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Impact of an Immersive Academic and Place-Based First Year Program on Student Connections and Engagement Over Four Years
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Abstract:	The Finding Your Place (FYP) program is an academically-based first year experience at a small liberal arts college in Tennessee. The program builds close relationships and skills for academic success by bringing first-year students and faculty advisors together in an immersive, transdisciplinary, and reflective experience focused on the study of place before the first semester begins. A survey of four cohorts of students (classes 2017-2020) found that, compared to peers who did not participate in the program, FYP students reported a number of favorable outcomes, including greater connection with first-year advisors and residential hall staff, more significant and valuable learning experiences, and earlier and more frequent participation in local community engagement. Additionally, in three out of four years, the program attracted proportionately more non-white students, as well as more students with greater financial need. These results suggest that an immersive, academic pre-semester first year experience can have lasting benefits.

Impact of an Immersive Academic and Place-Based First Year Program on Student Connections and Engagement Over Four Years

Over 90% of institutions of higher learning in the U.S. offer some form of first-year seminar (Pattengale, 2017) and first-year seminars have a history of success in easing student transition to college and improving retention and persistence (e.g., Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Porter & Swing, 2006; Schnell & Doetkott, 2003). In fact, first-year seminars are now recognized as one of a select group of high impact practices (HIPs, which also include learning communities and service learning, for example) that enhance student engagement with sustained effects (Chism & Graziano, 2016; Kuh, 2008; NSSE, 2013). More recently, HIPs, and especially first-year seminars, have been recognized for fostering long term academic success, even among non-majority populations when such experiences are made widely available (Swanson, Vaughan, & Wilkerson, 2015). Some scholars maintain that making it possible for every undergraduate to participate in at least two high impact practices, one as early as the first year, is the single most important means of enhancing student engagement (Kuh, 2008). Third on a list of “20 retention principles” is student engagement during the first six weeks of college (Pattengale, 2017), a point that underscores the importance of providing students with deeply meaningful experiences early during their first semester. While the structure, format, and content of first-year seminars vary considerably across institutions, depending upon goals and resource availability, the most effective experiences emphasize critical inquiry, frequent writing, and collaborative learning (Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Kuh, 2008).

Our goal was to develop an immersive first-year program around academic, place-based courses that raised first-year student engagement by fostering early and deep connections

between faculty and other students. Situated on top of the Cumberland Plateau in the Southern Appalachian region, the University of the South (hereafter referred to as “Sewanee”) has a 13,000-acre land base known as “the domain” which is used extensively for recreation and hands-on, field-based learning. The college has also developed collaborative partnerships in surrounding rural communities as a growing number of students seek out civic engagement and service learning projects. However, there has been a common perception that many students exist in the “bubble” of university life, graduating without connection to, or knowledge of, the larger context surrounding campus, including the natural world and neighboring communities. We wanted to set first-year students on a trajectory towards seeking out and participating in other high impact practices, such as faculty-student research, service-learning projects, and overall greater civic engagement. We wanted to foster connections to community and the natural environment and inspire conversations about how the local relates to the wider world. Other program objectives included an emphasis on experiential learning, transdisciplinary exploration, and strengthening skills in reflective writing and synthesis.

The focus on place as the subject of our first-year seminar was based upon the fact that Sewanee considers our large land base and tight knit community as two of our greatest assets. In addition, a placed-based pedagogy offered opportunities for first-hand, inquiry-based experiences, rich in local knowledge and particular context, that engage learners and highlight complexity (Elfer, 2011). A thorough study of place necessitates examination through many lenses, a process that encourages exploration and synthetic analysis that resists traditional boundaries of academic disciplines (Christensen & Crimmel, 2008). The subject is also very compelling in our globalized and digitized world. Indeed, some scholars point out that the pursuit of mobility and economic progress have rendered American society as “placeless,”

allowing websites and digital relationships to substitute for place, family, and friends (McClay & McAllister, 2014), resulting in lost identity and a sense of disconnectedness (Jacoby, 2014).

