

**Overview:**

Effective Fall 2014, the 1100:101 course formerly titled, the Student Success Seminar (SSS), became “The Akron Experience: University 101” (AE). First-Year Seminars are one example of High-Impact Educational Practices (Kuh, 2008) which have been shown to be beneficial for student success, so one of the most programmatic changes to the AE course was that it became mandatory for all Preparatory and Emergent students, and was strongly encouraged for College Ready students. Due to the mandatory requirement, the number of sections increased from 33 in Fall 2013 to 66 in Fall 2014. To accommodate the increase in sections, College Ready and Emergent Advisors within the Centers for Academic Advising and Student Success all instruct at least one section which includes advisees from the respective advising centers. This was an intentional decision to foster the advisor-student relationship and aid students in the first-year transition.

From a curricular standpoint, much more of an emphasis was placed on providing a common experience and uniform set of learning outcomes. This first-year seminar course is designed to: orient students to The University of Akron, its traditions and resources; facilitate the development of skills for academic and personal success; and assist in the commitment to an intended major and career pathway. The course incorporated a standardized syllabus and textbook with common assignments and group presentations for key topics. Students also participated in the First-Year Lecture & Common Reading Program.

This poster will include performance data from the Fall 2014 semester as well as fall to spring persistence figures. Preliminary data indicators are positive. The percentage of A’s awarded in the class were the highest in the past five years, and the percentage of F’s were lowest in the past five years.

**References:**

Kuh, G., & Schneider, C.G. (2008). *High-Impact Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges & Universities.

# ***The Akron Experience: University 101 - Learning Objectives:***

**Orient students to The University of Akron, its traditions and resources**

**Related Assignments:**

- UA Photo Scavenger Hunt
- Campus Events/Involvement Reflection
- Common Reading & First-Year Lecture Reflection

**Facilitate the development of skills for academic and personal success**

**Related Assignments:**

- “All About Me” Reflection
- College Survival Kit Workshop Reflection
- Reflection on the movie, “Crash”
- Akron Experience Plans & Goal Sheet
- MAP-Works Transition Survey Reflection
- Time Management – Time Log Activity
- Information Literacy – Bibliography Assignment
- Financial Aid/Financial Literacy - **CashCourse** Online Resources

**Assist in the commitment to an intended major and career pathway**

**Related Assignments:**

- FOCUS2 Project
- Resume
- First-Year Experience Portfolio

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# High-Impact Educational Practices



## First-Year Seminars and Experiences

Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members' own research.

## Common Intellectual Experiences

The older idea of a "core" curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.

## Learning Communities

The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with "big questions" that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link "liberal arts" and "professional courses"; others feature service learning.

## Writing-Intensive Courses

These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice "across the curriculum" has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and, on some campuses, ethical inquiry.

## Collaborative Assignments and Projects

Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research.

## Undergraduate Research

Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students' early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

## Diversity/Global Learning

Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore "difficult differences" such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

## Service Learning, Community-Based Learning

In these programs, field-based "experiential learning" with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both *apply* what they are learning in real-world settings and *reflect* in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

