

2022-23

First-Year Networks Program Summary



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Executive Summary

First-Year Networks (FYN) are groups of first-year students formed around identities and common co-curricular interests. They give students an avenue to create community and increase their connection to the university resources through programming and consistent communication.

The primary purpose of the FYN program is to provide opportunities for first year students to connect with one another, campus resources, and learn about the UW community. The secondary purpose of FYN is to support students who are struggling to find a community in their first year.

Participation and Structure

In the 2022-23 school year, incoming first-year students were invited to join any of nine interest- and identity-based FYN. The structure of FYN changed from quarter to quarter based off student evaluation feedback. Led by the FYN Student Coordinator, each quarter there were weekly emails, weekly opportunities for engagement and campus resource information provided to students. Additional FYN engagement included using Zeemee App, the FYN Discord server, Meet-up and Go's and having specific transfer engagement and 1:1 meetings.

Engagement throughout the 22-23 year varied and highlights include:

- FYN provided **40 unique event opportunities** for students to get connected with students, campus resources, and the UW community.
- 601 unique students enrolled in a FYN compared to 748 for the 2021-2022 school year.
- Beyond the weekly email, events which featured crafts, games, and campus resource information received a higher attendance.

End of Quarter assessment Surveys indicated the following:

- 78% of respondents were satisfied with their decision to join FYN
- 85% of respondents would recommend the program to next year's first-years.
- 68% of respondents found emails sharing opportunities around campus valuable or extremely valuable.
- 44% of students specifically responded that they liked FYN for the connections, community, and friends it allows them to make.

Recommendations

FYN has received funding through 2024. Based on results and feedback collected in assessment surveys the program will continue and the following recommendations have been provided:

1. Communications: Keep consistent in social media platform and utilize FYP Instagram more.
2. Event Collaboration: Create opportunities for facilitating larger scale events in collaboration with campus partners.
3. Resource Support: Continue to identify various modes of support (guides, emails, social media) to ensure students feel connected to campus community and resources.

Overall, FYN will continue to provide opportunities for students to get involved, connect students to campus resources, and give students a sense of community.

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Purpose

The purpose of FYN is to provide opportunities for first year students to connect with one another, campus resources, and learn about the UW community. Through various programs, events and communications, students were provided various opportunities to get involved and build their community in their first year at UW.

The Goals of FYN included:

- Connect students to information about campus resources, departments, and opportunities for engagement by:
 - Providing weekly communications via email and social media.
 - Providing weekly opportunities for engagement through events and programming.
 - Providing targeted resource guides about campus and community partners.
 - Offering opportunities to connect with campus partners through collaborative events.
- Connect to students who are struggling to find a community at UW by
 - Offering 1-1 meetings
 - Offering opportunities to connect with peers with shared interests or identities.

Program Evolution: Differences between 2021-22 and 2022-23

The difference between the first and second years of FYN was the presence of Network Leaders. For 2021-22 there were 14 Network Leaders (one student leader per Network theme). The program ran the majority of FYN events through Network Leaders who would host events for students who had joined their Network (See Appendix 1 for the 21-22 FYN Program Summary). Network Leaders were not hired in 2022-2023, but instead all individual networks were overseen by two First Year Engagement Student Coordinators, with additional Transfer Network support from the Transfer Engagement Intern who split their time to support FYN events and/or drop-in hours. Student Coordinators planned and hosted FYN events. Weekly emails and online engagement were similar to last year, and a version of drop in hours was also maintained (previously called office hours in 2021). Drop-in Hours last year and in Fall Quarter had low attendance, so in Winter 2023 drop-in hours were rebranded to “FYN Cafes” which attracted more attendees possibly due to the rebranded name and the inclusion of free food.

ENGAGEMENT

Overview of Enrollment in FYN

Note: students were not limited to a certain number of FYN for which they could sign up.

Interest-Based FYN		Identity-Based FYN	
The Great Outdoors	337	Transfer	103
Explore Seattle	324	First-Gen	92
Leadership & Community Service	297	Out of State	137
Foodie	272	Central & Eastern Washington	27
Art & Entertainment	226	Total Number of Students	601

Unique user participation: 601

Event & Online Engagement

Event engagement throughout the year was varied and did not always reflect student engagement in the program. FYN hosted 40 events, which averaged to about 1-2 events per week with attendance varying depending on the type of event and when the event was hosted. More students attended events in Fall and events involving crafts, games, and campus resource information than other events. The numbers collected through the check-in process were not always accurate due to people sometimes not checking in and not being able to collect check-in data for Fall Quarter (See appendix 6 & 7). About 50% of students specifically responded that they liked FYN for the connections, community, and friends it allows them to make. And about 50% of respondents mentioned that they liked the events and activities opportunities. (See appendix 3).