Recovering a sense of place through intimate knowledge and experience is considered essential to cultivating civic engagement and public leadership (McClay & McAllister, 2014), building individual resilience and community health (Baker & Bilbro, 2017), developing a sense of stewardship for the natural world (e.g., Berry, 1987) and fostering human flourishing (Tuan, 1977). For all of these reasons, the study of “our place” seemed to offer first year students a grounding focus for immersive exploration, building connections, and becoming rooted in academic life, on campus and in the wider community.

This research, comprised of two parts, examined the initial four years of Sewanee’s Finding Your Place (FYP) first-year program. First, we conducted a survey across the entire student body comparing the first four cohorts (classes of 2017-2020) of FYP students with their non-FYP peers. We hypothesized that FYP students would demonstrate significantly higher levels of comfort, connection, and engagement compared to non-FYP students, in a variety of academic and co-curricular activities. Secondly, to determine if and how students who elected to participate in FYP differed from those who did not, we compared information collected by the Office of Institutional Research between the two groups during the same four-year period, including data on demographic variables and academic performance.

Method

Program

This study was undertaken at Sewanee, a private liberal arts college in Tennessee with an average total enrollment of 1,700 undergraduates. FYP consists of multiple 100-level FYP courses, representing a diversity of academic disciplines (e.g., archeology, biology, English,

geology, history, music, religious studies, etc.) that begin in mid-August two weeks prior to the start of the semester and end at the mid-point of the semester in October. Participation in the program is voluntary and students who opt to take an FYP course do so in the place of another college course. FYP courses are conducted in two parts, beginning with a nine-day pre-semester “interdisciplinary immersion” during which students in all courses conceptually explore “place”, as well as the campus and surrounding region through plenary lectures, common readings, and field trips. With assistance from two student “mentors,” each course is led by a professor who serves as a first-year advisor.

The program is free to all students, except for textbook costs. Enrollment has been limited by the number of FYP sections offered (available first come, first served). Courses comprise 16 first-year students and two mentors, and for the years surveyed, 10 courses were taught on average, providing seats for nearly 40% of incoming first-year students. Sewanee also has another three-day pre-semester non-academic outing program that accommodates approximately 220 students, as well as a practice of bringing fall athletes to campus early. Although the current pre-semester “immersive” all day class schedule of FYP precludes participation from fall athletes and outing program participants, more than 500 students participated in the FYP program over the first four years. These other groups (i.e., outing program students, fall athletes) are part, but not all, of the comparison group in our survey analysis. Once the semester begins, the FYP courses continue as a weekly “perspective development” seminar that narrows to emphasize the disciplinary focus of the faculty advisor. Students deepen their understanding of a topic through a “capstone” project and the course ends at mid-semester, providing these first-year students the opportunity to concentrate on their

remaining three classes. Students in FYP courses earn elective or general education credit, depending upon the preference of the instructor.

Participants and Procedures

We surveyed the entire student body to compare the first-year experience of the first four cohorts of the FYP program with those of students who did not enroll in FYP. The survey was open to all students from the classes of 2017 to 2020. All undergraduates enrolled at the institution were sent an e-mail invitation to participate in an IRB-approved online survey of “First Year Experiences” in late-January of 2017. Students interested in participating followed a web link to a Qualtrics site where they completed a consent form and survey materials. The survey took about 10 minutes to complete and participants were given two weeks to participate in the survey, with a reminder email occurring four days before the survey was closed. As an incentive for participating, interested students were entered into a drawing to win Amazon.com gift cards worth \$200 (1), \$25 (4), or \$10 (20), which were emailed after survey completion. Following gift card distribution, all participants’ identifying information was deleted, including email address, identification number, etc.

A total of 373 participants, representing nearly 22% of the student body (214 female, 112 male, 3 neither male nor female, 2 choosing not to respond) completed at least a portion of the survey and were included in the analyses. Overall, the sample was representative of the student population at the university. Participants were fairly evenly distributed across class years (22% first years, 23% sophomores, 28% juniors, 26% seniors, 1% other). Among the sample, 83% reported being white, 6% reported being Latinx, 6% reported being African American, and 1% or fewer reported being of other racial/ethnic groups. Approximately 15% reported being a first-generation college student. One third of those surveyed identified themselves as having

participated in the first-year program (FYP = 121), with those who did not participate in FYP (non-FYP = 248 students) representing the remaining two-thirds of the sample.