## Internships

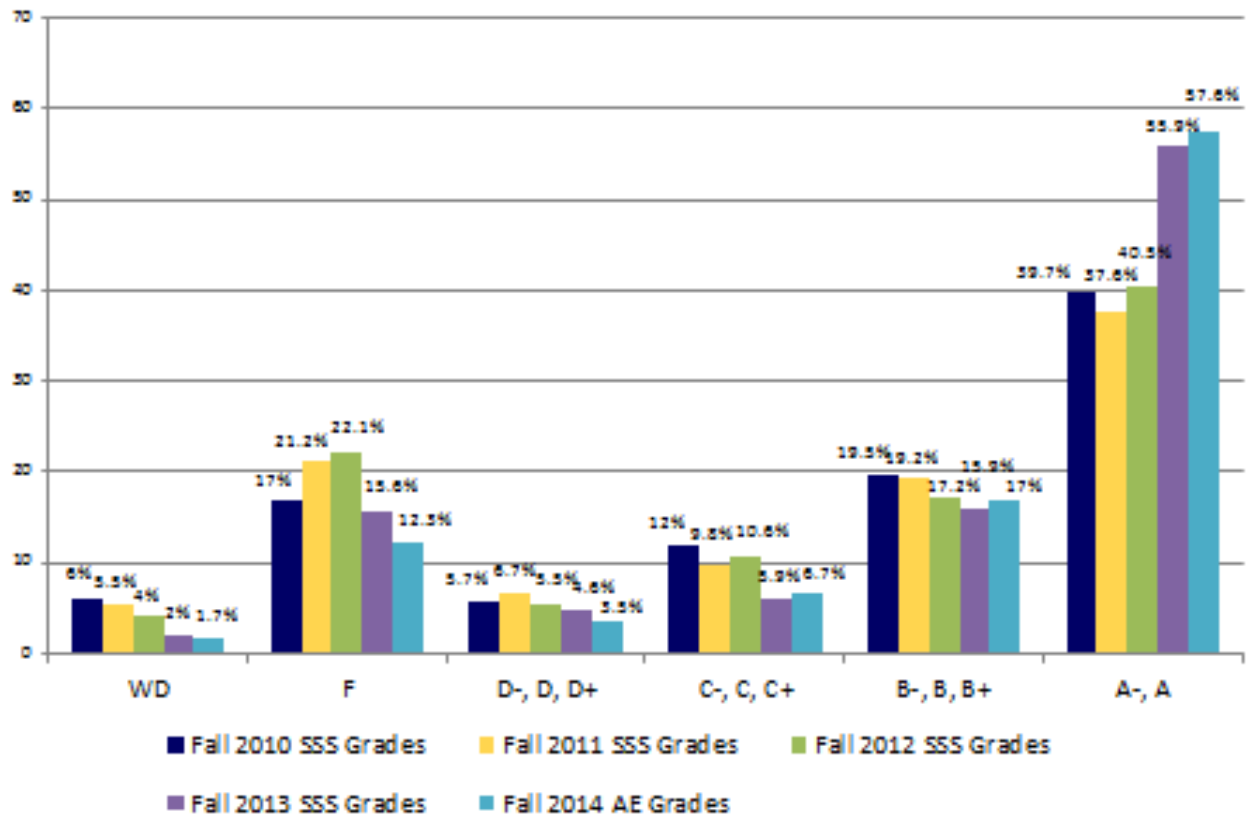
Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

## Capstone Courses and Projects

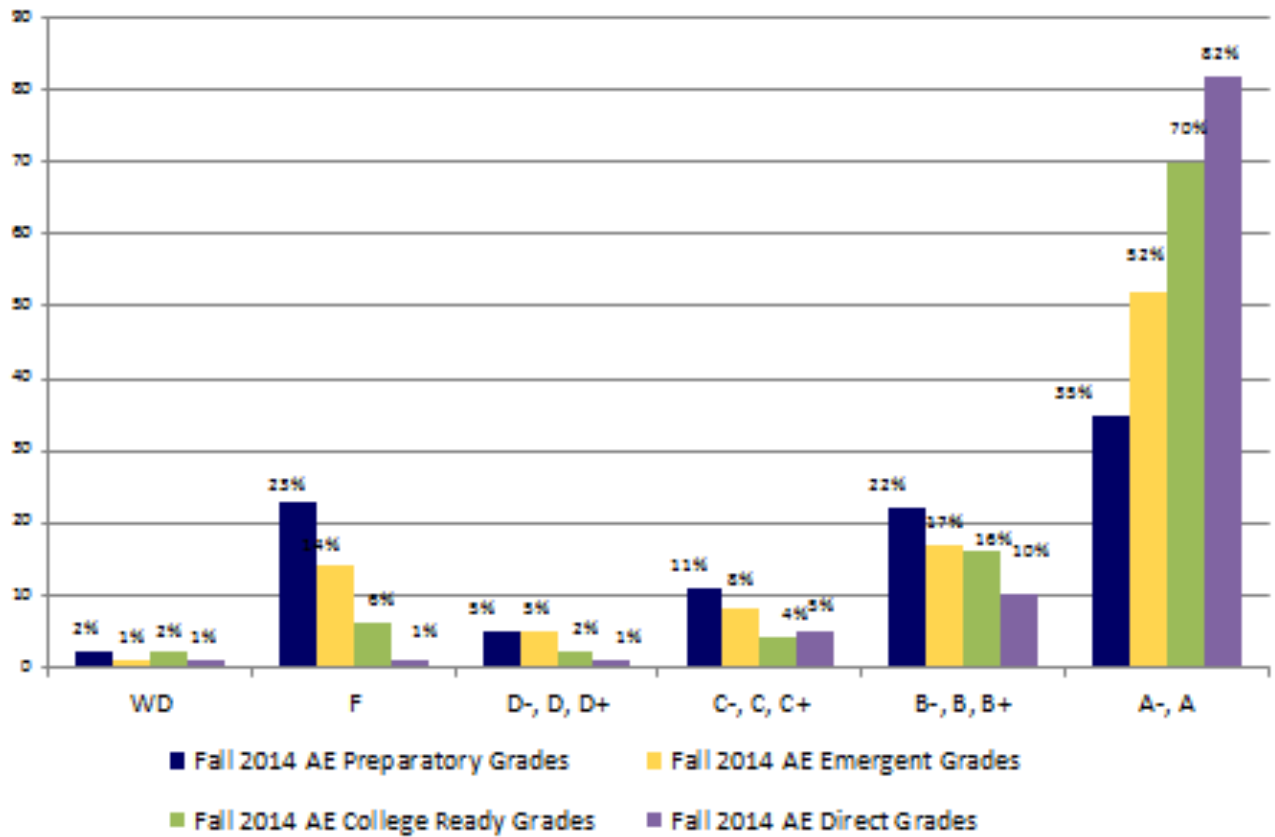
Whether they're called "senior capstones" or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of "best work," or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.