Online engagement changed throughout the 2022-23 year and included weekly postings on social media applications to primarily highlight FYN, UW and community events. Due to the popularity of the ZeeMee app with incoming Freshman, ZeeMee app was selected as the primary social media engagement platform in Fall quarter. However, after school started there was a significant drop in engagement on the app. There was an effort to re-engage through a scavenger hunt photo event with a prize for people who posted on ZeeMee, however only 1 person participated. Although last year's program did not have great success using Discord, the decision was made to switch to Discord in Winter Quarter '23, since many UW RSO's and UW academic departments use the Discord app. Discord engagement was slightly greater than ZeeMee engagement, but still did not create a lot of engagement between students. Based on the 2020 data, and student coordinator input, it is recommended that FYN try having its own Instagram account as a way to try and increase online engagement.

FYN also utilized a weekly email to engage students and the data reflected students engaged with the email the most. 68% of survey respondents found emails where we shared opportunities around campus valuable or extremely valuable (See appendix 3).

Reflections on Engagement

Students were more engaged in Fall and Spring Quarters and appreciated the weekly email. It was easier to have high engagement at the beginning of autumn quarter because first-year students are often still in a higher

energy mindset due to Dawg Daze and starting at a new school. During winter quarter, engagement can be quite low. This quarter is notoriously difficult for students both emotionally and physically, so students may be less inclined to go to big social events and put themselves out there. Spring quarter saw increased engagement; however, the goal of this quarter is to have students looking for other campus opportunities to engage and taking more of a guiding approach to ensure that students transition into their second year with confidence in their own abilities to find resources, RSOs, and students to connect to. Next year Spring Quarter might be an opportunity to do more “meet up and go” type events to connect students to the campus. Due to switching online platforms mid program, it is hard to assess online engagement. It would be beneficial to have one online engagement platform for the entire program and assess how students used it at the end of the program.

STRUCTURE

The structure of FYN varied from quarter to quarter as the program worked to be responsive to student assessment feedback. Students signed up to be part of FYN throughout the summer and were invited to a kick-off event during Dawg Daze. This event had over 100 students participate and get to know the people in their network. Autumn Quarter kicked off our official FYN programming as follows:

Structure - Autumn 2022

Weekly events were broken into overarching theme blocks subsections:

- Weeks 2-4: Explore Seattle - weekly events were geared towards getting students to explore beyond the UW by having students visit parks, neighborhoods, and Pike Place.
- Weeks 5-7: Making Connections on Campus - events consisted crafting in the CTC, visiting museums and lesser known spots on campus.
- Weeks 8-11: Stress Relief - events were planned with the context of classes ramping up and finals week.

Drop-in Hours: every week

- Open time for students to ask questions
- Included a couple of special topics sessions like “curves and grading” and “how to find research”, etc.

Structure - Winter 2023

Events Every 2 Weeks:

- Events aimed to get students together during winter quarter and connect with one another over a shared activity
 - FYN Café (replaced previous “drop-in hours”):
- Each café has a resource focus topic with digital and printed resource guide
- Examples: CLUE, LinkedIn & Handshake, Majors, etc.

Structure - Spring 2023

Events Every 2 Weeks:

- More events focused on specific Network themes or getting students connected to other campus resources
- FYN partnered with Transfer Engagement Specialist to host transfer specific events
 - FYN Café:
- Each café focuses on a different Network group, with digital and printed guides available
- Provides RSOs that relate to each Network
- If no RSOs pertain to the Network theme directly, then provide general resources for the group.
- For example – not any specific Central & Eastern WA RSOs; centered the guide around other resources like HFS, HUB, etc.

OUTCOMES & ASSESSMENT

Assessment Overview

Assessment of the FYN program was conducted to:

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of FYN
2. Identify which aspects of FYN were most impactful for students
3. Gain insight into broader trends about Network students' transition experience

Survey data was collected from three surveys: the "Sign Up for a Network" onboarding form (September 2022, n=601, See appendix 2), the End of Autumn Survey (December 2022, n=74, Appendix 3), the End of Winter Survey (March 2023, n=22, Appendix 4), and the End of Spring Survey (May 2023, n=TBD, Appendix 5). All three surveys asked students to rate their agreement with certain statements as well as offered open-ended questions for students to write responses in their own words. In addition, the surveys asked questions about students' engagement level, their experience with specific aspects of the FYN Program, and their overall satisfaction with FYN. For a full analysis of data collected from different surveys visit the links in the Appendix section of this document. Data from the End of Spring Survey is still being collected. Summary statistics included in this document are all based on student feedback from the End of Autumn Survey and compared to the initial Sign Up for a Network data. If you are interested in further information about the results of these surveys, send an email to fyengage@uw.edu.

