**Sophomore Slump**

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**Article 1 Info:**

* "students self-reporting of the sophomore slump, including comments such as ‘**burnout**’, ‘**a lot tougher’**, ‘**academic dead zone**’ and ‘**directionless**’”
* Students are **more invested** because they are now choosing and focusing on their major educational discipline
* universities have focused recently on institutional strategies to enhance student engagement and retention, primarily at the first year level (Kift, Nelson, & Clarke, 2010). There are few studies on student engagement at the second year level, but correlations between the Second Year (sophomore) slump in the American university system and the corresponding stage in the Australian university system are starting to emerge (this reflects within our own programming too!)

**Demographics:**

* Australian study
* Second year (sophomore) science students
* Low SES (social economic status)
* non-English speaking background
* GPA at the end of second year
* First generation college students

**Purpose of Study:**

* Identifying the 2nd year slump in Australian science student context
* Looked at academic performance and the student perceptions of second year education
* Identify strategies that assist with addressing student engagement and perseverance in sophomore year

**Findings:**

* An academic slump based on GPA trend of a decrease of GPA greater than 0.35 was observed for 33% of the student cohort, irrespective of their program of study or background. <-- direct from text
* academic workload/expectations and work experience were of most concern to students. focus on strategies to enhance student engagement and retention throughout the student lifecycle <-- direct from text
* Student responses to questions that asked what aspects of second year they were most concerned with indicated that their greatest concerns related to academic workload (82%), academic expectations (71%), how to gain work experience (55%), whether second year content will help with their career (53%), and balancing a job with study (45%) (Figure 5).
* Students that had a job also correlated with low SES, primary income earner, and had low-to moderate entry level scores for the college.
* Students reported that in order to feel more confident about their studies, they reported that going over content that they have previously learned or “refreshing” would be helpful, professional development such as gaining employment, networking with professionals within their field of interest, career info, and research opportunities. Time for peer support amongst their cohort was also reported as a helpful need, indicating that a common “free period” or “free time” to gain support from peers would be beneficial.
* many second-year students are concerned with academic engagement, career exploration and, to a lesser extent, with balancing extracurricular pressures (such as work) with study. The students reported that they would respond to initiatives aimed at improving academic engagement, student-staff-industry interactions, and career exploration, and to a lesser extent, social activities.
* second year students often struggle with self-confidence, autonomy and academic commitment

**Future Considerations**

* Combining cirriculum with outside activities (co-cirricular activities) to help with rentention and student engagement.
* Ideally, we could design curriculum that reflects a helpful learning environment for this target group of students that meets their needs and while helping with retention and their engagement. This may help with social, networking, and professional skills in cirriculuum
* Student/staff engagement, networking with peers, professional development would be helpful according to these findings.

**Article 2 Info:**

**Demographics:**

* In the UK

**Findings:**

* “motivation, which is determined by the lower-order factors of self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and perceptions of the curriculum (Fig. 1). A similar architecture may apply to student performance” (Webb & Cotton, 2019).
* frequency of external engagement (e.g. with study groups, lecturers) significantly predicted drop-out from year one but not year two. (Webb & Cotton, 2019).
* Belonging refers to ‘students’ sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others (teacher and peers) in the academic classroom setting and of feeling oneself to be an important part of the life and activity of the class
* students in year two had less belief that their course would be enjoyable and interesting, and lower ‘mastery orientation’ (i.e. motivation to master a discipline for its own sake). (Webb & Cotton, 2019). (relates to external validation and evaluations).
* More students having thoughts of not enjoying course content and wanting to drop out
* Students with more support with their specific degree track (e.g. major/minor studies) and with professional development and higher education/furthering their education
* found that external sources of support became less relevant to second years’ thoughts about leaving university. Rather, intention to drop out became linked with individual perceptions of academic capability. (Webb & Cotton, 2019). <-- this could be related to the skills that we can teach from this class!

**Future Considerations:**

* Some approaches for enhancing belonging are firmly rooted in the curriculum, e.g. field trips, enhanced access to faculty, and group work
* learning activities, methods of assessment, and exchanges with faculty and other students. As discussed, the curriculum might influence students’ self-efficacy and sense of belonging.
* Students who considered withdrawing had other commitments such as paid employment around 15 hours a week (80% of students from study)
* with expansion of professional support in universities (e.g. academic skills developers, well-being practitioners) and increasing possibilities for self- help (e.g. internet resources), students may be accessing support in ways which bypass the tutor-tutee channel (this could also be compared to the peer tutor that they have freshman year) Many respondents probably had not engaged with their tutor around such matters, as reflected by the significant proportion of neutral responses (‘not sure) <-- indicating that a class could be useful with academic skill development
* Students in 2nd year do not like asking questions for clarification during class. A host of ‘active’ teaching methods (e.g. Response Ware, group problem-solving) might be embedded in contact hours to nurture students’ confidence to present and discuss ideas (Freeman et al. 2014).
* Top reasons for drop out: personal circumstances, finance, and caring responsibilities
* 37% cited course/institution-related factors as the primary reason for departure. (meaning retention is not always possible when considering personal factors)
* students showed deepening social integration and, from a favorable baseline in year
* one, developed more positive perceptions of their teachers.

