



## A LOOK BACK

Since the last issue of the SYE newsletter in November of last year, our students have continued to explore, engage in, and reflect on experiential learning activities. Look back at some of those activities. p. 03

## SYE BLOG

The SYE Blog, authored by Dr. Brenda James, director of the Center for Academic Success and Achievement, explores some of challenges and successes in developing an SYE program and the crucial role of students. p. 04

## A LOOK AHEAD

With valuable insight from students, we are revamping SYE. The 2019-2020 iteration of SYE will include SYE Ambassadors, SYE Coaches, and greater campus-wide involvement and promotion. p. 06

# SUMMARY REPORT: UNDERSTANDING THE SOPHOMORE YEAR EXPERIENCE

*by Maggie Heier*

## Introduction

Grounded in the recent successes of first-year experience initiatives across the country, a new focus upon the needs of students during their second year of college is now growing. Between 2000 and 2007 alone, the number of institutions reporting they had created programs specifically designed for second-year students increased from 40 to 130 (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007). This national focus on the second year, coupled with the current success of first year initiatives, is now prompting the University of Washington to explore whether there is an opportunity to bring an intentional focus to second year students on this campus.

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## SUMMARY REPORT: UNDERSTANDING THE SOPHOMORE YEAR EXPERIENCE

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The purposes cited for creating second year initiatives vary. According to the most recent (2008) National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives, respondents said the primary reason they established a sophomore initiative on their campus was to improve retention (65.7%), improve student satisfaction (64.9%), improve student engagement (62.9%), prepare [students] for career (e.g., internships) (49.8%), and to assist [students] in the selection of a major (49.3%).

Retention has long been considered a primary driver for orientation and first year experience programming around the country, closely tied to student engagement and student satisfaction. Certainly the increased attention paid to the first year of college has proven its effectiveness nationally, but with these gains can come an unexpected consequence. Some students experience feelings of abandonment during the second year as the support initiatives start to disappear (Hunter, Tobolowsky, Gardner, Evenbeck, Pattengale, Schaller, & Schreinder, 2010). Further, the authors point out that these critical issues do not disappear during the second year. “There is no reason to believe that students who survive the first year of college are suddenly successful in the second year” (Hunter et al., 2010, p. 15)

In addition, the focus on major and career preparation aligns with the primary developmental tasks cited for students during the second year: developing purpose and selecting an appropriate major and career path (Hunter et al., 2010).

While these have long been focus areas for students during the second year of college, the 2008 recession has ratcheted up the pressure for students to quickly identify a viable major and career path.

Today college is increasingly viewed by many as a key to prosperity. As a result of this shift, student expectations for their undergraduate experience are rising as quickly as tuition rates. Increased cost of attendance poses real challenges for students and their families. Student indebtedness for those who borrow for college has grown to \$26,600 for the 2011 graduating class, according to the Institute for College Access & Success' Project on Student Debt. The time is ripe for a critical examination of the ways that institutions support students as they try to navigate this changing landscape – including their experiences during the second year of college.

### **Purpose and outline of this report**

This report will evaluate recent literature and leading practices on the experiences of students during the second year of college. The report will begin with a definition of the sophomore year and then describe the key developmental tasks for students during this critical year according to the research. Next, the report will explore the challenges unique to second year students – academic, developmental and institutional. National trends in addressing the sophomore year experience will be discussed followed by a review of current practices at peer institutions. Finally, recommendations will be offered for next steps.

Heier, M., 2018. *Summary report: Understanding the sophomore year experience*. Retrieved from [https://depts.washington.edu/stdntlfe/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/SYE\\_SummaryReport\\_FINAL\\_12.18.12.pdf](https://depts.washington.edu/stdntlfe/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/SYE_SummaryReport_FINAL_12.18.12.pdf)



# A LOOK BACK



## WBAL-TV

On November 13th 2018, several second year students had the opportunity to visit the WBAL-TV station at 3800 Hooper Avenue, Baltimore. There, they viewed a live taping of the 5 pm news with Alison Hinson and Andre Hepkins, learned about the day to day operations of producing the news, and engaged in career exploration conversations with the duo and other members of the WBAL team.

## MSU INFLUENCERS

Several second year students participated in MSU Influencers: A Second Year Experience Program, spearheaded by Dr. Amber Hodges. Through this program students learned about "Morgan Life Hacks (time management, how to utilize campus resources, campus involvement, etc.)." They also created and shared video blogs of them implementing these Morgan Life Hacks which they also shared on social media.



## REGINALD F. LEWIS MUSEUM

Twenty-five students took a walk through history and culture at the Reginald F. Lewis Museum in downtown Baltimore. On February 2nd, 2019, the group explored hundreds of years of African American history in the museum's permanent collection and engaged with other exhibits as well. They also learned about volunteer and career pathways to work at the museum.



# SYE BLOG

## HOW STUDENTS HELPED US START AN SYE PROGRAM AT MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

by Brenda J. James, Ph.D.

In launching a Second-Year Experience program at Morgan State University this year, we ran headlong into a tough obstacle: ‘sophomore slump’. But, with help from the students themselves, we worked through that challenge and many others. Students are participating, exploring new fields, and finding themselves.

Though we are far from reaching our goal of 100 percent (we’re at 10 percent, as I write this) we are making strong progress and helping our students succeed. Here is how we are doing it.