Survey Questions

All participants. All participants were asked a series of questions about their early learning experiences and integration into Sewanee relationships, including their relationship with their first-year advisor, the student staff in their first residence hall (who served during the first two years as program mentors) and “peer mentors” (subsequently trained by the Residential Life Office to serve as program mentors in place of the residential hall staff). Most items in the survey were completed on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale, but exceptions are noted below.

Two items assessed participants’ reflections of comfort and connection with their first-year advisor: “During my first semester, I felt comfortable interacting with the advisor I had,” and “During my first semester, I felt connected to the advisor I had.” These items showed strong reliability ($\alpha = .90$) and were thus computed and analyzed as a scale of two items. Participants were asked two similarly worded questions about the student staff mentors in their first residence hall ($\alpha = .89$). Participants also completed two similar items regarding how they currently felt about their first advisor (e.g., “I still feel comfortable interacting with the advisor I had during my first semester”, $\alpha = 0.91$) and two similar questions about current feelings about their first residence hall student staff ($\alpha = 0.92$).

All participants were asked a series of questions about their involvement in activities and programs at Sewanee. If a student had been involved in any of these activities and programs, they were asked additional questions about the nature of their involvement, the point at which they first became engaged in it, and the duration/frequency of their involvement (see Table 1). Of

particular interest were activities associated with HIPs, including civic engagement, outreach trips, and research with professors.

Lastly, participants completed a series of items about their general first semester experience. They were asked to assess the following statements: “During my first semester, I engaged in a significant learning experience at Sewanee,” “During my first semester I had experiences that would be valuable for other first-year students to have,” “During my first semester, I was introduced to places around Sewanee that helped me function in day-to-day life here,” and “During my first semester, I felt connected to Sewanee overall.”

FYP students only. Participants who were FYP students indicated if their FYP class had trained student FYP peer mentors. Participants that had student FYP mentors responded to two items related to (1) past and (2) current relationships with their mentors (e.g., “During my first semester, I felt comfortable interacting with my FYP mentor[s]”). Reliability of these items ranged from $\alpha = .87$ to $\alpha = .91$. FYP students also reported two items related to (1) past and (2) current relationships with other students in their FYP course (e.g., “During my first semester, I felt comfortable interacting with the students in my FYP course” Reliability of these items ranged from $\alpha = .89$ to $\alpha = .90$). Lastly, the FYP students reported on the item “I thought having my FYP course end at the midpoint of the semester (in October) was helpful.”

Comparisons Using Non-Survey Data

To assess whether the FYP program attracts different populations of students, and to determine if students opting into the program performed differently academically, we examined data provided by the Office of Institutional Research. We compared mean academic rating (a composite score assigned to each student by the Office of Admissions), based upon several variables (high school GPA, SAT/ACT scores, high school rank, and high school “quality”). We

also compared average first-year GPA, first-semester GPA, second-semester GPA, and second-year persistence between FYP and non-FYP students, using data provided by the university's Office of Institutional Research for the four years under study.

Statistical Analyses

Comparisons between FYP and non-FYP students were analyzed using Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) and a set of independent samples *t*-tests using a Bonferroni correction. These procedures protect from inflation of Type I error and are described in more detail in the results section.

Additional data provided by the Office of Institutional Research were compared between the two groups using chi-squared tests. Mean academic rating was compared between FYP and non-FYP students within a single year to assess whether higher performing students might be self-selecting into the program. This variable, however, cannot be compared across years, as its calculation has historically varied from year to year. Thus, academic rating may provide an indication of the academic performance of incoming students within a single year, although inferences across years on this variable are not valid. Comparisons of GPAs and second-year persistence between FYP and non-FYP within a single year were conducted using independent samples *t*-tests. Likewise, average GPA and second-year persistence across the four years were compared between the two groups using a *t*-test.

Results

Responses to Survey Questions for All Participants

Most survey participants reported favorable attitudes on the outcomes of interest (e.g., relationships with advisors and residence hall staff, early learning experiences, connections to Sewanee). Indeed, across both FYP and non-FYP students, on the outcomes we examined,

students gave high marks (as an example, the modal response for students' initial comfort/connection with their first advisor was 7.00). However, it should be noted that in none of our comparisons did non-FYP students report more favorable outcomes than FYP students. Furthermore, we checked assumptions related to homogeneity of variance and normality for tests of inferential statistics. When variables were distributed in a non-normal fashion, according to a Shapiro-Wilk test, we used log-transformed values of these variables. When comparison groups did not have equal variances, according to Levene's test for equality of variance, we used the adjusted degrees of freedom and associated p -values.

