

**FOCUS**

**MON  
MAY  
13  
2024**

# ON THE FIRST YEAR

**2ND ANNUAL  
REGIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON  
THE FIRST-YEAR  
COLLEGE  
EXPERIENCE**

*For faculty,  
professionals,  
administrators,  
and student  
leaders from  
regional colleges  
and universities*

**REIMAGINING THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE:  
ENGAGING STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS**



*Featuring Keynote Speaker Jillian Kinzie  
Senior Research Scientist and Associate Director,  
National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE),  
Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research*



**WELCOME, COLLEAGUES**, to our Second Annual Regional Conference on the First-Year College Experience, supported by the College of Arts & Sciences, the Provost, and the Vice-President for Student Affairs.

What began as an idea to bring local FYE colleagues together has expanded to a full-day conference, with presenters and attendees from all over New England and the Tri-State area.

Our presenters include faculty, professionals, administrators, graduate students and undergraduate student leaders. We are especially excited to welcome the peer mentors from UConn-Waterbury today!

In order to honor this range of areas committed to imagining and reimagining the college experience for first-year students, we chose a keynote speaker who exemplifies that range. Jillian Kinzie, a student success expert, was a faculty member at Indiana University Bloomington and coordinated the Master's Program in Higher Education and Student Affairs, and is currently a Senior Research Scientist and Associate Director at the Center for Postsecondary Research and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Institute, Indiana University School of Education. She is the author of numerous data-driven publications on student success, most recently co-editor of *Radical Re-Imagining of Student Success in Higher Education*.

After Jillian's keynote, she wanted to have time with smaller groups of colleagues to chat, roundtable-style, so during our first three concurrent sessions, we provide opportunities for administrators, professionals, and faculty to join her.

This year, we have also added poster presentations to the mix! While we have a short, dedicated time at the day's end to engage with posters, they will be displayed throughout the day, so please chat with poster presenters during lunch and during breaks.

Thanks to you all for joining. We hope to see you next year too!



# PROGRAM

8:30AM-9:00AM • EN B121

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CHECK-IN BREAKFAST AND POSTERS

9:00AM-9:15AM • EN C112

.....  
OPENING REMARKS

9:15AM-10:45AM • EN C112

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KEYNOTE

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**Reimagining the First-Year Experience: Engaging Students for Success**

*Jillian Kinzie*

*Jillian Kinzie, Senior Research Scientist and Associate Director, National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research*

The first college year is a critical transition point in a student's educational journey. Most institutions have implemented proven practices to smooth this passage including holistic first-year experience programs, orientation, seminars, and support in gateway courses. Yet, loose ends remain. This session highlights broad trends revealed in recent first-year student engagement results from the National Survey of Student Engagement and offers recommendations about approaches to reimagine the first college year for more equitable student learning and success.

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COFFEE BREAK AND POSTERS

**10:45AM-11:00AM**  
**EN B121**

Take 15-minutes to grab a snack, talk with colleagues, and engage with poster presentations.

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CONCURRENT SESSIONS

## CONCURRENT SESSION #1

11:00AM-11:45AM

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### Calling all Administrators: A Chat with Jillian

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EN B 112 A&B

College and University administrators are invited to join Jillian for a roundtable discussion focused on ideas and data from her keynote presentation that they wish to further explore. This session will be led by participants' questions and interests. This is also a wonderful opportunity to get to know other administrators in the region.

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### Applying Black Feminist Theory and Hood Feminism Principles to the First-Year Experience

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EN A 120

*Daphney Alston, Associate Director, Student Involvement and Leadership Development  
Southern Connecticut State University*

*Naa Opoku, Clinical Case Manager, Graduate Student  
University of Connecticut-Hartford*

As the landscape of higher education continues to change, so should the pedagogical approaches of professors and instructors, especially those working with first year students. In this session, participants will learn the tenets and theoretical frameworks of Black Feminist Theory, as well as the prolific work of Mikki Kendall and Hood Feminism. We will apply these two theoretical lenses to how we support first year students in our teaching practices, as well as addressing mental health and other basic needs.