**Article 3 Info:**

**Demographics:**

* Sophomore students with learning disabilities
* **Findings:**
* Students with disabilities (SWD) have lower retention rates than all other students. 25% drop out after the first year and their second year is even more difficult
* students’ low self-efficacy, and career indecisiveness are challenges that they face in sophomore year
* the 2nd year is often a time when students who are likely still acclimating to the college
* environment receive less support
* In sophomore year students embrace their autonomy but struggle to establish their own unique identity and develop a sense of purpose
* higher dysfunctional career thoughts than seniors
* the sophomore slump is associated with several negative effects including confusion, depression, and anxiety (Harris, 2018; Lemons & Richmond, 1987); inertia, disorganization (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007), career indecisiveness, and lack of clarity about what it takes to convert academic goals into career choice
* are likely to exhibit lower self-efficacy, increased self-doubt, and less resilience as compared to their peers, resulting in dysfunctional thoughts about the college experience and their postcollege future
* Dysfunctional or negative thinking can hinder students’ college success and ultimately contribute to the decision to withdraw from college

Specific information on students with LD:

* During this time, young adults (18-25 years of age) undergo physiological and psychological changes that influence their identity, self-concept, and, ultimately, career development
* crucial time for students’ general identity development (Arnett, 2015), vocational identity progression (Osborn et al., 2007), and the exploration of career choices.
* Lots of negative thoughts of themselves can manifest into their decision-making skills with career decision making, planning, and goal setting
* essential aspect of the career intervention and planning process is
* the acquisition of self-knowledge derived from individuals’ life experiences.
* **Future Considerations:**
* Self-determination is directly correlated with decision-making skills, which is lower in sophomores
* More supportive transition programs could be beneficial for sophomores with career-based interventions

**Article 4 Info:**

**Demographics:**

* **UK study on sophomores**

**Findings:**

* Decrease in the satisfaction, performance, and persistence in sophomore students
* Students are stressed with decision-making with their degrees
* analysis of 7000 module results at Liverpool John Moores showed that 32% of second years’ marks were consistent with a ‘good degree’ (i.e. first or upper-second class), versus 36 and 46%, respectively, in years one and three (Yorke 2015).
* In terms of detailed findings, year two saw positive trends in students’ academic engagement (e.g. self-reported independent study time), social integration (e.g. feeling accepted, involvement in extra-curricular activities), and views on teaching staff

**Article 5 Info:**

**Demographics:**

Nursing students

**Findings:**

* Students need a better understanding of their expectations moving forward as a sophomore student
* peer learning have long been recognized as effective in encouraging meaningful learning by encouraging students to work together, develop critical thinking skills, articulate knowledge and develop learning strategies. peer learning students take responsibility for their own learning by giving feedback to, and receiving feedback from, other students
* there appeared to be distinct themes that suggested students had low self-efficacy regarding their potential performance when they commenced into the second year of study. This was reflected in their sense of being confused, stressed and seeking clarification that they understood correctly
* Supporting peers through sharing of mastery experiences, modelling and verbal persuasion may also increase students' self-efficacy by alleviating the physiological response associated with stress

**Article 6 Info:**

**Demographics:**

* Students at a private 4-year Catholic liberal arts college

**Findings:**

* 8% of students leave after freshman year and 4% after sophomore year; in less selective universities, these estimates are greater, at 35% and 17%, respectively
* Students who transfer out of a college at the end of their second year report lacking academic and professional direction
* sophomores require practices that expose them to career choices, afford them opportunities for self-reflection, and encourage exploration of their social identities (which they may need help with)
* high-impact activities (or High Impact Practices (HIP) for sophomores, including learning communities, credit-bearing courses, and undergraduate research opportunities could be helpful in addition to interventions such as sophomore retreats, newsletters or websites, career fairs, sophomore only classes, increased advising, and residence hall programming
* 99% of students who participated in a HIP during sophomore year are retained at the end of that year compared with 87% of students who did not participate.   
  Those activities included:  
  1. high achievement or honor roll classes or attending a social justice class that engaged in services off campus.   
  2. Community-engagement courses to better understand systemic roots of community challenges   
  3. Diversity learning opportunities with reflection such as studying abroad  
  4. Internship and research study opportunities

\* incorporate a variety of HIPs that cater to the specific needs of sophomores: career exploration, social integration, and identity exploration.

**(LASTLY) Overall Themes found in all articles:**

**Identified Needs:**

**Themes:**

* Students want to feel a sense of belonging, purpose, valued, and included with peers and faculty. Faculty can help with this by providing more “kudos” and encouraging students to be engaged and ask questions by having smaller classes to help nurture their confidence within discussion-based lectures
* Students want more support with their majors and minors
* Both can help students improve their GPAs and report less drop out
* Students in sophomore year have a lower GPA than those in freshman and junior years
* Self-efficacy relates to motivation and subsequent outcomes
* A lot of students struggle with work/life balance when they have to be employed outside of school

**Evidence-Based Practices for Prevention:**

* Transition programs to help students with career-based interventions for improvement of self-determination and decision-making skills
* Creating more opportunities for students to network with one another and gain more confidence from interactions and validation from one another
* Some approaches for enhancing belonging are firmly rooted in the curriculum, e.g. field trips, enhanced access to faculty, and group work

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