of college, the fact that students are thinking about these things on so many levels, according to the text (individual, relational, collective, and material), for perhaps the first time, it behooves us to learn and understand “how individuals and groups make meaning of the world they occupy…which makes social constructivism a worldview and method appropriate to consider these ideas” (p. 75). Most importantly, as the socio-economic gap is widening between students on this campus, the college
must find ways to help facilitate conversations about a topic that is probably harder to talk about even than race or ethnicity, mainly because we have not practiced as much yet.

The second key area of student identity that needs to be addressed is the difference between colorblindness and true understanding of ethnic and racial diversity. The idea of "colorblindness" must be challenged because when colorblindness is the dominant narrative it "renders the experiences of people of color invisible" (Patton, et al., 2016, p. 94). For students at this particular college, there is a strong divide between those who lived the first 18 years of their lives in primarily minority or highly diverse settings in Chicago or surrounding suburbs and the students who come from homogenous communities (ethnically, racially, and religiously) and have never lived with or engaged with students of color. Many of these White students have not been faced with questions of privilege or White identity, and thus would prefer to believe that colorblindness is an appropriate way of dealing with racial identity. While research indicates that Generation Z students are the most ethnically and racially diverse generation, and often have always known people or friends from different races, the population of Trinity Christian College does not fit that aggregate, as many students from the religious backgrounds represented live in homogenous pockets and do not come with this experience. Therefore, it is imperative that Trinity Christian College, especially in the first-year programs, help students learn about racial and ethnic identity and how they can work through the necessary stages of development.

Thirdly, Trinity Christian College, like many other colleges, is facing a growing need to focus on gender identity development. Due to the religious backgrounds of many students, thinking about gender or sexual identity is often ignored and students who are questioning their identity in this way often do so in fear and for the first time at college. In this way, these students often are behind their peers in their sexual and gender identity development, meaning
that there is more impetus on the college to help guide students through this process. It is important not to forget that “questioning and experimenting can also be done by heterosexual individuals who are exploring societal, cultural, and family norms about heterosexuality, such as the preferred or sanctioned race, ethnicity, religion, social class, or physical abilities of the individuals with whom they are expected to partner. Active exploration of individual sexual identity is therefore ‘inclusive and flexible enough to account for between and within-group differences exhibited by same-sex and other-sex-oriented individuals” (Patton et al, 2016, p. 164). Even this type of development and questioning is often stifled in many of the religiously conservative families that students are coming from. Therefore, a first-year program needs to be prepared and able to guide students through these conversations and issues at Trinity Christian College.

In addition, any first-year program at Trinity Christian College in particular needs to take into consideration ways to support students in their faith identity development. While this is a private Christian college, not all students attending hold to a Christian faith, or even any faith. However, according to a study by Northeastern University in 2014, close to “78% of Generation Z says they believe in God” (Seemiller & Grace, 2016, p. 43). In addition, a far smaller percentage report that they participate in organized religion, as “Organized religion is often aligned with conservative political views, especially around social issues. Given that we found the vast majority of Generation Z students are liberal or moderate in their views on social issues, it would not be unexpected if Generation Z opts out of organized religion to reconcile their faith and social beliefs” (Seemiller & Grace, 2016, p. 43). In light of this trend, even Christian colleges need to be cognizant of ways to help first-year students reconcile their faith with a maturing understanding of how to practice and develop that faith. In particular, the ideas
presented by Sharon Daloz Parks (2000) in her book, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith*. For Parks, faith development is a journey of transformation, a metaphor that needs to be expanded to encompass all people, and specifically young adults. Her understanding of a young adult’s desire for meaning making is “not so much a matter of leaving home as it is undergoing a series of transformations in the meaning of home. We grow and become both by letting go and holding on, leaving and staying, journeying and abiding—whether we are speaking geographically, socially, intellectually, emotionally, or spiritually” (p. 51). Therefore, the metaphor of journey is what drives her theory, but not of journeying alone. The act and process of mentoring is about accompanying young people on this journey to help them discover their meaning and individual, active faith.

Finally, it appears that while in the past first-year college students were often seen as entering college in what Baxter Magolda (1992) labeled *transitional knowing* in that they acknowledge that “some knowledge is uncertain” and they would “expect instructors to go beyond merely supplying information to facilitate an understanding and application of knowledge” (Patton, et al., 2016, p. 363), it is becoming apparent that many Generation Z students entering college are not quite at this level of self-authorship. This is seen by the way many Generation Z student fear failure more than anything else, so rather than accepting uncertainty and working to understand and apply information on their own, they often seek to find exactly what a professor is ‘looking for’ in order to maintain the levels of performance they (and culture) have put upon themselves. This puts an even greater burden on first-year programs and college educators to help students work through even more levels of identity development than might have been necessary in the past.
**Generation Z in the Classroom**

*Area 1: Relevance Problem.* The first area to look at is that Generation Z students are decidedly different in the classroom than previous Millennial students. What has come to the surface in research about this generation is that they need relevance and connection in the classroom. Generation Z students are not going to accept learning something for learning’s sake, but will demand an understanding of why it is important and how it fits in with their greater understanding of life.

Chun, et al. (2016), in the research done at the University of Hawaii in how to teach this generation, discovered that teaching “must move beyond the one-way depositing of knowledge and the routine of individual work, to collaborating with faculty and working and connecting with learners of shared interests, locally and globally. This is what motivates and engages them in learning. This works well because this generation of students feels a responsibility to take action, remedy the problems, and effect social change” (p. 9). These students focus on making a difference and “are more interested and invested in subjects and actions that they feel can immediately impact their communities” (p. 4). To reach them in the classroom, faculty need to demonstrate how the knowledge they are learning will transfer into their post-college life and how they can use it to improve and change the world.

In addition, research by Wotapka (2017) in how to teach Generation Z students revealed the need for relevance for these students. Keep in mind that “Gen Z grew up with even busier schedules than Millennials did, so they like to maximize what little spare time they have. For that reason, explain upfront why a lesson is needed and how it can be applied in the real world” (p. 2). If that is done, Wotapka states, these students are more likely to be more diligent, less chatty than Millennial students, and a passionate group that works together to solve issues (p. 1).
Thirdly, the comprehensive study by Seemiller and Grace (2016) demonstrates that relevance and, like Cronin (2017) argued, authenticity, make all the difference in getting Generation Z students to engage in the classroom. Everything has to have meaning beyond the surface for these students, and they want to “blend their passion for particular issues with their conceptualization of work” (p. 215). They have grown up in a world of problems, so they want to see how what they are learning can help them solve those problems in the world.

Generation Z students are realistic problem solvers who appreciate honesty and authenticity from those who lead them. They do not like to be protected from problems or to have them sugar-coated. They would rather face an issue head-on and be part of the solution. With their problem-solving nature and desire to be consulted in decision making, it is a win-win scenario for those working with Generation Z students to be transparent and involving them in addressing issues. Not only can this be empowering for the students, it might result in a great solution. (Seemiller & Grace, 2016, p. 193-194)

In addition, relevance must be present in experiential learning, co-curricular activities, service-learning, and off campus programs. Nearly “two-thirds of Generation Z students believe that colleges should offer courses on how to start a business” (p. 217), as they see the current gig and entrepreneurial economy relevant to their future, no matter what subject is their major.

**Area 2: Learning Style Problem.** This generation, also known as the iGeneration for having lived with smart phones their entire lives, has a learning style that is decidedly different than the learning styles that higher educators have assumed in their pedagogy for hundreds of years. Due to their focus on technology and a communication style that is often broken into 7-second segments (Vine videos and InstaStories), these students are highly visual, have short attention spans, and firmly believe in the fallacy of multitasking.
Rothman (2014) describes this generation as a “tsunami” due to the way this wave of employees is going to flood the market when the Baby Boomers all begin to retire around 2020 (though, according to Phil Gardner of the Collegiate Employment Research Institute out of Michigan State, in his 2017-2018 Recruiting Trends Presentation, this date is being pushed later and later). Rothman’s research has found that “because their use of technology has developed the visual ability portion of their brains, visual forms of learning are more effective for these learners…the fast-paced multimedia has affected the ability of these learners to focus and analyze complex information” (p. 1). For this group of students, the visual cortex is far more developed, making visual forms of learning more effective and the traditional methods of lecture and discussion in higher education classrooms both disliked and ineffective by this generation. In fact, Rothman argues that current students have the ability to pay attention for only seven to ten minutes at a time. Rothman demonstrates that despite what these students think, the human brain has a limited ability to multitask, and she calls the act of switching tasks “Acquired Attention Deficit Disorder” and says that while these students are better than previous generations, there is a significant price to pay in trying to learn this way (p. 2).

In addition, how Generation Z students encounter homework is a significant shift from the past. Students often use a method called “Keyword Spotting” to locate needed information in a text, again a byproduct of an almost constant digital existence for them. “When learners are shown online text and content, they generally want to look at color images and read less than 20% of the text. That calculates to 4.4 seconds for every 100 words on the page. Forty-three percent of teenagers want to learn on the Internet and not use paper-based materials. Thirty-eight percent prefer blended learning and 16% prefer using books to learn” (Rothman, 2014, p. 3). This makes these students more kinesthetic, experiential, and hands-on learners who prefer to
learn by doing rather than being told what to do or by reading text. “Learning is not a spectator sport for them” (Rothman, 2014, p. 3).

Rothman (2014) presents some guidelines for effectively teaching this generation, and it means that faculty need to accept a significant shift in the way learning happens in a classroom if they want to be effective instructors. She argues that Gen Z will learn more effectively if they are left to solve problems and find solutions by trial and error (p. 4), which ties in with their need for relevance in their education. Rothman recommends having students work in teams or small groups to allow them to express their opinions openly. “Cheating and hacking are considered brilliant in Gen Z’s world, but not in education” (Rothman, 2014, p. 4), so they must learn to discover, curate, and manage information. Working in small groups can help them focus on critical thinking and problem solving instead of memorizing information.

The research of Wotapka (2017) supports Rothman’s project-driven and group work style of instruction for this generation. He states, “give the Gen Zs a project, a goal and end and set them free to do it…start class with a 10-minute conversation followed by a task and then another 10-minute conversation” (p. 1). He asserts that they will communicate best in images, so it is important to shape the class assessments around these sorts of items: charts, graphics, different text, and different types of media.

Mohr and Mohr (2017) also identified some of the changes in learning style with Generation Z students, and they noted that “most active university faculty are Baby Boomers and Generation-Xers (a.k.a. Busters) who are not teaching primarily Gen-Y and Z undergraduate students” (p. 84-85). This creates a gap in terms of an aging faculty who are growing more and more distant from the students they are teaching, especially in their teaching style. Faculty are often accused of being a “sage on the stage” in transmitting specific knowledge about their
subject area to students. However, this style of teaching does not appeal to Generation Z students, who want to be change-agents and believe in making a difference, but may need guidance and options when asked to work with others (p. 87). Faculty can no longer expect that students have the skills to work in group settings, even though the faculty may want the students to work that way. Mohr and Mohr (2017) offer some specific ideas for the classroom in their research summary. 1) Give choices and a sense of freedom if possible, but be willing to provide examples and give guidance. 2) Explain how assignments can help students make a difference in their lives and the communities. 3) Be more purposeful in assigning group tasks (collaborating online before meeting in person might help students prepare for strong group participation). 4) Model how to analyze, summarize, and synthesize the content (consider having students search for appropriate sites and sources for information as a first step and then follow up with comparing the sites to determine which two provide the most reliable and unbiased information) rather than assume they know how to do it (p. 90-91).

Area 3: Information Problem. Even though Generation Z is the most digitally connected generation ever, there is a disconnect between gathering information and knowing how to use that information in an academic setting for these students. In fact, recently NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers) identified “digital technology” as one of the eight competencies that employers indicate are necessary for college graduate to be successfully prepared for the world of work. Unfortunately, employers often note that students are often unprepared in this competency when they graduate from college.

Mohr and Mohr (2017) identified that many students “feel overwhelmed by the availability of information and need help in evaluating it (p. 87-88). This supports the research
done at the University of Hawaii by Chun, et al. (2016) that asked students where they went for their information. They discovered that:

77% of participants use the Internet, 30% use applications, and only 23% use the library.

Not surprisingly, 38% of students feel it is very important to use technology to complete class work, while another 41% responded it is somewhat important. Only 19% of the 280 students surveyed indicated they had no preference or that technology was not important for completing class work, and 3% did not answer the question. Additionally, 48% responded it is somewhat important for instructors to use various technologies to effectively teach, with another 32% indicating it is very important. (p. 5)

Overall, this group of researchers found that 31% of respondents said that technology or technology-related tools would enhance their learning in the classroom. On the other hand, many of these students mentioned that they valued teacher-student engagement, teachers who had command over their subject areas, and interactive teaching styles (p. 5). Responses also indicated that 36% of respondents inferred that active participation was preferred over passive listening/lectures (p. 6). The summary of their research concluded that “this generation takes for granted the amount of data they have access to and the speed at which they can get it – which is a natural part of their lives. Gen Zers think little about how the search engines can sort through petabytes of information in just a few seconds” (p. 12).

Most of the research about Generation Z and how they gather and use information comes from scholars, Murray and Perez (2014), from Kennesaw State University. In their early research, Perez and Murray (2010) discovered that “a gap is emerging between cursory, functional use and deeper, analytical understanding of computing technologies” (p. 127). They found that in 2009, less than half of students in a survey reported that the IT skills they learned in
their courses had adequately prepared them for the workplace, and overall determined that IT use does not equate to IT competence (p. 128). According to the authors, “technological literacy is the capability to use, understand, and evaluate technology as well as to apply technological concepts and processes to solve problems and reach one’s goals” (Perez and Murray, 2010, p. 128), but today’s students need to become adept at ‘21st century skills,’ which include using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to gather and assess information, collaborate, innovate, think critically, and solve problems (p. 129). According to this research, a computer literate student should be able to use a computer to conduct research and solve problems related to the student’s major discipline. In this regard, computer literacy has been associated with application literacy – the ability to use specific software applications such as word processing, spreadsheet or presentation software (p. 130). Often called the 4th Literacy, ICT has become a growing deficiency in our current generation of students.

In later research, Murray and Perez (2014) built on their earlier ideas, indicating that colleges and universities have not kept up with teaching students the skills they need for ICT success, as it is either taken for granted or assumed that it is at an adequate level for student need. They conducted their research in a senior-level capstone course, composed of students from all majors and given over four concurrent semesters. The participants were 65.22% female, 28.99% male, and 5.8% unreported, though their results were only given in the aggregate and not differentiated by gender. However, they argue that “digital literacy is both inseparable from the liberal arts of today and fundamental to modern reading, writing and arithmetic” (Murray & Perez, 2014, p. 86). Murray and Perez (2014) assert that this is not just about functional literacy, but problem-solving, creativity, and generativity: students who are not digitally literate are less effective in their studies and less employable (p. 88). Since they are considered digital natives,
many students entering the university today have a high level of exposure to digital technologies and media. “However, they are not prepared to cross the bridge between personal and academic use of technology. As academic knowhow is gained through formal education, so too much technological prowess be gained through structured learning experiences” (Murray & Perez, 2014, p. 88).

Summary

Research indicates that the students entering college today are a decidedly different group, overall, from their Millennial predecessors. At Trinity Christian College, a first-year seminar program, while unique and seeming efficacious enough to help ensure incredible retention and persistence numbers, that is 15 years old and relatively unchanged may not be working in a way that is most beneficial to the learning styles, needs, and values of current students. It is time for Trinity Christian College to consider what might be lacking in the current FYF 101 course, look at if students feel that the course is meeting their needs in terms of their college transition, and discover what pedagogy, methodology, or content changes are needed to best help Generation Z students and beyond in their successful college transition and persistence to graduation.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to provide institution-specific research at Trinity Christian College, recommendations to help similar small institutions, and to understand the perceived needs as well as the academic transition requirements for Generation Z students. With the transition into college the first major obstacle for many students, and the fact that current Generation Z students struggle with already high levels of anxiety and stress due to the insulated and protected life many of them lived for their first 18 years, it is crucial that colleges approach helping students effectively transition into college not in a way that relies on the past tried-and-true methods, but in a way that addressed the specific needs and obstacles for these students and seeks to create programs that work with students to create a smooth and successful transition into college. This research seeks to discover, based on research on Generation Z and on Generation Z students’ own perceptions, what their needs are and how they can be incorporated into a first-year seminar that works for them. This study does this through data collected at Trinity Christian College in the spring of 2016 using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), as well as a project-specific survey given to all sophomore, junior, and senior Trinity Christian College students who entered the college as first-year students and participated in the current FYF program.

The research questions guiding the project are:

1. To what extent did students, who are members of Generation Z, perceive that they were prepared for the academic expectations of college in their first year?
2. How well, based on student perception, did the content of First-Year Forum 101 prepare Generation Z students for academic success and transition into college life at Trinity Christian College?

3. Did the content of First-Year Forum 101, based on student perception, effectively help prepare Generation Z students for their transition into college and academic success at Trinity Christian College?

4. What elements do students feel are necessary to add or subtract from the First-Year Forum 101’s curriculum that will be more effective in helping Generation Z students’ transition into Trinity Christian College?

Findings from this research are intended to be used as recommendations for the creation (or revision) of a new First-Year Seminar curriculum at Trinity Christian College which meets the needs of these students based on what they report are concepts or skills that they were unprepared for when entering college. The intent of the study is to discover if the current FYF 101 course is preparing students for the academic rigor of college and if the topics covered in the course are the appropriate topics to be covered for this generation of learners. Findings will not only inform Trinity Christian College about the preparedness of the Generation Z population and what their academic and transitional needs are, but also help create a place to address those gaps in other similar institutions undergoing a seminar re-design or re-evaluation.

Setting

The study took place at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois, a Christian, private, liberal arts college about twenty miles south of Chicago. It was chosen because the researcher, Emily Bosscher, is the current Director of the First-Year Experience Office at Trinity. Trinity Christian College has an enrollment of approximately 1200 students, including those in
the Adult Studies and Graduate programs. The current first-year seminar at Trinity, called First Year Forum (FYF 101), is mandatory for all freshman students in their first semester of college. In the past few years, first-year enrollment has been anywhere between 150 and 200 students, with recent years seeing that number rise due to deliberate changes in recruiting practices by the college. FYF 101 is a one-credit, pass-fail course that takes place almost entirely in the five days before the start of the semester.

The FYF 101 course is 15 years old, and has changed very little since its inception. The most significant changes have been losing a full day to the schedule while having events and content added, making the five days packed almost too full for students to have time to process and take in what they are being asked to learn during the course. The course begins on a Friday evening after the students move in during the day. After saying farewell to their parents, students join their small-group cohort and begin meetings, followed by a welcoming worship service that night. Saturday covers the topic of Christian worldview, followed by a trip into Chicago to illustrate what they learned. Sunday focuses on establishing patterns of worship while at college by having students visit local churches. Monday is a full day of addressing many topics: StrengthsFinder assessments, Title IX training, diversity conversations, defining a Liberal Arts education, time management, and how to communicate appropriately with professors through email. Tuesday, a half day, contains an all-class service project in a local community center. After all of this, every night is filled with planned activities and programming to help students adjust to life on campus and meet each other.

All of this happens before the semester begins. Once that happens, there is one follow-up meeting with the cohort, as well as a lecture series in the first three weeks of classes that students are required to attend. Formal mentoring from the faculty and student mentors, however, ends
by the second full week of classes in the fall semester. While the desire is for the course to be academically vigorous, there are not a lot of ways to assess students in such a short amount of time. Students are required to send in an Introductory Essay a week before they arrive on campus, to introduce themselves to their faculty mentor and get them thinking about the themes and topics of the course (Appendix A). They then write a final paper of reflection on the course (Appendix B). Other than these papers, the only other assessments of the course are a short response to the service project, a meeting with their academic advisor, and participation credit.

Despite that after 15 years, it is time for this course to be revised and rethought for a new generation of students, it does currently employ some best practices from first-year seminar pedagogy. High Impact Practices, as defined by the Association of American Colleges and Universities webpage (2018), are “teaching and learning practices [that have] been widely tested and have been shown to be beneficial for college students from many backgrounds, especially historically underserved students, who often do not have equitable access to high-impact learning.” Of the ten High Impact Practices (HIPs), Trinity currently employs seven, including having First-Year Experiences, Collaborative Assignments and Projects, Undergraduate Research, Diversity/Global Learning, Service Learning, Internships, and Capstone Courses and Projects. Employing these HIPs has made the program successful in the past, and these practices do not need to be thrown out, merely reimagined as to where and how they are used to best serve Generation Z students.

Organizational Overview

Trinity Christian College opened its doors in 1959. The idea of the college began in 1952 when a group of twenty- and thirty-year-old Chicago businessmen and entrepreneurs (a couple of ministers, a couple of doctors, a couple of chemists, a lawyer, and the owner of a garbage
business) got together to envision a Christian junior college in the Chicago area. Donald Sinnema (2009), in his book, *If We Begin with Christ*, outlines the development of the college from the initial idea, the purchase of the Navajo Hills Golf and Country Club (where the first classes were held in the clubhouse, which still stands in the center of the college today), to the hiring of a controversial philosophy professor (Dr. Calvin Seerveld) whose ideas still shape the direction of the philosophy of education on campus today. And from the beginning, Trinity carved its own way in the Reformed Christian community by admitting, from the very beginning, non-Reformed students to the college. In addition, it established student conduct codes unusual to Christian colleges at the time, assuming that “students were responsible adults who did not need to be policed” (Sinnema, 2009, p. 133). The doors opened with a student body of 37 freshmen. “Of this number 34 were full-time and 3 were part-time; 21 were male and 16 were female; 34 were from the Chicagoland area and 3 were from out of state – one each from Wisconsin, Iowa, and South Dakota. All students commuted to campus. Most lived at home and carpooled together; those from out of state boarded with local families” (Sinnema, 2009, p. 146). From a rather unconventional beginning and imagined by unconventional dreamers, Trinity has grown into a school which continues to defy the norms of Reformed education. It still welcomes non-Reformed believing students, including a good number of Muslim, atheist, and other religions. In the words of Dr. Calvin Seerveld from September 1960, as quoted in Don Sinnema’s (2009) book,

> Trinity Christian College does not specialize in turning out engineers, businessmen and schoolteachers; it is not geared to the student’s learning a trade, making money or becoming stopgap aid to primary education; Trinity does not aim at being ‘practical.’ If this is hard to understand, it is because it is hard to understand that man does not live by
bread alone. While technically trained engineers, business administrators and school teachers will incidentally be coming out of Trinity, that is not what we are after, that is not for what Trinity was established…to that collegiate activity, the program of Trinity, is not ‘practical’ does not mean it is impractical any more than not to live by bread alone means you must live without bread. The point is simply this: at Trinity Christian College you do not learn to bake bread, however useful and expedient and proper learning to bake and make your daily bread may be…The stand of Trinity Christian College is rather this: we study everything because man does live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, and since God has spoken and speaks here, there, and everywhere in the world and its development, his sustained creation, it is man’s privilege, it is God’s command to those who are qualified, to search through all the areas of creation and all the varied aspects of human activity – nothing of God’s playground is off limits – it is our task to seek out everywhere the wonders of God Almighty’s work and enjoy the discoveries with childlike surprise day in and day out forever. (p. 183-184)

This bigger picture of learning and the desire to continue to push the limits of understanding and learning still shapes the curriculum and curriculum decisions on campus today.

Trinity Christian College began its first-year program officially in the Fall of 2002, with a pilot program described in the minutes of the Faculty Association on December 11, 2001, as “the First Year Forum, giving one credit hour for a one-week course offered mostly during new student orientation week.” As the research questions and problems addressed in this thesis relate directly to Trinity Christian College’s program, a brief history of the program is in order.

The University of South Carolina’s groundbreaking University 101 (UNIV 101) program began in the early 1970s, and the 1980s and 90s saw the widespread growth of first-year
programs and seminars in the United States. This growth was a reaction to lowered enrollment due to the recession in the 1980s, and due to the research and promotional work of practitioners like John Gardner, George Kuh, and Betsy Barefoot. As Hunter and Linder (2005) address in their chapter “First-Year Seminars” from *Challenging & Supporting the First-Year Student*, since about 1989 and the publication of *The Freshman Year Experience*, first-year seminars took off in type and the amount of credit offered.

Since national data were first collected in 1988, the number of institutions offering first-year seminars has shown a gradual increase (from 68 percent in 1988 to 74 percent in 2000) … Recent history of first-year seminars has shown a gradual shift to more traditional academic content. In the early 1990s, almost three-fourths of seminars emphasized extended orientation or college survival material. The most recent national survey saw this percentage decline to approximately 62 percent, while the number of seminars focused on academic topics has increased. (p. 280-281)

However, as is often the case for small, liberal arts colleges, the idea of a first-year program came late to Trinity Christian College, not appearing on the scene until 2000. According to Becky Starkenburg, current Vice-President of Student Life and former Coordinator of the First Year Experience, even as recently as in 2008 when she arrived on campus, she thought “they [Trinity] are old fashioned and haven’t figured out how to be a real college yet” (personal communication, October 23, 2017). Even in the first decade of the century, Trinity tried to rely on a previous familial model of campus and hadn’t fully invested in tested practices to help shape student success and retention.

In the fall of 2000, then Provost Mark Ward saw a need for something to help with retention on campus. The Student Life Division was minimal at the time, with just a Dean of
Students and Resident Directors running all of the student affairs side of campus. The First Year Forum (FYF 101) concept was his brainchild, and he ran it with one of the Resident Directors at the time. Prior to the decision of the Faculty Association to approve this as a course, Dr. Ward ran a focus-group program to beta test the material, and used student input to help shape the curriculum. According to Rachel Westerveld (personal communication, October 22, 2017), in the fall of 2000 when she was a freshman, a full-year test course was offered for one credit. Meeting once a month for the full year, the course took a worldview, local, and cultural focus. Rachel remembers engaging in many cultural activities such as visiting nearby Lake Katherine (a preserve and ecological center), to the Michigan City lighthouse, to hear Sister Hazel at House of Blues in Chicago, and to tour an Hispanic neighborhood on Chicago’s South side. While she doesn’t remember the significance of every event, she knows that it culminated in a worldview project. “I remember our big project was a mosaic made from photos we took throughout the class. Each group was given a Polaroid camera that took little stickers for pictures to make this project” (R. Westerveld, personal communication, October 22, 2017). It appears that this group of students then helped with orientation the next year (2001-2002) for the pilot run of the FYF 101 course that fall. Becky Starkenburg attests that the original intent was to run a comprehensive full-year support program, but once the wheels hit the ground, there was not enough support between Dr. Ward and Shannon Schaans, the RD helping for about 30 hours a week, to keep it going at that level (personal communication, October 23, 2017).

The course was established to fulfill three learning goals, as found in the document “Designing the FYF Course for Significant Learning”: That students will be enfolded into an initial community of scholarship that contributes to active engagement; That students will be introduced to a Biblical vision of the world and their role, as college students, in that world; and
That students will be challenged to be proactive in using their Trinity years in service to God and his world. The course was built on the theme of “Joining the Journey” and designed to help first-year students find the path of learning, as shaped by themes from Psalm 16 and Isaiah 42. The course content was divided into five clear sections (Appendix C), which started with summer readings and assignments for “Getting ready for the journey,” followed by focusing on the three learning goals stated earlier during the FYF 101 week, and a final goal of “Jumping into the journey” during a proposed Living Learning Community pilot program in the residence halls.

The six-day program (Appendix D) focused on a balance between large group and small group sessions led by a student and faculty mentor pair. In the inaugural year, 2002, students read *The Color of Water* as a way to invite conversation and discussion about the three goals of the course (enfolding, Biblical vision, proactive in service), meeting campus leaders who came and spoke to students during these days, and in multiple ways interacted with and discussed the summer readings with classmates, student leaders, and faculty. The third goal, about being proactive in service, was emphasized through attendance at service projects. Amidst it all, faculty and student leaders led times of reflection on these experiences and taught about appropriate academic behaviors. The five full days, which allowed for students to have to time to do other social and transitional activities as well, culminated in Convocation. After classes started, a few final required events took place as follow-ups, including a trip into Chicago on Labor Day to become familiar with the city and gain a cultural experience, as well as a reflective meeting a week later to address proactive needs for the rest of the semester.

In the 15-year history of this course, it has changed both substantially and hardly at all. When Becky Starkenburg was hired in 2008 (as Coordinator, working 20 hours per week for 10 months), the start of the year was moved up one day from Thursday to Wednesday, meaning that
the timing of FYF 101 required more creativity, so the first Saturday of the fall semester was used as an official full day of the FYF 101 course to make up for the loss of the day earlier. Ms. Starkenburg’s 5-year leadership created the most change since the inception eight years earlier. She increased the role of faculty involvement, added in new topics of worldview and the StrengthsFinder Assessment. She dropped the common book and instead found shorter articles that could be more flexible from year to year, mostly because no other department on campus was willing to pick up the book and connect it to their general education course. In 2009, additional programming was added, called the SouthWest Series, to provide additional faculty and key campus people time to address topics of freedom, scholarship, and engaging in community that were not getting covered during the pre-semester hours of FYF 101. This took the place of the original idea of having a Living Learning Community, which unfortunately never gained traction. In 2009, a formal worship service was also added to the Friday night opening session, adding another hour of programming on the first day students were on campus. Ms. Starkenburg added more of a structured curriculum and training program for the faculty, added in her own version of an early alert system because the college did not have one in place, and added in the requirement that commuter students had to live on campus during the days of FYF 101, in response to a growing number of underclass commuter students and empty residence halls in 2010 (B. Starkenburg, personal communication, October 23, 2017). Ms. Starkenburg’s time also included the expansion of the position from Coordinator to Director of the First Year Experience, as the Provost had pulled out from any oversight of the program by this time and Ms. Starkenburg was running it all herself.