### The goal

With funding support from the Lumina Foundation, we designed and implemented a Second Year Experience (SYE) program.

As Morgan State’s Director of the Center for Academic Success and Achievement (CASA), our office was primarily responsible for making this happen. Participation is not a requirement—but it is strongly encouraged. As we started planning, we identified some opportunities for students, including study abroad, internships, research with faculty, and service-learning courses.

### The roadblocks

We’ve all heard the term ‘sophomore slump,’ a time when second-year students feel lost, unmotivated and confused or undecided about their majors. I concerned that this might affect participation in our new program, especially since many of the opportunities offer no class credit.

But we did offer incentives to students for completing each part of their Experiential Learning Plan (ELP), such as a T-shirt designed by one of the second-year students, SYE wristbands, earbud cases and card holders for students’ cell phones. To our dismay, the incentives didn’t work as well as we hoped. How do we engage 100 percent, or even 50 percent of these students?.

### The steps we took

First, our team felt we needed to expand our choices of experiential learning opportunities that would address some of the needs associated with second-year students. To leverage what students were already doing, we added work study, part-time jobs off and on campus, and volunteering/community service. We also offered ‘campus-to-career’ field trips. We’ve learned that these field trips are meeting many of our students’ needs and providing direction as they embark on their journeys of self-discovery.

**GET INVOLVED**  
and  
**Enhance YOUR Second Year**  
**at Morgan State**

- STUDY ABROAD
- INTERNSHIPS
- CAMPUS TO CAREER FIELD TRIPS
- RESEARCH WITH FACULTY
- VOLUNTEER/COMMUNITY SERVICE
- JOB SHADOWING
- WORK STUDY
- PART TIME JOBS



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# SYE BLOG

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## HOW STUDENTS HELPED US START AN SYE PROGRAM AT MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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### How students led the way

We also learned a lot through focus groups with students. They told us that there should be repercussions for non-participation or that we should make participation a graduation requirement. They also suggested hosting social events, developing an “upbeat” video as a marketing tool, creating a role for SYE ambassadors for each school/college, and having someone “walk them through the ELP process.” Students also suggested that field trips be advertised according to majors or disciplines of study. They also suggested that we send out a survey for even more feedback. The students’ responses were thoughtful and critical to the success of our SYE program. It is a true partnership. And thought I had hoped to see greater participation this year, students still have the rest of the semester and summer of 2019 to engage in experiential opportunities. This is a work in progress, and, with the guidance of our students, I’m confident that we will reach our goals and help them reach theirs.

### Positive feedback

I’m pleased to conclude on a good note. Our students shared these insights on what they’ve learned and experienced in the new program.

### WBAL-TV

*It opened my eyes to a new field and I gained a new respect for people in the news field. It made me realize that since I am a communications major, I have to use communication a lot more.*

### Reginald F. Lewis Museum

*This trip had helped me because I am not very active on campus. This is basically the first thing I have done dealing with Morgan that wasn’t homecoming. I believe it sort of brought me a little closer to my class. I used my listening and learning skills to really to learn and gain the information. Many of the things I heard today I never knew of...it was really nice to learn more about the history of where I am from.*

### PEARL (Patuxent Educational Aquatic Research Laboratory)

*This trip has broadened my spectrum of what I can do with my future degree. It has excited me and made me want to dip my hands into a lot of different things outside of my comfort zone. I also ate a raw oyster which wasn’t that bad! This experience has made me excited to be a Morgan student and I’m happy I’ve signed up for this trip.*

### Volunteer/Community Service

*The Experiential Learning Opportunity has allowed me to broaden my network by enabling me develop communication skills through active interaction with people I tutor. As a result, my ability to meet and relate with different people from diverse backgrounds has been greatly improved.*

### Research with Faculty

*My experiential learning has helped me see that a balance is needed between everything in order to succeed. Also, I am using my love for math to explore careers that I want to have once I get my degree.*

# A LOOK AHEAD

## 2019-2020 SYE: A NEW LOOK

We are almost to the end of the first year of the SYE program at MSU! With the second year of SYE approaching, we have decided to revamp SYE. Thanks to valuable student input, we are excited to announce two of the changes that will take place for the incoming cohort of second year students.

## SYE COACHES



The five professional advisors under the Center for Academic Success and Achievement (CASA) will serve as the SYE Coaches for the new cohort of second year students. These coaches will be valuable in guiding students through the SYE experience process of exploring, engaging, and reflecting. Beginning fall 2019, SYE Coaches will be listed under the student's network in Starfish. Each advisor will be assigned to at least one college/schools.

### SYE School/College Groupings per Advisor

- College of Liberal Arts
- School of Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences
- School of Business and Management
- School of Community Health and Policy, School of Global Journalism and Community, School of Architecture and Planning
- School of Engineering, School of Social Work, and School of Education and Urban Studies

## SYE AMBASSADORS

More than 10 students from the 2018-2019 cohort of second year students have volunteered to serve as SYE Ambassadors for the incoming 2019-2020 cohort of SYE students. Each ambassador will represent the school/college of their major. Their involvement in their school/college as well as their relationship with faculty, staff, and students in their school/college will be beneficial in promoting experiential learning opportunities that students will be interested in engaging in. In addition, this group will assist with conveying the importance of exploring and engaging in out-of-classroom experiences to their peers.

### *The Faces of a few SYE Ambassadors*