To protect against inflated Type I error rates, we conducted a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) to test differences between outcomes completed by the total sample of FYP students and non-FYP students, and this overall MANOVA model was significant Wilks' Lambda = .925, $F(8, 364) = 3.665$, $p < .001$ (see Table 2). FYP students demonstrated more favorable outcomes than non-FYP students on a number of items (see Table 2). Specifically, FYP students felt greater reflected (i.e., initial) and current comfort and connection with their advisors, and greater reflected (i.e., initial) and current comfort and connection with their first residence hall staff. In addition, these students reported greater degrees of early learning and valuable first year experiences (this latter test reached marginal levels of significance).

We also analyzed students' involvement in activities and programs at Sewanee. However, because MANOVA only examines outcomes based on the number of participants who have completed all the items under examination, this test is not reasonable for this analysis (as almost no participants had participated in all of the activities we examined). As such, to protect against inflated Type I error rates for activity and program involvement, we conducted a Bonferroni correction and conducted multiple independent samples t -tests (see Table 3). We

conducted six tests, and thus, used the adjusted p -value of .0125. Results revealed that FYP students participated in community engagement activities earlier and more frequently during their time at Sewanee than their non-FYP peers (this latter effect should be considered marginal). No other statistically significant effects emerged.

Additionally, when asked, FYP students overwhelmingly thought it was helpful to have their FYP class end at the midpoint of the semester ($M = 6.45$, $SD = 0.96$, $median = 7.00$, $mode = 7.00$).

Non-Survey Data Comparisons

We did not compare mean entering GPAs between FYP and non-FYP students because Sewanee does not standardize incoming GPAs. However, academic rating, a composite variable that integrates a number of criteria, was significantly higher for FYP students compared to their non-FYP counterparts for each year (see Table 4). (As noted above, academic rating is calculated differently with each academic year, and thus, does not allow for cross-year comparisons in its value.) Nevertheless, within each year, FYP students had a higher mean academic rating than their non-FYP peers, perhaps suggesting that higher performing students elected to participate in the program, although the magnitude of difference between the two groups appears to decline in years three and four. We also found that across the four years, first-semester GPAs, as well as first-year GPAs were significantly higher for FYP students than their non-FYP peers. The mean difference over four years in GPA between FYP and non-FYP students was 0.24 ($SD = 0.10$). Similarly, second-semester GPAs were higher for FYP students for three out of four years. Second-year persistence did not differ between the two groups within a single year.

The number of FYP sections taught varied somewhat over the four years, and there were always more applicants than spaces. We found that during the first year, when the nature of the

program was less well known, the population of participating students did not differ statistically from the larger population of all first-year students (see Table 5). However, in the second, third, and fourth years of this study, there was greater than expected participation by non-white students in FYP and lower than expected participation by this group in the non-FYP cohort. In fact, over four years, FYP was comprised of 23% non-white students compared to 17% for non-FYP students. A similar trend was observed regarding financial need, with FYP students having higher mean financial need in years two, three, and four, relative to non-FYP students. There was also greater than expected participation by women in years three ($\chi^2 (1, n = 469) = 4.36, p < .05$) and four ($\chi^2 (1, n = 514) = 9.03, p < .05$).

Discussion

It is not surprising that FYP students brought early to campus for an immersive academic experience forged close relationships with their residence hall staff and felt more comfortable and closely connected to their faculty advisors and course instructors than their non-FYP peers. Several studies conclude that students participating in first-year seminars have more meaningful interactions with faculty and other students (Goodman & Pascarella, 2006). The smaller class size puts these new students in a situation in which they have to interact with faculty and peers about substantive issues over extended periods of time, and optimally, increases the probability that students will experience diversity through contact with people different than themselves. It is notable that three out of four years, the program attracted proportionately more non-white students, more students with greater financial need. For each year, FYP students were also those with higher academic ratings than their non-FYP peers. Over four years, nearly a quarter of FYP students were non-white, compared to 17% of non-FYP students. Not only does the higher proportion of non-white students in FYP enrich the diversity of perspectives offered to all in the

program, but it also makes a range of high impact practices offered by the program available to these groups of students.