Additional changes were made as the years progressed, both under Ms. Starkenburg until 2013, and then under Director John Baldauff until June 2015. Subtle changes occurred: the trip
into Chicago to teach use of the public transportation and find a space to talk about worldview in a real-world setting was moved from the Saturday after classes started to the pre-semester days. The service project moved to an all-class service project rather than individual sites. The StrengthsFinder assessment was added into the curriculum and a session was added to talk about that. Additionally, a new need for Title IX education that was not present in 2002 had to be given space as well. Most shifts in timing occurred because the school changed the first day of the semester from a Thursday to a Wednesday, thus cutting off one whole day of this program. With Labor Day coming some years after three days of class and some years after eight days of class, it became a challenge to use that day for a Chicago trip, thus ensuring the need for that aspect to permanently move to the Saturday before classes began. As a shift in worship practices on campus came into play, on-campus worship time on Sunday was moved to bussing students off-campus to worship at area churches.

The space for open time and casual fellowship has been replaced over the course of 15 years with a packed schedule of students running from discussions and lectures on a wide variety of topics, without a lot of time and space in which to process what they are learning or having casual conversations with their peers about the transition to college – topped each night by highly planned events to facilitate connection and engagement with their peers. By the fall of 2017, in the third year with current director, Emily Bosscher, who is also the researcher for this study, the schedule of FYF 101 was packed full, cramming in topics that need to be covered, but without much ability to provide reflection or time to have students process the ideas and topics (Appendix E). Academic rigor was lacking, and while the program is apparently doing an outstanding job helping students transition socially, students are starting the school year after four frantic days exhausted and unprepared for what the schedule of college life was really going
to be like. In unofficial surveys collected by the Office of First Year Experience, in conjunction with the Foundations Committee (General Education), students were reporting that the program did a lot to help them meet friends and feel comfortable on campus, but very little was connecting academically. Most of the survey comments focused on their exhaustion even before school started and in response to what “helped you least as you started your freshman year,” there were some telling answers:

- “I think what helped me least was maybe the fact that the FYF class started right after I got here. It was kind of overwhelming to have a class so soon.”
- “It interrupted with my school work a lot and I thought most of the things [sic] could have been emailed to me and not gotten in the way of my school work.”
- “Not having any time to relax or just hangout around campus on our own time.”
- “The schedule was super busy. There was barely any time to get to hang out with other people besides your group.”
- “Please spread out FYF events more, it was very overwhelming.”
- “Give the students a little more down time so they can nap.”
- “Give more free time in the schedule.”

Over and over the requests came in for breathing room because the students were stressed, tired, and overwhelmed. Despite questions asking them about the academic elements, very few students commented or seemed to be aware of the academic requirements, as those were apparently overshadowed by stress in the adjustment.

Despite a plan for a Living Learning Community that was part of the initial proposal, no true Living Learning Community has been formed in the residence halls of Trinity Christian College. In addition, an early task force for the Retention Committee proposed having a full-time
staff member to help retention efforts, deepen the initial experiences for students at Trinity, and extend the FYF 101 program into the fall and spring academic semesters. Though this document is undated (Appendix F), Ms. Starkenburg believes that the proposal came about before she arrived in 2008 (personal communication, October 23, 2017). At the time, the task force felt that a full-time staff member would be valuable, as “work can be done to identify key retention issues that new students at Trinity face.” Programming can be developed and implemented throughout the semester that will continue to address these needs of the students. These programs could allow for increased involvement by new students as well as upper class student mentors. Facilitating their leadership abilities throughout the semester will “increase involvement/satisfaction of current students as well as new students” (The Relationship of the Coordinator of the First Year Experience Position to Retention Task Force Recommendations, n.d.). The proposal saw the need for continued research in cross-cultural curriculum to connect with the FYF 101 course, serve as an information hub for first-year parents and their students, and establish a parent network and comprehensive activities plan. While the position was never made full-time, it is remarkable that the part-time Director of First-Year Experience has taken on these tasks anyway, despite having to also work part-time in another area of the college. As the Foundations Committee rethinks curriculum currently, the question has been raised again about developing student leaders through a more on-going program, as recommended in the above early document, but never instated. Furthermore, in 2017, the questions about deepening the initial experiences of first-year students by extending the program into the fall and spring semesters are still being asked, and have still not been resolved on Trinity’s campus.

The first-year program at Trinity Christian College, as demonstrated here, is unique, thus providing limited opportunities for best practice comparisons. While it hits on many of the best
practices present in current research and literature, it does not fall into any one specific category or program model. It is not an orientation program only, which is usually defined similarly to Greenfield, Keup, and Gardner (2013) as a time of “facilitating the transition of new students into the institution; preparing students for the institution’s educational opportunities and student responsibilities; initiating the integration of new students into the intellectual, cultural, and social climate of the institution; and supporting the parents, partners, guardian, and children of the new student” (p. 44). Nor is it truly a first-year seminar (FYS) in the academic definition, which states that they “focus primarily on an academic theme common to all sections, but may also address critical academic skills such as writing, reasoning, and critical thinking” (Hunter & Linder, 2005, p. 279), due to lack of time to address deep reasoning or critical thinking in the allocated four days. It is also not quite an extended orientation, as it does not extend into the fall semester beyond the first week in any formal way (though some programming, such as the SouthWest Series seminar series does extend into the first three weeks). According to Hunter and Linder (2005), extended orientations, while being the most common type of first-year seminar, are often between one and three credits and focus on “student survival and success techniques” (p. 279). There is a final type that draws from all models and is perhaps the closest to FYF 101 at Trinity Christian College: the hybrid seminar. As Greenfield, Keup, and Gardner (2013) indicate,

While not a core component of Barefoot’s (1992) initial typology, the emergence of a seminar type that represents a combination of two or more of these common iterations is worthy of note. Over the past five years, the number of institutions reporting that they offer this type of combined first-year seminar, often called a hybrid seminar, has grown (Padgett & Keup, 2011; Tobolowsky & Associates, 2008). It is therefore reasonable to
assume that the first-year seminar has evolved to a point where institutions are able to
draw from various types to create a course that is most aligned with the institutional
mission and culture, as well as responsive to students’ needs. (p. 96)
This is where the program at Trinity sits: a 5-day hybrid seminar that seeks to help students
transition both socially and academically before the fall semester begins. This unique program
design presents both a challenge and an opportunity to find ways of better helping students
transition in both areas in the future.

Participants

The population participating in this study is all Trinity Christian College undergraduate
students who are sophomore, junior, or senior level during the 2017-2018 academic year. They
are all students who entered the college as first-year students and took part in the FYF 101
program their first semester. As the focus is on Generation Z, any participants who report that
they were non-traditional first-year students and were not born in 1995 or later were eliminated
from the study. Based on these criteria, the initial sample size was 409 students, and the
response rate for the survey was 45% or 185 students.

In addition, participants include all Trinity Christian College students who participated in
the Spring 2017 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) survey. This group included
213 students, 74 of which were first-year students (38%) and 139 of which were senior students
(33%) in the spring semester of 2017.

Mixed Methods Approach

The design and methodology considered for this graduate thesis project was a descriptive
study using mixed methods. Mixed methods are defined by Creswell (2014) as “collecting both
quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that
may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks…. [which] provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone” (p. 4). This method reflects the transformative worldview taken to approach this research study, in that the research intertwines a social agenda (in this case the beliefs and behaviors of Generation Z) to create a reform or change (in this case, a new first-year program that better helps them in their college transition). The data collected was done in a convergent parallel mixed method design, as it was all collected within the course of a couple of months and the quantitative and qualitative data was analyzed as a whole and at the same time.

The quantitative instrument was a survey (Appendix G) sent to students. The majority of questions were on a Likert items scale based on 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree, and 5=Strongly Disagree. Some additional questions asked students to rank answers in order of importance, and some final questions allowed for free and qualitative responses. Quantitative data were also used from the results of the NSSE assessment that Trinity Christian College administered in the Spring of 2017, and were included to discern changes in student needs as well as see how those responses compare to the Fall 2017 survey conducted specifically for this study. The Director of Institutional Research at Trinity Christian College, Kimberly Williams, confirmed that all identifiers listed in the NSSE data were removed before the college received the findings, so only de-identified data was used for this study.

In addition, there were qualitative questions built into the survey instrument, allowing students to supply ideas and share the skills that students wish they had known before, during, or after the FYF 101 program. These questions were listed in open-ended, short answer responses. At the end of the survey, students also had the opportunity to indicate an optional participation into a further qualitative investigation through focus-group interviews. Of the 183 participants in
the survey, 96 students (73 females and 23 males) indicated that they were willing to participate in follow up focus group sessions. After Focus Group session dates were set and invitations sent out to students, seven students participated in the Focus Groups. Though not surprising, it is important to note that of the seven students, only one was male. In addition, all seven have been highly engaged in the life of Trinity Christian College and almost all currently hold or have held leadership positions on campus. These indicators may be key in understanding their responses and ideas in the Focus Group sessions.

Additionally, as part of an ongoing Foundations Curriculum revision, faculty at Trinity Christian College have been interviewed about the FYF 101 course and the current needs of students. Some of their responses also are gathered into the qualitative data and will shape the descriptive study results.

**Procedure**

Quantitative data were collected using SurveyMonkey. An email was sent from the Trinity Christian College email account of Emily Bosscher to all selected sophomore, junior, and senior students via their Trinity Christian College email account on Monday, October 23, 2017. Content in the email consisted of a brief statement of the study, an invitation to participate in the research, and the link to the survey, which was open until November 30, 2017. When students clicked on the link, they first saw the consent information, where they were to indicate their participation by checking “yes” or “no”. Students who checked “no” were directed to a thank-you page and then exited out of the survey, and those who selected “yes” continued with the surveying process. As an incentive for taking the survey, a random drawing took place after the survey closed for a $50 gift certificate to the college bookstore. The only time student IP information was used was to notify the random winner of the drawing. Additionally, students
who chose the option to participate in the focus group were asked to give their name and contact information at the end of the survey.

Follow-up interviews of 45 minutes each were held at Trinity Christian College on February 5 and 7, 2018. The Focus Groups were conducted by the researcher, and the full conversations were recorded and a transcript was created. Emails were sent out to all students who offered to assist in focus groups, and they were invited to come to one of the two Focus Group sessions. Students were asked to RSVP to a night that worked in their schedule, and snacks were offered to all students who agreed to participate. Upon arrival, each student was asked to sign a new consent form (Appendix H) for this stage of the survey process.

In the end, a very small group of seven students participated during the two Focus Group sessions. The Focus Group sessions were recorded with a digital voice recorder, as the researcher also took notes simultaneously and kept track of who was speaking. The voice recording was transcribed and has been included as Appendix I.

**Participation Protection and Data Security**

It is required under the IRB application submission and approval process that all participants in a research study must be informed of their benefits, use of confidentiality, and how data collected will be protected. This was delineated on the consent form that participants signed when participating in the survey. For this study, there are no direct benefits to the participants, as the research will impact future incoming students at Trinity Christian College, not current students. The benefits of this research will be for future incoming first-year students at Trinity Christian College, the college in general, and the impact that these recommendations will have on retention rates and student success. This also means that there are very minimal risks to participants as well.
There are, however, some benefits to the participants that are perhaps less apparent, but important nonetheless. Through their involvement in this study, these students are impacting change and given a voice into the methods and practices at Trinity Christian College. This could give participants a sense of commitment and involvement in the process of change in the FYF 101 program, as well as in the life of the college as a whole. Often, only the students in the highest levels of campus leadership, such as Student Association, are privy to this kind of direct impact on the college, as they have the privilege to sit on faculty committees and offer their perspective. Participating in this survey allowed for a greater diversity of students to have that same chance to enact change to the way Trinity functions. This also offers one more space for the High Impact Educational Practices (Kuh, 2008) to come into play, as it allows students to see how research works and the importance of participation in a way that can help them pursue their own passions and research projects while they are in college and beyond. As C. González (2001) argues in her work, “research can be performed in many places: There are national labs, private labs, and research institutes. Much more research is done outside of the university than within its walls. The distinct mission of the research university, however, is to introduce students to research, to inspire in them a passion for discovery. This applies both to graduate and to undergraduate students” (p. 1624). González (2011) clearly illustrates the benefits for students for life after college as well when they participate in research survey instruments such as this one, and concludes her paper by saying that “universities must continue to make a concerted effort to integrate students, from the lower division to the postdoctoral level, into a coherent learning community. The historical separation between graduate and undergraduate education has obscured the connections among the research university’s five levels of learning, as well as the university’s mission, which is to introduce students to research, to inspire in them a passion
for discovery through teaching and mentoring of the highest intellectual and moral caliber at each of these levels” (p. 1626).

All students taking the survey provided their consent by completing an on-line consent form. If, after clicking into the survey, they did not agree with the statement of consent, they chose the “do not agree” option and then were exited out of the survey. An additional consent form was given to students who agreed to participate in focus-group interviews, as their answers would be anonymous but their identity known. Furthermore, all faculty involved with the interview process also signed a consent form, indicating that their comments would remain anonymous in the study.

All data were stored on the SurveyMonkey account until the survey closed, after which they were downloaded and stored on the researcher’s universal account on the Trinity Christian College secured universal drive. The IT department at Trinity Christian College maintains that personal network drives are accessed by the owner only (permission based active directory), and is backed up in secure cloud storage (Box) which is encrypted in transit and at rest. IT personnel on Trinity’s campus have access by permission only and have signed confidentiality agreements as a job requirement.

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis was conducted in four distinct parts. First, the researcher took the collected quantitative data from the survey instrument and separated the data into the five separate categories of questions from the survey. This data were analyzed for trends and patterns, and tables were created for each of the categories. The survey instrument also had qualitative questions, so the second part of the analysis process was to code those answers based on recurring categories or responses. All the responses, once coded, were then analyzed for
frequency and patterns. The top answers were also put into tables to provide a clearer visual sense of how the students responded to the qualitative, open-ended questions.

The third part of the data analysis was to look at the data collected in the NSSE during the spring of 2017 at Trinity Christian College. This analysis was done to determine which questions and data points about student perception were most relevant to this particular study. In this case, data collected that pertained specifically to the first-year experience and student perception about their first year of college were used, while the data relating to the senior students and the perceptions of their overall college experience were set aside. In addition, data from the NSSE that demonstrated how Trinity Christian College students compare with national data was the most important reason to use this collected data. The information was analyzed to see if students are averaging higher or lower against the national average, and how the FYF 101 program might be contributing to those results.

Finally, the fourth piece to the data analysis was to conduct the Focus Group sessions. The questions posed in the Focus Groups were designed to add additional clarity and further solutions to the themes that presented in the data. The transcripts were reviewed to discover if there is consistency and conformity in the suggestions made to improve the areas of weakness that were exposed by the themes. All four parts of the data collection and analysis were intended to get as detailed a picture as possible of the perceptions of students about their own academic success and the success of the FYF 101 program, and to compare their answers to what the research on Generation Z indicates these students need for success.
Limitations. Most studies of this type are going to present some limitations to the scope and outcome of the research. This is the case of this study as well.

The first limitation of this study is the size. Trinity Christian College is a small college, with only 1200 students. In doing a research study that looks specifically at the needs of the Generation Z students at this institution, the reality is that the sample size for the survey instrument is going to be quite small. While the research could give insight for other smaller institutions, this research is limited in its influence on the entire field of study. The research could be useful for other small colleges in a similar position of change or redesign, however, it will not be applicable in a broader scope across higher education without enlarging the participant pool or gathering additional data.

The second limitation is the fact that the wording on some the survey questions, caused some confusion during the data analysis. In hindsight, the order of Likert categories in Questions 1-5 of the survey should have been rearranged to read Very Well Prepared, Prepared, Somewhat Prepared, and Unprepared. Due to the inversion of Prepared and Somewhat prepared, some of the mean and median data analysis was a little confusing. In order to report the data more clearly, these two terms were switched in order on the tables in Chapter 4 and the issue is addressed in the data analysis and results.

The third limitation is the external validity of the research (Creswell, 2014). Trinity Christian College is a very small, Christian, liberal arts college that is located in the suburbs of the large metropolis of Chicago. While this means that many students come with a knowledge and understanding that is more cosmopolitan, the school also attracts students from smaller cities and rural locations that have pockets of religiously affiliated schools and families. This means that the worldviews, life experiences, and perspectives of the students at Trinity are incredibly
diverse. Students at Trinity Christian College may have perspectives that are unique to them as Generation Z, but also as students who have chosen to attend this particular, small, private school. This means that it may be impossible to generalize the results to other first-year or Generation Z students beyond the specific population of Trinity Christian College.

The fourth limitation is researcher bias (Creswell, 2014). While every effort was taken to minimize the bias, it must be noted that the researcher is the Director of the Office of First Year Experience and of the first-year program (FYF 101) at Trinity Christian College. Therefore, desires of the director to change the program because of perception and knowledge intrinsic to that position have been evaluated and considered. All quantitative data collected from participants has been reported exactly, while qualitative data interpretation biases may warrant future research and are acknowledged in Chapter Five.

**Ethical Considerations.** Every effort was taken to ensure that data was collected for this study in an ethical manner. Permission was given by the Institutional Review Board from Trinity Christian College (where the survey instrument was administered) and Kennesaw State University (where the Masters coursework for this study took place). Furthermore, permission was granted by Kimberly Williams, Trinity Christian College’s Director of Institutional Research, to use the results of the 2017 NSSE survey that was administered on campus as an additional data source to review when conducting this research project.

In addition, all survey participants signed a consent form (see Appendix J) before participating in this program and had to be 18 years of age or older. All respondents to the survey remain anonymous, unless they voluntarily agreed to give their name and contact information to participate in the focus group portion of the data collection. The only use of any identifying information for participants was to notify them that they were awarded the $50
random drawing of a gift card for participating. Answering the questions in this study posed only minimal risk, if any at all, to the participants.

Throughout the study, all data collected were stored securely on the encrypted Box drive at Trinity Christian College. No one had access to any of the data collected specifically for this project other than the researcher and those who helped with the data analysis at Trinity Christian College. NSSE data for Trinity Christian College, is also accessible to Kimberly Williams and others who have been given access at Trinity Christian College. Data collected (both through this study and the NSSE survey) did not have any personal identifying information connected to them.

**Summary**

A mixed methods approach was used to evaluate the perception of Generation Z students at Trinity Christian College about their preparedness for college and the effectiveness of the current FYF 101 program. Data used was collected in NSSE during the spring of 2017 and a survey administered in the fall of 2017. Analysis of the data through induction and coding provided the researcher the evidence for any gaps in the current programs and ideas from students for how to fix those gaps for a smoother and successful transition into college. This data will help make recommendations for a new first-year program at Trinity Christian College in the fall of 2019, as well as could help other smaller institutions. The following chapter will present the findings of this research.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to find out how prepared first-year students entering college perceive themselves to be. In addition, the study sought to find out how well the first-year programs currently in place at Trinity Christian College (FYF 101) help them either overcome a lack of preparation or guide them to greater success, based on student perception. Finally, the study hoped to find out, based on student perceptions, what needed to be added to or changed in the program to better meet first-year student needs. The questions were designed to specifically look at areas of possible weakness for Generation Z students, based on research and the literature review revelations about this group as a whole. The goal is to identify if the students at Trinity perceive areas of development in themselves or the Trinity program that line up with generalized needs or areas of development in Generation Z, as well as identifying student suggestions for improvements in the program to overcome those weaknesses. The result of these perceptions and suggestions will be to give recommendations to the college for the revision of the current FYF 101 program. This information was collected through a survey specific to this research, administered at Trinity Christian College in the fall of 2017, as well as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) administered at Trinity Christian College in the spring of 2017. Additional follow-up focus group sessions were held in the spring of 2018 to gather qualitative data and more descriptive student responses.

In this chapter, the results of the analysis will be explained, providing responses to the research questions asked in the beginning, as well as detailing themes that emerged from the student responses in the study.
Results

Survey Administered for this Study. The survey (Appendix H), administered to students in the fall of 2017, was given to sophomore through senior students who enrolled at Trinity Christian College as first-year students and participated in the FYF 101 program their first semester. This population consisted of 409 students, 183 of whom agreed to participate in the survey. Of those, five responses were eliminated because participants reported that their year of birth fell before 1995, thus making them non-traditional students during their first-year and not part of the Generation Z population. The survey contained both quantitative questions about student perceptions relating to the FYF 101 program and their preparedness for college, as well as qualitative questions requesting that students offer suggestions about how to improve the FYF 101 program. There was an identified amount of survey fatigue in the data, as the number of skipped responses grew to 29 students on the final question. Most questions were skipped by approximately ten to 15 students. The data analysis was done by the researcher with the help of a statistician at Trinity Christian College, who concurred that due to the fact that the data collected is categorical or ranked, the median and mode for the quantitative data are the most appropriate ways to report the results, rather than using more descriptive statistics.

Question set one: questions about student preparedness before coming to college. The first five questions of the survey asked students to indicate how prepared they felt in the summer before beginning college. These questions were designed to get a baseline of how students perceived their own college readiness and were designed to answer the first Research Question: To what extent did students, who are members of Generation Z, perceive that they were prepared for the academic expectations of college in their first year? Based on the literature review and research on Generation Z, many students of this generation have been told throughout life that
they are good at everything (Cronin, 2017), so these first questions were looking for where Trinity Christian College student match up to the overall understanding of Generation Z.

Overall, the survey results reveal that in four out of five of the questions, students felt prepared, as the median responses demonstrate. Each of those four questions also all had single digit responses in the “unprepared” category. What is significant is that the fifth question, asking how prepared students felt in knowing who to go to for answers on campus, had the exact opposite outcome. For this question, “very well prepared” had only single digit responses, while the median response was “somewhat prepared,” and the only question that demonstrates a gap in student preparation, as seen in Table 1. Students indicate that they felt most prepared to write papers and use technology to gather information. Slightly less confident were they in feeling prepared to manage course workloads and managing time, with managing course loads coming in at the lowest central tendency for these four questions.
Based on this set of questions, and specifically the question highlighted in Figure 1, the data indicates that an area of focus for the future would be to do more to help students to feel prepared and confident to ask questions and find answers on their own once they arrive at college.

**Question set two: questions about whether or not specific aspects of the FYF 101 program prepared students for academic success in college.** The second set of questions asked students to indicate if the elements of FYF 101 prepared them for what they encountered as a student outside of this first-year course. These questions were designed to identify if students were taking from the course what the objectives and design of the course wanted the students to attain, and were written to answer the second Research Question: How well, based on student perception, did the content of First-Year Forum 101 prepare Generation Z students for academic success and transition into college life at Trinity Christian College? The data was divided into two tables, one which demonstrated answers with a median of “neither” and one of “disagree.”
This division demonstrates the aspects of the course that worked well in student perception and the aspects that seem to fall in a more grey area of uncertainty for students.

Table 2

Survey Questions 6-23: How well FYF 101 course elements prepared students (Median=Agree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: FYF 101...</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...helped me understand my top 5 strengths (from the StrengthsFinder Assessment)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...prepared me for worldview discussions in my other college classes</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...taught me the importance of getting my homework done on time in college</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...taught me how to successfully use Moodle in my other college classes</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...taught me the purpose of Academic Advising</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...spent enough time talking about diversity issues to prepare me for my college experiences</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...helped me learn how to communicate with my professors</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...taught me the meaning of worldview</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...spent enough time covering time management to help me be successful in college</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...prepared me for meeting with my Academic Advisor during registration</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 demonstrates all the aspects of college preparation that students felt the FYF 101 course prepared them well for. (For the full list of questions asked in this section of the survey, and the numerical results, see Tables K1 and K2 in Appendix K.) What is notable here is that all of these aspects are almost entirely new topics for a first-year student, as they are institution specific as well as topics or tasks that most likely students will not have thought about before entering college (StrengthsFinder Assessment, worldview, college homework, Moodle, Academic Advising, communicating with professors). Though many students probably enter college having thought about diversity and time management in the past, it is likely that the college-specific wording and focus is what made students choose “agree,” to indicate that the course prepared them well in a way that was specifically college-directed. The strongest
response in this group was for the question regarding preparing students to communicate with their college professors, as Figure 2 shows.

Figure 2

![FYF 101 Prepared Me to Communicate with Professors Pie Chart]

This overwhelming response may be due, in part, to the fact that students have never had to communicate with professors before, so any knowledge in this area was more than they had before arriving at college.

In this same set of questions on the survey, 8 of the 18 (just under half) all resulted with a median of “neither.” Of these questions, half of the also had a mode value of “disagree.” This second set of questions mostly asked students about the application of skills learned in FYF 101 and emotional and psychological skills needed in college, rather than the practical topics or skills of the questions in Table 2. This may demonstrate that students experience more uncertainty when it comes to the less tangible aspects of college life (stress, relevance, study skills, rigor) which students feel less prepared for, even after the FYF 101 course.

For this group of questions overall, it appears that students were not necessarily definitive in the way they answered, as the amount of answers that landed in the “neither” category for the
median prevent highly indicative assumptions for many of the questions. On average, 21.33% of the time students chose the “neither” option for this set of questions. Despite the heavy use of the neutral option, there are some significant markers in some of these questions.

First, it is important to note that only two questions had double-digit responses in the “strongly disagree” category: “FYF 101 prepared me for the stress of my academic class load” and “FYF was relevant to my other coursework at Trinity Christian College.”

Figure 3

![Pie chart](image)

For the first of the two questions with the greatest degree of disagreement (Figure 3), 42.94% of the answers fell in the bottom two categories; for the second question (Figure 4), a slightly less 38.09% fell in the same categories. As seen in Figure 4, relevance also seems to be an area of weakness in the program based on student perception.
Despite that, however, the very first question in this set ("FYF 101 prepared me well for writing papers in my other college classes") had a higher 46.55% of answers in the bottom two categories (Figure 5), indicating that overall, student perception is that writing preparation is a significantly weak area of the FYF 101 course.
This is supported by the answers on the positive end of the Likert scale as well, as only 18.96% of students chose “strongly agree” or “agree” for this question.

Additionally, nine of the questions fell under double digit percentages in the “strongly agree” category. In addition to the three questions above, “FYF 101 prepared me for developing good study skills for my other courses,” “FYF 101 prepared me for the rigor of academic work in my other college classes,” and “FYF 101 spent enough time covering time management to help me be successful in college” all ranked lowest in the “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree” categories, averaging 39.36%.

The strongest aspect of the FYF 101 program overall, according to the responses for all 18 questions, seems to be in helping students “understand my top 5 strengths.” This question, as demonstrated in Figure 6, revealed an 82.88% of students indicating that they “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree,” along with the lowest “neither” response of all the questions at 10.34%.

![Figure 6](image.png)

The next two strongest elements, based on these student responses, were “FYF 101 helped me learn how to communicate with my professors” (Figure 2), and “FYF 101 taught me the meaning
of worldview,” with scores in the top two categories of 74.12% and 72.35% respectively. After that were the questions relating to Academic Advising, talking about diversity, and preparing for worldview discussions in other college courses, again all in the category of applying the skills or information to the college setting.

**Question set three: questions about the effectiveness of the logistics of the FYF 101 program.** The third set of six questions asked students to indicate if the timing, schedule, and logistics of the FYF 101 course worked in a way that helped them find success in their other college courses. These questions were intended to find out if the structure of the course is one that works for Generation Z students, and sought to answer the third Research Question: Did the content of First-Year Forum 101, based on student perception, effectively help prepare Generation Z students for their transition into college and academic success at Trinity Christian College?

**Table 3  
Survey Questions 24-29: How well did FYF 101 work logistically:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taking place before the start of the semester.</td>
<td>12.73%</td>
<td>44.85%</td>
<td>23.03%</td>
<td>16.97%</td>
<td>2.42%</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would have preferred to have FYF 101 take place during the semester.</td>
<td>1.82%</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
<td>10.30%</td>
<td>39.39%</td>
<td>39.39%</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FYF 101 had balanced time to make friends and adjust academically to college.</td>
<td>26.67%</td>
<td>50.30%</td>
<td>11.52%</td>
<td>9.70%</td>
<td>1.82%</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was helpful to know about the topics taught in FYF 101 before having to experience them in my other classes.</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
<td>46.06%</td>
<td>30.91%</td>
<td>10.91%</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to recall what I was taught during FYF 101 in future classes.</td>
<td>2.42%</td>
<td>20.61%</td>
<td>29.70%</td>
<td>38.79%</td>
<td>8.48%</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If FYF 101 took place during the first semester, I would have been able to better connect the content of FYF 101 with my other classes.</td>
<td>2.42%</td>
<td>26.06%</td>
<td>28.48%</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
<td>15.76%</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>Neither</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For this set of questions, the rate of students choosing the “neither” category stayed consistent with the previous category of questions at a very similar 22.32%. In addition, this set of questions also seemed to reveal the strongest opinions from the students, especially in the “strongly disagree” category. Of the six questions, as demonstrated in Table 3, three of them were perceived as positive logistical elements, while the other three were perceived as more negative.