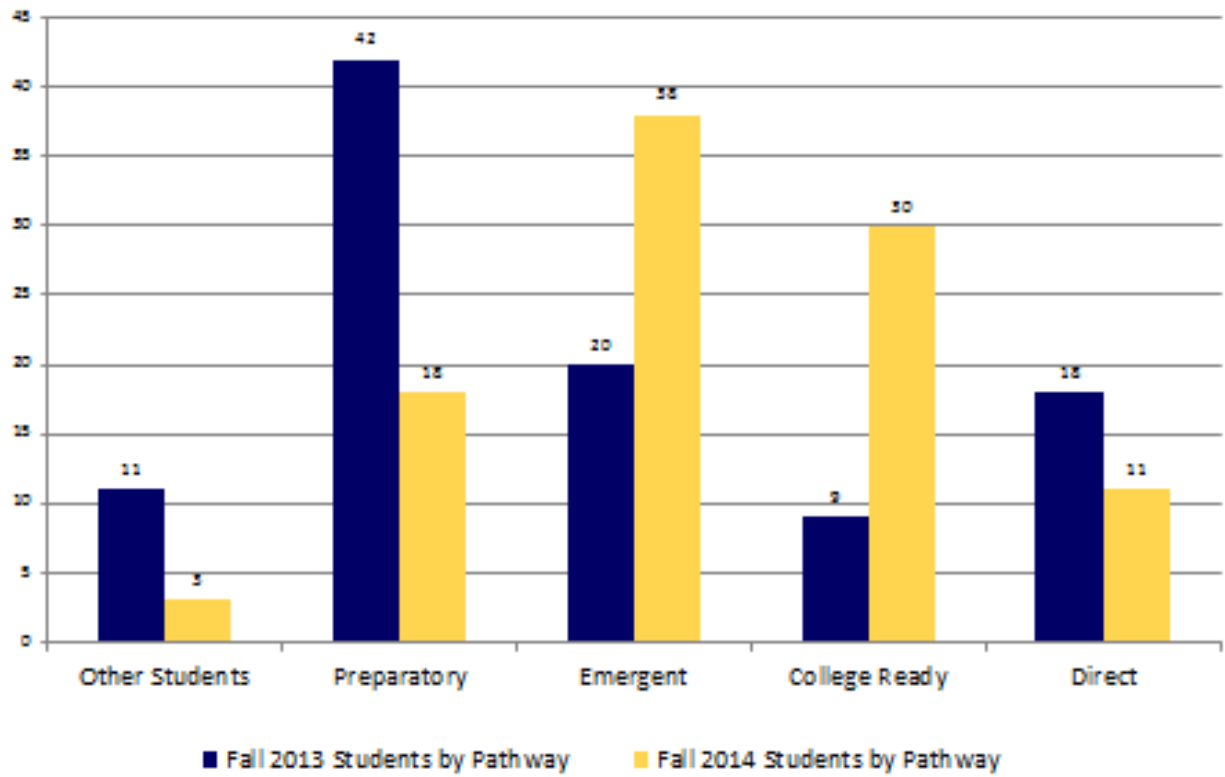
## Historical Grade Distribution Comparison for 1100:101 Courses Fall 2010-2014