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### Retention in the Classroom: Promoting Consistent Attendance and Participation

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EN B 111

*Nicole Decoteau, Director of First-Year Program, Writing, and ESOL  
New England College*

Retention at the institutional level has been studied since the 1970s and a number of known predictive and control factors have been replicated through the decades; however, studies at the course level have not been conducted at as high a frequency. This study utilized known retention factors to identify students who were less likely to retain at the institutional level and determined if those same factors helped to indicate consistent attendance and participation at the course level. Findings indicate that retention at the institutional level can be replicated at the course level; therefore, students who are less likely to retain institutionally can be identified and supported through specific interventions at the course level, which can positively affect retention at the institutional level.

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LUNCH AND POSTERS

11:45AM-12:45PM

EN B121

## CONCURRENT SESSION #2

12:50PM-1:35PM

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### Calling all Faculty: A Chat with Jillian

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EN B 112 A&B

College and University faculty are invited to join Jillian for a roundtable discussion focused on ideas and data from her keynote presentation that they wish to further explore. This session will be led by participants' questions and interests. This is also a wonderful opportunity to get to know other faculty in the region.

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### A Pitch with Purpose

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EN A 120

*Jenna Hartwell, Academic Advisor*  
*Doris Cajamarca Bravo, Peer Mentor*  
*Shania Ross, Peer Mentor*  
*Mallory Smith, Peer Mentor*  
*University of Connecticut-Waterbury*

Attend this session and learn about the Peer Mentor experience at UConn Waterbury! In addition to supporting our First-Year (FY) seminar courses, these incredible students spend the fall semester developing a project proposal (and corresponding public pitch) centered on improving the larger student experience. Leveraging a combination of Design Thinking, Empathy Mapping, and the National Association of Colleges and Employers' Career Competencies, come and discover the ways we are developing and inspiring leaders while simultaneously enhancing our campus services.

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### From One-Size-Fits-All to Targeted Success: A Decade of Impact with Cohort Coaching

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EN B 111

*Megan Wigton, Assistant Director, Student Success & the First-Year Experience*  
*Damien Boutillon, Assistant Director, First Generation Student Success*  
*Marisa Vinas, Graduate Student Success Coach*  
*Fredrick Monroy, Graduate Student Success Coach*  
*Salem State University*

Higher education institutions are exponentially investing in coaching models to bolster student retention and success. These student-facing initiatives draw from strength-based and equity lens models, while emulating historically successful federal and state initiatives supporting underserved student populations. Known barriers to educational success are often addressed by a singular, centralized coaching initiative, or a combination of federally funded student support and institutional tutoring centers. At Salem State, Student Success and the First-Year Experience chose to foster distinct initiatives and serve in a more targeted way the unique attributes of four student population: first-generation, Pell-eligible, predominantly Hispanic and Latinx, and "murky middle" student populations. Through ten years of growing and expanding this targeted cohort coaching approach, Salem State identified benefits to each student population that may not have been achieved otherwise, resulting in higher retention. Further, Salem State's targeted model resulted in three institutional benefits: higher donor engagement with a thrice expanded program; cohesive messaging on coaching eligibility; and a fertile ground to practice coaching program integration and collaboration.

## CONCURRENT SESSION #3

1:40PM-2:25PM

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### Calling all Professionals: A Chat with Jillian

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EN A 112 A&B

College and University professional staff and administrative faculty are invited to join Jillian for a roundtable discussion focused on ideas and data from her keynote presentation that they wish to further explore. This session will be led by participants' questions and interests. This is also a wonderful opportunity to get to know other professionals in the region.

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### Going Beyond Think-Pair-Share: Increasing Peer-to-Peer Engagement in First-Year Courses

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EN A 120

*Omar Simpson, Student Success Course Director  
United States Military Academy, West Point*

Think-pair-share is an active-learning strategy designed to give all students in a classroom the opportunity to think and talk about the ideas they are studying (Lyman, 1981). Coming from his experience teaching first year seminars for over eight years, Dr. Simpson explains some challenges that can occur with traditional Think-Pair-Share models and offers refreshing solutions. In this workshop, he'll provide several practical strategies to help students build collegial peer relationships, learn to share tasks, and actively engage in deeper discussions. Faculty will be able to immediately implement the new strategies in their classrooms to increase learning and peer to peer engagement.