On the positive side, the question “FYF 101 provided me with a balance of time to make friends and adjust academically to college” had a resounding 76.97% of students responding “strongly agree” and “agree.” This percentage is almost 20% higher than the next favorable question, indicating the perception of great success on the part of the students. This same question also had the lowest percentage of “disagree” and “strongly disagree” answers at only 11.52%. The other two logistical aspects that were perceived as favorable among the participants were “Having FYF 101 take place before the start of the semester prepared me for my first semester courses” and “It was helpful to know about the topics taught in FYF 101 before having to experience them in my other classes,” with 57.58% and 55.15% of students respectively stating they “strongly agree” or “agree”.

On the opposite side, the question “I would have preferred to have FYF 101 take place during the semester, rather than before it” was overwhelmingly perceived as a negative logistical change to student participants.
In this case, as demonstrated in Figure 7, only 10.91% of students chose the favorable “strongly agree” or “agree” categories, and a prodigious 78.78% indicated that they “disagree” or “strongly disagree” to a change of this nature. The other two logistical elements of the program that ranked on the lower side were “If FYF 101 took place during the first semester, I would have been able to better connect the content of FYF 101 with my other classes” and “When new experiences or challenges arose in my semester class, I was able to recall what I was taught during FYF 101 to deal with them” with negative “disagree” or “strongly disagree” responses of 47.27% and 43.03% respectively.

**Question set four: ranking elements of the FYF 101 program.** The fourth group of questions on the survey first asked students to rank from most important (1) to least important (9) current elements of the FYF 101 program and their perception of their value or importance as part of the course, as demonstrated in Table 4. Secondly, students were asked to rank from most important (1) to least important (7) new elements that might be added into the curriculum in a future iteration, as demonstrated in Table 5. The goal was to determine student perception on the
value of the course content, as well as answer the fourth Research Question: What elements do students feel are necessary to add or subtract from the First-Year Forum 101’s curriculum that will be more effective in helping Generation Z students’ transition into Trinity Christian College?

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Overall Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding how to use library resources</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having key people to ask questions of</td>
<td>6.31</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the concept of worldview</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in a service project as a class</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding your top 5 strengths with StrengthsFinder</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having conversations about diversity on campus</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing how to use a syllabus</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting your academic advisor</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning how to manage your time</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Overall Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning adaptability in the academic environment</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning how to work in small groups</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding how professors grade and give feedback</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding your own learning style(s)</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing the relevance of the FYF 101 material to your other coursework</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning how to evaluate sources when researching for a paper or project</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The myth of multitasking and learning how to focus on one task</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data collected for these two questions did not end up being overwhelmingly in favor of one element over another, though there was still a clear indication of student preference when it comes to what they perceive as important in a first-year seminar course like FYF 101.
In terms of what topic the students feel is most important to cover in the FYF 101 class, survey participants chose “Having key people to ask questions of” as the most important, while “Engaging in a service project as a class” was ranked overall as the least important element, as Table 4 shows. Coming in as second most important was “Learning how to manage your time.” Looking down the ranking list, it appears that those skills that may be seen as more practical or necessary for the day-to-day functioning at college were ranked higher, while the more thematic or theoretical elements of the course were viewed as less important.

The second question asked students to rank in order of importance the list of new elements that could be incorporated into the FYF 101 course. Here, as Table 5 illustrates, student perception revealed that they believe there is a need for “Understanding your own learning style(s),” but they felt that “Knowing the relevance of the FYF 101 material to your other coursework” was of least importance. In this question as in the previous one, student preference seems to indicate that they value the practical academic and day-to-day skills over theoretical skills.

Meeting set five: qualitative response questions.

The six questions in this section were intended to offer students a chance to share their ideas in a way that gives them buy-in and ownership at Trinity Christian College and in the first-year seminar program. One of the benefits of participating in this research is that it gives students an opportunity that many of them do not usually get – to participate in the process of evaluating programs, making changes, and working to improve the way departments work at the college.

The first question in this set was “Which aspect of FYF 101 do you feel least prepared you for your college courses?” This question elicited a wide range of responses, only two of
which were statistically relevant. Of the 99 responses given for this question, the top category of responses (with 28 responses) was one that was coded as “Academic Preparation.” This category contained responses that indicated that students felt FYF 101 least prepared them to tackle homework, write papers, listen to and understand lectures, and other general academics responses. One student indicated that “writing the paper and the journals did not prepare me at all. I know they were suppose [sic] to be there to show what a paper was like but it wasn’t that helpful, to be fair it did help how to use moodle [sic] to submit papers.” Another student reflected a similar sentiment by saying “the aspect of FYF that least prepared me were the actual assignments. They were not at all indicative of the kind of work that would be required of me in my classes.”

Many students indicated that FYF 101 least prepared them for the difficulty of what was to come in their academic work overall. The second most common response (with 12 responses) was that students felt they were already prepared for college when they arrived, so the FYF 101 program did not help them additionally in this area. The next two categories that students indicated they were least prepared for through FYF 101 were the stress of college life and time management or study skill aspects. One student stated that “we did not talk a whole lot about how to deal with stress caused by academics [sic],” while another student added “having so many meetings, stressed me out a lot in the beginning which contributed to less time and effort to write papers.” The most thorough response to this question was from a student who said Honestly, all of it. We didn’t learn anything that pertained to life on Trinity’s campus – laundry, library resources, how to use the gym, where to use meal swipes, where the mailboxes are, where the Writing Center is. In FYF, you need to have more faith in students that they know what they’re doing. If they got into college, they should know
what to do about school, how to work with other people, how to write a research paper, etc. So instead of explaining to us how to be students – we’ve been doing that our whole lives – teach us how to live at Trinity.

The second question asked student participants to offer up to three new topics that they would like to see included in the first-year seminar to better help students transition to college and be successful while there, and illustrated by Figure 8 below. As students were asked to offer three suggestions, each individual suggestion was counting during the coding process. However, exclusions were made on the graph to eliminate any suggestions that appeared five or fewer times, in order to simplify the data reporting and focus on the suggestions with the most frequency.

Figure 8

A few very dominant themes and ideas emerged from the student responses to this question. First, time management has already been identified in previous data as a topic that is not covered nearly enough during the FYF 101 course. This element included both how to

\[\text{Exclusions were deemed appropriate by the researcher either because the volume of data required the researcher to narrow focus on the responses with the most frequency.}\]
manage personal time and the balance of friends and going to class, as well as how to manage
time to get studying done. One student stated their three goals as “time management, learning to
adapt in pressure situations, how to deal with people you may not be comfortable around.”
Another student indicated the top two elements would be “-Working through roommate conflict
-More explanation of services Trinity offers and how to access these services (ex: IT desk).”

This leads to the second most dominant topic, which was that of transitioning to life on
campus, and included requests for more help in how to live in a dorm, how to negotiate life with
roommates, and where to find people and services on the campus (everything from who to talk to
about different needs to where to print or how to do laundry). For example, one student
responded with “learning how to use printers on campus, leaning [sic] about Inter Library loan
and creating accounts for students, and learning how to use the library’s website to find sources.”
Another student stated

-Teach students how to print. –Teach them where they can park. –Teach them that
they can use meal swipes at the BBC. –Teach them about the mail and print center.

Students don’t always have upperclassmen connections coming in, so when FYF doesn’t
teach them how these types of things work on campus, it’s a waste of time, money, and
energy.

The next three topics all focused on different aspects of academic life, including how to use
library resources, how to write papers, and how to interact with professors. One student response
said “Learn how to manage time. Professors want you to succeed. One test doesn’t make you
fail a class so keep persevering.” The rest of the topics shifted back and forth between the need
for more practical help with both academic elements (understanding a syllabus and study skills) and social elements (stress management and social relationships).

Thirdly, students were asked to indicate what topic or element of the FYF 101 program should remain in the curriculum, though perhaps with some improvement to make it more effective. Again, due to the volume and variety of individual responses, exclusions were made on the graph to eliminate any suggestions that appeared five or fewer times, in order to simplify the data reporting and focus on the suggestions with the most frequency.

Figure 9

![Bar chart showing the number of responses for different topics]

There was not as much variety in answers for this question, and frequency dropped off to one or two similar responses after the responses shown in Figure 9 above. A number of these suggestions mirror the suggestions made in the previous question, perhaps indicating the importance of these topics in terms of student perception. Repeating topics include study habits and time management, paper writing and library resources, and interactions with professors. It is worth noting that three of these are practical skills and the other three (diversity and community engagement)

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1Exclusions were deemed appropriate by the researcher either because the volume of data required the researcher to narrow focus on the responses with the most frequency.
engagement, 5 Strengths, and worldview and reformed theology) are all related to theoretical concepts.

One student noted well the dichotomy that was revealed in this question:

I think the emphasis of FYF is to get comfortable with college, not necessarily perfectly prepare us for the ‘academic rigors.’ That comes with time and there’s no true test to teach us about that. That being said, I appreciated the fact we could build friendships and relationships before school started, something I think is more beneficial to freshman [sic] than a heavy learning load in FYF. Keep that structure more than change it.

Another student stated it bluntly by asking for “More technical aspects of college and less themes.” The possible reasons for this split view will be looked at more thoroughly in Chapter Five.

The fourth question asked students to think specifically about their personal transition experience when they were a first-year student. The purpose of this question was to see if their experiences were matching up with what research on Generation Z indicates the first-year experience is for many students, and to see if their suggestions for improvement are consistent with what they actually experienced. As with the other qualitative and free-response questions, some answers were excluded if their frequency was below five.
Once again, there were some significant trends in the answers the student participants gave for this question, as demonstrated in Figure 10. Again, the top answers switch back and forth between practical social transitional elements and practical academic elements, and in this case, only three students (not included on the graph) reported that the most difficult aspect had anything to do with theoretical ideas (two students indicated denominational or religious differences and one student indicated that the concept of worldview was the most difficult aspect). One student shared:

The difference of denomination. This place is very different from the Christian background I come from. That is not a bad thing at all in fact I would say it’s a great thing because of the new perspective it allows me to see the world from. But, I did not feel comfortable and still often do not feel comfortable engaging in conversation about my beliefs and the things that I hold true and important in my Christian walk/faith. I

1Exclusions were deemed appropriate by the researcher either because the volume of data required the researcher to narrow focus on the responses with the most frequency.
often felt and still feel like I am constantly trying to understand and see where the reformed doctrine is coming from and adding pieces of it to my own faith, however there is not a lot of what happening from the opposite end. There are not many people willing to hear my background and give it thought and reflection often it is very obvious that others think my beliefs are somewhat wrong and that’s a difficult posture to be immersed in.

The themes of time management, academic workload, social transition, and stress management all show up here as they did previously, though it is worth noting that several students also indicated that there was no difficulty at all in their college transition. One student stated it this way:

Learning how to spend my own time. I don’t think anything but pure course experience could have prepared me. I would just wait to start homework until 2am when all my friends went to bed and I learned my lesson when I slept through alarms, etc. I don’t think anyone could have taught me strict time management, I had to do that for myself.

Another student chose the topic of time management by saying “I think for me it was learning how to do my homework on time. That’s been a struggle for me my whole life, but it showed up more once I stepped into college academics. Learning how to thrive instead of surviving in key.”

The fifth question pushed these ideas a little further by asking students to indicate specifically what elements could be added to the FYF 101 course to prevent the difficult transitions or better prepare students for their academic transition into college. The exact wording of the question focused on the academic transition, though not all student answers reflected that they were thinking strictly of the academic aspects of college. The fourth most
common response related to the structure of the FYF 101 program and a request that there is more free time built into the course to allow for better adjustment to the campus in general, as shown on Figure 11 below. On this note, one student requested that the FYF 101 program “Give the whole day off the day before classes start to do last minute things, and take it easy before classes start. Otherwise, try to integrate a little bit more time in between events for some time for students to do whatever you [sic] want.”

Figure 11

| WHAT COULD A NEW COURSE COVER TO BETTER PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THE ACADEMIC TRANSITION¹ |
|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Meeting with majors              | 4.00        |
| Using online or campus resources | 4.00        |
| Have alumni there to give advice | 4.00        |
| More on learning styles/study habits | 6.00      |
| Have more chill events           | 6.00        |
| Practice writing with authentic feedback | 7.00      |
| Be realistic about the amount of homework in college | 9.00      |
| Teach time management and how to relax | 20.00     |

Once again, the theme of time management and how to balance personal time with academic work stood out as a dominant forerunner. Recurring themes of the academic workload, paper writing, learning styles or study habits, and learning to use campus resources were also given at a frequency worth noting. One student suggested “Have a whole dedicated [sic] to exploring the areas around, target [sic], Wal-Mart, the mall, the movie theater, Hollywood [sic], things like that,” while another student said “Maybe we could do some sort of study-habits survey, and from there the mentors could suggest or even show places around campus to do homework (BBC, Library, basement of dorms, Ozinga chapel, etc.).”

¹Exclusions were deemed appropriate by the researcher either because the volume of data required the researcher to narrow focus on the responses with the most frequency.
Finally, the sixth question asked students to dream big. In part, this question was included to open the door for the students who want to help create change and impact the way things work at Trinity Christian College. The hope was that those students who have long had opinions they wanted to share, but did not know the venue to do so, had a chance to share them here. Additionally, it felt important to hear from Generation Z students themselves what they believe would make this course better. Hopefully, they would have creative and unique ideas that the administration at Trinity Christian College would not have thought of.

Figure 12

![Chart showing responses to changes for FYF 101](image)

The responses were very mixed, though there were some strong leading ideas as shown on Figure 12. First, it appears that survey fatigue had set in by this time, as 90 students offered an answer, while 95 students skipped this question. Secondly, students gave opposite answers. Four students suggested making the course longer, while 2 students indicated that it should be shorter or cut altogether. For instance, one student wrote:

> If there were not any limitations, I would start fresh with FYF. I think that whatever is in

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1Exclusions were deemed appropriate by the researcher either because the volume of data required the researcher to narrow focus on the responses with the most frequency.
place now is complete trash and 0% prepares students for college. Don't talk about worldview, creation, fall, redemption, and new creation, diversity, and community. It's so forced and unbelievable. Students take FYF as a joke because it does NOT prepare them for what is to come. Make it centered around the academic aspect and not false values.

While on the opposite side, another student commented:

Something that I would change would be making it last through the whole semester. I am not saying that there should be classes or events or FYF101 every week. I'm suggesting that FYF101 groups get together one a month for dinner or for a fun time off campus. Or FYF101 student mentors and adult mentors can meet up with students to see how they are doing.

One student requested more panels and group sessions on topics, while a couple of students requested far less large group sessions. Some themes did emerge though, and these are ones that have been consistent throughout the data collected in this survey. These themes were practical transitioning skills, more free time, practical academic and study skills, and more activities to meet people.

Some of the students did offer suggestions for how to make the changes beyond just stating what needed to be changed. In requesting more choice, one student offered “I would make it more voluntary than mandatory. Give several options that students could choose from that they think they would benefit from. No mandatory games or stuff.” Another student expanded on another event already on campus to offer a way to add choice into FYF 101:

Well, I think changing things in general to actually teach something would be beneficial. I get the concept of a service project, but only so many students are going to connect with that. I think that there should be options for sessions that students can sit in on. Students
should be able to choose what they want to learn. Have an option of an in-depth campus tour, an opportunity to learn about the gym, the library, the BBC. Let students get involved with Outcry and Chapel - give students a chance to choose. Don't make every single thing mandatory - that was the part of FYF that turned me off.

Many students offered commentary on the idea of focusing more on practical college survival skills. In one instance, a student offered that “It needs more information on services Trinity has to offer and how to use them. For example, counselling and how advising works, and also. [sic] more information on how to use the library,” while another one added that “I think FYF should be more about basic college survival skills. You learn about the courses when you get to them and each teach [sic] is different so having a base for how to deal in general could be more beneficial for the students.” One student noted that “This is kind of impossible...but I would want to change people's attitudes about FYF so that people were more excited and engaged in the process, but I also remember being a freshmen and being overwhelmed by everything.”

**National Survey of Student Engagement.** The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was administered to first-year and senior students at Trinity Christian College in the spring of 2017. Trinity Christian College had a stated population of 196 first-year students, of which 74 responded. Of those responses, there were 60 completed surveys and 14 partially completed surveys. These numbers gave Trinity a 38% response rate for first-year students, of which 66% were female, 97% were full-time students, and 58% were White. While the clear majority of the first-year students taking this survey were traditional students and thus part of Generation Z, this is not a guarantee and the NSSE did not filter for date of birth. Therefore, the validity of the data here is perhaps not quite as high as the data collected specifically for this study.
The data points from the NSSE that pertain to this study are the Engagement Indicators of first-year students, specifically their Experiences with Faculty, the Academic Challenge of college, and Campus Environment. According to the NSSE data report, “Engagement Indicators are summary measures based on sets of NSSE questions examining key dimensions of student engagement. The ten indicators are organized within four broad themes: Academic Challenge, Learning with Peers, Experiences with Faculty, and Campus Environment” (Trinity Christian College, 2017).

Table 6

NSSE 2017 Engagement Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-Year Students</th>
<th>Engagement Indicator</th>
<th>Your first-year students compared with CCOBU</th>
<th>Your first-year students compared with Carnegie Class</th>
<th>Your first-year students compared with Chicago Area</th>
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<td>Higher-Order Learning</td>
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<td>Academic Challenge</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learning Strategies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Quantitative Reasoning</td>
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<td>Learning with Peers</td>
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<td>Discussions with Diverse Others</td>
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<td>Experiences with Faculty</td>
<td>Student-Faculty Interaction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Effective Teaching Practices</td>
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<td>Campus Environment</td>
<td>Quality of Interactions</td>
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<td>Supportive Environment</td>
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The first category presented is Academic Challenge. Based on the data from NSSE reported in Table 6, first-year students at Trinity Christian College are averaging lower in both Reflective & Integrative Learning and Learning Strategies than their peers at Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCC&U) institutions, the Carnegie Classification, and other Chicago area students. Learning strategies were significantly lower, however, when compared to
the Carnegie Classification and other Chicago area students, indicating that Trinity Christian College students are reporting a lower engagement with Learning Strategies than their peers. According to NSSE, Learning Strategies refers to the ways “college students enhance their learning and retention by actively engaging with and analyzing course material rather than approaching learning as absorption. Examples of effective learning strategies include identifying key information in readings, reviewing notes after class, and summarizing course material. Knowledge about the prevalence of effective learning strategies helps colleges and universities target interventions to promote student learning and success” (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2018, n. p.). Questions in this section include asking whether students have “Identified key information from reading assignments, Reviewed your notes after class, or Summarized what you learned in class or from course materials” (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2018, n. p.).

Although Table 6 indicates that the other categories of Learning with Peers, Experiences with Faculty, and Campus Environment showed no significant difference between Trinity Christian College and the comparison sets, it does note that Trinity Christian College students do perceive the Campus Environment as supportive at a statistically higher average. NSSE states that the Supportive Environment category covers questions relating to “settings that cultivate positive relationships among students, faculty, and staff” (Trinity Christian College, 2017, n. p.). This data does not quite align with the results from the survey for this study, mostly because the survey did not ask students their perceptions about feeling supported on campus in general, rather it focused primarily on the FYF 101 course. In addition, while the data from this study-specific survey demonstrates that students desire more connections with faculty than they perceive they are currently engaging in, the NSSE results indicate that students feel satisfied with
the support and relationships they have with a combination of students, faculty, and staff. This could indicate that while some relationships on campus are strong, more could be done yet to cultivate positive student-faculty relationships specifically.

**Focus Group Sessions at Trinity Christian College.**

The purpose of the Focus Group sessions was to have conversations with students who indicated a strong interest and stake in the program as demonstrated by their willingness to sit down and share further their ideas of how the FYF 101 program can benefit first-year students at Trinity Christian College. This data collected were intended to answer the fourth Research Question: Does First Year Forum 101 contain the content that students perceive as important in helping them transition into life and academic success at Trinity Christian College, as well as looking to tap the creativity of current students for their ideas on how to meet student perceptions for transition and success. This was done by creating follow-up questions (Appendix L) that came out of the other data collection results, and asking participants to weigh in on these themes by offering solutions and opinions. The four questions discussed asked about 1. Teaching more time management and study skills in FYF 101, 2. Covering more practical skills of living on campus and attending college (including the role of Residence Life in the FYF 101 program), 3. Covering library resources and learning better how to write papers and use databases, and 4. Adding in more time to help students transition socially.

Overall, the Focus Group participants had responses and ideas that mirrored the original survey responses, yet their solutions presented a much more balanced understanding of the purpose of a first-year seminar program than the participants overall demonstrated. In part, the reason for these objective answers may be because the Focus Group participants were all upperclassmen (junior and senior standing), and all are currently or have been involved in
positions of campus leadership during their time at Trinity Christian College. Of the seven participants, three had been mentors or interns in the FYF 101 program, three had been or still were Resident Assistants, and three had leadership roles in Student Activities or an ethnic organization at some point in their college career. This indicates that while their answers may not be typical of all students, they may also know better than some students the feasibility of program changes and how much (in their words) “hand holding” should be done versus what students should discover and learn on their own in their college transition.

In response to Question 1: “How can FYF 101 incorporate new ways to teach time management and study skills to first-year students,” Focus Group participants were quite united on their response. The consensus from all students was that the skill of time management and learning how to study is something that cannot so much be taught, especially in a way that meets the needs of all students, and is instead something that students just need to discover, experience, and learn on their own. Student B indicated that “The way I learned all the time management and those skills was by actually living through it and making mistakes, which kind of makes it difficult to incorporate that into an FYF program.” Student A agreed that “I think you do need to learn by making mistakes and I think that some of those time management skills, people don’t realize they need them until like way after FYF is over.” Based on these concerns about the feasibility of teaching these skills, the participants did offer some creative ideas to help students address these skills in the FYF 101 program. Both sets of focus group participants came up with the suggestion to extend the FYF 101 program to allow more time to mentor and guide students in developing these skills. For example, Student B said that “If the program [were] to be extended over time, I think it’d be a lot more... I guess students will be a lot more susceptible to learning that because it will be experiencing (sic?) it as they’re going through the FYF program.”
In addition, they suggested that more intentional explanations be given to students that teach them who or where to go for different needs, specifically in the different roles of Residence Life versus the FYF 101 program. Finally, they suggested providing students with planners and then building in time to walk students through filling out the planner and thinking through all of their syllabi and due dates over the course of the semester. Student G suggested “a reflective exercise of like how do you currently time manage and how do you see that going forward,” while Student F suggested a meeting “dedicated to like, OK, bring a syllabus and like we’ll spend 20, 30 minutes of our meeting, like writing things out that are important.”

Question 2, “should FYF 101 cover more practical elements about living and attending college, and if so, how might that look?” again brought consensus from the focus group participants. Overall, these students indicated that there was a need for more collaboration between the FYF 101 program and Residence Life, particularly in being clearer in telling students where to go for answers for their different questions. They again agreed that too much hand-holding is a disservice to first-year students, but at the same time, Student D got right to the point in saying, “I think students are very antsy and they want to know these things, so at least telling them where to go ahead of time would be beneficial and then they can talk with their R.A.s [sic] and get to know them and figure out everything else at that point.” Recognizing these issues, the participants came up with two clear ideas for how to find the balance in addressing this issue. The first suggestion was to have a two-part process of a scavenger hunt and follow-up pamphlet that gives all types of learners a way to feel comfortable with the day-to-day tips and tricks to life at college. Part of this scavenger hunt would be to show students all the different web applications (printing, course management, student portal, email), where to find them and how to bookmark them so they have access from the very beginning. In addition, produce a
follow-up document that students can access for these tips anytime during the semester. This would provide for the “different types of learners. So, I would’ve liked physically walking to the laundry machine, having my FYF mentors stand there while we all bought a laundry card, like that would work for me. But some people are like, just give me a handout, I'll do it on my own,” shared Student G. The second idea was that of a panel discussion to introduce students to the faces and people to go to for all the answers to their questions as they come up. This would include RAAs and other key Residence Life employees, IT personnel, librarians, tutors from the Office of Learning Services, and other upper-class students. This would define jobs on campus, give new students a chance to ask the specific questions they have, and clearly give them people to go to in the future.

Question Three, “Should the FYF 101 program do more to cover writing skills, paper formatting, and research” had the least amount of discussion and the strongest response against the idea. The focus group participants all agreed that due to the current time frame of the FYF 101 program, adding in more coverage of writing and evaluating sources would “not be a good ideas…because it’s such a short time period and asking students to write a paper during the midst of all the other activities going on, I think they will just be stressed out and it wouldn’t be in their memory as much,” according to Student A. Focus group participants agreed that this was the role of the English department or other Foundations courses and not FYF 101, which “is not looking for academic excellence right off the bat. What FYF is looking for is setting the groundwork for academic excellence and I don’t think learning how to do MLA or APA is going to effect that,” according to Student B. Other students expressed the frustration that would develop from students who are already prepared and able to do these things well and, as Student G shared, “I would’ve been bored and annoyed if we did that as part of FYF. I think there’s enough…enough
in FYF going on already that I don’t think you need to learn paper writing and again with the
different, like you’re taking it from a bunch of different high school experiences.” Participants
did suggest that if the FYF 101 program were extended further into the semester, there could be a
“way to partner with FYF like a few weeks into the semester maybe and you actually have a
paper that’s going to be doing and you actually need to find sources and use proper citations.
That might be more beneficial than during the actual orientation weekend” (Student E).
Additionally, a panel discussion with librarians to “give the students a glimpse so that they can
later just continue like practicing in [inaudible] reaching out to those people later so that they
won’t have to feel like, oh it’s a one-time thing and I have to remember” (Student C).

Finally, the Focus Groups addressed Question Four: “How could FYF 101 better help
students transition socially, both with peers and faculty?” On the aspect of social transitioning
with peers, participants were united in saying that this process must be experienced by students,
but could be guided more by FYF 101 mentors or the program as a whole. Student B shared that

The current program is founded on a lot of big picture ideas, things that are important to
Trinity as a school, um, and to the Reformed Tradition that we’re kind of stepping into
while we attend the college. Um, and I think making it so big picture making it…talking
about it, talking about diversity, all these things that are essential to where we are, can
also miss out on a relational aspect, which is something that’s really important and
something that I think needs to be focused on maybe a little bit more.

Student G followed up by saying, “it’s kind of something you just have to do, like it’s a hard part
of transitioning to college and I don’t think we’re going to be able to fix that. Like I don’t think
it’s our job to like fix it and make it perfect. The transition is healthy and it’s um, it causes a lot
of growth personally and socially. And um, there’s only so much hand-holding we can do with
that kind of stuff.” All participants encouraged more on-going support from FYF 101 mentors to continue to help students connect with people socially, as well as encouraging more upperclassmen to be present and connecting to first-year students early on. In terms of the connection to faculty, both focus groups came up with the idea to have a specific lunch set aside during the FYF 101 program where students sat with others in their major, and were joined by professors from that major. This will allow students another point of connection (FYF 101 group, Residential Life hall, those in shared major classes) already in the early days of being on campus, as well as beginning to develop relationships with faculty who will be resources throughout their college experience. Student C stated the importance of these interactions by saying that they formed a good relationship with their FYF faculty mentor, who happened to also be a professor for their major, which meant that “because I felt comfortable with one professor, I got to know that professors aren’t just some people higher up there that I can’t really talk to. It just helped me to have more confidence in talking to, um, the faculty. So, I reached out to even more faculty afterwards.”

Themes

Four broad themes were evident from the data that was gathered, along with an additional emerging theme. 1. The FYF 101 program seems to be good at covering thematic topics, but is not successful at preparing students for the practical elements of transitioning to college; 2. The thematic elements were perceived by students as the elements FYF 101 did the best job of teaching; 3. The perception about the topics that are not being covered well seem to stem from anxiety and stress for first-year students; and 4. Students desire more specific academic preparation and connection to faculty as soon as they arrive at college. An emerging fifth theme of relevance of the material in FYF 101 is also present.
Each of the five research questions are addressed by one or more of the themes. Specifically themes four and five answer the first research question, to what extent did students, who are members of Generation Z, feel prepared for the academic expectations and use of digital sources for research in the summer before entering college. The second research question, how well did the content of FYF 101 prepare Generation Z students at Trinity Christian College for academic success, is answered by themes two through five. The third research question, did the structure and content of FYF 101 effectively help prepare Generation Z students for their transition into college and academic success, is acknowledged by themes one and three. All themes one through five address the fourth research question, does FYF 101 contain the content that students perceive as important in helping them transition into life and academic success at Trinity Christian College. Finally, themes one and four answer the fifth research question, what elements do students feel are necessary to add or subtract from the FYF 101 curriculum in order to be more effective in helping Generation Z students transition into Trinity Christian College. These themes, working in conjunction with each other, all give answer to the research questions that were asked in this study. Though no single research question is answered by each of the specific themes, all are answered clearly through these themes.