Although FYP students entered Sewanee with a higher academic rating than their non-FYP peers, we are not able to discern whether the higher mean first-year GPAs for FYP students resulted from higher performing students being attracted to the program or if those in the program did better academically. Furthermore, because there is no way to standardize grades across courses, we are not able to ascertain if there is veracity to the question of if FYP courses were in some ways “easier” or graded in a more lenient fashion. Over four years, there was a trend for slightly higher second-year persistence for FYP students (90.3%) compared to their non-FYP peers (87.5%), although this was not significantly different within a single year. Studies at other institutions have demonstrated gains in persistence as high as 7-15% as a result of participation in first-year seminars (Goodman & Pascarella, 2006), although some of the institutions reported considerably lower initial persistence than the mean rates cited for Sewanee during this study period (e.g., Howard & Flora, 2015). Thus, our data may fall victim to a ceiling effect when it comes to student persistence.

It is worth noting that for all of the effects reported above, no degree of “causality” can be inferred. Students elect to be in FYP before enrolling at Sewanee, and because placement in FYP is not randomly assigned, we cannot claim that FYP caused particular outcomes. Nor does this study control for pre-college characteristics in students. This point notwithstanding, the evidence suggests that students who are in FYP, or have been in FYP, report more favorable outcomes. These results cannot make claims about the effectiveness of other experiences that students may have at Sewanee, including those targeting first year students. In fact, we presume that other non-academic experiences targeting first year students have a number of favorable

outcomes. Indeed, this is likely one reason why some of our comparisons did not produce significant differences when we examined comparisons between FYP and non-FYP students.

Implications: HIPs and the Emphasis on Place

This study arose out of the desire to examine a first-year program that had as a principle objective enhancing first-year student engagement and success through the study of place, in this case, Sewanee's land base and close-knit community. It is therefore instructive to provide examples of how immersion in the study of place was used to engage first-year students. For nine full days prior to regular orientation, without conflicts with other classes or distractions from "party cultures," FYP students were immersed in the study of the campus, surrounding communities and our region. FYP students examined the institution's history through numerous perspectives, including those of non-majority groups. For example, reading Ely Green's autobiography (Green, Wyatt-Brown, & Smith, 1990), students were introduced to the challenges of growing up in the Sewanee village as a biracial youth in the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth century. Similarly, the study of regional geology, ecology and their connections to the legacy of coal mining provided students with context to better understand the culture and contemporary economy of surrounding communities. FYP classes visited the well-known Highlander Folk School, where Miles Horton, Martin Luther King, and Rosa Parks gathered with local residents to discuss their struggles with labor, civil rights, and environmental justice. Plenary events celebrated the cultural traditions of a region often viewed only through the lens of economic decline. These experiences built upon material presented in lectures, texts, and discussion, encouraging students to grapple with reconciling the past to the present, and connecting the particular to the wider world (readers interested in the details of the FYP program should feel welcome contacting the authors for additional information).

These experiences allowed students, faculty and peer mentors to get to know each other well through discourse of substantive issues, and field experiences also offered time for “academic socialization” (Kuh, 2005). From these experiences also emerged several “deep approaches” to learning, which included the discussion of ideas with faculty and peers outside of class, analyzing and synthesizing ideas and trying to understand others’ perspectives (Brownell & Swaner, 2009). According to Nelson Laird, Shoup, Kuh, and Schwarz (2008), students who approach learning in these ways have higher academic success (i.e., higher grades, learning retention, integration, transfer) as well as more enjoyable learning experiences. Not surprisingly, FYP students expressed more frequently that they had engaged in significant learning experiences that would be valuable to other students during their first year. While this sentiment is supported by other studies showing that first-year seminar participants have higher levels of satisfaction with their college experience (Goodman & Pascarella, 2006), we believe it was the nature of the experiences and the study of place that students and faculty shared that cultivated a sense of meaning, as well as close connections. Some scholars believe that it is precisely “placed education” that gives context and meaning to students’ lives, reorienting their “minds and hearts to care for healthy places”, in recognition of what Wendell Berry’s calls “ecological and community interdependence” (Baker & Bilbro, 2017). We propose that “place” had an important role in deepening student experience and likely encouraged the earlier and more frequent participation in activities of civic engagement or in service to local communities reported by FYP students. In fact, during the “perspective development” phase of the program, faculty teaching in the program report a high degree of student-designed capstone projects with some degree of community engagement. For new students, service-learning creates meaningful connections with the community and deeper interactions with faculty and peers while enhancing