This is an interactive workshop where participants will learn by doing.

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### Digital Distractions: Helping Students Reduce Smart Phone Dependency

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EN B 111

*Amy Baldwin; Senior Lecturer, Literacy and Student Success  
University of Central Arkansas*

*Laurie Hazard; Lecturer, Psychology  
New England Institute of Technology*

Are your students driven to distraction by their smartphones? Students report that they are more dependent than ever on electronic devices, and that dependency has been linked to a myriad of issues: lack of social adjustment and integration, poor academic performance, and increasing mental health concerns. Through the lens of an addiction model, this workshop will address what is contributing to smartphone dependency and the implications for college students. This workshop will also provide concrete strategies for helping students develop self-regulation skills that can improve engagement and learning both inside and out of the classroom.

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COFFEE & SNACK BREAK

2:25PM-2:35PM

EN B121

Take 10-minutes to grab a snack, talk with colleagues, and engage with poster presentations.

## CONCURRENT SESSION #4

2:35PM-3:20PM

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### From the Woods into the Classroom: Summer Camp for First-Year Students

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EN A 113

*Brianna Kirk, Coordinator of the First-Year Experience*  
*Robbin Smith, Professor & Faculty Liaison to the FYE Program*  
*Central Connecticut State University*

In the summer of 2023, the Central Connecticut State University First-Year Program piloted a summer camp experience. In this program, we took 23 students and 10 upper-class peer camp counselors into the woods for 2 nights and 3 days. The goals of the program were to help students form connections with each other and with their peer counselors, and to provide skills that would help smooth their transition to college. The program became so much more. Camp Central spurred student reflection, generated enthusiasm for CCSU, and created lasting connections. Join us in this session to see how we got started, what the impact has been on our campers and their college experiences, and where we are headed as we go into our second year.

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### Dry Erase Markers and a Whiteboard: Time Management Game Plan for Involved Students

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EN B 111

*Ashley McDowell, Success Advisor*  
*University of New Haven*

Many first-year students realize that their free time can be their best friend, or their worst enemy, especially for involved students (examples: student-athletes, student leaders, student employment). The purpose of this time management workshop is to demonstrate an exercise that helps students map out all required responsibilities (classes, practice, games, working on assignments, studying, sleep, relaxation, and social life). This exercise also helps students pinpoint how they can better balance and establish their daily and weekly schedule by identifying “pockets” of free space on the white board using a visual and creative awareness technique.

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### Meta-Mastery: A Roadmap for Effective Learning

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EN A 115

*Vanessa Borum, Associate Director of Academic Advising*  
*University at Albany*

Have you met with a student who says I just don't know how to study? Are you unsure of what to do or say to help? If this resonates, then this is the session for you! Attend an interactive workshop that is grounded in current research on metacognition, learning, and study skills with the focus on building skills for students to raise their academic confidence and resilience. Strategies include how to approach textbook reading, note-taking in the classroom, and exam preparation. Students who have attended this workshop have shared how helpful it has been for them. Come for the workshop and leave with real tools that you can immediately share with students. This workshop is a top-rated guest presentation in First-Year Experience courses on student surveys.



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## Building Bridges: Supporting and Connecting with Special Populations of First-Year Students

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EN A 120

*Thierry Thesatus, Associate Dean of Career and Student Success*  
*Aimee O'Shea, Associate Director of Career and Professional Development*  
*Southern Connecticut State University*

In this workshop, participants will explore strategies for better supporting and connecting with special populations of first-year students, focusing on first-generation and undocumented students. Recognizing the unique challenges and experiences these students may face during their transition to college, the workshop will provide practical insights and actionable tools for fostering inclusivity, building trust, and promoting student success. Participants will delve into the specific needs and concerns of first-generation and undocumented students. Drawing on research-based best practices and real-world examples, the workshop will address topics such as navigating academic and financial barriers, fostering a sense of belonging, and providing culturally responsive support services.