**Theme One: Practical Transitioning Skills.** Consistently, students responded with a desire to see more topics included into the FYF 101 program that pertain to their physical and social transition on to the college campus. From the student survey responses, it appears that the adjustment to living on campus is challenging to many of them and instead of being a generation of students who can figure things out through exploration or trial and error, these students desire help in making sure that they know where to go for campus resources or getting questions answered, how to accomplish daily tasks such as printing or refilling a laundry debit card, and
how to approach every single aspect of college life. In line with the research on Generation Z, these students who have been guided, coached, organized, and watched over by their parents their entire lives, seem to need a more directed and specific transition in their early days on campus. The goal, perhaps, would be to wean them off this guidance, but as the program is right now, not nearly enough is being done to replicate the life they are used to. A more gradual approach is perhaps needed to begin their year by teaching and introducing them to all the elements brought up by this research, and then teach them how to find answers and gain independence on their own.

The practical skills highlighted by students in the survey data fall into three main categories: how to live in the dorms, how to locate campus resources, and how to do daily tasks. The responses indicate that they would be more confident in their college transition if they knew how to do each of these things before the start of classes on the first day. These observations mirror the observations made by Seemiller and Grace (2016) who stated that “students should engage in learning that prepares them to apply knowledge and skills to deal with the complexity of the real world” (p. 218). The authors argue that in creating programs for Generation Z students, practical goal-setting must be integrated, along with goal-setting and practical elements such as financial literacy, information literacy, and leadership competency. Seemiller and Grace (2016) indicate that

Generation Z students are realistic problem solvers who appreciate honesty and authenticity from those who lead them…They would rather face an issue head-on and be part of the solution. With their problem-solving nature and desire to be consulted in decision making, it is a win-win scenario for those working with Generation Z students to
be transparent and involve them in addressing issues. Not only can this be empowering for the students, it might result in a great solution. (p. 193-194)

In this light, the request by students to help them find solutions to their confusion and uncertainty about life on campus in their first few days fits in with the understanding of who Generation Z students are.

In terms of living on campus, many students felt that they were not fully trained or prepared on issues of where and how to do laundry, how to reload laundry cards, and who to talk to about supplies or facilities in the dorms themselves. Perhaps this means that the Residence Life staff need to rethink how they help first-year students transition into living on campus, but that also means that the FYF 101 program should coordinate better with the Residence Life staff to make that happen during the first few days of the program. More significantly is the request from many students to spend more time teaching first-year students how to interact and live with roommates and the new dynamics of community living and adult relationships. This response is indicative, it appears, of the struggle Generation Z students have with in-person conversations and the unwillingness or fear to face potential awkwardness, as reported in Chapter Two in the work done by Kerry Cronin (2017). When so many of their friendships in high school have been conducted on Snapchat, text, and Instagram as the primary method of communication, it is not surprising that students feel that more time should be spent teaching them how to share a room with another person and how to work through any differences face-to-face.

The second category was that of finding and utilizing campus resources. While all students are given tours on campus visits, these are more general and often occur months before the student actually moves on to campus. In the collected data, students requested more time spent on learning how to find key personnel on campus, more specific tours to locate campus
offices and classrooms, and knowing exactly where their mailbox is located and how to open it. In the past, some of these things were left up to the student as part of their exploration, discovery, and ownership of the college campus. When looking at Generation Z, however, and their stress about and aversion to awkwardness, it appears that the process of getting lost and having to ask questions to gain understanding is no longer going to be the modus operandi for this group.

The final category was a request for more specific training about the day-to-day workings of life on campus. Some of the requests included more time spent on learning how to print documents, how to use Moodle, how the dining hall works, meal swipe policies and use in places beyond the dining hall, how to buy books, and even where to study on campus. It again seems indicative of this generation that they are unable or unwilling to explore and discover these things on their own, and feel unprepared if they have not been specifically taught or walked through each element or option. This seems to reflect a general theme for this generation that their lives have been planned, guided, and sometimes controlled by adults. Many have never had to ask or make mistakes or go through a process of discovery before, as the way was paved for them or things were done for them throughout their younger years.

Overall, the desire for practical skills reflects the level of cognitive and social development that many first-year students find themselves upon entering higher education. As addressed in Chapter 2, students are entering college trying to figure out how to make meaning of the world they occupy (Patton, 2016) and learning to articulate their social identity. Simultaneously, they are still in a level of cognitive development that focuses on duality, or the “sense that all questions have one right answer” and “authorities know the answers and are responsible for teaching them to others” (Skipper, 2005, p. 40-41). This desire for practical
transitioning skills and knowing campus resources fits with the stage of cognitive dualism that these first-year students experience. Furthermore, the combination of uncertainty about how they fit into the social structure of the campus, as well as the need to know the one correct answer for all of their questions mirrors exactly what has emerged here as Theme One. What is necessary in response to this data, then, is to build a first-year seminar curriculum that guides students through these stages of social and cognitive development and into a mindset that allows them to engage in the cognitive multiplicity that will be necessary in their college classroom experiences.

**Theme Two: Thematic Topics That Were Covered Well.** Overall, the data indicates that students least preferred talking about or addressing the more thematic elements to the FYF 101 program. These themes are topics that are important to the culture and mission of Trinity: worldview, diversity, Reformed theology, service, strengths development, and community. While the data revealed quite clearly that the first-year students felt these elements did the least to prepare them for their college experience, these thematic elements were also the things that students reported were covered or taught best in the FYF 101 program. In short, they reported that they learned these themes successfully, but this exposure did not prepare them for life in college in the way they perceived they needed to prepare to be successful.

There are some possible reasons behind this seeming dichotomy. For one, many students arrive at college never having addressed or discussed some of these topics before. With a population of students with very diverse religious backgrounds, many students have never been exposed to thinking about their theology or identifying what it is that they actually believe. Many students have never learned the term “worldview” before coming to college and are starting from scratch in thinking about their own worldview or the worldviews of others. Almost
no students have ever taken the StrengthsFinder assessment before coming, so all knowledge about those results are going to be new to them. It is not surprising, therefore, that the students reported that FYF 101 was successful in teaching them about these topics, as their baseline of knowledge was probably very low.

On the other hand, concerning the topics of diversity and community, some students are coming in with the idea that they already have a mastery of these themes. Generation Z is considered the most racially diverse generation, and most students have grown up with an understanding or relationship with people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds. In some instances, these students may be thinking that they are fine and do not need continued conversation about these topics. Additionally, the challenge of being more open and vulnerable about power, privilege, and racial difference is not one that these students may be willing or even able to do in the early days of their college career. For the students who do come from very homogenous communities, diving into these conversations in the first days on campus may just be too awkward for them. In this way, it makes sense that these topical elements are seen as secondary to the more practical pieces of just fitting in and transitioning to being away from home.

**Theme Three: Anxiety about Daily Life.** The third theme does tie in the previous two, but reveals that first-year students perceive that they need to be able to transition in their own way and choose what they think they need to be successful. In some ways, this is a common perception in young adults in general: the idea that they know what they need and do not need the extra help that some of their peers might need. In some ways, the FYF 101 program has been designed the way it has so that students do not find too much time on their hands in the first few days on college. By keeping them busy and their minds occupied, they might be less likely to
get homesick or reconsider their decision because they are distracted. This may have worked for previous generations, but Generation Z is continually connected to home, parents, and off-campus friends due to social media and smart phones. Even kept busy, they are reminded of home, connected with home, and communicating with parents sometimes multiple times a day. So, a new approach to how time is scheduled during FYF 101 seems to be appropriate based on survey responses.

First, student responses are asking for more free time or choice. In student responses on the survey, some reported that their most difficult aspect to transitioning to Trinity was “the lack of time because of the busyness of FYF,” while another student indicated “Time. [sic] For freshman FYF is crazy busy that it didn’t allow for any free time throughout your day to get adjusted and make yourself feel fully at home before you fully got in the school mode with made me exhausted before classes even began.” Others used words like “exhausting,” “stressed,” and that FYF 101 was “fast paced.” Another student asked to shorten the FYF 101 program “so that students are able to breathe a bit before classes begin” or “make the schedule less hectic so you can actually process the things coming at you.” Finally, a student reported that “FYF is an important time to make friends, so maybe more free time at the beginning of the week.” Probably the most telling response, considering the general characteristics of Generation Z and their visual emphasis and shorter attention spans as well as being consistent with student learning in general, was the student who said that “I would love to see more interaction between the students in FYF and less time sitting listening to lectures. For me personally, I don’t do well sitting for long periods of time.” Students are responding to a very real aspect of the current FYF 101 program: students are scheduled and busy from 8:00 am to between 10:00 and 11:00pm. The packed schedule is in part due to the desire to keep students busy enough to forget
about home, and in part because over the years more and more topics were added into the program to address changing demands of what the college felt students needed to cover in their first days on campus.

Second, in the programmed time, students are requesting more chances to get to know other students, more time to choose how they interact with each other, and once again, more practical elements to make them feel at home on campus and ready for classes to begin. This request aligns once more with the research of Seemiller and Grace (2016) about Generation Z students. Both in and out of the classroom, these students like to be consulted and be involved in their learning process, and not just be recipients of knowledge. Seemiller and Grace (2016) say that “this calls for a more facilitative than authoritative approach to teaching” (p. 204). Like the survey respondents, Seemiller and Grace (2016) encourage new approaches to teaching including flipped classrooms, hybrid courses, and student-driven learning to “fit well with Generation Z students’ interest in intrapersonal learning because they could independently learn content on their own while also tending to their desire for social learning by meeting face-to-face periodically with their peers” (p. 206). This concept mirrors that of a focus group participant who said:

Maybe have a schedule of choices for lectures to attend... like OPUS. That way, if I felt like all was all set in the paper-writing world, I could choose instead to go to the lecture about time management. Then there could be small group discussions after each within each lecture attendance, and post-conference meetings with my FYF group to have us teach each other what we learned. Obviously there needs to be multiple lectures that are required for everyone, but there are plenty of topics that I would have rather chosen to attend. Rating severity [sic] would be key.
Overall, this theme speaks to a disconnect between how students answered the quantitative survey questions about college preparation and their qualitative responses. Though overall students indicated that they were prepared for writing papers and doing college work in the summer before their first-year, they still requested repeatedly that more time and energy would be spent in the FYF 101 program to help students prepare in practical ways for academic success. For example, many students made suggestions similar to the student who stated, “I think you guys should bring in people that been [sic] through the process to talk to the people that are very stress [sic] about the college life.” This seems to indicate an overall high level of stress and anxiety about performing well in college. While they are reflecting a past that they believe prepared them well, their anxiety of future performance and success seems to compel them to say that more needs to be done to truly prepare them for academics. This high anxiety about academic preparation leads to the fourth theme.

**Theme Four: Desire for specific academic preparation.** An interesting contradiction in the data is that the NSSE data reports that first-year Trinity Christian College students perceive their engagement with faculty as average in comparison to both other CCC&U colleges and other Chicago area colleges. The data collected in the survey specifically for this research, however, reveals a different feeling among students. Consistently, the request for more interaction with professors came up in qualitative responses to Survey Questions 33 (“List 3 topics that should be included in the first-year seminar to better help first-year students prepare for college that are not currently in the curriculum”), 34 (“Pick 1 topic that should remain in the curriculum, but needs to be developed more thoroughly, and why”), and 36. (“Based on your answer (to #35), what could a new FYF 101 course cover that would better prepare students for their academic transition?”). These answers included wanting more time with professors from across campus, but specifically
from each major, during the FYF 101 course. Students also noted the desire to know better how professors graded, how they taught, and what their expectations are in the classroom. It appears that many students, who have had parents pave their academic way and address all issues that have ever come up academically, are worried about not having that knowledge and support. Going from very protected worlds to having to navigate these waters on their own for the first time seems to be driving their desire to clear up any uncertainty before the semester fully begins.

Other topics included in the theme of specific academic preparation were a desire for more specific time management skills and training, more understanding about course loads and how to get homework done, how to study in a group, and what academic advising is all about, all seem to stem from anxiety from the day-to-day workings of college. Students indicated that they would like “to actually have a professor speak about how they run a class to get an idea of home [sic] college classes are,” “have interactions with more professors before class starts,” and “more lectures from past students and professors on how they handled and ? [sic] class and how they present classes.” Additionally, the suggestions were made to “meet with all of the professors of your major and ask them any questions you have” and “guide students in how to figure out a professor’s methods. What kind of note taking would work the best for this class. What will the tests look like (so you know how to take notes)? How each professor communicates, will they reply right away, do they like face to face better, etc… Mostly just guiding them in how to figure out the structure of a class.”

This theme provides a clear answer to Research Question 1, by indicating that although students perceived that they were prepared for paper writing and research when they came to college, in fact they see the need for more college-specific instruction on what is truly expected of them at the college level. This mirrors the research of both Seemiller and Grace (2016) and
Cronin (2017), who indicated that Generation Z students are looking for both authenticity and honesty when it comes to their true abilities. Though they have been told otherwise throughout their lives, they know that they cannot possibly be the best at everything, thus creating the academic-related anxiety and the desire for their college experience to be one that begins with honesty and a clear delineation of what is expected of them. Add to that the belief in Generation Z that education is of the utmost importance as a “foundation for individual success and societal prosperity” (Seemiller & Grace, 2016, p. 100), these students are anxious about their academic performance as “going to college today will likely result in accumulating a debt these students cannot pay off. They worry they will not find adequate employment after college to support themselves and their families as well as pay off their student loans” (p. 100). This sheds a lot of light on why the theme of better, specific academic preparation has come out of this research, and is a strong connection to the anxiety present in theme three.

In addition, this recurring desire to know all the ins and outs of how every professor works before the actual classes begin seems to reflect the way that Generation Z students have been coached all their lives and continue to seek coaching and mentoring relationships with those they work with, including professors.

**Emerging Theme Five: Relevance.** The final theme is one that is emerging from the other four, and speaks to some of the places that revealed opposing answers from students between the first section of quantitative questions in the survey (their own perceptions of preparedness the summer before entering college) and the final section of the survey where they requested better preparation for the daily workings and academic expectations of being enrolled in college. This seeming disconnect seems to stem from the idea of relevance. It appears that perhaps students are not seeing the relevance of the purpose and content of the FYF 101 program
to the rest of their college experience. Some of the requests for more practical and specific
preparation point to the possibility that FYF 101 does not do well in making it clear that what is
happening in this course, even the theoretical aspects, is setting the foundation for conversations
they will continue to have throughout their college experience. Perhaps the relevance of why the
class teaches more than just knowing where the mailboxes are, is not being communicated well
to students, or it is, but they are not perceiving those elements as relevant because their anxiety
about the basic adjustment to college is too great.

Relevance of the material in the minds of the program directors seems to be different than
relevance according to students. One student indicated that “I’d make it more relevant for the
total transition, not just academic. For many of us the social, emotional, etc. transition was
harder.” Another student had a stronger opinion about how they perceived the relevance of the
FYF 101 course:

I’m gonna be honest, I’m not even sure how FYF counts as a course. I didn’t learn
anything, but I was in a completely different boat than the other people in my FYF group
academically and socially. None of us were going through the same problems or
concerns, so if you put people together that have similar academic situations and goals,
that could be beneficial. I think right now there’s only the Honor’s group and the Bridge
Program group, but everybody else is kinda grouped together. So [sic] I think that by
making groups that are more similar, you can discuss academic struggles and social
struggles.

It is indicative perhaps, of the mindset of many Generation Z students that they are all individual
and unique, and were raised by parents who instilled those values in them. Wanting all parts of
the program to relate specifically to them on an individual level demonstrates their lack of
understanding how logistically impossible that would be, while reflecting what Seemiller and Grace (2016) describe as Generation Z students having a “more favorable impression of themselves than they do of their peers” (p. 13). In fact, the authors indicate that “they view themselves as responsible and determined individuals with concern for others, but the characteristics they associate with their peers can be interpreted as self-focused and irresponsible…another study found that one in three Generation Z students thinks their peers are lazy and lack focus” (p. 13). This negative view toward their peers could be what is driving the idea that students are not seeing the relevance of FYF 101 for themselves, but that their classmates may need it more and should have the additional support that they themselves do not need. One student voiced the concept this way: “I personally had been very well prepared for college coursework before I began, so for me sitting through hours of learning how to research sources or read a syllabus would have been a turn-off. However, I can see these resources being incredibly valuable for students who struggle in those areas, so encouraging students to learn in optional ways might be really good.”

Additionally, this theme that seems to be demonstrating that students are not getting the relevance of the FYF 101 course, which could reflect their general cognitive development, but also be indicative of the need for Generation Z to be motivated by rewards. If students are not seeing the reward of the class in the first days – be it advancement or better grades or character growth or making friends or finding the copy machine – they may not see the relevance for the bigger picture of their overall college experience. While Generation Z students are often motivated by “not wanting to let others down, advocating for something they believe in, making a difference for someone else, having the opportunity for advancement, and earning credit toward something” (Seemiller & Grace, 2016, p. 15), the authors also indicate that what is
almost more powerful with this group of students is the things that unmotivate them. They are
not motivated by the need for acceptance or competition, or the need to be validated. Instead,
“Generation Z students are more motivated by relationships and the ability to work toward
something they care about than financial advancement” (p. 17). The reason why some students
are not seeing the relevance of a course like FYF 101 could be that the wrong motivators are
being employed currently. It appears that the desire for relationship building with peers and
faculty, as the survey responses indicate, could be the element that motivates students to see the
relevance in the purpose of a first-year seminar in the future.

In addition to the five themes, one additional aspect of note was revealed through the
analysis of the data collected in the study, and this was the validity of the survey and the
suggestions made for improvements.

Validity of the Survey

Overall, the face validity of the collected data is strong. In part, this was demonstrated
through the high response rate on the survey, recurring themes in both the qualitative and
quantitative data collected, and the intersection that those results had with research on the
behaviors and beliefs of Generation Z students. While student answers in the quantitative
questions were not always consistent with their qualitative answers, clear themes did emerge.
And even in the places of seeming disparity, the way students responded about the perceptions of
their own skills and abilities was consistent with the broad characteristics of Generation Z. In
the cases where students reported in qualitative questions that they were prepared for college
writing, yet also reported that FYF 101 did not prepare them well for college writing, may reflect
more on the way these students see themselves and their own abilities than on the FYF 101
program.
One element to note in the validity of the findings is the prevalence of the use of the “neither” or neutral option on many of the quantitative survey questions. It is unclear whether the survey instrument or mode of collecting the data was weak in the Likert identifiers, or if there was confusion on the part of the participants. Perhaps some students chose the option because they truly felt like FYF 101 neither helped nor hurt them, but perhaps it was also used because they could not decide either way. Whatever the case, it is important to note that the researcher is aware that this could affect the validity of the findings.

Summary

The results of this study demonstrate that Trinity Christian College students do reflect, in many ways, the characteristics of Generation Z when it comes to their anxiety, their perceptions of their abilities, and their desire to be motivated differently than their predecessor generations. These characteristics play a large part in demonstrating as well, through this collected data, that the current FYF 101 program is not designed to meet these students where they are, nor to fully meet their educational needs for a successful college experience.

Stress and anxiety over starting college in general dominated the results, with students perceiving that if they were given all the information up front and were told all the steps right away, their transition into college would have been smoother. This stress and anxiety, reflective of Generation Z (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Cronin, 2017; Chun, et al. (2016); Wotapka, 2017) seems to be indicative of the lack of grit or ability to face obstacles as they come due to their protected upbringing. These anxieties are categorized into themes of anxiety over academic requirements and faculty interactions, anxiety over social and physical transition to the campus and residence life, and anxiety over the desire for practical skills instead of thematic ideas, which seem more relevant for the first few days on campus.
In addition to the themes that emerged from the data, so did some ideas for solutions and improvements in the future iterations of the FYF 101 program. With the intersections between the Focus Group responses and the needs of Generation Z that were revealed in the literature review, strong recommendations will be made that will create a strong first-year program to better serve the students at Trinity Christian College. These recommendations will be discussed in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This case study examined the current first-year experience program at Trinity Christian College, FYF 101, and its effectiveness in meeting the transitional needs of Generation Z students. As the current program is fifteen years old and beginning to become an overly scheduled four-day program, it is hard to adjust the program or allow for flexibility to meet the changing needs of new generations. This was the motivation to explore student perceptions about the current program and how well it prepared them for their college transition, as well as their ideas about improvements that could be made for future first-year students.

Four research questions guided this case study:

1. To what extent did students, who are members of Generation Z, perceive that they were prepared for the academic expectations of college in their first year?

2. How well, based on student perception, did the content of First-Year Forum 101 prepare Generation Z students for academic success and transition into college life at Trinity Christian College?

3. Did the content of First-Year Forum 101, based on student perception, effectively help prepare Generation Z students for their transition into college and academic success at Trinity Christian College?

4. What elements do students feel are necessary to add or subtract from the First-Year Forum 101’s curriculum that will be more effective in helping Generation Z students’ transition into Trinity Christian College?

Through the collection of data from current Trinity students via survey and Focus Groups, and a look at the spring 2017 NSSE data from Trinity Christian College, five themes
were revealed about the perceived transitional needs of first-year students. 1. The FYF 101 program seems to be good at covering thematic topics, but not successful at preparing students for the practical elements of transitioning to college; 2. The thematic elements were perceived by students as the elements FYF 101 did the best job of teaching; 3. The perception about the topics that are not being covered well seem to stem from anxiety and stress for first-year students; and 4. Students desire more specific academic preparation and connection to faculty as soon as they arrive at college. An emerging fifth theme of relevance of the material in FYF 101 is also present.

This chapter will discuss the themes and results of the data collection, as well as implications and recommendations for what the FYF 101 program might look like in the future. In addition, some discussion of future research related to this case study will be highlighted.

**Discussion of Results**

In their book, *Generation Z Goes to College*, Seemiller and Grace (2016) indicate that their research has demonstrated that in general Generation Z students have a strong work ethic, but desire relevance and authenticity in a way that requires educators to explain the meaning beyond the surface or the act. They want to “engage in learning that prepares them to apply knowledge and skills to deal with the complexity of the real world” (p. 218), and to face problems head on while being part of the solutions. In the results of this research, it has been made clear that “the real world” is equal to the new world of college for first-year students. Students have indicated many times in in the data collected that they want a first-year program that allows them to prepare for and gain the skills necessary to confidently enter the complexity of the college academic experience after the first-year program has ended.
This case study revealed that students at Trinity Christian College feel that overall, the current FYF 101 program does a very good job of teaching and introducing thematic elements and unique-to-Trinity ideas. These include learning how to use Moodle, the course management system; how to understand their strengths; what a worldview is, and what it means that Trinity holds a Reformed Christian one; the idea of diversity on campus and the central role it plays in campus life; and an introduction to what a Liberal Arts education really is. At the same time, there is an indication that students don’t currently see the relevance of those themes or their connection to the rest of their college experience. The results that indicate that these themes are taught well are very likely since many students come to Trinity not knowing anything about these topics. When a student has never thought about a strengths assessment before or heard the definition of worldview, the learning curve is going to be very high. They will leave the program knowing far more about these topics than when they entered it, which is how the survey asked them to evaluate this topic. However, even though students may have gained an understanding of these topics, it does not mean that they recognize why they need to know about these topics or how they will relate to the rest of their college experience. In fact, this answers the second research question, which asked if the content of FYF 101 prepares students for academic success. The data would indicate that students do not see this happening, as they are not connecting the topics being taught in these four days to their coursework later in the semester. This disconnect between teaching the themes well, but not establishing relevance may indicate that the program is missing a step that is necessary to truly achieve the objectives in the course. Some space needs to be given to move from understanding a concept or theme to helping students find connections and applications to their experience on campus. In terms of diversity, can students really address an understanding of those around them and how to engage
in conversations about diversity when they don’t yet know who they are on campus or among their peers? In terms of worldview, are students able to move from an understanding of what worldview is and vocalizing their own, to being able to discuss and learn from those with differing worldviews in their various courses? This research indicates that the way the program stands currently, there is neither the time nor the training to make this happen.

The lack of time leads to the next result of this research. Overall, the data indicates that students are most concerned about the lack of space in the current FYF 101 program. Responses ranged from a desire to have more time to truly meet and engage with a wide variety of people, including establishing better connections with roommates and suitemates, to the concern that they were starting classes already stressed out and exhausted from the long days and the rushed homework assignments giving in the four-day program. Overwhelmingly, students reflected the concerns that led to this case study in the first place, and reinforced the need to create a program that teaches students what an authentic college experience is really going to be, while offering a lot of people to support them and answer questions as they transition. Student responses indicated that college is a time where students have to learn how to manage time, often hours of open time in the middle of the day, but the FYF 101 program creates a false perception of college life with days being highly scheduled and full, from early morning until late at night. These first days on campus must reflect a more genuine college experience to best help students truly transition into what college will really be like – one in which they have choice, one in which they are encouraged to find balance, and one in which social confidence and connection is extremely important to their thriving. These results give a definitive answer to the third and fourth research questions, which asked students if the FYF 101 course effectively prepared students for their transition into college and academic success through both the structure and
content of the course. This recurring issue of space and time to adjust socially and physically to
the campus indicates that what students perceive will best help them transition to campus and be
successful academically is not currently aligning with what the program outcomes and faculty
feel is necessary. This misalignment needs to be corrected to best serve student needs – to help
them more thoroughly acclimate and adjust to the campus first, and then help them with the tools
and skills for academic success once they are comfortable enough to engage with those topics.

In this desire to have a program that allows more open time and space to connect with
peers, the results of the data collection also indicated that students are more concerned with
transitioning physically to the college campus than starting to dive into the deeper conversations
and thematic discussions. Across the board in both qualitative responses on the survey and in
Focus Group sessions, students indicated that they desire more clarity and guidance in settling
into campus itself – using campus resources, knowing where to go, and knowing how to live life
in college. The idea of wanting to know how to get a laundry card or use the laundry machines,
as well as a repeated desire to know where the mailboxes are and how to open them, seems to
indicate that students desire a program that allows them far more confidence in knowing how to
maneuver through the campus before the regular semester starts or the upper-class students show
up. Data showed that students wanted more interaction with professors early on, particularly in
their majors. Ideas about lunch sessions with faculty and fellow students, as well as requests for
a better understanding of faculty expectations in the classroom even before the semester begins,
adds to that idea that students desire a feeling of connectedness and belonging socially as an
outcome of this course. They need to know how they fit in and that they will be supported and
guided before they can dive into the more challenging conversations and discussions about
difference within the community: worldview and diversity. Based on the results of the study, it
is not that students want to get rid of those themes or conversations completely, but that they are not ready to engage in them yet in the first four days on campus. These suggestions answer the fifth research question which asked students to indicate what might need to be added or subtracted from the program for it to be more effectively helping students to transition into college at Trinity Christian College. These specific suggestions will be addressed in the Recommendations section of this chapter.

Finally, the results of this study demonstrate that how students see information literacy and their need for instruction about paper writing is very different from what faculty perceive the need to be. In answering the first research question, students indicated that they felt very prepared for the academic expectations and use of research materials before coming to college. Many indicated that while they were well prepared, they did see that many of their peers weren’t as well prepared, and could use more help. However, despite this result in the quantitative survey questions, the qualitative responses indicated that students did desire more help with paper writing and academic expectations, particularly in knowing the expectations of individual professors and the major programs. The impetus of some of the survey questions came from conversations and interviews with faculty about what they see to be the needs that the current FYF 101 program is not addressing well. Faculty consistently reported that they were seeing a lack of information literacy among their students, an inability to discern the validity of sources in research, and a need for more concentrated effort in getting students early on in their college experience to be able to effectively use and understand research tools. This study revealed that students were, for the most part, on the same page. They acknowledged that they would like more instruction in how to write papers well (specifically to meet professor expectations) and to be more successful in their paper writing in college. However, the biggest difference between
student responses and faculty perceptions was in the fact that through the qualitative responses and Focus Group conversations, students did not feel that the FYF 101 program was the appropriate place for these skills to be taught. This research indicated that students want to learn about research or writing from the professionals (the English department) or from the people who were doing the grading (professors in the discipline where the expectations for certain style of writing or research was required), not during the FYF 101 program. This mirrors the perception and desire on the part of students that the FYF 101 program be a program that focuses on adjustment to life in college, rather than making it a place where specific skills are taught across the board whether students feel they will need them or not.

**Limitations.** The greatest limitation for this study was that good, longitudinal research has not been gathered at Trinity Christian College through the Office of First Year Experience to determine effectiveness of the program or a need for changes in curriculum. While informal surveys have been taken each year after the program to get a temperature reading on the way the course went, and changes have been made along the way to address those survey responses, there has never been formalized data collection of the effectiveness of the program over the 15-year history. Additionally, internal research has never been conducted on campus to be able to determine if and how the FYF 101 program contributes to retention numbers and persistence to graduation success at the college. There is no direct data demonstrating correlation between retention numbers and the FYF 101 program specifically available on campus. There has long been a blanket idea that the school must be doing something right, including the FYF 101 program, because retention has been good, but there is no documented proof to support it. This study could have been able to demonstrate more conclusive results perhaps, if there had been an ability to track results and data over time to look at how effective the program was in the past.
and to truly make determinations that compare perceptions of previous Millennial students to the perceptions of the new Generation Z students. This limitation opens the door for continued research and data collection going forward, however, to make sure that the course is more effectively keeping up with the changes in student population and need in the future.