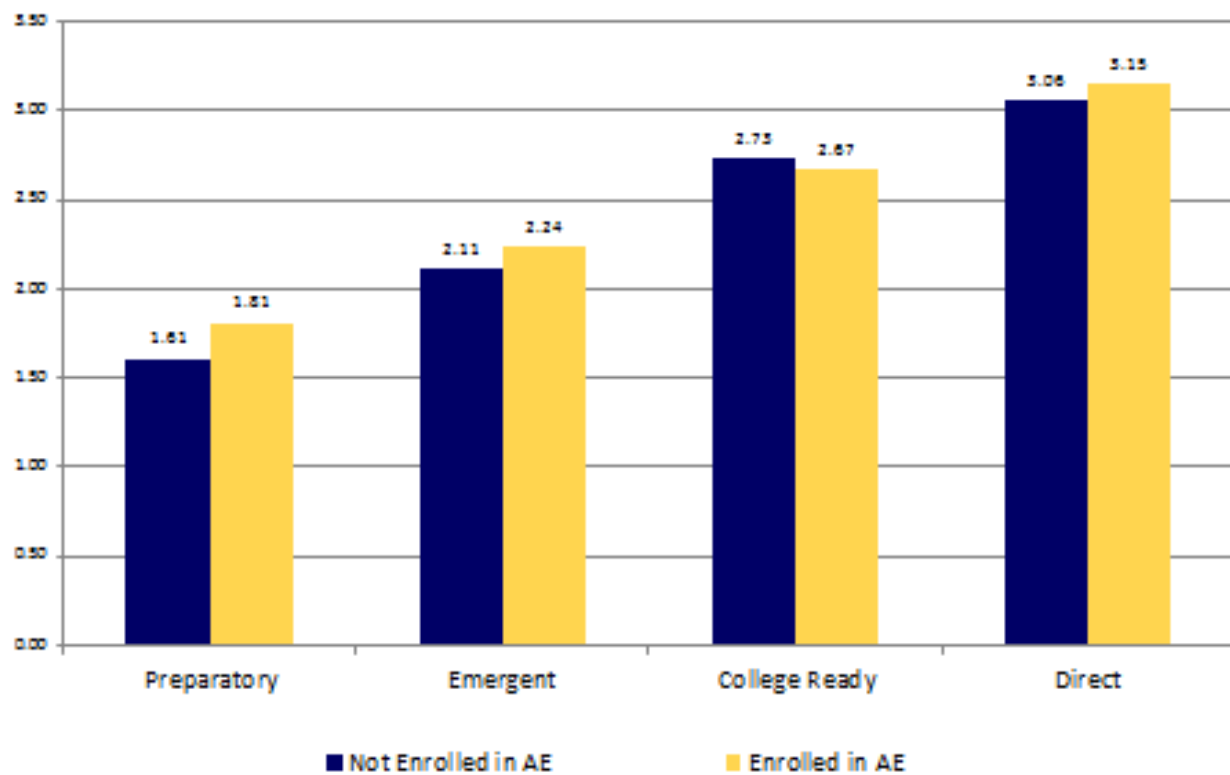
## Fall 2014 Grade Distribution by Pathway for 1100:101 Courses



## Fall 2013 & 2014 Enrollment by Pathway for 1100:101 Courses



## Average Fall 2014 GPA by Pathway for Students Enrolled in 1100:101 Courses



February 2015

# CashCourse

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February 2015



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[www.cashcourse.org](http://www.cashcourse.org).