### CONCURRENT SESSION #5

3:25PM-4:10PM

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## FYE Activities as an Opportunity to Support First-Gen, Low-Income, and Minoritized Students

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EN A 120

*Laura Tropp, Director, Academic Affairs*  
*Erika Granoff, Director of Student Services*  
*Jordan Ochs, Director of the First Year Experience Program*  
*University of Connecticut-Stamford*

In FYE courses, it is important to work with students on time management. Yet, often, for First-Generation and students from Minoritized groups, time is out of their control, and they have the burden of not enough time. This presentation explores the importance of teaching students about "time poverty." Students explore their own relationship with time to approach time as an equity issue to provide new empowerment on owning their time. The first presenter will discuss the amount of pressure first-generation students commonly feel. The next presenter will share an FYE class activity designed to provide an opportunity for self-reflection and disclosure that allows students to process various successes and failures they have encountered thus far. The third presenter will introduce a FYE class activity designed to increase students' awareness of their family dynamic and the ways it can motivate and deter them from persisting in college. The corresponding assignment helps students practice healthy communication with family about challenging scenarios related to college and independent decision-making. The goal is to empower students to navigate familial relationships and preserve family support throughout their college journey.



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## Course Scheduling for First-Year Students

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EN B 111

*Craig Hlavac, Associate Dean, Liberal Arts*  
*Therese Bennett, Professor of Mathematics*  
*Southern Connecticut State University*

Course scheduling for first-year students can be a challenging task! New students must be carefully and strategically enrolled in appropriate courses, a task that requires collaboration with many distinct areas of the university, including academic advising, first-year experience, student affairs, financial aid, and the registrar. The disparate needs of various student groups (e.g. student athletes, honors college students, student government) coupled with individual student work and family obligations require many course options for first-year students. This session will provide data-driven insights and recommendations on how to accommodate first-year students and ensure scheduling options throughout the registration period. Math and English placement will also be discussed.

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## First-Years and Persistence: The 'Secret Sauce' to Helping Students on Their Learning Journey

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EN A 113

*KC Clemens, Associate Instructor*  
*Lees-McRae College*

Many of those working in Student Success centers and/or providing a valuable First-Year Experience are often frustrated with students who ghost. A variety of reasons might affect a student's choice to respond; however, there are strategies that can help a student eventually communicate. In this presentation, I will provide LMC's 'secret sauce' to reengaging students who have ghosted and providing support or a recovery plan. On LMC's campus, First-Year instructors also serve as the student's advisor for the first year on campus. Our dual role as instructor and advisor allows us to know our students well and provide necessary outreach as students develop their "college legs." Building an environment where students can develop personal responsibility is one important step towards encouraging persistence.

# POSTERS

**4:10-4:30PM  
(DISPLAYED ALL DAY)  
EN B 121**

Posters will be on display all day in EN B121. Please take some time in the morning, and during lunch and breaks, to stop by. Then join us at the end of the day for a snack and to talk with poster presenters!

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## **Facilitating FYE with an Equity Lens through Restorative Practices**

*Patricia Gagliardi  
Director of Education & Restorative Practices  
Southern Connecticut State University*

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## **First-Year Probation Students: A Focus on the Journey**

*Jessica Ruddy  
Associate Director, Academic Success Center  
  
Nina Lupo  
Professional Advisor  
Eastern Connecticut State University*

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## **This, That, and The Other: The Role of Freewriting, Visual Interpretation, and Dialogue to Promote First-Year Student Engagement**

*Emily Cole  
Assistant Director of Academic Advising & INQ Instructor  
Southern Connecticut State University*

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## **Empowering First-Year Student Autonomy**

*Shenira Billups  
Adjunct Faculty, Psychology  
  
Allyson Regis  
Coordinator, Wellbeing Center  
Southern Connecticut State University*

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## **Facilitating Adult-Like Learning Environments: Exploring and Incorporating the Learning Partnership Model in First-Year Seminars**

*Andrew Parzyck  
Assistant Professor of Communication, Media, and Screen Studies  
Southern Connecticut State University*

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## **Cultivating Ten Habits of Mind for Success in College: Practical Strategies for Your FYE Program**

*Laurie Hazard  
Lecturer, Psychology  
New England Institute of Technology*



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by the  
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 **F**IRST-YEAR **E**XPERIENCE



Southern Connecticut  
State University