their sense of civic responsibility (Bringle & Hatcher 2009). Kuh (2008) points out that the importance that faculty place on a high impact practice has a strong effect on student participation. Thus, the early emphasis on relationships and community in the FYP curriculum highlighted the importance of these connections and perhaps encouraged new students to participate in activities focused on service and communities, high impact practices strongly correlated with student success. In a study of nine components of first-year programs at six liberal arts colleges in the “mountain” southeastern U.S., Howard and Flora (2015) noted that while service learning has been shown to create a sense of community caring and support as well as social and academic integration, it may not yield a direct association with retention.

In summary, our study offers evidence that an immersive place-based first-year experience creates conditions that foster comfortable and close relationships among first-year students, faculty and peer mentors, and that those relationships may persist through the senior year. The intentional focus on community and connections, as well as the academic and experience-based exploration of place offered meaningful experiences to these students that may have contributed to earlier and greater engagement in the local community, which is a demonstrated high impact practice. That more non-white students, as well as those with greater financial need, participated in FYP demonstrates that potentially marginalized groups were able to take advantage of the many benefits offered by the program, including close relationships, deep learning and high impact practices, all of which have demonstrated significant positive effects on student success.

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Authors' Note

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Table 1

Survey Items Related to Student Involvement in Activities and Programs at Sewanee the University of the South.

Yes/no question	Range of first engagement with involvement	Duration/frequency range
Civic engagement	Fall first year - spring senior year	None or almost none at all-A few times per week
Outreach trips	Fall first year - spring senior year	None or almost none at all-a few times a week
Research with a professor	Fall first year - spring senior year	One semester-nine or more (including summers)

Table 2*MANOVA Results of FYP and Non-FYP Survey Responses about their First Year Experiences*

Dependent Variable	FYP Mean (SD)	No FYP Mean (SD)	F	p-value	η_p^2
Reflection on comfort/connection with first year advisor	5.45 (1.73)	4.92 (1.58)	8.54	.004	0.022
Current comfort/connection with first year advisor	5.18 (1.81)	4.54 (1.83)	10.12	.002	0.027
*Reflection on comfort/connection with first year residence hall staff	5.63 (1.38)	4.95 (1.44)	12.21	.001	0.032
*Current comfort/connection with first year residence hall staff	5.15 (1.76)	4.50 (1.63)	6.11	.014	0.016
*“During my first semester, I engaged in a significant learning experience at Sewanee”	6.11 (1.00)	5.65 (1.23)	11.12	.001	0.029
*“During my first semester, I had experiences that would be valuable for other first-year students to have”	6.13 (1.01)	5.84 (1.15)	3.73	.054	0.010
*“During my first semester, I was introduced to places around Sewanee that helped me function in day-to-day life here”	6.02 (1.15)	5.78 (1.23)	2.64	.105	0.007
*“During my first semester, I felt connected to Sewanee overall”	5.63 (1.58)	5.46 (1.57)	0.57	.451	0.002

Note. For ease of interpretation, the *Ms* and *SDs* of log transformed variables, marked with an “*” are presented as their original, untransformed values. The associated test of significance, however, reflects the log-transformed values.