**Pairing first year  
experience programs with  
CashCourse**

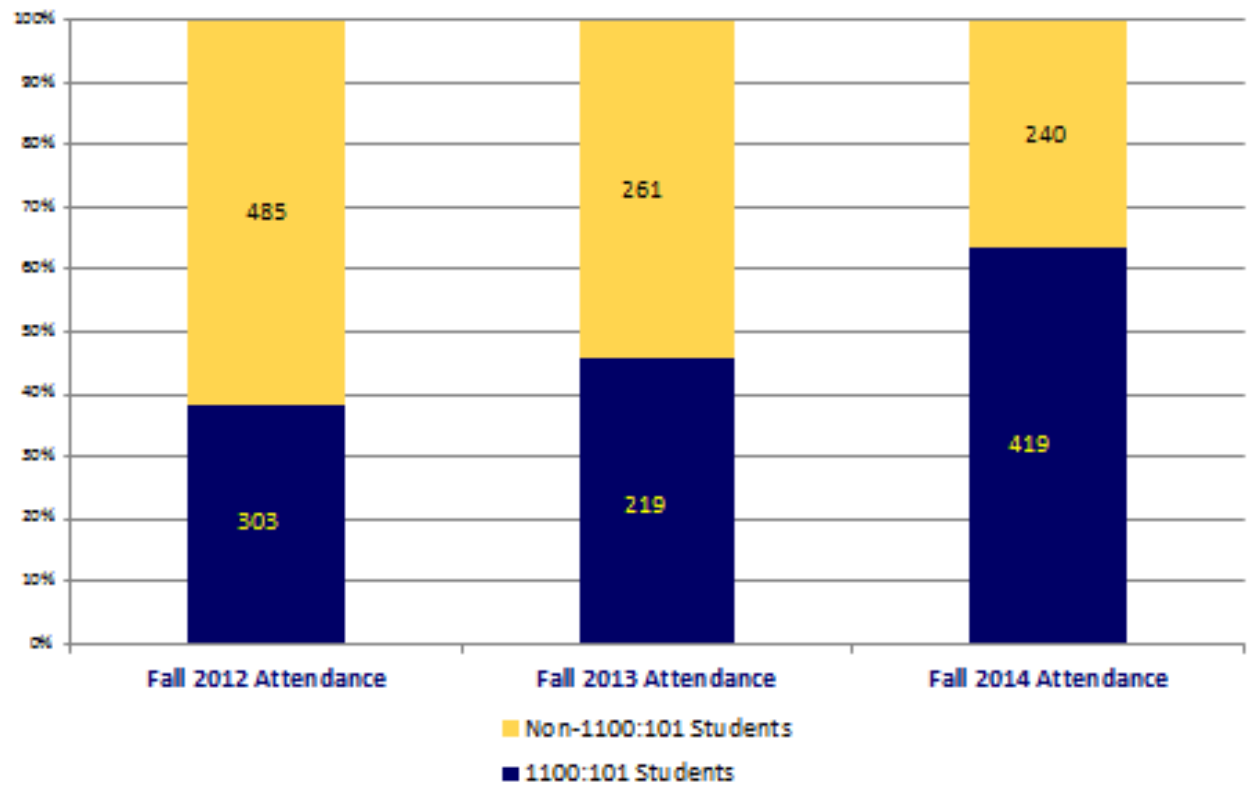
Tanya Lundy, assistant director of student financial aid at the University of Akron, submitted a CashCourse Reimbursement Program application for the fall 2014 cycle. The Akron application was approved and Lundy's subsequent campaign managed to stand out among a very impressive group of award recipients.

For the duration of the cycle, the University of Akron's CashCourse site had over 1500 visitors with each one spending an average of ten minutes exploring the resources.

This strong student engagement was secured through a partnership between Lundy and the university's first year experience course. [Read more about their efforts here!](#)



## Common Reading First-Year Lecture Attendance by 1100:101 Students 2012-2014



## **Fall 2015 Plans**

### **Exploratory Students**

For the Fall 2015 semester, exploratory or “undecided” students will substitute Career Planning (1100:117) for The Akron Experience: University 101 (1100:101). The Career Planning course will incorporate some key content from the AE course, but the primary emphasis will be on the development of skills to assist students in making educational and career decisions.

### **Utilization of Interactive Online Course Content**

The AE course will continue to use the customized version of “Focus on College and Career Success” as the textbook. A course fee is being proposed to reduce the cost of the textbook and provide access to online content. In addition to the text, Cengage Learning will provide access to MindTap which offers interactive online course resources. Content can be linked to Springboard allowing easy access for students.

### **Group Presentations for Key Topics**

During the Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 semesters, group presentations were conducted on Student Conduct, UA History and Traditions, Financial Aid/Literacy, Safety and ALICE Training, and Resumes and Careers. The AE course will rely on staff from those departments to once again present to students on their areas of responsibility. Presentations were given to two to four class sections at a time in order to reduce the number of presentations for staff and allow consistency in the delivery of content.