Additionally, the wording of the survey questions, in the end, created some limitations. One such limitation was the wording on some the survey questions, which caused some confusion during the data analysis in Chapter 4. In hindsight, the order of Likert categories in Questions 1-5 of the survey should have been rearranged to read Very Well Prepared, Prepared, Somewhat Prepared, and Unprepared. Due to the inversion of Prepared and Somewhat prepared, some of the mean and median data analysis was a little confusing. In order to report the data more clearly, these two terms were switched in order on the tables in Chapter 4 and the issue is addressed in the data analysis and results there. With the help of a statistician at Trinity Christian College, the reporting of the data was still valid, despite the initial confusion. In addition, the survey demonstrated limitations in the area relating to the informational literacy questions. While the survey addressed whether or not students felt prepared to write papers and do research when coming to college, the results fell short of really comprehending if students understood what information literacy actually is. The survey questions focused on perception rather than knowledge. In that way, the data collection did not fully provide the kind of information to help answer Research Question One confidently. A future study would need to make sure that the students were being asked questions that revealed if they know what information literacy means and if they understand that bias and discernment are a major factor in using digital resources for paper research. Perhaps questions would also need to be included to find out what digital resources students are actually using and aware of as well. Without data to reveal what students
already know about this topic or a way to make sure that students are using the same definition for information literacy, the data collected in this project cannot be conclusive, nor is it effective for making clear recommendations as a result.

Finally, there are limitations present in the data collection, particularly in the Focus Groups. The initial survey was sent out to all students who are current sophomores through seniors and had participated in the FYF 101 program as first-year students, giving the results a greater likelihood that there would be an aggregate representation from a wide variety of Trinity students. However, when it came to asking students to commit to the follow-up Focus Group sessions, those who chose to participate ended up being students who only represented the top percentile of their class in terms of both academics and participation in the life of the college. All participants in the Focus Groups were students in good academic standing and held formal leadership positions at some time in their time at Trinity. This means that all suggestions and insights were coming from students who have invested themselves into Trinity, and have engaged in a very holistic education in their time on campus. This skews the responses toward a very particular group of students, rather than a representation of all types of students on campus. The recommendations made by students could have been very different had a more diverse group of students participated. As research continues on this topic and Trinity brings a more ongoing process of Focus Groups to maintain the program in the future, a more deliberate attempt at hearing from a far more diverse group of students should be made. It is important that this program meets the needs of the struggling students and those who live more on the edges of college life as well, so their voices need to be included.
Implications

This study not only opens the door for further research in the area of the first-year seminar, it also demonstrates a need to apply an understanding of Generation Z students across the college and specifically in teaching practices in first-year or general education courses.

Implications for Practice. Understanding Generation Z students (or any future students) on the front edge of the generational shift is crucial. There is an immediacy to stay on top of generational changes in order to help students flourish from the moment they begin their higher educational experience. This immediacy extends beyond the context of a first-year seminar in any institution, however, and must also take place across the curriculum for all courses students are taking in their first years. Faculty from all departments should be teaching from an understanding of who their current students are and how they learn. In order to do this, a more comprehensive study of student perceptions about teaching practices, relevance, and faculty connection should be administered across all general education courses.

This extended study could take the survey used here and tweak it to encompass a larger group of courses. The aggregate data could be reanalyzed to look at the whole general education experience for first-year students, rather than just the first-year seminar. This might give the institution a better understanding whether the curriculum as a whole is meeting the needs of students for both retention and academic flourishing. In addition, faculty would then have a better understanding of the effectiveness of their teaching techniques with the current generation of students, thus helping fine-tune where additional faculty development might be needed. By putting this into practice, students will have a far more interconnected educational experience across the general education curriculum.
**Implications for further research.** For further research in the area of the first-year seminar specifically, there is a need to take this study and turn it into something that could be applicable or functional to other small colleges or universities. In order to transfer what was learned in this study for use in a broader scope, a rubric must be created that can give other institutions a guideline for measuring this information on their campuses. This rubric could evaluate both characteristics of Generation Z students (or future student populations) and learning outcomes for a first-year seminar or general education curriculum. Descriptions for what would be described as “excellent,” “satisfactory,” “neutral,” “unsatisfactory,” or “poor” could be created by the institution to match up with their values and desired outcomes for first-year students.

This rubric would then serve two goals. First, it could be used at Trinity Christian College on a regular rotation to check that courses for first-year students are still meeting the needs of the students. Perhaps the rubric could revolve through academic affairs for ongoing assessment that focuses on a few general education departments each year. The information gathered from the use of the rubric would then help that particular academic department re-think or adjust their approaches in and out of the classroom to better serve students. Second, once a rubric is created, it can be shared with other small colleges and universities to give them a starting point for this study on their campus. By giving other institutions a foundation to evaluate whether or not their first-year program is staying flexible enough to meet the transitional and academic needs of changing student populations, they could make changes more quickly in their own programs and not have to start from scratch in their own research.
Recommendations

Recommendations for Better Communication. Incoming first-year students do not know the departmental definitions or the areas of responsibility on a college campus. All students know is that they have questions and want answers, not who the proper persons or departments are who can answer them. In addition, students are expressing the desire for more gathering of information in their first days on campus to feel better prepared to begin the academic component of their college experience. For this reason, collaboration and communication need to be stronger on college campus, and in particular at Trinity Christian College. This communication fall into two areas: communication between departments and communication with students.

Communication between departments. First, as students are indicating a great need for being taught how to navigate campus resources and how to feel comfortable living on or accessing campus, Trinity can no longer assume that these questions are being addressed or covered by someone else. If learning how to access mailboxes and do laundry had not been previously included in FYF 101 because the assumption was made that it was being covered in Residence Life, that needs to change. In addition, if Admissions is communicating information about some of these things, but then First Year Experience relays slightly different information, confusion will continue to grow. A recommendation for Trinity Christian College is to develop an intentional process of mapping out what is being communicated to students and when. There should be a list of all the things that are important for students to know from the time they are admitted to the first day of classes in their semester. Once that list is developed, the departments need to map out when the information should be covered to best help students and who is responsible for covering it. This will not only make sure that information is shared at
appropriate times, but that all departments are aware of what their responsibility is so that there are not gaps in what is told to students. The departments should audit this process every year, making sure that the way information is being communicated from all departments is consistent and empowering to students to allow them to make confident choices in their college transition process. One way to do this is to use the Rubric to Evaluate Language developed by Kathryn Wilhite (2017) in her research at Kennesaw State University. Her study illustrated that communication pieces that utilize empowerment language, statement formation, and language leading to engaged decision making, are more likely to define the environment in meaningful and substantial ways. As the context is applied to the terms, the opportunity for a student to make meaning that informs a meaningful definition emerges. Through that meaning making process, the student’s role and responsibilities within the environment develop. Those communication pieces that place a priority on empowerment language do a better job at instructing informed decisions and explicitly trusting students to make them. (p. 90-91)

The college overall needs to ensure that communication with first-year students is done in a way that meets the student needs both in content and method of delivery, rather than rely on what has been done in the past.

*Communication with students.* The second area of better communication is directly with the students themselves. Trinity Christian College and more specifically the FYF 101 program needs to make sure that students know that their questions will be answered. Perhaps that is simply by indicating in writing and in daily conversation that the questions have been anticipated and will be answered at a time that will best help the students in their transition. Perhaps sharing information in a more detailed pamphlet or handbook, as suggested by a student in the Focus
Group, so that students have a written copy that clearly indicates not only the answers to frequently asked questions, but also a reassurance that all questions will be answered in due time and a reminder of who to turn to for various issues that come up. These communications also need to eliminate the internal divisions of department or area, as students do know yet know the structures of the college and honestly don’t care which department oversees what, as long as their question is being answered. The college can do a better job of answering all questions while also gently guiding students toward an understanding of these departments and areas of expertise for the future.

**Recommendations for a re-creation of the course.** Several elements of the FYF 101 course could change to meet the needs of Generation Z students and future classes of incoming first-year students to Trinity Christian College.

*Change the way the college views the course.* In many ways, the college hold the FYF 101 program a little arrogantly, in that it is defined internally as an academic course that is required for graduation and holds a one-credit value. It is taught only by faculty and not qualified staff members, and is seen as the gateway into academic life at Trinity. This perception is not the way students perceive the course however, and a change in attitude among faculty and Academic Affairs needs to happen to hold the course a little more lightly as an interdisciplinary and co-curricular experience rather than as one that is strictly academic. The purpose for a first-year course such as this one should be to help students in their transition and prepare them for the rest of their college experience, which includes a far greater holistic view of flourishing than just the academic component. So, while the course should remain academic in content, the value of the non-academic aspects needs to take a higher priority and value in the minds of the faculty and the college.
One program with two distinct parts. To maintain a course that intentionally helps students transition into college and thrive as students both socially and academically, the course needs to be viewed and planned as two separate parts. As students indicated, there needs to be more space built in to allow students to settle without being over-programmed or overscheduled, a trend that they have experienced most of their lives and which has contributed to their already higher levels of anxiety. Instead, by extending the FYF 101 program beyond the four or five days before the semester and into the first semester itself, there is room to begin to allow for both transitions to occur more naturally and thoroughly.

The first part of the program then, becomes what exists already: the days before the semester begins and having first-year students on campus before the rest of the student body arrives. The college needs to prioritize their ideas around actual activities that belong in the program’s first days to keep the focus on allowing students to transition to living on campus, making decisions about how they manage their time, and acclimating them to the resources and services available on campus. In these early days, the focus could be on campus resources, deepening relationships with fellow students across the class and within residence life, teaching students how to make decisions about time management and finding a work-life balance, and making sure they are able to access any necessary technological programs (Moodle, email, student portal) that are essential to their daily success in college. In addition, a focus could be put on the history of Trinity, what it means to be a Trinity student, and an intentional welcoming of students into the traditions and values of the Trinity community.

This means that some of the more academic elements are moved out of the first days and into the semester itself. The college needs to determine, based on general education requirements and what works best within the way the college does the academic load, how long
the course continues into the semester. The course could meet weekly for all 15 weeks of the semester, or more ideally, twice a week for the first 8 weeks of the semester. This would allow a chance for the themes of diversity, worldview, StrengthsFinder Assessments, understanding liberal arts, and information literacy to be presented to students at points in the semester where it connected much better to what they needed at that time. For example, the first week could focus on time management and engage students in mapping out their work for the semester based on the syllabi they received from all their courses, making the exercise practical and relevant. Information literacy could be addressed by librarians and representatives from different disciplines in the third or fourth week of classes, when students are starting to have to turn in their first papers. The papers and assignments would then have more value, as they would be handed in to other courses and not just arbitrary assignments for the FYF 101 course. In creating this 8- or 15-week curriculum, the college would need to make some decisions about how the themes line up with the other first-year general education courses to best scaffold the information and support students when they need it along the way. Some of these decisions would involve removing topics that are present only because this seminar happens to be a place where all first-year students can be found. Over time, it was become a catch-all for all the topics the institution feels first-year students need to know, without truly evaluating if the seminar is the right time and place for that information. Some topics that might fall into that catch-all category are:

Where does Title IX training need to be to help first-year students understand its implications?
When should diversity conversations be addressed in a way that will allow first-year students think deeply about privilege and valuing differences? Does an element about student identity development need to be added to the curriculum first in order to help first-year students understand who they are before they can truly understand about others? These decisions about
keeping or excluding these topics need to be made to help shape the expanded and additional weeks of this course.

And finally, with the two distinct parts, it is recommended that the course should be assessed differently in each of the areas. Better ongoing research and data collection by the college needs to happen yearly to make sure that the course is meeting the changing needs of students, as well as to identify emerging trends or issues early enough to make appropriate changes that will best serve incoming first-year students. The assessment of the pre-semester days should be conducted by Student Affairs to make sure that students are flourishing in those areas and the program is meeting the Learning Outcomes specific to that part of campus. In addition, the semester portion of the course should be assessed by Academic Affairs and specifically the Foundations Committee, which writes and oversees all the general education curriculum. Side by side but separate assessment would allow changes to individual parts of the program as needed and not necessarily a reconfiguration of the entire first-year seminar program if one aspect is still working as it should. This will allow more flexibility and timeliness in changing the program in the years to come.

*Built-in flexibility for changing students.* The final recommendation for changes to the course itself is connected back to the attitude the college should adopt toward the course. The first-year program needs to meet students where they are, not necessarily where faculty wish they were. That means that more time should be allowed for the Director of First-Year Experience and those shaping the Foundations Curriculum to conduct ongoing research and study into student development and the trends of shifting generations or populations of students. This should be done both through research and reading of published materials, but also spending more time networking and working with other practitioners at other institutions, in order to share
resources and learn about best practices occurring at other institutions of higher learning. More emphasis on research that focuses on the needs of first-generation students to gain better understanding of their needs and the patterns of enrollment with this population should be given. The Director should be given additional time to spend in study and research, and not just on planning the logistics of the program itself from year to year. This additional time and the resulting research could help shape course development by faculty in all departments in ways that will best serve the current student population. If this course is to lay the foundation for the flourishing and academic success of students throughout their college career, there must be a system in place with the intent to build on the curriculum in the FYF 101 course, as well as in the other courses that first-year students are taking. Ultimately, to do this, it is recommended that the Director move from a half-time to a full-time position.

Additionally, as the Director of First-Year Experience works to create the groundwork and share research, the college needs to spend more time helping faculty translate that knowledge into their teaching practices both in the FYF 101 course and across the general education curriculum. Currently, very little time is spent on faculty training; not just faculty training for FYF 101, but faculty training as a whole. Trinity Christian College is currently working through a Quality Enhancement Plan as part of an upcoming accreditation review which includes a focus on better faculty development, which is a good step in the right direction. As the school considers the idea that more intentional faculty development and training is needed, this offers a perfect opportunity for specific training to be included that helps faculty develop new ideas for teaching first-year students, and ways to incorporate more technology or activities that meet students where they are in their learning styles and needs. It is recommended that as
Trinity Christian College shapes their outline and schedule for the QEP implementation, they incorporate the FYF 101 program into that process.

**Recommendations for future study for the course.** Looking ahead, it is recommended that the college lay out a specific long-term plan that indicates to what extent the course should be flexible for future iterations, and what things should be considered foundational. Perhaps this could look like a side-by-side document that indicates elements that are flexible due to the needs of students and which are imperative to introduce the mission and values of the Trinity Christian College community. Some of the possible consistent topics might include the history of Trinity and the values it was founded on, as well as the ideas of worldview, diversity, and community that are written into guiding documents of the institution.

Secondly, it is recommended that the college looks at the FYF 101 program in conjunction with the new Foundations (general education) curriculum, which is set to be unveiled in the Fall of 2019. There should be a continual emphasis on making sure the FYF 101 course complements the Foundations Curriculum to intentionally provide a connection and anchor for the other first-year courses and the Learning Outcomes. It should not just be in the years where a major overhaul happens that these course connections are studied, but on an ongoing basis to maintain integrity and continuity in the curriculum.

One area in particular that the Foundations curriculum could emphasize would be the desire of students to engage more fully with faculty. The idea of a lunch with faculty and students in a major or department, as suggested by students, ties into the general desire of Generation Z students to be mentored or coached. Using Sharon Daloz Parks’ ideas about walking beside students on their faith and identity journey, Trinity Christian College could do a much better job of intentionally engaging with students in this way during their first year of
college. Connecting the mentoring element of FYF 101 with an on-going process of mentoring students across the first-year curriculum could not only contribute to retention and persistence goals, but also fulfill Trinity’s goals of faith development in students. As Generation Z in general pulls away from organized religion and religious practices (Seemiller & Grace, 2016), helping students regain or develop the habits of opting into religious practice and communal worship might best be done through modeling and mentoring from the faculty.

Finally, it is recommended that the college consider what the data collected in this survey indicated was not working well for students. While students are stating that there should be more emphasis on teaching discipline-based writing skills (specifically MLA versus APA styles and requirements), they are also expressing that they would prefer that the teaching of this come from departments and the places where they are going to need to put it into practice, not from the FYF 101 or first-year program. It is important for the college to invest some time into this request to discover where it would best serve students, which may mean adjusting the content of some courses or finding an additional space to add a course to address these needs.

**Recommendations for immediate action steps.** To address the recommendations made in this chapter, Trinity Christian College should take a few easy and immediate action steps.

*Step One.* Convene an action team to look through the collected data and the recommendations listed to write a white paper that outlines the expectations that students have for their first-year on campus, as well as what is in place currently to try to meet those expectations. This would look at the work of Admissions through the first semester of course, to create a timeline of what is currently in place and what the student data revealed. This step would be a reporting step to share the information across the campus.
Step Two. Convene an ad-hoc committee or action team that contains both faculty and Student Life representative to begin a conversation about what is being done in the first-year and what needs to happen moving forward. Members of this team would include faculty who teach first-year and Foundations courses, members of Admissions and Student Life staff, and the Director of First-Year Experience. In this step, the group would map out an action plan to determine how to fill in the gaps that were revealed and expressed in the white paper report. Their recommendations would then go to the Foundations Committee and the Director of First-Year Experience to help shape curriculum and program changes.

Step Three. Even as discussions are continuing across campus about the future of the Foundations Curriculum, and courses continue to be proposed and evaluated, members of the Foundations Committee should keep the collected data from this research in mind. As there seems to be a need for a course to help with specific writing genres and requirements, finding courses or ways to build that into the curriculum now makes the most sense.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated the need to create systems and programs within colleges and universities that approach first-year student success with an open-handed attitude that is willing to listen to the way students think, learn, and require to be successful in college and persist to graduation. Just because a college thinks they know what students need or how to serve them, without intentional research and data collection this cannot be known for sure. Trinity Christian College has coasted for a long time on a system that has not changed much but has been assumed to be working because retention numbers remain high. Unfortunately, the direct correlation between retention numbers and the FYF 101 program had not been evaluated, and it appears that the program was not actually providing what students perceive they need, and thus perhaps not
such a significant factor in the retention numbers. One the other hand, the study also
demonstrated that the FYF 101 program at Trinity Christian College was created on a very solid
foundation of best practices and a commitment to the deeply held values and missional goals of
the college. Because of that, the content of the FYF 101 program has remained strong and
appears to still be what students need to transition smoothly into academic life in the college. It
is, however, the method of delivery and the structure of the program that warrants change as
demonstrated by the research and data presented in this paper.

Trinity Christian College is at an exciting time in its history and faces a very unique
opportunity to make big changes to the FYF 101 and first-year experience programs in the 2019
school year. Flexibility seems to be the key to building these changes—flexibility both, built
into the program for students to have some choice and autonomy over their experience and
flexibility in the structure of the course to make changes more quickly in the face of shifting
student populations and needs in the future.

The themes that were revealed through the data collection and student responses, and the
willingness of students to share ideas and suggestion for change, reflects a general understanding
about Generation Z students that shows they are very willing to help find ways to bring positive
change and are eager to be involved in those planning processes. Using student voices and
insight to keep the FYF 101 program more attuned to the needs of students now and in the
future, is crucial to keeping a flourishing program that truly translates into student success.
Trinity should not forget to keep listening to the voices of the students themselves in order to
provide an education that serves them well while being grounded in the traditions and values that
have kept Trinity strong for over 50 years.
Finally, it is evident that the ideas of belonging, identity within the college community, and a solid social and physical transition into the space of college are important to the students of Generation Z. As important as academics are, it is doing a disservice to throw students into deep conversation or rigorous academic study on their first or second day on campus. Once students are comfortable with their interaction with the campus community and have established the relevance for what they are learning in a first-year program, they will have the ability to engage with academic topics and experiences with far greater success. Small colleges just as much as large ones, and specifically Trinity Christian College, must make sure that first-year programs are truly helping with the holistic development of students, which starts with the very first days in the first-year program.
REFERENCES


Cuseo, J. (2017, January 18). Re: How many credit hours (units) should the first-year seminar (FYS) carry? [Electronic mailing list message]. Retrieved from fye-list@listserv.sc.edu.


Trinity Christian College. (n.d.) Designing the FYF course for significant learning.


Trinity Christian College. (n.d.) The relationship of the coordinator of the first-year experience position to retention task force recommendations.


Appendix A

Summer Assignment – Introduction Paper

Write a paper of introduction directed to the Trinity professor who will be your faculty mentor during FYF 101. This paper should be personal, reflective, honest, and complete. Your paper should contain:

a. One paragraph that briefly introduces who you are, where you live, some hobbies you have, and what you are hoping to study at Trinity. Include a little bit about your academic background here as well, since you are sharing with a professor who will have you in class.

b. One paragraph that explains your worldview: what you believe or who you believe in, how you see the world around you, and how you see where and how you fit into this world.

c. A personal story about an experience you have had with hospitality. Perhaps a time you were hospitable to others, or a time you felt great hospitality toward yourself. If necessary, it could be a time when you didn’t feel hospitality, and how or why that experience stood out to you and affected you.

d. A personal story about a time you felt truly part of a community. What factors caused you to feel that way? Is it something someone specifically said or did to create that community feel? Why is being part of a community important?

e. A personal story about interactions you have had with people who are different from you. What kind of situation have you been in where this played a role in the experience? Have you experienced the joy of variety in groups or situations? Have you experienced the negative aspects of brokenness in light of this idea? Why might variety and interaction with different types of people be important?

f. A brief conclusion to wrap up your paper.

You will be graded on the thoughtfulness and depth of your answers, the ability to follow directions, the paper’s organization, and grammatical correctness. Your audience is a Trinity professor (and possibly your upperclass mentor), so please use appropriate language and voice. This must be typed, double spaced and saved as a Word document (or saved as a PDF), include a proper heading at the top (this includes your full name and date), and then uploaded to Moodle. Before handing it in, make sure you have done a careful spelling and grammar check, and you have read over the paper at least once. Please make sure you submit the document as a final copy (follow the instructions on Moodle). It would be appropriate for this to be 2-4 pages long.

DUE: August 11, 2017
Appendix B

Final Project Part One: The Paper Due on Moodle by September 1, 2017

Write a 2-3 page paper, which responds to the article “An Education That Lasts” from the book Why College Matters to God by Rick Ostrander (Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, 2012, pages 125-141) and which was discussed by the panel on Monday, August 21.

The paper must contain the following:

- Personal analysis of the article. What did you learn from the article about a liberal arts education and the kind of education you will receive here at Trinity? Did anything in the article surprise you? Did you understand what a liberal arts education was before reading the article? If yes, did you learn any new insights? If no, how does this knowledge shape the way you are going to start classes this fall? Does it change anything in your mind about what you are doing at Trinity? Please use at least one direct quotation from the article (with proper citation) to support your response.

- Personal analysis of the discussion of the article. You heard the panel discuss the ideas, and you most likely discussed the article a bit in your small group. How did the panel bring more light or new ideas to the article? How did class discussion add to your understanding?

- Personal response and honest analysis to the process of reading the article. How much time did you spend reading the article the first time? Were there distractions? Was that a successful way to read it? Were you well prepared for classes and discussion the next day? What might you need to do in the future to do a better job of being ready to discuss an assignment in class?

- In light of your success or lack of success in doing your homework, how are you going to proceed once classes start? Do you think you might need some extra help? How do you think you are going to get your homework done? Where might that happen? What might you have to do now that you didn’t do in high school in order to be successful in college level work?

- Conclude your paper with an appropriate wrap-up paragraph.

- The paper must be typed, double spaced, and contain the proper headings at the top. It must include a proper works cited page at the end to correspond to the citations within. If you need help with this, go to the Purdue OWL website, which has all the information you will need. It must be spelling and grammar checked, and read over at least once by you before uploading it to Moodle.
Appendix C

IV. OVERALL COURSE DESIGN

A. General and Specific Theme

The general theme is “Joining the Journey” with a version of Psalm 16:11 -- “making known the path” -- as this year’s specific theme.

Psalm 16:11 (also quoted in Act 2:28)
You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Isaiah 42:16
I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.

What are the meanings we can give to “making known the path”?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

B. Chronological Design

Pre-FYF Week: “Getting ready for the journey”
Summer reading and assignments

FYF Week: “Meeting our fellow travelers”
Goal 1: Enfolded into an initial community p. . .

“Establishing the direction for our journey”
Goal 2: Introduced to a Biblical vision. . .

“Planning the next steps in our journey”
Goal 3: Challenged to be proactive. . .

Post FYF Week: “Jumping into the journey”
Living Learning Community pilot program in residence halls

C. Minute-by Minute Schedule
See the following pages.
Appendix D

FRIDAY, August 24

10:00am-5:00pm  **Resident Students Move-in**
Student Mentors Only assist R.A.s with move in and check in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals:</th>
<th>Enfolding into community by:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- meeting group members before class begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- assisting with nuts and bolts of moving in</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation:</th>
<th>Students will assist in the check-in and move-in process</th>
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</thead>
</table>

| Supplies: | Kelli will have supplies (gift packs) as well as extra copies of the assignments and books for those students who did not get them. |

At check-in, students will be given their group name and a FYF schedule. Make sure new students make their way over to the FYF office in Alumni Hall. They will get a pack (tee shirt, letter from mentor, classroom information (on name tag, and mentor contact information (on name tag)).

5:00pm  **Campus Picnic**
Faculty and Student Mentors look for members of their group

7:00pm-8:00pm **Session One, Small Group Room (Parents meet in Ozinga Chapel)**
Student and Faculty Mentors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals:</th>
<th>Enfolding into community by:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- getting to know their group members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- orienting to the week ahead</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation:</th>
<th>Mentors will plan whip-around and have schedules to discuss.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student mentors should pick up ice-cream bars from the cafeteria on the way to their sessions.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supplies:</th>
<th>Whip-around materials and schedules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ice-cream bars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pick up extra copies of <em>The Color of Water</em> for new students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extra assignment sheets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6:45 - Mentors make conversation as people enter room

7:00 - Get acquainted whip-around
Be sure to fully introduce yourselves as mentors

7:30 - Go over schedule and discuss the week ahead.
Discuss the purpose of FYF (three goals of the course) and answer ???'s.

Mentor discusses expectations of FYF class
Review orientation activities for the week
Student mentor tells students what orientation activity they will be attending.
Collect any assignments and make sure to let students who have not turned their assignments in that they must do so at tomorrow’s session. For those students who registered late, and who do not have a book, please give them their books and make sure to let them know that the assignment is due on September 10. (Please do this in a setting where those students who have handed in their assignment have already left the room.)

Please note that once the session is over, the students who live on campus must attend the resident hall meetings and commuters go to a separate meeting.

SATURDAY – August 25

8:00am  **Morning Mentor Meeting, Grand Lobby**
Come with what you need for the morning sessions. There will be coffee and donuts available.

8:20am  **Pre-Session Assignment**
Greeting/Question table/Commuter Check-in Table
Mingle with students as they arrive, start moving people in to the auditorium by 8:50am.

9:00am- 9:55am  **Session Two: Ozinga Auditorium**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals:</th>
<th>Introduced to vision by:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- orienting to college mission and FYF goals and schedule</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enfolded in community by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- meeting president</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- worshiping and interacting with each other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Preparation:**
- Make sign for group
- Pick up extra copies of course sourcebook

9:00(or ASAP) Mark Ward welcomes audience
- Facts about the class of 2011?
- Facts about returning students and faculty/staff
- Preview of the day
- Introduce President Timmermans

9:10 - Welcome and devotions - President Timmermans
- Musical worship time

9:35 - Mark Ward
- Summarizes college mission and introduces 3 FYF course goals

9:50 - Review schedule for week and for rest of the day
9:55 - Dismiss to refreshments
10:05am **Refreshment Break, Grand Lobby or Commons Area**

10:30am – 12:30pm **Session Three, Small Group Room (Parents meet in Ozinga Chapel)**

**Goals:**
- Introduced to vision by:
  - discussing *The Color of Water*
  - discussing general education (bridge)
- Enfolded in community by:
  - reinforcing relationships
  - helping students connect throughout the weekend

**Preparation:**
- Whip around exercise
- Design Color of Water discussion
- Journal assignment
- Have bridge document
- Have extra texts and sourcebooks for any stray students
- Group sign

**Supplies:**
- Whatever is need for whip around and Color of Water Discussion
- Waiver forms for each student
- Copies of students’ summer assignment answers
- Bridge illustration

10:30 - Mentors make conversation as people enter room
Mentors make introductions again – remember that they may not remember your name.
Whip-around

11:00 - Discussion of *The Color of Water*, with the goal of reinforcing the three FYF course goals
This will depend on your individual group lesson plan but should include the student’s summer reading assignment and a discussion of Trinity’s general education program
Include a Journal assignment – in-class might be best

12:15 - Discuss and sign Waiver forms and contact information form
Please return the forms to Kelli immediately following your session.
Collect student contact information
Share general information – answer any questions
Review the remainder of the day
- any activities that you will be attending Saturday and Sunday
- SNL

12:30-12:45pm **Faculty and Student Mentor Meeting, Grand Lobby**
Please meet to discuss any issues that arose in your group sessions and to hand in waiver forms.
6:15pm – 8:00pm  **Saturday Night Live**  
All student mentors meet in the Alumni Hall lobby to review SNL skit. At 7pm, SNL begins at 7pm and will wrap up at around 8pm. Following SNL, there will be a dance and karaoke. Student mentors should plan to attend.

**SUNDAY, August 26**

10:30am  **Campus Worship, Ozinga Chapel**

11:30am – 1:00 pm  **Lunch Buffet, Dining Hall**

5:00 pm  **Community Worship Service, Ozinga Chapel**  
This is not strictly a Trinity event, but students are welcome to attend.