Selected responses

Highlights from assessment

By the end of autumn quarter...

- 92% of students somewhat or strongly agreed that they feel confident accessing academic support services (advisors, tutoring, etc.) - increased by 16% compared to the beginning of the quarter.
- 99% of students somewhat or strongly agreed that they feel confident navigating UW campus – increased by 42% over the quarter
- 74% of students somewhat or strongly agreed that they feel like a part of a smaller community at UW – increased by 29% over the quarter

- 70% of students somewhat or strongly agree with being satisfied with the number and quality of friendships they have at the UW – increased by 32%
- Selected Quotes:
 - o *“I just really appreciate the work that the student coordinators put into the weekly email - I've found it kind of hard sometimes to learn about what's going on around campus, so the emails have been really nice.”*
 - o *“I like the efforts that FYN provides and it's nice to be able to not feel pressured to go to anything, but also just have that [events] as an option anyway.”*

Outcomes and Changes

From our evaluation form data in autumn quarter 2022 FYN pivoted the following for winter quarter 2023:

- Rebranding Drop-In Hours and doing “FYN Cafe” – a more relaxed way to engage and included focus topics centered around campus resources.
- More all-FYN events like bowling and a ceramics night.
- Moved away from ZeeMee platform and used Discord which worked a bit better for engagement
- Focused on encouraging students to attend events even if they cannot stay for the whole time.
- Partnering with other offices on campus (ex: FYN x Foster event)

From winter quarter 2023 evaluation data some changes to spring 2023:

- Moved FYN events from Friday to mainly Wednesday and Thursdays to see if that works better for more people's schedules
- Did a mix of more varied events – had a partnership event with LiveWell, had more Transfer student events, had a couple arts and crafts events, etc.
- Focused more on how to advertise events
- Offered 1:1 support option for FYN students

Table 2: Sense of Belonging (How connected do you feel to the UW Community)

	2022-2023			
	Start of FYN Program		Mid-Check in of FYN Program	
	Ct	%	Ct	%
Very Isolated	47	7%	0	0%
Somewhat Isolated	214	36%	7	32%
Somewhat Connected	308	52%	13	59%
Very Connected	21	3%	2	9%
Total	590	100%	22	100%

Overall Challenges:

- Social media engagement/advertisement
- Engagement falls off in winter quarter

Successes:

- Student growth and attitudes at the end of each quarter were positive overall (See Appendix 3).
- Students attended events and made connections with other students.
- Students attended drop-in hours/Network Café's where they learned about academic resources, RSOs, and other resources on campus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Connect and Highlight Existing Programs:** There are several UW resources that support student identities (ECC, CIRCLE, OMA&D, etc.). FYN should focus program efforts to guide students to existing resources, ensuring that students find at least one place on-campus they can identify as part of their community.
2. **Social Media:** There were a lot of changes across the program, including communication. It would be better for assessment and student support to have consistency in communication platforms. Discord is one of the few social media platforms that allows for students to engage with each other and with FYN staff and with more consistency, it could create more engagement.
3. **Event Resources:** FYN helps students form connections with each other and gain foundational knowledge about campus resources and success at UW. Continue to balance social events with providing students with resources.

Opportunities for Growth

FYN Structure:

To better connect with students as they go through their first year the program could be structured as follows:

- Autumn: Weekly events including resource introduction, fun social events and meet up and go events.
- Winter: Every other week events that are more relaxing/low stakes and partner more with community partners.
- Spring: Every other week events that focused on RSO's, and resource and campus partner collaborations

This structure would respond to typical engagement patterns throughout the academic quarters and could be a beneficial way to approach building out events for the year.

Other Opportunities for Growth:

- Social media platforms – usage and choice of platforms. Utilize Instagram posting.
- Programming: move from events each week to maybe every 2-3 weeks. Create opportunities for facilitating larger scale events, and more room for collaboration with campus partners.
- Plan more collaborative events with campus partners.

NEXT STEPS

2023-24 School Year

There will still be two student coordinators, but the FYN student coordinator will be taking more lead in terms of program responsibilities, and the Dawg Daze student coordinator will help support. For the 2023-24 school year, the FYN program will continue to focus on the aspects of FYN that students reported as most valuable: events that offered opportunities to meet new people, and emails that provided resources and opportunities to get involved.

APPENDIX

1. [2021-22 Program Summary](#)
2. [FYN Sign Up Form](#)
3. [End of Autumn Quarter Evaluation Form Data](#)
4. [End of Winter Quarter Evaluation Form Data](#)
5. [End of Spring Quarter Evaluation Form Data](#)
6. [Tap Numbers \(for winter and spring quarter\)](#)
7. [Signup.com Numbers](#)
8. [2021-2022 First Year Networks Report](#)