

Philosophy Dimension Report
Eastern Wyoming College

Foundations Institutions intentionally cultivate learning environments for new students that emerge from a philosophy of two-year colleges as gateways to higher education. The philosophy is explicit and easily understood. It is consistent with the institutional mission, reflects a consensus of internal and external constituencies, and is widely disseminated. The philosophy is also the basis for organizational policies, practices, structures, leadership, and resource allocation to support the new student experience.

Paste report body in this space. A recommended report structure includes 1) Committee Leader, 2) Committee Members, 3) Current Situation, 4) Opportunities and Challenges, and 5) Sources of Evidence. The report body may be composed in a word processor and pasted over this place-holder-text. The discussion notes below may be copied and pasted into a word processor to assist in composing the report body.

Committee Leaders:

Wayne Deahl, Division Chair--Arts, Humanities, Behavioral & Social Sciences
Peggy Knittel, Faculty

Committee Members:

Tom Andersen, Women's Basketball Coach
Angie Babcock, Grant Writer
Andrea Bryant, Learning Resources Director
John Ely, Faculty
Carmie Howe, Administrative Assistant for Learning
Jan Lilletvedt, Director of Fitness Center

CURRENT SITUATION:

The Philosophy Dimension Committee was charged with examining three performance indicators relative to the status of a philosophy statement and application for the first year experience at Eastern Wyoming College. They are first, whether such a statement exists; second, if a statement exists, its influence on current practices and policies related to the first year experience; and third, to what extent the statement has been disseminated to various departments, divisions, and Outreach sites.

Regarding the first performance indicator, the committee is in unanimous agreement that a philosophy statement specific to the first year experience does not exist at Eastern Wyoming College. This leads, then, to the obvious answer to the next indicators. Given the lack of a statement, there is no influence on policies and practices as a result of a philosophy statement.

However, the committee is in agreement that there is evidence an implied philosophy, or philosophies, exists at Eastern Wyoming College. This is supported by the Faculty/Staff survey. Approximately 61% of the respondents indicated that a philosophy for working with new students had been at least moderately communicated to them. Almost one-third rated this as high to very high.

Similar or greater results were noted in responses to "Has a department/unit philosophy for working with new students...been communicated to you" (64.2%), "Does this institution operate from a commonly held philosophy about the new student experience" (61.2%), and "Does your department/unit operate from a commonly held philosophy for working with new students" (69.4%). Slightly more than one-third rated all three as high to very high, indicating a clear perception of an implied philosophy.

Even greater numbers indicated belief in the value of a first-year philosophy (85.7%) and that Eastern Wyoming College is committed to the success of first-year students (87.7%).

Key indicators of this implied philosophy as found by the committee would be indicated in fragments of the college catalog, in the strategic plan, from the mission and vision statement, and in the organization of the student orientation. Housing has already begun work on a new statement of philosophy which will be included with next year's materials. Other indicators were found in coaches' conversations with participants, in a comprehensive document from Student Services, and in letters from specific programs sent to prospective students. Finally, one of the strongest indicators was found in the Bridge Program materials and in Distance Education brochures and letters; however, these documents affect only a segment of first-year students and not all areas of the college.

All of these indicators suggest to the committee that a written philosophy is needed. The committee is in agreement with the following draft of a possible statement. This is only a draft and should be used as a starting point for the creation of a philosophy statement. Eastern Wyoming College is committed to providing a First Year Student Experience that promotes student academic success in a challenging but supportive environment, facilitates the transition to college for first time students, and helps students identify and achieve their personal goals. EWC's First Year Student Experience is designed to foster personal growth, increasing independence, ethical behavior, and personal responsibility for learning. EWC's First Year Experience also affords opportunities for student involvement in activities to enhance social development.

Recommended Grade: D

Recommended Action Items:

- There is no formal statement, so the committee suggests that one be created. *(High priority)*

See the statement of the committee for formal suggestions for this statement.

- Draft a Philosophy Statement for the first year experience at Eastern Wyoming College. *(High priority)*

The following are suggestions for the first year philosophy from this committee. As the committee does not represent the entire institution, it was considered more appropriate to list necessary items as discovered through performance indicators. Also, the committee suggests that the philosophy be concise, clear, free of jargon, and not representative of any specific department/unit of the college.

Suggestions

- We value student success
- We give students personal attention to help them grow
- "Make or Break" an individual's attempt at higher education
- To assist student in transition to higher education
 - o Placement testing
 - o 1 on 1 advising
 - o Low student to teacher ratios
 - o Require College Studies class first semester
 - o Financial Aid
- To ensure student success in the classroom
 - o Tutors
 - o SmarThinking
 - o Advisor alerts
 - o Deficiency Reports
 - o Retention Team effort
- To assist students in "finding themselves" by identifying strengths/weaknesses leading to selection of a career
- Align with Mission and Vision statement
- Stress the importance of academic success for first year students
- Emphasize improving the transition to a college for a diverse population of first year students (noting unique needs of different groups of students)
- Addressing assisting first year students in identifying and achieving their personal academic goals
- Address the importance of character development

- Adopt the First Year Philosophy statement formally and encourage its practice throughout EWC. *(High priority)*

- Publish and disseminate the statement as widely as possible. *(High priority)*

The committee encourages publication be in the catalog, on the website, and in all documents related to students, faculty, and staff.