8:30pm- 9:15 pm  "**What Do You See When You Look At Me?**, Grand Lobby"  

**MONDAY – August 27**

8:00am  **Morning Mentor Meeting, Grand Lobby**

9:00am-9:25am  **Session Five, Ozinga Chapel**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Goals:</strong></th>
<th>Enfolded in community by:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- worshiping and interacting with each other</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Set up day’s events</td>
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</table>

**Preparation:**  
Group signs so that group will sit together. 
Determine which order you complete sessions six and seven.

**Supplies:**  
Please grab a snack in the GL before heading to your sessions.

9:00 - Mark welcomes back students

9:05 - Liz Rudenga Welcome.

At the conclusion, Liz will turn it over to Vinny.

9:10 - Vinny/Devotions and music (10 min)

9:20 - Mark Ward previews the day’s activities. 
mentions that there will be grab N’ go snacks as they leave.

9:30am – 10:50am  **Session Six, Recital Hall**

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<tr>
<th><strong>Goals:</strong></th>
<th>Introduced to vision by:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- introducing worldview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- relating worldview to Cooper article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- setting up The Journey</td>
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</tbody>
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**Preparation:**
Session Seven, Grand Lobby

Goals:
- Enfolded in community by:
  - reinforcing relationships
- Introduced to vision by:
  - connecting with college diversity commitment and summer reading
- Challenged to be proactive by:
  - practicing positive interactions

Preparation:

Supplies:

12:30am -12:55am Lunch, Dining Hall
Eat with your small group

12:55pm- 3:30pm Session Eight, Go to Tibstra parking lot from dining hall

Goals:
- Introduced to vision by:
  - hearing/seeing a variety of worldviews
  - connecting views to Cooper/Christian worldview

Preparation:

Supplies:
- Worksheet about The Journey
- Money if desired

12:55 - Begin loading buses in Tibstra Hall parking lot. Please make sure your group all sits together
On the bus, begin discussing what they can expect in The Journey.
  - Non-Christian
  - Transition
  - Calling/vocation
  - Take attendance
1:05 - Buses Depart for Marcus Cinema.
1:20 - Buses arrive at Marcus Cinema
1:30 - “The Journey” begins
3:00 - “The Journey” concludes
3:05 - Load Buses and leave for TCC
3:30 - Buses arrive at TCC

8:30 pm Session Nine: Small Group Rooms
Student Mentors Only

Goals:
- Enfolded in community by:
- reinforcing relationships
  Introduced to vision by:
  - connecting The Journey to Trinity

**Preparation:**

**Supplies:** Worksheet

8:30 - Meet briefly with your group to hand out worksheet that relates to “the journey”.

8:45 - Bonfire and smores in the courtyard

**TUESDAY – August 29**

8:00am **Morning Mentor Meeting, Grand Lobby**

9:00am-9:25am **Session Ten, Ozinga Chapel**

**Goals:** Enfolded in community by:
  - worshiping and interacting with each other

  Introduced to vision by:
  - connecting service to Trinity education

**Preparation:**

**Supplies:** Please wear FYF shirts?
  Group signs so that group will sit together.

9:00 - Mark welcomes back students
  Mark introduces Ginny Carpenter

9:05 - Ginny Carpenter Welcome.
  At the conclusion, Giny will turn it over to Vinny.

9:10 - Vinny/Devotions and music (10 min)

9:20 - Mark Ward previews the day’s activities.

9:30am – 10:30am **Session Eleven, Small Group Rooms**

**Goals:** Challenged to be proactive:
  - placing the service opportunity in context

  Introduced to vision by:
  - connecting service to educational worldview

**Preparation:** Be prepared to keep and display a positive attitude all day!
Before you load your bus make sure that you also have
your bag lunches and your bottled water.

**Supplies:** Please wear your FYF shirts.
  The day’s directions for your bus driver.

9:30 -

10:30am-4:00pm **Session Twelve, Leave from Chapel Lot**
10:30 You will have specific information about when your group is to load on the busses

4:00 Student arrive back from their service projects

**WEDNESDAY – August 29**

8:00am  **Morning Mentor Meeting, Grand Lobby**
Faculty and Student Mentors – Faculty mentors will be done by 8:30 for advising

9:00am-9:45am  **Session Thirteen, Ozinga Chapel**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals:</th>
<th>Enfolded in community by:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- worshiping and interacting with each other</td>
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<td>Set up day’s events</td>
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<td>Preparation:</td>
<td>Group signs so that group will sit together.</td>
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<td>Supplies:</td>
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9:00 - Mark welcomes back students
Mark introduces SA President
9:05 - SA President Welcome.
At the conclusion, turn it over to Vinny.
9:10 - Vinny/Devotions and music (10 min)
9:20 - Mark Ward places service in context
Summarizes FYF goals
Discusses academic behaviors
9:40 - previews upcoming activities.

9:45am – 10:00am  **Refreshment Break**

10:00am – 11:30am  **Session Fourteen, Small Group Rooms**
Student Mentors Only

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<tr>
<th>Goals:</th>
<th>Challenged to be proactive:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- placing the service opportunity in context</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Introduced to vision by:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- connecting service to educational worldview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplies:</td>
<td>Assessment tests (check out and in from registrar’s office)</td>
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</table>

10:00 - Whip around – focuses on others in the group
10:15 - Reflect on service opportunity
Do academic behaviors exercise
Complete self-assessment for journal credit
Discuss your group’s plans for Monday
11:00 - Assessment testing

11:30am Class Photo
Please to the outdoor amphitheater for a class photo. Check in with Kelli so we know when all the groups have arrived.

THURSDAY, August 30

First full day of semester classes – mentors check with students today or tomorrow to see how classes started.

FRIDAY, August 31

9:45am-10:45am Convocation
New students will process in with their class.

Don’t forget about the Involvement Fair/TrinProv in the evening

SATURDAY, September 1/SUNDAY, September 2

On- and off-campus activities

MONDAY, September 3

Time varies Session Fifteen, Leave from Ozinga Chapel Lot
Goals: Challenged to be proactive:
- becoming familiar with Chicago
Introduce to vision by:
- experiencing cultural aspect of Chicago
Preparation: Map, money and a cell phone
Supplies:

MONDAY, September 10

10:00am – 10:45am Session Sixteen, Small Group Rooms
Goals: Enfolded in community by:
- reconnecting after one week
Introduce to vision by:
- reviewing assignment
Challenged to be proactive:
- addressing needs for upcoming semester
Preparation:
Supplies:
Appendix E

First Year Forum 101 Schedule * indicates required events

**Friday, August 18, 2017**

10:00 AM-2:00 PM  
Residence Hall Move In  
FYF Check In*

2:00 PM-3:00 PM  
Commuter Check In* at the First Year Info Tent

3:15 PM  
Parent Session: Drop in Before Drop Off: Dining Hall

3:15 PM  
Commuter Welcome Meeting* – for all commuters, Fireside Room

5:00 PM  
Welcome Picnic

6:00 PM  
Student-Family Goodbye

6:30 PM  
FYF small group meetings*: FYF Small Group Classrooms

8:00 PM  
TrollNight*: Outdoor Amphitheater

8:30 PM  
Residence Hall Meet and Greet* (in the Quad)

8:30 PM  
Commuter Connection Meet and Greet* (in the Quad)

9:45 PM  
Late Night Programs: Backyard Bash! (behind South Hall)

**Saturday, August 19, 2017**

8:00 AM  
Breakfast: Dining Hall on your own

8:45 AM  
Worship*: Ozinga Auditorium

9:00 AM  
FYF Small Group*: FYF Classrooms

10:20 AM  
Refreshment Break: Ozinga Grand Lobby

10:30 AM  
FYF Large Group*: Worldview with ________(Ozinga Auditorium)

11:30 AM  
Board Bus for Downtown Experience* (sack lunches provided)

1:30 PM  
FYF Small Group*: Downtown Location

5:30 PM  
Residence Life Dinner/Commuter Dinner*

Resident students will eat dinner with their residence hall floor community-Meet where your RA has designated.

Commuter Connection students will eat dinner together – Meet where your Coordinator has designated.
8:00 PM    Saturday Night Live: Ozinga Grand Lobby*

Join us as the mentors, RAs, Student Association, and Campus Ministries teams entertain you with crazy skits and general hilarity. This is a campus tradition that always promises a ton of fun!

Post-SNL    Late Night Programs: Messy Games! (Courtyard between West and South)

**Sunday, August 20, 2017**

AM    Worship* – at local churches with your residence hall floor

12:00 PM    Lunch* – at local churches with your residence hall floor

2:00 PM    Free Time (Slip 'N Slide and Sand Volleyball behind South and West Halls)

5:00 PM    Dinner: Dining Hall on your own

6:00 PM    President's Party*

Join your new classmates and mentor group to head over to President Kurt Dykstra's home for desserts and an opportunity to meet your college president.

9:00 PM    Bonfire and Worship (Courtyard between West and South)

**Monday, August 21, 2017**

8:00 AM    Breakfast: Dining Hall

8:45 AM    Worship and Large Group*: Ozinga Auditorium

9:00 AM    FYF Large Group*: Diversity with ____________

9:45 AM    Refreshment Break: Recital Hall

10:00 AM    FYF Small Group*: FYF Small Group Classrooms

11:00 AM    ½ of FYF Groups*: Student Life Presentation in Auditorium

½ of FYF Groups*: StrengthsFinders Presentation in Recital Hall

11:30 AM    Switch Presentations*

12:00 PM    Lunch in the dining hall on your own

12:45 PM    FYF Small Group A*:

1:10 PM    Solar Eclipse Break

160
1:30 PM       FYF Large Group*: Vocation with Alumni and Friends (Ozinga Auditorium)
2:30 PM       FYF Small Group B:
4:00 PM       Free Time
5:00 PM       Dinner in the dining hall on your own
8:00 PM       Late Night Programs: Movie Night! (Ozinga Chapel Auditorium – free popcorn and iced coffee bar)
9:00 PM       Movie Begins

**Tuesday, August 22, 2017**

8:00 AM       Breakfast: Dining Hall on your own
8:45 AM       Worship*: Ozinga Auditorium
9:00 AM       FYF Large Group*: Service Talk with Dr. Shaniqua Jones
9:15 AM       Service Project*: Buses will be departing from Ozinga
12:30 PM      Lunch in Dining Hall
1:00 – 4:00 PM Fitness Center Orientation
1:00 – 4:00 PM Commuter Students Check-out (Student Life Loft)
1:00 – 5:00 PM Choir Auditions: Various Locations in Ozinga (Please sign up in the Chapel Office prior to today)
5:00 PM       Dinner: Dining Hall on your own
6:00 PM       Various Campus Activities TBA (look around for advertising)
8:30 PM       Residence Hall Meetings*: Residence Hall
9:30 PM       Residence Hall Events: Residence Halls

**Wednesday, August 23, 2017 – Academic Classes Begin**

10:00 AM      Convocation*: Ozinga Auditorium

You are expected to attend Convocation. This event draws our entire community together for a kick-off event full of celebration, and it is a part of your FYF grade. Your student mentor should tell you where to meet for this.

**Monday, August 28, 2017**

10:00 AM      FYF Large Group Session: Ozinga Auditorium
Friday, September 1, 2017

10:00 AM  Final Paper due on Moodle

Monday, September 11, 2017 OR at a time designated by your FYF mentors

10:00 AM  FYF Small Group Wrap Up Session

SouthWest Series Schedule
Residence Life and FYF are hosting 8 events in West Hall to help you with your transition. These events will address issues relevant to your transition to Trinity. **You must attend TWO of these events - please plan ahead.** Resident Students must attend "Roommates: Make it work!", and then two additional events. Commuters are required to attend just two (not Roommates: Make it work!). The dates and times are listed below.

All events will be held in West Hall basement at 8 pm.

*When choosing your SWS events, please choose topics that are relevant to your experience. More information is available on flyers posted around campus.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Aug. 29</td>
<td>Roommates: Make it work! REQUIRED FOR RESIDENT STUDENTS ONLY</td>
<td>Lauren Horras (Area Director for South and West Halls) and Aaron Johnson (Assistant Area Director)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, Aug. 30</td>
<td>College and Sexuality: Time for an Honest Conversation</td>
<td>Dr. Stephanie Griswold (Director of Trinity Counseling Services), Becky Starkenburg (Vice President of Student Life), and Mark Hanna (Dean of Students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Sept. 5</td>
<td>Trinity Survival Guide</td>
<td>Rebecca Loenen and Elijah Heyboer (FYE Interns)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, Sept. 6</td>
<td>Bucket Lists: Why you should make them and burn them!</td>
<td>Jeff Timmer (Director of Vocation and Career Development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, Sept. 7</td>
<td>Be a Troll: Get Involved!</td>
<td>Kara Van Marion (Area Director for Tibstra and Alumni Halls) and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, Sept. 11</td>
<td>College 101: The Importance of Physical and Mental Health</td>
<td>Professor Stefo (Professor of Nursing) and Trinity Counseling Services Representative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Sept. 12</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, Sept. 13</td>
<td>Growing in God @ Trinity</td>
<td>Pastor Bill Van Groningen (Chaplain) and Lauren Horras (Area Director of South and West Halls)</td>
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Appendix F

The Relationship of the Coordinator of the First Year Experience Position to Retention Task Force Recommendations

The success of a first year program/course can most often be tied to an increase in first year student retention to the sophomore year. While the benefits of Trinity’s First Year Forum go beyond a healthier retention rate, it is easy to establish a connection where the impact of an Office of the First Year Experience can be tied directly to the goals and tactics laid out by the retention task force.

The following are highlights of the retention task force’s report. The bold text indicates where a development of an Office of the First Year Experience will assist in accomplishing the retention rates laid out in that report.

Establishing a first year office will deepen the initial experiences and attachment to Trinity. The office will:

- Use admissions information (quick facts) to develop a seamless transition to TCC and increase student satisfaction by working with admissions, student development, the business office, and academic offices.
- Coordinate the nature of contacts with students before they arrive and during their first year. For example, how do they feel welcome?
- Identify internal cultural issues that they face. Develop a campus activities plan for first year students (and later all students) by intentionally programming for a student body with diverse backgrounds.
- Extend the FYF program into the fall and spring academic semesters. Could establish learning communities, mentors that work with English classes, community partnership opportunities, or convocation themes.

- **The office of FYF can serve as a transitional office for new students.** By utilizing “quick facts”, the office can be a resource center where students can connect about common interests, making them feel more connected to the campus community and thereby increasing student satisfaction/retention.
- **By housing a full-time staff member, work can be done to identify key retention issues that new students at Trinity face.** Programming can be developed and implemented throughout the semester that will continue to address these needs of the students. These programs will allow for increased involvement by new students as well as upper class student mentors. Facilitating their leadership abilities throughout the semester will increase involvement/satisfaction of current students as well as new students.

The Office of FYF will also address social issues that arise throughout the first year of a student’s experience at Trinity. The office will develop avenues to address the continuing issue of cliques:

- Address the Reformed/public school issue directly by asking the appropriate Ad Council member to talk with faculty/staff when complaints are raised.
• Offer education in cross-cultural understanding and communication. Rationale: The sense of belonging (or lack of it) continues to be a concern as seen in SSI, focus groups, reports that Nelvia brought, and other areas.

• Include programming in FYF that encourages interaction between new students in a variety of ways.

• Develop student activities and interest groups that cross typical student-selected boundaries.

• Develop and share student stories, both of success and those that demonstrate room for improvement. Find the right venue for sharing.

  • The FYF office can work to become a venue for shared concerns/frustration as well as success and satisfaction for first year students. With the development of a full-time staff member, the possibility is there for continues research on cross-cultural curriculum that can be added to the current FYF course content. A full-time staff member can also research to develop the curriculum of the course as a whole.

  • The First Year office can be the first line of defense in situations where students have issues/questions/concerns. By proactively addressing the issue through programming, semester-long mentoring, and in-office resources, student issues can be more effectively addressed.

  • Additions to the mission of FYF can include improved student activities focusing on specific student issues and concerns. The office of FYF will address the issue of college cliques first hand through improved availability and curriculum development.

FYF will work to bridge relationships between academic affairs and student development:

• Develop a student leadership program that fosters relationships between mentors and students for the purpose of increased student involvement and connection to Trinity.

• Establish a parent network. (e.g., first-year parents group, website information, newsletter, parents of alumni)

• Develop and implement a comprehensive campus activities plan. Establish a calendar of student activities. Publish it early (even at Blueprints). Aim to enliven weekends.

  • Creating an environment where current student leaders have an outlet to serve is the first step to the implementation of a student leadership plan.

  • With the continuing assistance of student leaders, a full-time staff member can serve as the central office of information for new students. This will alleviate work from other departments as well as encourage information sharing between academic affairs and student development. New students will benefit by receiving the most accurate information.

  • The office of FYE can serve as an information hub for first year parents. Instead of being unsure about whom to ask what question, parents will feel more confident knowing that there is one central location where questions can be addressed throughout their child’s first year at Trinity.
Appendix G

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The following questions address to what extent you felt prepared entering college. All can be answered with a scale of 1-4, with the following rankings:

1: Very Well Prepared
2: Somewhat Well Prepared
3: Prepared
4: Unprepared

1. In the summer before coming to college, how prepared did you feel in your ability to write papers?
2. In the summer before coming to college, how prepared did you feel in meeting the work load of classes?
3. In the summer before coming to college, how prepared did you feel in using technology to research information for papers or projects?
4. In the summer before coming to college, how prepared did you feel in managing your time to get homework done?
5. In the summer before coming to college, how prepared did you feel in understanding who to go to for answers on the college campus?

The following questions are addressing to what extent the content of FYF 101 prepared you for academic success throughout your time at Trinity Christian College. All can be answered on a scale of 1-5, with the following rankings:

1: Strongly Agree
2: Agree
3: Neither
4: Disagree
5: Strongly Disagree

6. FYF 101 prepared me for writing papers in my other college classes.
7. FYF 101 helped me understand my top 5 strengths (from the StrengthsFinder Assessment).
8. FYF 101 helped me understand way to use my top 5 strengths in other classes.
9. FYF 101 prepared me for developing good study skills for my other courses.
10. FYF 101 prepared me for worldview discussions in my other college classes.
11. FYF 101 taught me the importance of getting my homework done on time in college.
12. FYF 101 spent enough time covering library services in preparation for my other courses.
13. FYF 101 taught me how to successfully use Moodle in my other college classes.
14. FYF 101 prepared me for the rigor of academic work in my other college classes.
15. FYF 101 prepared me for using library services while at Trinity Christian College.
16. FYF 101 taught me the purpose of Academic Advising.
17. FYF 101 spent enough time talking about diversity issues to prepare me for my college experiences.
18. FYF 101 helped me learn how to communicate with my professors.
19. FYF 101 prepared me for the stress of my academic class load.
20. FYF 101 taught me the meaning of worldview.
21. FYF 101 spent enough time covering time management to help me be successful in college.
22. FYF 101 prepared me for meeting with my Academic Advisor during registration.
23. FYF 101 was relevant to my other coursework at Trinity Christian College.

The following questions relate to the logistics of the FYF 101 program and to what extent the structure of the course helped you in your academic transition to Trinity Christian College. All can be answered on a scale of 1-5, with the following rankings:

1: Strongly Agree
2: Agree
3: Neither
4: Disagree
5: Strongly Disagree

24. Having FYF 101 take place before the start of the semester prepared me for my first semester courses.
25. I would have preferred to have FYF 101 take place during the semester, rather than before it.
26. FYF 101 provided me with a balance of time to make friends and adjust academically to college.
27. It was helpful to know about the topics taught in FYF 101 before having to experience them in my other classes.
28. When new experiences or challenges arose in my semester class, I was able to recall what I was taught during FYF 101 to deal with them.
29. If FYF 101 took place during the first semester, I would have been able to better connect the content of FYF 101 with my other classes.

The next questions ask that you rank, in order or importance, some of the elements of the FYF 101 course:

30. Based on your experiences in FYF 101, rank the following topics from least important to most important for first-year students:
   • Understanding how to use library resources
   • Having key people to ask questions of
   • Understanding the concept of Worldview
   • Engaging in a service project as a class
   • Understanding your top 5 strengths with StrengthsFinder
   • Having conversations about diversity on campus
   • Knowing how to use a syllabus
   • Meeting your academic advisor
   • Learning how to manage your time

31. If these new topics were added to the FYF 101 course, rank them from least important to most important for new students at Trinity Christian College:
• Learning adaptability in the academic environment
• Learning how to work in small groups
• Understanding how professors grade and give feedback
• Understanding your own learning style
• Knowing the relevance of the FYF 101 material to your other coursework
• How to evaluate sources when researching for a paper or project
• The myth of multitasking and learning how to focus on one task

Finally, a few open ended questions to find out some qualitative information. These would be optional.

32. Which aspect of FYF 101 do you feel least prepared you for your college courses?
33. List 3 topics that should be included in the first year seminar to better help first-year students prepare for college that are not currently in the curriculum.
34. Pick 1 topic that should remain in the curriculum, but needs to be developed more thoroughly, and why.
35. What was the most difficult aspect of your academic transition upon arriving at Trinity?
36. Based on your answer (to #35), what could a new FYF 101 course cover that would better prepare students for their academic transition?
37. If there were no limitations to what you could change, what changes would you make to help increase learning in FYF 101?

38. What is your year of Graduation from Trinity Christian College?
   • 2018
   • 2019
   • 2020
   • 2021

39. Did you enter Trinity Christian College as a first-year freshman or transfer student?
   • Yes
   • No

40. If yes, what year did you enter Trinity Christian College as a first-year student?
   • 2013
   • 2014
   • 2015
   • 2016
   • 2017

41. In what year were you born?

42. Are you willing to be interviewed in a focus group setting to further discuss your experience in the FYF 101 course and identify ways it could better serve the needs of first-year students?
• Yes
• No (will send them to the conclusion/thank-you/information about the random drawing for participants page)

43. If yes, please include your name and contact information so we can communicate the follow-up information.
Appendix H

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Study: Identifying First-Year Seminar Curriculum Needs for Generation Z

Researcher's Contact Information: Emily S. Bosscher, emily.bosscher@trnty.edu, 708-239-4853

Introduction
You are being invited to take part in a research study conducted by Emily Bosscher, Director of First-Year Experience at Trinity Christian College, and a student in the Master’s of Science in First Year Studies at Kennesaw State University. Before you decide to participate in this study, you should read this form and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

Description of Project
The purpose of the study is to gather data from students about student preparedness when coming to college. Specifically, to find out if the curriculum presented in the FYF 101 course taken by all first-year students at Trinity Christian College contained the material that best prepared students to begin their college experience, and if it didn’t, to find out what it was lacking. The results of this data collection will inform the creation of a new FYF 101 course in the near future.

Explanation of Procedures
If you agree to participate, your comments and ideas from focus group sessions conducted by Emily Bosscher may be used for her thesis paper. No names will be used and all answers will remain confidential.

Time Required
The focus group session will last for on average 45 minutes, unless the those being interviewed desire to spend more time elaborating on ideas and thoughts.

Risks or Discomforts
There are no known risks or anticipated discomforts to those who agree to take this survey.

Benefits
There are no immediate benefits to those being surveyed, though this will benefit future incoming students at Trinity Christian College. Participating students will also benefit through the experience of helping shape college policy and change.

Confidentiality
The results of this participation will be confidential. Students will be identified only as Student A, etc. in the paper.

**Inclusion Criteria for Participation**
You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study.

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding these activities should be addressed to the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, 585 Cobb Avenue, KH3403, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591, (470) 578-2268.

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF THIS CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR YOUR RECORDS.

☐ I agree and give my consent to participate in this research project. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty.

☐ I do not agree to participate and will be excluded from the remainder of the questions.

Signed:
Date:
I: Ok, thank you all for being here. For the purpose of this focus group and the anonymity of all involved, please, when you offer an answer, just say your letter so that whoever’s transcribing this fully can identify which student. So you will be a, you will be b, c, and d, so when you offer something just quickly remind us. I will try to keep track of it on here as well so that we have backup and I'll be taking notes as we go. (Chuckle) OK. So all of you participated in the survey this fall that, um, was done through Survey Monkey and you answered some survey questions that were on a Likert scale ranking, different stages of your thought process and then there were some, ah, free response answers at the end and you all offered to participate in further response. So the questions for this focus group came out of the themes that emerged from the three responses and from the data in the survey. So I picked four areas that seem to be the most common areas that kept coming up in terms of survey response. So what we're hoping to do today is just to take those a little bit further and see if I can hear from you some specifics, some guidelines, some, um, connections between your own learning and what we're hearing in the survey for the purpose of this study. And it's true you are all Generation Z just in case you didn't know that. Generation Z is approximately 1995 to 2010 and so the focus of the study is on students particularly in that generation so that we can create a new program to meet the needs of new students, which unfortunately it's too late for you. [Laughter] OK. So the first question is one of the top responses to the survey was that FYF 101 needed to do more to teach students time management and this included ideas of getting homework done, how to balance life and work and school and how to get enough sleep as well as study skills and put specific study habits. First question is how did you learn those things as you transitioned into college? So how did you figure out time management and study skills and study habits? And then the second part is, how could FYF 101 incorporate new ways to teach first year students these specific skills? So whoever would like to go first may begin.

Student B: This is student B. [Laughter] Um, I think in general, the way I learned all the time management and those skills was by actually living through it and making mistakes, (chuckle) which kind of makes it difficult to incorporate that into an FYF program that, um, essentially is only one weekend. However, if the program it to be extended over time, I think it'd be a lot more. I guess students will be a lot more susceptible to learning this because it will be experiencing it as they're going through the FYF program. Um, but I think that it would be important in the FYF program to stress the importance behind setting aside maybe specific time to study, um, scheduling your life around maybe like what your hours are in regards to work and school and figuring out when to study. And then figuring out when to hang those… like hang out with friends, those types of things. Just creative ways to do that. And I don't know necessarily know how that looks yet, um, we have an OLS center on campus, the office of learning services and maybe they'd be a good place to start and kind of ask ways that they currently teach students in our bridge program to do that.

Student A: I'm Student A and I agree with student B, I was going to say the same thing, but I think honestly that probably a majority of the people that responded to the survey about like the
need for more time management realized they needed better time management skills like in years after their freshman year. So like sophomore year, junior year, um, hopefully by senior year you're a little bit better at it, but I know that like even though the transition from freshman year to sophomore year is really different and like, how much school work you have and um, just the level of like time management with like you are more involved. A lot of people are on campus and in different clubs or just with different friends and jobs and all that. Like, those all seem to pick up like after freshman year. Um, even more second semester freshman year. So as much as it would be beneficial to like teach time management skills, yes, I think that you do need to learn by making mistakes and I think that some of those time management skills, people don't realize they need them until like way after FYF is over.

Student D: Um, this is Student D. And I agree with what was previous said by students A and B (coughing over) and um, it's kind of a, like for me it was also living and learning, um, and then also just like knowing myself. So, um, just like living through high school and um knowing my study habits and what else I could be involved in really helped me, um, because I was an athlete all the way up until or all the way up and through freshman year of college. Um, so having that in my life just kind of gave me an, like an up on time management because I always had to manage school and sports. Um, so just like knowing myself and what I have to be involved in because when I got to college I wanted to expand my horizon and be involved in other things other than sports. Um, so I guess like high school kind of prepared me to know the extent of what I could do and still do well in school, um, but also like the living and learning aspect of it too freshman year was an easier year know I think the transition from freshman to sophomore year and even at the junior year was much harder. But by that time felt like I developed good study skills and like sleep habits and et Cetera, et cetera. Just by like what's upper class men told me and what professors recommended. I'm just basically like living through it all.

Student C: This is student C, I basically all can agree that students have to go through it. But then I think something that FYF 101 can do is that maybe have the mentors just continue engaging with the students. That way students know their mentors are not just there during FYF season or a month after, that they can continue throughout at least a couple more months so that students can actually go to their mentor who's already been through these things and ask them like, how do you do this? Um, how am I supposed to manage my time? I have a job and I have school. How do I balance that? So I think just having that longer connection. Although FYF is only for a month, from a week, to a month.

I: Great. Any final thoughts on that one?

Student A: Yeah. I think that to have the mentors, as just available, available people to talk to is a good thing, but I also think that that's a really important role as an RA and like encouraging those kinds of conversations with your RA.

I: Um, I'm going to ask a follow-up question. Student A, I know you have been an RA. Do you think that there needs to be a stronger connection in the work of the RAs with the FYF program that, that, that, that would help if there's a more clear working together in that sense?