Table 3

Independent Samples t-test Results of FYP and Non-FYP Survey Responses about their

Involvement in Activities and Programs

Dependent Variable	FYP Mean (SD)	No FYP Mean (SD)	t	p-value	Cohen's d
*"When did you first begin your work in local community/civic engagement?"	1.68 (1.15)	2.14 (1.31)	-2.89	.005	-0.41
*"How frequently do you engage in local community/civic engagement?"	4.52 (1.71)	3.99 (1.65)	2.14	.033	0.31
*"When did you first begin your work on outreach trips?"	3.00 (2.15)	3.02 (1.56)	-0.72	.473	-0.16
"How frequently do you engage in outreach trips?"	1.85 (0.36)	2.04 (0.83)	-1.12	.268	-0.30
"When did you first begin conducting research with a professor at Sewanee?"	4.39 (1.98)	4.61 (1.97)	-0.50	.620	-0.11
*"How many semesters have you conducted research with a professor at Sewanee (include fall semesters, spring semesters, and the summer as a "semester" as well)?"	2.85 (2.29)	2.26 (1.73)	1.38	.171	0.303

Note. For ease of interpretation, the *Ms* and *SDs* of log transformed variables, marked with an "*"," are presented as their original, untransformed values. The associated test of significance, however, reflects the log-transformed values. Additionally, because a Bonferroni correction was utilized for these six tests, the adjusted *p*-value associated with statistical significance is $p < .0125$.

Table 4*Non-Survey Data Comparisons of Student Financial Need and Academic Performance Variables*

	2013		2014		2015		2016		Average over four years	
	FYP	No FYP	FYP	No FYP	FYP	No FYP	FYP	No FYP	FYP	No FYP
Number of students	106	382	127	339	137	332	154	360	524 ^a	1413 ^a
Academic ^b rating	4.33*** (2.03)	3.39 (2.08)	4.43** (2.01)	3.73 (2.04)	3.98* (2.08)	3.50 (2.03)	3.81* (2.01)	3.35 (2.04)	n/a	n/a
Financial need	\$18,201 (18,260)	\$16,792 (19,980)	\$20,180* (19,978)	\$15,691 (19,099)	\$21,369** (21,459)	\$15,603 (19,501)	\$27,007*** (24,093)	\$15,109 (20,953)	\$22,097 (21,537)	\$15,820 (19,905)
1st-year earned hours	32.2*** (3.7)	30.5 (4.4)	31.6 (3.8)	31.0 (3.7)	32.1* (4.0)	31.3 (3.8)	31.9 (5.1)	31.4 (4.0)	31.9 (4.3)	31.0 (4.0)
1st-semester GPA	3.43*** (0.48)	2.93 (0.69)	3.17** (0.55)	2.99 (0.69)	3.21** (0.60)	3.00 (0.65)	3.20** (0.64)	3.02 (0.64)	3.24 (0.59)	2.98 (0.64)
1st-semester GPA	3.22** (0.69)	2.96 (0.68)	3.04 (0.74)	2.93 (0.69)	3.16*** (0.61)	2.89 (0.69)	3.17** (0.69)	2.94 (0.70)	3.14 (0.69)	2.93 (0.69)
1st-year GPA	3.33*** (0.55)	2.95 (0.64)	3.11* (0.60)	2.97 (0.59)	3.18*** (0.57)	2.96 (0.60)	3.18** (0.63)	2.98 (0.60)	3.19 (0.60)	2.96 (0.61)
2nd-year persistence %	92.5	87.2	88.2	89.1	89.8	87.3	90.6	86.4	90.3	87.5

^aTotals (not averages); ^bAcademic rating is a composite score assigned to each student by the Office of Admissions, based upon high school GPA, SAT/ACT scores, high school rank and high school quality.

Differences between groups for each year are statistically significant as noted using an independent sample t-test: ***p<0.0001, **p<0.001, *p<0.05.

Table 5

Distribution of White and Non-White Students in FYP and Non-FYP Cohorts

	2013		2014		2015		2016		Total over 4 years	
	FYP	Non FYP	FYP	Non FYP	FYP	Non FYP	FYP	Non FYP	FYP	Non FYP
Non-White	14	75	30	45	37	44	40	47	121	211
White	92	307	97	294	100	288	114	313	403	1202
Total	106	382	127	339	137	332	154	360	524	1413
% Non-White	13%	20%	24%	13%	27%	13%	26%	13%	23%	15%
	No association was observed		$\chi^2 (1, n = 466) = 7.33$ $p < 0.05$		$\chi^2 (1, n = 469) = 12.84$ $p < 0.001$		$\chi^2 (1, n = 514) = 12.80$ $p < 0.001$			