

# GVSU Assessment Conference

Assessing the Impact of EDH 181: A  
Pathway to Student Success and Belonging

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# First-year experience national context

The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) recommends a robust first-year experience with an emphasis on first-generation and at-risk students

- ✓ 90% of colleges and universities offer a first-year seminar (Young & Hopp, 2013)
- ✓ Graham et al. (2023) found higher persistence rates among first-gen and students of color who participate in first-year experiences
- ✓ First-year experiences have been shown to level academic disparities and counteract lower incoming GPAs (Clark and Cundiff, 2011)
- ✓ First-year seminars specifically help conditionally admitted students and assist with direction and persistence (Tampke & Durodoye, 2013; Pickenpaugh et. al, 2021)



# Oliver Wilson Scholars

Oliver Wilson Scholars (OWS) helps transition learners from high school to college through coordinated support services, academic success coaching, and personalized resources. We help learners feel connected to campus and create the positive relationships needed to succeed at GVSU.

## Program Requirements

- Meet with student success coach a minimum for four times a semester
- Attend weekly student tables
- Successfully complete EDH 181
- Follow GVSU's Code of Conduct

## Admission into the Program

- At the time of application to GVSU all students with a cumulative GPA between 2.0-2.79 are referred to the OWS Admissions Committee for additional review
- This committee uses a holistic review process that considers:
  - GPA
  - Test scores
  - Student's academic life-cycle
  - Neighborhood indicators
  - Percentage of students who receive free or reduced lunch
  - Average AP scores
  - Any written materials submitted by student







# EDH 181 at GVSU- What it's all about



## Course Background

Transitioning leadership from Ed Foundations to Higher Education



## Updated Content

Socialization to college  
Practical skills for navigating success  
in and out of the classroom



## Summer Launch

Pilot program with ~80 students  
and 5 instructors led to tweaks for  
the fall semester (~496 students  
and 26 instructors)

# EDH 181 - Syllabus Highlights

This course serves as an introduction to recommended academic, social, and personal skills, highlighting the expectations and needs of successful college students in the context of Grand Valley State University's diverse community.

*Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:*

Develop the skills necessary to build personal and social communities necessary for success in the college context.	Recognize, identify, and regularly utilize the various support resources that exist for students on Grand Valley's campus.	Recognize one's academic self as a continually developing project through the lenses of growth mindset and self-efficacy.	Develop autonomy as a learner by developing critical thinking skills, making connections across topics, and recognizing quality work in a college context.
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## Course Topics

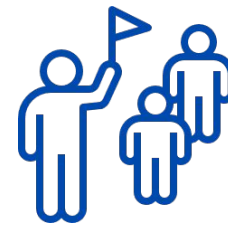
Introduction to College and Finding Your Place	Writing Effectively and Efficiently
What it Means to be a College Student	Reading Effectively and Efficiently
How to Navigate College Courses	Keeping your Place in Time and Space
Engaging Academic Inquiry	Circles of Support
Developing Digital Literacy	Developing Financial Literacy
Mid-Point Check-In: Individual Meetings with Instructor	Final Exam

# EDH 181 for OWS: Course and program and focus area connectivity



## Research-Based

Required course is guided by best practices



## Higher Education Transition

Unpacks social, cultural, and academic expectations and fosters understanding of college environment



## College Navigation

Bridge gaps in cultural capital and allow students to understand GVSU-specific culture



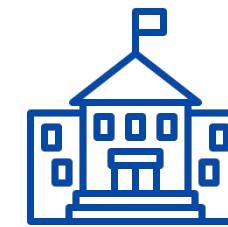
## Belonging and Connection

Facilitate cohorts and learning communities to build peer connections



## Student Success

Empower student to self-advocate and feel ownership over academic experience



## Strengthen Retention

Course strategies are designed to support OWS students understanding of GVSU structures





# Instructor Training



## Recruitment

Seeking interested instructors with a passion for student success!



## Training

Orientation to prepared materials  
Balancing preparation with academic freedom



## Support

Not as strong as we would like, with hopes for more dedicated instructor support in FA25.





# Program Assessment

## Fall 2024-Winter 2025 Assessment Plan

- Dr. Anna Hammersmith and Dr. Amanda Buday Associate Professors of Sociology
- IRB approved proposal through the Provost to assess the course
- Assessment Plan:
  - Observing EDH 181 Classes
  - Reviewing class content (syllabus, BB, assignments, presentations, etc.)
  - Interviewing Instructors of EDH 181
  - Interviewing OWS staff members
  - Connecting with students (current and former cohorts of EDH 181)
  - Investigating and evaluating other relevant institutional data source (e.g. GVSU Pulse or NSSE data)
  - Drafting a report of findings to share with relevant audiences and stakeholders.
  - Presenting key findings and recommendations to relevant audiences







# Student Experiences & Perceptions Survey

Developed in partnership with the directors of the Tutoring & Reading Center, First-Year Learning Communities, Gardner Institute Gateways to Completion course redesigns, Social Science Lab, and with feedback provided by many introductory course coordinators and student success supports.

Items related to:

- Students' sense of belonging, growth mindset, and self-efficacy that has been shown to be positively associated with student success and retention (e.g., Walton & Cohen, 2011; Walton et al., 2015; Murphy et al., 2020)
- Students' experiences with elements of engaged learnings (Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013) including, frequent and constructive feedback, opportunities to reflect, real-world application
- If applicable, students' perceptions of how an embedded peer support (structured learning assistants, peer mentors, embedded tutors, writing consultants) supported their learning
- Self-reported demographic items including race and ethnicity, first-generation status, and Pell eligibility





# Student Experiences & Perceptions Survey

## Fall 2024 Pilot

- Students enrolled in these course types were invited to participate
  - Included an embedded peer support (structured learning assistants, peer mentors, embedded tutors, and writing center consultants);
  - Part of a GVSU First-Year Learning Community;
  - Part of the Gardner Institute Gateways to Completion course redesigns;
  - EDH 181; or
  - In a section of a course that did not involve one of the student success interventions identified above.
- 925 students (13% of invited) provided consent and completed the survey
- 284 individualized course section summary reports were sent to 162 instructors

## Winter 2025 Goals

- Prepare comprehensive reports in collaboration with development partners and share with the campus community
- Meet with instructors to gain feedback and suggestions based on their summary reports
- Partner with units and course instructors to increase the number of invitations to students and response rate



# Multiple measures to tell the EDH 181 story

## Belonging

## Pedagogy and course experiences

## Accessing Resources

**Social  
Science Lab  
Interview**

**Belonging at GVSU**

**Course Content**

**How EDH 181  
helped them know  
how to access  
resources**

**CLAS Voyage  
Survey**

**Belonging in  
EDH 181**

**Elements of Engaged  
Learning  
(Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013)**

**Accessing  
academic support  
for EDH 181**





# Future Plans for EDH 181 and OWS



Expand linked course options with first-year learning communities



Consider more specialized course content to speak to individualized needs



Pre-register OWS students for both EDH 181 and first-year learning communities



Co-train faculty for both EDH181 and first-year courses



Expand program to additional populations





# Thank you!

## Questions and Discussion

### Get in Touch

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