Student A: I don't know. I think that they're very, two very different realms and I think that they do intersect at points, but I also think that FYF is your like introduction into college and like,
like the academic side of college and like all I've, that's like when I was of if I think more
like how do you, how do you do college and like the academic sense and then when I think
of like Res Life, I think of more like how do I do college and grow and like be more filled as
a whole person. Like how do I connect with all these different clubs? Like how do I become
a social member of this community? Um, and I think that's more of a, the Res Life side. So I
think there is points of intersection but I also think that like time management is a
conversation that you could have with your mentor but also like you have like a very mixed
group of people that are part of your FYF group and you might feel more comfortable
talking to your RA about that. So like also just reminding students that like there RA is a
really good source to go to find connections to figure out how to do certain things that FYF
doesn't cover, um, to talk about these kinds of time management things and just in general
about school, like RAs have all done it before and are part of our job is to like help freshmen
incorporate into the community

Student B: This is Student B, and I'm kind of coming from the other end as I've been part of the FYF
program for two consecutive, well I guess three because I was a freshman, so three
consecutive years, um, but two from working behind the scenes with the program. And I
think in general it would be nice to have a little more correlation and um, communication
with the Res Life staff because this isn't like going against anything you said, Student A.
[Laughter] But I think there's a little bit of miscommunication as to what FYF is like. Yes,
we're there to help with the academic side, but we spend a lot of time with current students
and with professors trying to prepare students for what it's like to live in college and
balancing responsibilities is a big part of the program by giving them schoolwork but also
getting them introduced to their class, um, their classmates, um, different professors in the
community and getting them in touch with what the community actually is and getting them
integrated. Um, just into the new place that they're going to be living and spending their life,
you know, on their floors, those types of things. So I think that there's a stronger sense of
correlation and communication between a Res Life staff and FYF, like just a stronger bond
in general. Maybe you can communicate some different types of things. So the students like,
yes, FYF mentors are there to help, some students maybe are comfortable going to their RA
because they're FYF mentor was like the first person that they had contact with on campus.
And if that person's not making himself available, there's a problem. So maybe that
communication needs to happen between Res Life and the mentor specifically, but I think in
some way trying to strengthen the bond between mentors and RA's and AADs and ADs I
think would be extremely valuable for both programs, Res Life and FYF and for the students
who are taking part in both of those.

Student C: This is Student C, um, I'm currently a freshman RA and I have had the student who came up
to me and asked I'm very overwhelmed and very stressed, I'm being given a lot of
assignments to do and I don't. I can't and she just started like tearing up and I had to like sit
her down and ask her like, OK look, you have due like tomorrow and then what did you
have do the day after that? And I sit her down and ask her to like write things down and then
tell her. I told her to ask her professors about what is due next once classes are over. I think
students have the preconception that the FYF mentors are there in the beginning, they're
basically the starter engines and then what keeps the students going throughout the rest of
the year. Are their RAs? So I think it's important to tell the students their mentors are not
just there at the beginning there with them throughout the entire process.

Student B: Um, this is Student B. Sorry, I'm going to keep going. Um, I completely agree with that
statement. That Student C made that a lot of students kind of think that once I have is done,
their mentors are over and maybe it means that the FYF program has to do a better job to communicating to our mentors what they're actually there for and communicate to the mentors. Like you need to tell your students you're going to be there for them all semester. You need to be checking up with them at random times kind of forming that stronger bond. So I would agree with that.

Student A: I was gonna mention that too because I was an FYF mentor for a year, and I've been an RA for two years and I think that like how we were communicated as a mentor is like you have these two weeks, like these are your two weeks and then like maybe check in once through the semester. But it wasn't like required. And like we got paid our money and we were done, like we would say hi to the people that were in our groups, but like our job was over, like we got our money, we can kind of just say hi when they walk past on the sidewalk and ask how they're doing, but it wasn't like a relationship that we were like asked to keep up with. So I think, yeah, I think that would be important to just stress that mentors are still available if those are the people that you want to talk to about this kind of stuff.

I: OK. Let's move on to question two. And this, I realize you've already actually gotten into some of questions two, so we can skip over a little bit if it's repetitive, but many students indicated that they would like, they would have liked to cover more in that FYF 101 practical skills of living and attending college. This came up, the theme came up. Issues like living in dorms, where and how to do laundry, how to print, how to access your mailbox, how to get along with your roommate, how to use campus resources, how to utilize an RA, were all items people said they wished had been incorporated in FYF 101. So first question, do you feel like these are things that should be covered in FYF 101 or is this the responsibility of residence life? This kind of gets at what we were just talking about. Should residence life be working more intentionally with the FYF 101 program during the time to make sure these issues get covered? And what campus resources would you say are the most important to include? What creative creative ideas might you have for helping students figure these things out?

Student D: I think that it would be beneficial to cover the...um, I'm lacking in words...but to cover like how to do laundry, where to print, how to access your mailbox, et cetera, et cetera, the little things in FYF and or like have communication with Res Life and FYF to make sure that it gets covered as soon as possible because those are resources that students need upon or like quickly after arriving on campus, especially after classes start. Um, but then like bigger issues, um, like how to get along with your roommate more in depth, things like that. I feel like that's more of a Res Life thing because issues tend to pop up as the semester goes on. So, yeah, I would think that would be more along Res Life. But I definitely think FYF and Res Life should be working together, um, and then other campus resources that should be noted during FYF and or by an RA, Um, I don't know, like I always use Trinfo. I don't know if that is a site that still up and running, but the question here and there, whenever it was invented freshman and sophomore year, that was a really reliable resource because it tells you like where... where you can park, and what the dining hall menus is, or, and like little things like that where you can just like go online and quickly check rather than having to walk somewhere, check it out. So I don't know if that's like still updated or not, but even like having a resource for students can go to find answers to like several things at one spot that was really useful to me.

Student A: This is Student A, um, and I think that like all these little things are like really crucial for RAs to like have happen on their floors. And I know it's a like a, like it can be annoying to
think back to your freshman year and be like, I really honestly didn't know how to use a laundry room. They should have covered that in FYF. But like when girls will stop by my room and be like, I don't know how to get a laundry card, it was like an opportunity for me to actually connect with them and like teach them how to print or teach them how to like run a laundry card or, um, walk to their mailbox with them and help them open it for the first time. And it was just these little moments where like they had to rely on me for something and like forced them to come to my room and like ask a question and like interact with their RA, um, which I don't think I would've had as much had all of that been covered in FYF or like a session that was done. RA, I mean like roommate things, a Southwest series is usually done about those things. And if problems come up they do tend to come to your RA about it. Um, so I think that it is, it is a good, like that is a good thing that FYF can address if it comes up as a question and like a question and answer session or something. But I also think that like to encourage students to like talk to their RAs about that because it is part of living in the dorms and like that's like part of living in the dorms is learning how to like, do all the little things that are part of a dorm. But like you have a mother hen that can help you if need be. And that's like as a freshman RA one year and then a upperclassman RA one year, that's the biggest shift in people; like I don't get as much visitors to my room because they don't get all the questions of how do I get a laundry card or where do I print, Where do I park, what? Like where's my mailbox, how do I get it, how do I drop a class? Like these are all questions that come like when you have no idea, you ask your friends and if they don't know you go to your RA and I think it's like a really open space for like an segue into talking to an RA.

I: If I can interject a follow up question. Do you think this is a matter based on your different responses of just laying out more specifically in an FYF program? Here's where you go to for this, here's where you go to for this and let the spheres be separate, but tell students very specifically and upfront where they go.

Student D: Well, this is Student D talking. I think it would be beneficial to tell them at least where to go just because like you do need to....I guess. I don't know, because, I guess your RA is there when you're going through FYF. So I agree with Student A. It's a good [inaudible]...oops! (Laughter as they realize that Student D used Student A's real name in the comment.)

I: It's fine.

Student D: Agree with Student A, um, about, now I lost my train of thought. Um, yeah, I myself, have not been an RA, so that was a good point, um, by Student A to form relationships with, ah, their students. Um, but I think it also like students are very antsy and they want to know these things so at least telling them where to go ahead of time would be beneficial and then they can talk with their RAs and get to know them and figure out everything else at that point.

Student B: This is Student B, and I have a question, ah, would it be appropriate to kind of offer an idea for how to fix this issue? Does that make sense?

I: Mmm Hmmm.

Student B: So the way the FYF program is set up is we have a lot of different group sessions with your group leaders and with your group members. Um, talking about different things that are going on on campus. Um, we have days where we talk about diversity, talk about different
topics that are important to the community. Would it be possible to have a one of those hour periods that we would devote to Res Life where students would meet with their RAs? So they're still getting the opportunity to connect with their RA, it's still overseen kind of by the FYF programs, saying students need to know these things, but like Res Life, this is your job. We don't want to take that away from you, um, but that way students get the opportunity connect with their RA, they get the opportunity to connect with their floor while they're on campus and get all the details they need about dorm life, about Res Life, about how to live on campus. They get all the logistics, but I'm just wondering, I guess to the two RAs that are here, like whether or not they think that could potentially be a viable option because that way, FYF hasn't completely taking over their responsibility, but we do have a very, I guess set time in order to talk about these things with the people that the students should be talking to about. (Coughing)

Student A: This is Student A. I think that like could be a good option. I also think it would be, it'd be really interesting to have a panel with like RAs, where like, students would be able to ask like any sort of question and then it kind of gives, not like RAs need less work, but those first couple of weeks for RAs are like jammed packed with stuff and like we honestly are so thankful for FYF mentors because they like give us the breaks we need to like reset so that we can then be like on our game for when we are in charge of the freshman again. Um, and so I think a panel would be really cool because all the, like the RAs would be there, each student could ask or like students could ask questions if they have about like, like what is your, like what exactly do you do? People don't know what an AAD is. So it would be a good place for them to be like, what is an AAD and what do you do? Like then [inaudible], like as of now, like our AADs could talk about what their roles are, like, how they are here, just like what they're doing to support the community and could ask about like what are things that I should go to my RA about, what are things that I shouldn't, um, and like all of those things. Whereas like in a big group setting or even like two smaller sections, um, to just have like the voice of a bunch of different RAs and like all these students hearing all these questions rather than the one RA of your floor doing a tour of West Hall to find the laundry room, you know, like that could happen with your RA at some point if they feel the need is there. But I think that. So I think the bigger question of like how should Res Life and FYF work together is a question of like, what is it that a RA? What like, who are they to me in this community? So it'd be interesting to see that.

I: OK. Question three. (Coughing) Another theme that came up, a large number of students indicated that they would have liked more help in FYF 101 to learn library sources, citing and evaluating sources and writing in different styles such as APA or MLA. Despite the fact that all students take English 102, it seems that there is a need for these topics in FYF 101 as well. How did you learn how to use databases or evaluate online sources for your paper writing? How could this be incorporated into FYF 101? Would students make connections to their other classes if we did a general overview, or would it or should it be connected to a specific paper for another class so that it is put into practice and connected to the rest of their experience? I know that it's a little complicated, but you have it there in front of you. [Laughter] What creative ways would you offer to include that in FYF 101? So start a little bit maybe with that first question, how did you learn evaluating sources and using digital databases and some of that research for college papers?

Student A: I'm Student A. I took a dual enrollment class in high school, so I learned everything.

I: Cheater.
Student A: ...it was at Dordt, so Yeah, so at my high school that was like a Dordt class, so we used databases but we also had a lot more time to like go through more specific like how to use an online database and write good papers and so I came into college with a really like solid background in sourcing and databasing and all of that.

Student C: Student C. I learned how to use databases in English 102 actually. So my professor told us you have a paper due and if you need help deciding MLA then there's Purdue Owl. She gave us one source and we could do pretty much anything off with that. And then she made us throughout the semester doing multiple papers using most of the time MLA. So by the end I knew how to do MLA without having to look it up again. And again. I think it's not, it would not be a good idea to do it in FYF 101 just because it's such a short time period and asking students to write a paper during the midst of all the other activities going on, I think they will just be stressed out and it wouldn't be in their memory as much.

Student D: This is Student D. I agree, I don't think this stuff should be included in FYF because they are already thrown a lot of information. I think this would just be very overwhelming to them. Um, but going back to answer the initial question, (coughing), we learned MLA format in high school and then throughout my college classes, English 102, um, a Gen Ed theology 121 or 122. Um, and then like throughout my science courses I was exposed to databases and online resources, um, and the professors just outlined how do they use them, how to find sources. Um, and then, uh, like Student C said Purdue Owl was my savior when in doubt. So , um , but then to add one more thing on top of that , um , a lot of professors here like APA format and I was never taught that . Um , so this , I don't think this would be an FYF thing, but like a professor thing to teach what APA format is a little more in depth because I was a little overwhelmed with that , but that's not an FYF thing like I said, or it shouldn't be , at least I don't think.

Student B: This is Student B and I think we've kind of come to a pretty consistent consensus that a lot of our learning about these different types of formatting and like different resources have come from high school. Like, I had one really strong teacher in high school my senior year of English who taught me pretty much everything I know more so than what I learned in the writing Class I've taken here at Trinity. Um , I would agree with Student C and D that this responsibility shouldn't fall on FYF, but it should fall on one of the foundations courses, um, near the beginning of the year because even every academic discipline is going to have a different way they want these things done and that's something really important to acknowledge . And that kind of brings up difference between APA, MLA, and those types of things. Um, so maybe that's definitely somebody would bring up with the foundations (chuckle) committee, but I don't think that burning falls completely in FYF. And I guess my reasoning behind it is in FYF, It's not like they're looking for academic excellence right off the bat. What FYF is looking for is setting the groundwork for academic excellence and I don't think that learning how to do MLA or APA is going to effect that. I think the program is a lot more useful in establishing yourself into committee.... Sorry, in the community. And, um, getting used to what that community is like and also getting used to what a college work level would be like. I think that's much more beneficial for the program if it stays the current way it is, which is kind of a weekend [inaudible] type thing. So...

Student A: This is Student A and I'm exhausting my panel thing but I like, been thinking about it (chuckling) and it might be like even more beneficial to like have a panel with like all these questions . So we talked about not knowing how to print. We talked about not knowing how to use the library sources, while what we talked about, not knowing exactly what an RA is
for... like to have a panel with or librarian and an IT and a couple RAs and an OLS and a counseling service, the counseling services... just to like introduce students to all these different things that are on campus for them to utilize and like get to know as students here. These are all things that they have access to and like maybe just to introduce them to a familiar face in like... your computer breaks down. Like you know, you can go to IT, but like it's always a little scary to just like walk up to the desk and not like know what to do. But if you were, like, had been able to ask a question to like one of the IT guys can be like , yeah , like honestly like we get really bored and we love it when students come and stop by and like these are all the things that we can help you with . Like I think a lot of times I was like, I don't know if I can get IT for that. Like can they even switch out my battery in my laptop and like having known before that happened that like yeah we can try or no, that doesn't fall under our category but we can try to solve it without doing that first. Then and same with like a librarian like coming in and being like you could set up an appointment with us. We can sit down and find sources with you. Like you don't have to do it all on your own. Like that would've been huge. I think for a lot of students to know that before they walked in or been assigned to meet with a librarian for the first time, I didn't know where to go. Like how do I meet with a librarian? The writing center people don't know that exists for a long time I think or don't utilize it to the fulfillment that it could be utilized and I think it would be cool to see a panel of all these like resources that Trinity has to offer for their students. And how they can utilize those resources as well. So them like technically FYF covers it, but like at the same time you're like not giving them all the answers. It's like forcing them to like still do, like still grow and still like pushing them into the community themselves and not answering every question they have for them, but like giving them the resources to answer those questions themselves, because I think that's a huge thing that when we do surveys like this about FYF, we wanted them to answer every single question that we had. But we really truly looked back on it. If I had come to FYF and I had learned every single thing I needed to know about what it meant to live in the Trinity community...Like this community would have been boring. I like wouldn't have grown at all because I would have known... it would have, It wouldn't have been a new experience. (Coughing)

Student C: This is Students C. Um, what Student A said about knowing everything will be boring. Just adding onto that, students will honestly not remember everything we did even tell them everything to begin with. So I am an international student, and in international student orientation and we're thrown information out culture: where to go for different resources on campus, who to meet, who does what, what we should do in certain situations. And eventually after the week was over we forgot, kind of what we had to remember because a lot of things, almost everything was thrown at us at once. So it was we, they even told us how to use our mailboxes , but we even forgot that because we had to remember other things such as who do we go to for resources (coughing), or who do we go to to help us with our tax forms . So even the little things that are important to our day to day lives here on campus, we forgot. So I think like what Student A said, it's an, maybe we can just give the students a glimpse so that they can later just continue like practicing in [inaudible] reaching out to those people later so that they won't have to feel like, oh it's a one-time thing and I have to remember.

Student A: This is Student A and not everybody needs all these resources. Like if I was in FYF and I had to sit through a whole lesson on how to write in MLA? Word does it for you and I learned that in high school and I've... all I've used is references, the reference tab on Word [Laughter] does everything for you, [inaudible] citations, everything. So I was like, if I had to sit through a lesson on MLA formatting, I like would I have shown up? Probably not. Because I knew it already so,
but if I had learned that if it, MLA was something I did struggle with and my first class, all of a sudden I'm writing in MLA and I don't know what I'm doing, but I remember from the panel that we have an OLS office, we have a writing center. We have librarians like those are three resources that would be really important to know to then me like as a student, reach out for the help that I need in order to succeed academically.

Student D: This is Student D, um, I’m going back to the panel idea. I think that would be a good thing to do. And then um, just to like (coughing) make sure it doesn't get too long or too overwhelming or, like, have too much information said maybe if we did go through with the panel idea, you could limit the time down to say like, so if you had a panel of the librarian and IT guy and like you know, someone from the OLS and/or writing center, you can allot like a 10, 15 minute slot, I don't know, however long you wanted the panel to last to them and then like a little bit longer to the RAs and I don't know, just limit the time so that way all the information isn't said right then and there, and students won't be as overwhelmed and they will be more likely to remember it because it's less time, so less questions and then they still get to know that person and have a familiar face, but then they can go see them for further questions.

I: OK, final question. Again, another theme that came up in the survey, many students felt they needed more help transitioning socially when coming to college. This was indicated both for making friends and getting along with roommates, but also in getting to know professors and learn about the way students need to interact with them. What suggestions do you have to help with both of these areas? What could be added into the FYF 101 program or done differently to allow the social transition to be less stressful for students?

Student B: This is Student B. Um, I keep talking about the current FYF program because I guess that's what I have the most experience with. The current program is founded on a lot of big picture ideas, things that are important to Trinity as a school, um, and to the Reformed Tradition that we're kind of stepping into while we attend the college. Um, and I think making it so big picture making it... talking about it, talking about diversity, all these things that are essential to where we are, can also miss out on a relational aspect, which is something that's really important and something that I think needs to be focused on maybe a little bit more. Um, whether that's building relationships with the student mentor who's in your group or building relationships with different students who are in your group. I think the first week of college as a freshman, the people I hung out with were my FYF group, (chuckles) but after that, um, it was kind of over. You never talked to them again because they were weird, whatever. That's fine. But I think coming up with a way to I guess instill stronger relationships between those people that you're kind of coming into contact at first with on campus is really important. Um, plugging into a student mentor is extremely important because we don't live in a community where freshmen just talk to freshmen and sophomores just talk to sophomores. I think there's a lot of, I guess inter grade level communication, friendships, friend groups, so getting them connected with their mentors and more of a relational aspect than just kind of a professional aspect could be extremely important too. So maybe finding more ways to integrate the things that are relational into the FYF program could kind of help solve this somewhat of a social anxiety issue, if that makes sense.

Student C: This is Student C. One of the most positive, um, things that happened for me in FYF was interacting with the professor from my discipline, I'm part of the English... I'm an English Ed major and my FYF professor was an English professor and we went downtown together. We basically answered awkward questions together and then I actually had him for one of my
foundation courses, which I was very surprised about. Um, but because he knew who I was and because I knew him outside of the classroom, I was still able to go to him about different things and there were, um, different, like even when I was not in his classes, he invited me to his home for like Christmas, um, and his family cooked me like meals. And then even after that, knowing that I can reach out to him, um, not only about academics but just as like just a person in general, really helped me to just make that connection with the professor. And because I felt comfortable with one professor, I got to know that professors aren't just some people higher up there that I can't really talk to. It just helped me to have more confidence in talking to, um, the faculty. So I reached out to even more faculty afterwards.

Student A: This is Student A. I think something that I remember most clearly from my FYF experience was my FYF mentors, like essentially kicked out our FYF like faculty person and was like OK, now we're going to like actually tell you what college is like. And it was all really good advice. Like, go out with your friends that one night even, even if you have some homework left, like don't, don't say no to everything. Like try new things. Even if you try it once, um, like you will survive on four hours of sleep one night if you need to. [Laughter] Like just a little like the little tidbits that were like real true honesty about like what it was like to live as a college student as opposed to the more broader concepts that you talk about in FYF. Like to actually hear students talk about like they are the best parts that they've, they've experienced in college thus far in the tips and tricks that they have found to work both academically and socially and emotionally and physically and everything. Um, like, I, and then when I was an FYF mentor we did the same thing and we kicked our faculty member out. He like, he was the one that always like wanted this to happen, so he would like give us the time to do it. But, but like even for me it was like my advice is like, I would go and like go to the piano study rooms just to like I knew nobody could find me there and that's where I could like just... like find your own personal space where like if you need that personal space you can still go there and like have that personal space. Which like that's not something that you learn in FYF curriculum, but it's something that like is a really important aspect of living the college life. And so I think that was an important like conversation that was had both when I was a freshman and then also as a mentor with my students. Just because faculty members are great and like the relationships you make with them are also like crucial to FYF, I don't think it would be good to not have faculty at FYF. I think that's like one of the biggest keys to FYF, but I also liked being able to just like talk to the students as a student rather than as a mentor.

Student D: This is Student D. Um, I agree with Student A and that faculty should continue to be involved in FYF because it allows, uh, the incoming freshmen to get to know all the faculty because I don't really remember in particular, but I'm pretty sure all of the faculty members that volunteered were introduced. So at least you knew, like learn their name and saw their face. Um, but I don't think this happened either, but it could be beneficial, um, if the students, or the incoming freshmen, were able to have an allotted time to meet with the Faculty of their major. Um, whether that be like a short conversation or um, like getting lunch with them or just doing something to get to know them before classes start as a person. Um, so that way they will be more comfortable to come to them for academic help, um, when classes started because they already made an initial connection with them. Then I don't, I, when we first started talking about faculty, I was like, oh, maybe it would be a good idea to like pair students by major with the faculty from their major. But then I started thinking about it and I don't know if that would be necessarily a good idea just because they're going to be with them for the four years. Um, so I think, I mean, it shouldn't be intentional that like groups are put together or like certain professor is put with the group.
Um, because I had a um, philosophy professor as my FYF mentor and I got to know him on a personal level. He still knows my name today. Um, so I think the group should just be random and students should be allowed to make connection with whatever or whoever they are paired with: faculty or other students.

Student A: Student A. I think groups would be random, but I also think there should not be an Honors group, but that is a personal opinion. I think that the Honors group gets pointed out right from the start and automatically labeled as the honors group and seen as people that are, only care about academics and Honor students have a hard time like interweaving within other groups of students because they're set aside from day one. But in essence we really are just normal students who value a higher level of academics. But I always say there's two types of Honor students, ones that actually do everything and go above and beyond what they actually do and the ones that know how to like manipulate and get the, like be good student without doing everything they have to do. [Laughter]

Student B: This is Student B, and I kind of want to redirect back to what Student D was saying. Um, in talking about the Faculty student relationship, I think that is one of the most valuable things about the program because coming in as a freshman in college, in high school, you've been hearing about how college is going to be ridiculously hard. Like your professors are going to be mean and fierce and super strict. Like that's what we're taught. At least that's what I was taught at my high school. And talking to other people I know that's what they were taught too (chuckles). When in essence. It's almost the exact opposite. So I think that having that faculty member, there's crucial, but it was also crucial to communicate to that faculty member like, yes, you're there as a faculty member, but you're also there kind of to take these students under your wing and your own kind of mentor-esque way. It's not just the student mentors who are mentoring these students. It's also the faculty mentors and like, that's what they're there for, um, to introduce those students to what it means to have a relationship with a professor that's professional, but in a way it's still in essence a friendship or kind of a mentorship relationship... a mentor-esque relationship... sorry I'm getting tongue tied, but crucially communicate that to the faculty members as well.

I: Those are all the questions I had. Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate it.

END OF INTERVIEW
I: Ok, uh, welcome. Thank you for being here. For the purposes of this study, you have all signed a consent form, but we will also make sure that your identities remain anonymous and you will not be identified in the paper. So for the purposes of our conversation, we will assign a letter to each of you and if you would just introduce yourself as this is student whatever, when you speak, that would be very helpful. So because we had a few the other night, I'll start with E. So if you'll be student E, student F, and student G and that would be helpful. Um, I will take some notes just to kind of make sure things are... I'm keeping track of things here, but other than that I'll try not to take too much and just kind of let the recorder take over. And... Yeah. So let's get started. So I sent you the questions in advance, but if you didn't look at them, that's fine. These questions come out of themes that developed from the survey that you took online. So we took the, the quantitative and qualitative responses that people gave and pulled out... had about four or five themes that came out of that. And so I wanted to follow up on those themes just to get a little bit of maybe specific ideas about how you, um, would suggest making improvements or your thoughts regarding the themes that, that appeared. So question number one is one of the top responses to the survey was that FYF 101 needed to do more to teach students time management such as getting homework done and how to balance life and work and school. How to get enough sleep and study skills or habits. How did you learn that as you transitioned into college and how could FYF 101 incorporate new ways to teach first-year students these specific skills?

Student F: Hm. Is there any particular order you wanted us to...

I: No, just any order, but make sure you're kind of aiming toward the microphone and speaking up a little bit.

Student F: And you said you want us to say like, this is Student F...

I: Yes, please.

Student F: OK, this is Student F speaking. I would say that when I transitioned to college, like I learned how to balance my time by experience, which wasn't necessarily the greatest way because I definitely didn't get enough sleep freshman year of all years and I didn't, I don't know. I didn't spend enough time on homework is I should've probably right away, which led to unneeded stress later and obviously as, as time's gone on, like every year it gets better with time management and like this year has been pretty good with it. But um, as for ways to incorporate that into FYF, I need to think about that a little bit longer. [Laughter]

Student E: This is Student E speaking. As a first year student, one of the strengths that I came in with from developing in high school was my time management. And so I came already with pretty good habits that I just put to use once I got here. And one of my most, like my, the best thing that I think I do is I'd make things do like a day or two before they actually are in my head just so that I have a cushion. So incorporating new ways to teach that to students in FYF, I
think maybe giving them practical tips and tricks such as that. I don't know if this would just be in some sort of flyer handout so you could like collect students that do well with us, like what actually works for you so that the freshman can see these practical ways and then try them out with theirselves and see what works for them. Because I know it's different from person to person because I feel like when you teach something like time management, it's not going to be one way for every person. So maybe collecting that from current students and then sharing it with the freshmen would be helpful.

Student F: This is Student F speaking again. I think I'm just an idea for um, FYF is... I work best when I have everything written out and I can see like what I need to do and what I need to do it. And I know that the bookstore, like if you buy a certain amount of money in books, you get a free planner. But like, is it possible that maybe FYF can provide like a planner or some type of like calendar for the students so that like they at least have access to something right away if they want to start planning things out, because I know like I am a planner and my sister who's a freshman this year is a planner and like she needed to get a plan right away and didn't have one until like, that stressed her out at the beginning as well. So just thinking about that.

Student G: This is Student G, um,...I would echo both of what these two ladies have said. Um, I think it is something I learned through experience my freshman year. I didn't sleep enough. I didn't do as well in school as I did in high school because there was just too much going on and I would hang out with friends until two in the morning and then do my homework until four. And then sleep. I didn't have class til 11 so I slept til like, it was just bad. And I don't think anyone could have taught me or told me anything that probably would've changed my mind. I really think I just had to learn that and as classes got harder and grades got back that I wasn't satisfied with, I figured it out for myself. Um, and again, what Student E said about it is different for every person. Like I don't think ...I couldn't come up with a lesson plan to teach kids how to time manage. If I were to do anything I would do like a reflective exercise of like how do you currently time manage and how do you see that going forward in college? Do you have any questions about time management? Because there's going to be kids like Student E that come in with all these habits and to sit through a lecture on how you're supposed to time manage would be really hard and boring for them because they already, they've got it and they're going to figure it out themselves. Or like student F and I, like we just had to figure it out through experience. And I think if I were to do anything I would probably write a paper of like, what do I actually do? Time management. Is that going to last me through college? Um, and then going along again with what she said about buying them a planner. I think the biggest thing that I learned, because I got scarlet fever the first weekend of my freshman year, it was I had nothing, I couldn't be around anyone and I had nothing to do so I sat down with all my new syllabi and I wrote it all out in my planner when everything was due. And that was only because I was bored and sick and that... And now I do it every single semester. The first weekend of school or even the day I get that syllabus, it's all on my agenda. I know I want to go away this weekend. What do I have going on that next week? Like I'm visiting my grandparents so then I have two exams the next week so I need to make sure I'm pre studying... like that has been the best thing. And that's something that some people don't learn to do. So even if you had like a little. Sometimes I think for my floor last year when I was an RA, I like had a little, like I just was come to my room and fill out your syllabus, will play music and have snacks and like just like to get them...'cause it's really boring to do by yourself, but it'd be kind of fun to do like as an FYF activity or like here's two hours -- plan out your semester however you want, whether you are someone that writes in your Tuesday box what you're supposed to do on Tuesday or in your boxes throughout the semester, what you have due that day, if that makes sense.
Student F: This is Student F. I think that's, that's actually a good idea. Maybe having a time set aside where they can, like... I know that FYF is before the semester starts, but I know there's meetings that go on afterwards. Maybe meeting can be dedicated to like, OK, bring a syllabus and like we'll spend 20, 30 minutes of our meeting, like writing things out that are important. That's been helpful for me as well. I do what you do, um, Student G. Then I, um, I write out whenever I get my syllabi, I write out when everything is due for the entire semester and it's very helpful.

I: Let's move on to question two. Many students indicated that they would have liked to cover more in FYF 101 ... ah, practical skills of living and attending college issues like living in dorms, where and how to do laundry, how to print, how to access your mailbox, how to get along with your roommate, how to use campus resources, how to utilize an RA... were all suggested. First, do you feel like these are things that should be covered more in FYF 101 or is this the responsibility of residence life? Should residence life being more intentional with the FYF program and during the program to make sure these issues get covered? What campus resources would you say are the most important to include and what creative ideas might you have for helping students figure these things out?

Student E: This is Student E. Um, I know I was one of the people that talked about this in my survey that I wanted, at least as an incoming freshman... I was freaking out about the practical things right away, like laundry and printing I know were the two that I was the most concerned with, and like how to get packages and stuff like that. And I don't know if it's necessarily the FYF mentors' responsibility, but maybe if there was some sort of partnership with the freshmen RAs during FYF to like at least make sure they, that the students knew that those needs were going to be addressed at some point during like the first floor meetings or something like that. Um like... obviously some of these are... like how to do laundry is probably only residence life because there's commuters that are in FYF and they don't need to know how to do on campus laundry, but I definitely feel like there should be some sort of overlap between the RAs and the FYF mentors that... I don't know if the groups would split from their FYF group into their floors and then the computers could do something different if there was a specific time where they would go over basic living on your own things.

Student F: This is Student F. I agree with Student E. I think that um, there should be some type of collaboration because FYF... everyone's there. Everyone's doing the same thing. Everyone has this time dedicated to FYF. So like could one of the sessions for FYF be like, all right, you are assigned right now, like either go with your FYF mentor or your FYF mentor and your RA or something. I don't know. Somehow combine them so that we could take them to the basement of West, take them to the basement of South, show them where the laundry machines are, show them how to insert the card into the laundry machine and show them the site that you need to pull up... Give them all the links for the printing. Um, tell them to bookmark it on their computer. That's what I did. Take them over to the mail and print center. Just show them what it looks like, explain what it would be like to give a package. Because I know for me personally, it's really good for me to see something being done to learn how to do it because if someone just explains it to me, I get really confused. Um, so I think like actually bring them to the separate places and showing them or like bringing them to the "Mole Hole" and showing them where the mailboxes are and what that looks like. I mean frankly as my freshman year... that would have been wonderful for me. It would have been like a really practical... like it could be like another 20, 30 minute thing. It doesn't have to be that long, but like very practical thing to learn what to do to take care of yourself beyond school.
Student G:  This is Student G. I agree with both...both these ladies that I was a freshman RA last year, so I remember what it's like to have multiple of my 26 girls come in my room and I had to like teach them how to buy a laundry card myself and like take apart my time, which was fine. But I was like "oh you didn't learn this in FYF?" And they're like, "no." OK. So I think if there was just more communic.... if we just made like a master list of things kids need to know before school starts on Wednesday orientation and divvied it up and were clear about...'cause I didn't know as an RA that I was supposed to cover that in my...We have a whole outline for our floor, first floor meeting and a lot of it is about welcome to your floor... connect.... Like here's visiting hour rules... Don't burn down the building with the microwave. [Laughter] Like just like general, like, but mostly about connection. I'm your RA, please use me in any way. And then they're like, sweet...You're everything! Fix this laundry machine. Like, buy me a laundry card, edit my papers, blah blah. Like there's so many things that I was... or like fix the printer and like, ah, like that's not part of my job but let me direct you to whose job it is. And um, so I think it'd be even fun to have like a scavenger hunt of like, OK, this group like go... who can buy a laundry cart the fastest and then that person just has a laundry card or like, um, yeah, I definitely think the practical, yeah, how to use your mailbox. All of those types of things would be great. And I think again, we have different types of learners so I would've liked physically walking to the laundry machine, having my FYF mentors stand there while we all bought a laundry card, like that would work for me, but some people are like, just give me a handout, I'll do it on my own. And some people are like just verbally tell me and I'll remember and I'll figure it out by myself. So it's like if we found some way to combine those three things so that it wouldn't be like boring for some and not like overwhelming for others. Um, and then I think for the how to utilize your RA, I think, I don't know if I'm pretty sure I mentioned that that's part of this question too. Um, I definitely, I feel like my girls mostly got that, like I had a pretty good relationship with mine when they were freshmen and they would ask me all the question... like all these questions and I think that was a huge thing for me, but there are definitely some where they came up problems later and I'm like, why don't you tell me about this earlier? They're like, oh, I didn't know if that was part of your job. And like a huge part of being an RA is directing them in the right direction. You don't have to be everything for them, but you have to direct them like to the writing cen -- Like, no, I can't edit all your papers. Like I know I'm a junior student and you trust me, but please. And of course my personality is like, yes, I'll do everything and then I learned really fast. That doesn't last very long and I need to direct them to places like the writing center. So I think um, some people are like, what is an RA like? And I think that would be for Res Life to define. Whereas I feel like first year experience would be a lot of the doing laundry, getting mail, but also keeping commuters in mind, I like the idea of splitting up into groups and doing a scavenger hunt. We're making it fun somehow because it is tedious, but it's, they don't think it's important until they get into college and they don't know how to do laundry and they've gone a month and you know, that kind of thing.

Student F:  Um, this is Student F again, and even if you were to split up like commuters and, and residents or whatever, even the computers still need to know like how to pick up a package because they can get packages sent to Trinity or like they can, like commuters usually have meal plans maybe like they can be taken to the BBC and like show like and you can use your meal plans here and at this time whenever... stuff like that or like taken to the "Mole Hole" and be like this is a study center dedicated for commuters, that kind of thing. I was also going to say too, some people learn better visually, but some people like handouts. So what if you do both? What if there's just a pamphlet that's like how to and then you have a page for get a laundry card, have a page for ah, getting a package, a page for opening your mailbox, a page for how a-- how to print and then a page like what is my RA do for me, what does this person do for me, what can IT do for me? So on and so forth.
Student E: This is Student E. I really like the pamphlet idea, because I feel like even if you would go do it on a scavenger hunt, like say like who can figure out how to use the printer on their own and like there's no direction. That might be kind of fun. But like even if they do that and figure it out, you might forget. Like I remember I could not remember how to get to the Ultior or the Uniflow, whatever it is. And then so like if you have some sort of pamphlet that would be like a really good resource. Even if it was just posted on the Moodle course or a physical copy, I think that might still be valuable. Even for like when FYF 111 comes around at the semester. Like the incoming transfers, like they're just thrown in with nothing, like not as intense FY... first year experience. So I feel like that sort of thing that might be different from the previous college that they'd have to learn. So if you have a document like that might be useful.

Student G: I had one thing to say to Student F. I'm trying to remember what it was... [Laughter]. Oh, the bookmarking thing... that's huge. I think learning that. Oh sorry. This is Student G. Um, uh, even if like I wouldn't have minded like a five minute, like pull it up on the projector in front of your FYF group and go like add this to your favorites and I type in Moodle, add it to your favorites, type in Trin email and add it to your favorites. Type in web print add it to your favorites, type in work orders. That'd be great because then your RAs wouldn't have to do them all! -- favorites. Like, and then I had an RA folder of all my Res Life sheets that I need to keep track of, like Google docs and stuff. And then I have a school folder for like Moodle, web print, portal, like all these things like that because - you forget the website just gets so confusing because there's enough of them. So I think um, that would have been huge too. It would not take very long to just add it to your favorites and some, you know, we don't want to do too much handholding, but I think that would be like a huge help to a lot of kids.

Student F: Student F highly agrees with this. [Laughter] Like somebody pulled up on a projector and I was like, all right, take five minutes and this is this link. You want to bookmark it and be like, thank you. Because then I wouldn't have to figure it out. Twenty five minutes on my own, finding where the website is...yeah.

I: OK, thank you. Moving on to question three. So another theme here, a large number of students indicated that they would have liked more help in FYF 101 to learn library resources, citing and evaluating sources and writing in different styles such as APA or MLA. Despite the fact that all students take English 102, it seems that there is a need for these topics in FYF 101 as well. How did you learn how to use databases or evaluate online sources for your paper writing? How could this be incorporated into FYF 101? Would students make connections to their other classes if we did a general overview or should it be connected to a specific paper for another class so that it's put into practice? What creative ways would you offer to include that in FYF 101?

Student G: This is Student G. Um, I personally think that it's better off left to the English professors and I think a lot of people have to take a basic research skills type class for their major. I don't know...

Student F: Minor.

Student G: Minor? Yeah. I took when I was a social work major, I took a research class and now I'm a nursing major and I took a different nursing research class. But even in English 101/102 we were brought to the library and had someone to talk to us and walk us through the sources. And like, that was the first time I had been using APA was in social work. Um, in high school
I only learned MLA and I think that's a pretty common thread that I've heard. But the business majors don't care because they still use MLA. But a lot of the other majors, um, use APA, like all of the science, social sciences and sciences and education. So I think I would've been bored and annoyed if we did that as part of FYF, I think there's enough enough in FYF going on already that I don't think you need to learn paper writing and again with the different, like you're taking it from a bunch of different high school experiences. So I came in having written like a giant, like it was giant at the time, 12 page research paper as my senior project and there's some kids that had never written more than three pages. And so to universalize that into one FYF class would've been really hard. Whereas I feel like with an English 101 Prof sitting down 12, 15, 20 students, it'd be a lot easier for them to... Although I mean probably tedious. I think it's better for each student, maybe giving them resources like "please go see this librarian or this writing center person if you need help," but like to, like I said, to standardize that in a way that would not be too hard for some not be too easy for others and to put it as part of this thing that's supposed to be fun and how to navigate college in general. To put it as a paper writing thing. I don't personally think I would've enjoyed that, but ...

Student F: This is Student F. I think I personally had like four classes when I had to go sit in the library and listen to the library and telling me the exact same thing over and over and over again after I already knew you knew how to use the systems. And so I felt like that was a waste of my time. So in a way I think that doing it in FYF once so that no one other professors has to, have to do it is a good idea. Um, but at the same time, like I don't know if like in in FYF before the semester starts, I guess I wouldn't have been in the mindset that oh, this is applicable right now. And so I don't know if I would've paid attention anyway. I'm just thinking about how I was feeling freshman year coming into Trinity. But, um, I don't know, I honestly don't have a great answer for this one because I mean there would be perks to doing it in FYF, but there's also perks to doing it in class. So ...

Student E: This is Student E... I initially had the same thought that Student F has just said... [Laughter] That like it's only useful if you're actually in the process of writing a paper. So if you're doing FYF, and the only paper you're doing is the one that you're getting a pass fail grade on, you're not using sources like you're not writing that to get a hundred percent A on it to do the best quality of your writing I don't think, based out the ones that I graded while being a mentor. [Laughter] So like if there was a way to partner with FYF like a few weeks into the semester maybe and you actually need a paper that's going to be doing and you actually need to find sources and use proper citations. That might be more beneficial than during the actual orientation weekend. But then all students aren't always in the same class the first semester. So that might vary too. But I feel like if there's a way to, if you're going to do it, I feel like they have to have a paper that they're writing while they do it, so that they can be working on finding sources and getting feedback is if this a good source. But also I found like the librarians like to talk to you and help you. Like if you need help finding something, they like - that's their job, so they want to help you find it. So this year they did some sort of library scavenger hunt thing, orientation things. So like even just introducing them to them and be like, Hey, you can actually ask for help and they'll help you find what you need might be beneficial too. But yeah, I kind of agree that I don't think it's necessarily during the first weekend - that might be a kind of overload and forgotten.

Student F: This is Student F. Something to add to that, just like, for the library in general I think also is valuable to mention in FYF, um, about the IT desk in the library I notice doesn't have, like,
this doesn't pertain necessarily to this question, but I didn't even know that the IT desk was a thing until a couple months into my freshman year when my computer went down. So I think that's important to note as well, so that they know that they have some one that can fix their computer.

**I:** Question Four, on the survey, many students felt that they needed more help transitioning socially when coming to college. This was indicated both for making friends and getting along with roommates, but also in getting to know professors and learning about the way students needed to interact with them. What suggestions do you have to help with both of these areas? What could be added into FYF 101 or done differently to allow the social transition to be less stressful for students?

**Student F:** This is Student F. I just thought of an idea. I don't know how practical this would work, but um, I mean besides, there are some undecided majors going into freshman year, but most people have an idea of what they want to do. So what about a lunch on campus where you sit at the same table as the people from your major and your professor. Because then like you can get to know your professor as a person before you get to know them as a professor a little bit and, and vice versa, which I think is valuable. Um, and in terms of transitioning socially, it's, it's hard, but it's also something that you feel like you just kinda have to learn as you go. Because I obviously like I've never lived in a setting like this until I came here and so there was very little I could do to prepare myself for living with this many people. So I think a lot of that comes with time and I think a lot of that also comes with like if you're struggling with that, like RA role, like Res Life, that kind of thing plays into it more than FYF 101 I believe. So RA is more responsible for that than FYF 101 in my opinion. But um, definitely like the dinner with the professors. I think that could be potentially something that FYF does.

**Student G:** This is Student G. I was the RA freshman or for freshmen and, um, I agree with Student F because I think that is, that's one thing that could be very easily delegatable to RAs or at least encouraged the students that it is our job to engage in socially and two, if there's a roommate conflict, like the girls will finally come to me and I'd be like, have you ever thought about approaching her this way? They're like, oh my gosh, no. And then they do it and they're like, it worked! you know, that kind of thing and that's what we're trained to do. And um, we have two week intensive training where that's part of it is learning how to engage people socially and to foster good relationships even with people that are different from them. Um, so I don't, I feel like, again, with like generalizing from where everyone's coming from, moving into freshman year to try to teach a class on how to get along with people would just come off really sort of off putting to me. And um, like with what Student F said, it's kind of something you just have to do, like it's a hard part of transitioning to college and I don't think we're going to be able to fix that. Like I don't think it's our job to like fix it and make it perfect. The transition is healthy and it's um, it causes a lot of growth personally and socially. And um, there's only so much hand-holding we can do with that kind of stuff. I don't think it's really in our control other than to encourage ask for help, ask for help, ask for help from RAs, FYF mentors. Um, I love the professor, um, lunch an idea too. And that's good to get to know other students in your major because you're about to be together. I mean I switched majors but most of you are how to be together for four years. Um, so that's, that's key.

**Student E:** This is Student E. I really liked the idea of having a meal with your department, the professors in that department because I think that those people you have a lot of your classes with like off the bat that you might have a few of them. Like then you'll at least know some faces in your classes and like those are the people that have become my best friends are the
ones within my major just because you spend that time with them. So I think that would help
at least just build more bridges. Like you have your FYF group off the bat, you had your floor
and then if you have your department you can kind of have your foot in the door of a few
different groups of people. Um, I also wondered if like, like there's a lot of late night
activities, but if there was more now I can't quite remember. Did we eat every meal together
in FYF with the groups?

I: Not, not necessarily with your FYF group.

Student E: OK, because I feel like just around mealtime it might be like to have some structured meals
with the group, but then some were like just let them do what they want and just kind of test
the waters and see without like all the upperclassmen on campus that like kind of get in the
way. [Laughter] Like let them meet the freshmen, know who the freshmen are, ‘Cause I
remember being a freshman, like during class you can kind of act like you're in kindergarten.
Hi. I'm so and so what's your name? Where are you from? Oh I like baseball, what do you
like? That sort of thing. Then as soon as the upperclassmen move in, if you do that to one of
them, an accident that's awkward. [Laughter] You're like, that safety net is kind of gone so, I
don't know, maybe just some more like freshman class bonding as a whole. Which like the
late night activities that student activities puts on, kind of helped that. But not everyone wants
to go to things late at night necessarily. I don't know. That was just a thought that came as I
was talking.

Student F: Um, this is Student F, um, bouncing off of what Student E said. Um, I think that I know when
I was a freshman I totally valued just learning who the freshmen were and like knowing like
who is on my level, who's new, who's going through the same thing as I am. But I also was
terrified of upperclassmen until my sophomore year. And so I don't know if this is something
you would have to work out with, I don't know who would be in charge of this, but I'm like,
what if you have like a couple upperclassmen that volunteer or like, you asked to come back
on campus a couple days early to like sit down and talk with an FYF group or like talk with
um, a floor, or talk with, I don't know, just a really small group of people. Like bring in
upperclassmen like get, get the lowerclassmen involved with upperclassmen. Because I
know this year like a dating an RA and like interacting with those freshmen, like it's fun and
it's good and I've actually made some friends that way that I didn't think that I would, and
like, they feel more comfortable interacting with me even though I'm a couple of years older
and I just like, I really value the difference in age there and I think like - coming in freshman
year and being terrified of upperclassmen that I would've appreciated some of them coming
in and being real and just like talking about like what's Trinity like? Like how does it like to
do this and that? And um, like, just upperclassmen being willing to come in and say, talk to
me if you have questions like I want to talk to you, I want to be your friend, I want to get to
know you rather than like the isolation. Because sometimes I know, like sometimes freshman
year I was like, I have to just talk to freshmen. So. And that shouldn't be the case. But I know
a lot of freshmen do think that. So.

Student G: This is Student G. I think going off of what Student F said, um, I think a big I went came in
as a freshman as part choir and honors ensemble. So that was immediately like an inter class
experience where there were seniors, juniors, sophomores and freshmen in there. Um, so I
forget that other people have this very, like, this is freshman and this is everybody else
because I was immediately integrated and I sat next to a senior who chatted with me the
whole time and like her and I became friends and I felt really comfortable with my RA who is
a junior. Um, and I think yeah, I was just like really blessed to be something like that. So I'm
curious like what it would look like to create a different sort of, for the people who aren't in choir or on sports teams, sports teams also like those athletes get to know seniors immediately because those are their captains. But what about everybody else? Which is where I almost think the departmental lunch with just the freshman and your professors and then another departmental meeting with the entire, the entirety of it. Like I know nursing has a nursing student organization that organizes, like um, or they were thinking about organizing like a mentor, like an upperclassman student that could talk to underclassmen student because I know I utilize the, utilize the upperclassmen, ah, nursing students when I was an underclassmen because there's so many questions and I know education has a lot of like miscommunication with what you actually have to do. My roommate is an Ed major and she was talking about that. So just forming those connections. And I think teaching is something that I told my girls, like by my-- on my own, my first floor meeting when I was freshman RA, I was like, OK yeah, I'm your IRA and use me. But if you don't click with me, that's fine. But look at all these other student leaders. Everybody who's there that was wearing that green shirt like here, like all these RAs on the bulletin board in the front of South Hall. Look at their faces. They're. They were trained the same way as me. If you connect more with them, it's fine. Like these are other, especially like females, you can look to women's ministry leaders, FYF mentors, um, like the student leaders are all trained and willing and they stepped into this role for a reason. So they're willing to talk to you and help you out. And that's -Those are the upperclassmen. I got to know where either inquire in my major or were FYF mentors and other RAs because those people -Cause some upperclassmen don't want to talk to freshmen because they think they're too good for them. And that's when they scare them away. But there are student leaders that... I sat down with a freshmen the other day, at a library table because she asked to join me and we had a great conversation and that's, it was happenstance because we have the same major. So she was asking me all these questions. So I think yeah, forming those connections is huge.

Student F: This is Student F again and like even forming connections with. I know you mentioned like all the student leaders but I don't have like a paid role this semester or like a student leadership role, but like at the same time like I do like desire relationships with freshmen. So like encouraging, not only like go to your student leaders but branch out because yeah, like there's always going to be some people that are like, oh I don't want to talk to these people, they're freshmen, blah blah blah. But like there's always also going to meet people that are like, Oh hey, yeah, what's your name? Like where are you from? That kind of thing. And so like just I think more of a like encouraging community as a whole.

Student E: This is Student E. Reach out to the upperclassmen that like even the ones that might have applied for certain leadership roles and didn't get them or the ones that still want to just hang out and have fun and volunteer their time to do some sort of, I don't know if they would come back to campus a couple days early and volunteer or like if they wanted to help on move -in day or things like that where they could just be another face that they can be familiar with. That would be really helpful. Even if you don't have a title than like, like you're still, like you don't need a title to be one of those faces.

Student F: Um, this is Student F again. I agree with that too cause like moving day and like FYF is all like just the student leaders there, which is great because there's so many people helping. But I also think there's like other students, like I personally was there at move-in day though I wasn't a student leader, like doing random things and like I really enjoyed that and like interaction with freshmen even though like I don't have a position. And so, um, I don't know if, I don't know, maybe I don't know, just encouraging other students to get involved besides
the student leaders because like that also encourages community between the student leaders and those that aren't student leaders too. And so I just think that would be beneficial as a whole, even if it's not on move-in day or if it's like a part of FYF or like part of a random FYF session or something.

Student E: This is Student E. This is like kind of crazy, but it'd be kind of funny. What if the freshmen were moving day crew for like the sophomores or something like that. I mean they could meet a bunch of people and I'm not going to have help moving in! [Laughter] That's just like a, probably not practical because I know they do their service project trip and stuff. But that'd be kind of fun just to be the service.

Student F: This is Student F. I actually think that's a really fun idea because frankly it'd be nice to get some help [Laughter] and like to meet people that you haven't met before. Like I dunno, I'm a junior, I don't meet that many new people besides the freshman. So like to get that interaction on the first day, I don't know. I think that's a clever idea. It's a good thought.

Student G: Student G. I liked that idea. I think part of it makes me nervous because I don't want the freshman to feel like, oh they're already putting us to work - like we just got here! or the or the upperclassmen not again have the now look at our little freshies helping out. Like, like that kind of view of them were the first view of them is wearing matching tee shirts and help like carrying their stuff with them. Like it's a cute idea, but I worry about the repercussions of that.

Student F: That's a good point. [Laughter]

I: Alright, thank you very much. I appreciate your time!

END OF INTERVIEW
Appendix J

ONLINE SURVEY CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Study: Identifying First-Year Seminar Curriculum Needs for Generation Z

Researcher's Contact Information: Emily S. Bosscher, emily.bosscher@trnty.edu, 708-239-4853

Introduction

You are being invited to take part in a research study conducted by Emily Bosscher, Director of First-Year Experience at Trinity Christian College, and a student in the Master’s of Science in First-Year Studies at Kennesaw State University. Before you decide to participate in this study, you should read this form and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

Description of Project

The purpose of the study is to gather data from students about their preparedness when coming to college. Specifically, to find out if the curriculum presented in the FYF 101 course taken by all first-year students at Trinity Christian College contained the material that best prepared students to begin their college experience, and if it didn’t, to find out what it was lacking. The results of this data collection will inform the creation of a new FYF 101 course in the near future.

Explanation of Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will answer a series of questions about your experience in FYF 101 and how it did or did not prepare you for your academic journey at Trinity Christian College. You may also decide to agree to be part of further data collection in the form of focus groups or interviews, which you can opt into at the end of the survey.

Time Required

This online survey should take about 15-20 minutes, depending on how thoroughly you answer the free response questions.

Risks or Discomforts

There are no known risks or anticipated discomforts to those who agree to take this survey.

Benefits

There are no immediate benefits to those being surveyed, though this will benefit future incoming students at Trinity Christian College.
Compensation

All who agree to take part in the survey will be entered into a random drawing for a $50 Bootsma Bookstore gift card.

Confidentiality

The results of this participation will be confidential. You do not need to submit name or email at any time on the survey, unless you choose to opt into the additional focus group or interview process. No names or identifying information will be used in any way. The only time your IP address will be used is if you win the gift card drawing.

Inclusion Criteria for Participation

You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study. If, for some reason as a Sophomore you are still under 18 years of age, please opt out of the survey.

Use of Online Survey

IP addresses will be collected as part of the survey, but only for the ability to contact the winner of the gift card drawing.

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding these activities should be addressed to the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, 585 Cobb Avenue, KH3403, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591, (470) 578-2268.

PLEASE PRINT A COPY OF THIS CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR YOUR RECORDS, OR IF YOU DO NOT HAVE PRINT CAPABILITIES, YOU MAY CONTACT THE RESEARCHER TO OBTAIN A COPY

☐ I agree and give my consent to participate in this research project. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty.

☐ I do not agree to participate and will be excluded from the remainder of the questions.
## Appendix K

**Table K1**

**Survey Questions 6-23: How well FYF 101 course elements prepared students:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: FYF 101...</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...helped me understand my top 5 strengths (from the StrengthsFinder Assessment)</td>
<td>24.71%</td>
<td>55.17%</td>
<td>10.34%</td>
<td>8.05%</td>
<td>1.72%</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...prepared me for worldview discussions in my other college classes</td>
<td>18.39%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>17.82%</td>
<td>10.92%</td>
<td>2.87%</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...taught me the importance of getting my homework done on time in college</td>
<td>17.06%</td>
<td>44.12%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>15.88%</td>
<td>2.94%</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...taught me how to successfully use Moodle in my other college classes</td>
<td>16.47%</td>
<td>48.24%</td>
<td>17.06%</td>
<td>15.29%</td>
<td>2.94%</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...taught me the purpose of Academic Advising</td>
<td>14.71%</td>
<td>54.12%</td>
<td>15.88%</td>
<td>14.12%</td>
<td>1.18%</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...spent enough time talking about diversity issues to prepare me for my college experiences</td>
<td>20.59%</td>
<td>45.29%</td>
<td>22.94%</td>
<td>8.82%</td>
<td>2.35%</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...helped me learn how to communicate with my professors</td>
<td>17.06%</td>
<td>57.06%</td>
<td>12.94%</td>
<td>11.18%</td>
<td>1.76%</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...taught me the meaning of worldview</td>
<td>20.59%</td>
<td>51.76%</td>
<td>16.47%</td>
<td>8.82%</td>
<td>2.35%</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...spent enough time covering time management to help me be successful in college</td>
<td>2.98%</td>
<td>47.02%</td>
<td>25.60%</td>
<td>20.83%</td>
<td>3.57%</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...prepared me for meeting with my Academic Advisor during registration</td>
<td>10.71%</td>
<td>52.38%</td>
<td>15.48%</td>
<td>17.86%</td>
<td>3.57%</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table K2**

**Survey Questions 6-23: How well FYF 101 course elements prepared students:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: FYF 101...</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...prepared me for writing papers in my other college classes</td>
<td>1.72%</td>
<td>17.24%</td>
<td>34.48%</td>
<td>36.78%</td>
<td>9.77%</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...helped me understand way to use my top 5 strengths in other classes</td>
<td>9.20%</td>
<td>37.93%</td>
<td>22.41%</td>
<td>25.86%</td>
<td>4.60%</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...prepared me for developing good study skills for my other courses</td>
<td>1.15%</td>
<td>30.46%</td>
<td>29.89%</td>
<td>32.18%</td>
<td>6.32%</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...spent enough time covering library services in preparation for my other courses</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
<td>32.94%</td>
<td>22.35%</td>
<td>31.76%</td>
<td>7.06%</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...prepared me for the rigor of academic work in my other college classes</td>
<td>3.53%</td>
<td>32.94%</td>
<td>23.53%</td>
<td>34.12%</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...prepared me for using library services while at Trinity Christian College</td>
<td>5.29%</td>
<td>32.35%</td>
<td>26.47%</td>
<td>31.76%</td>
<td>4.12%</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...prepared me for the stress of my academic class load</td>
<td>2.94%</td>
<td>28.24%</td>
<td>25.88%</td>
<td>32.94%</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...was relevant to my other coursework at Trinity Christian College</td>
<td>3.57%</td>
<td>33.93%</td>
<td>24.40%</td>
<td>27.38%</td>
<td>10.71%</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix L

Focus Group Questions:

1. One of the top responses to the survey was that FYF 101 needed to do more to teach students time management (getting homework done, how to balance life and work and school, how to get enough sleep) and study skills or habits? How did you learn that as you transitioned into college, and how could FYF 101 incorporate new ways to teach first-year students these specific skills?

2. Many students indicated that what they would have liked to cover more in FYF 101 were the practical skills of living and attending college. Issues like living in dorms, where and how to do laundry, how to print, how to access your mailbox, how to get along with your roommate, how to use campus resources, how to utilize an RA were all suggested. First, do you feel like these are things that should be covered more in FYF 101, or is this the responsibility of Residence Life? Should Residence Life be working more intentionally with the FYF 101 program and during the program to make sure these issues get covered? What “campus resources” would you say are the most important to include, and what creative ideas might you have for helping students figure these things out?

3. A large number of students indicated that they would have liked more help in FYF 101 to learn library resources, citing and evaluating sources, and writing in different styles (APA or MLA). Despite the fact that all students take English 102, it seems that there is a need for these topics in FYF 101 as well. How did you learn how to use data bases or evaluate on-line sources for your paper writing? How could this be incorporated into FYF 101? Would students make connections to their other classes if we did a general overview, or should it be connected to a specific paper for another class so that it is put into practice and connected to the rest of their college experience? What creative ways would you offer to include that in FYF 101?

4. On the survey, many students felt that they needed more help transitioning socially when coming to college. This was indicated both for making friends and getting along with roommates, but also in getting to know professors and learn about the way students need to interact with them. What suggestions do you have to help with both these areas? What could be added into the FYF 101 program or done differently to allow the social transition to be less stressful for students?