



Making
Connections

Arkansas State University

Making Connections

Instructor's Resource Manual

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First Year Experience

What is the First Year Experience?

First Year Experience (FYE) is the culmination of experiences that a student participates in throughout their first academic year at A-State. FYE primarily focuses on connecting with students from New Student Orientation until the start of their Sophomore year. While the Office of FYE may not host every initiative that a first-year-student participates in, the success of FYE depends on campus-wide partnerships to give students the most robust first-year as possible.

What equates to success in FYE? The programmatic/course-level SLOs mentioned below under “Making Connections Objectives” are the four main goals of FYE. Ultimately, these SLOs build the overarching goal of FYE is to retain students from freshman to sophomore year.

One element of the First Year Experience is Making Connections.

Making Connections

What is Making Connections?

Making Connections at A-State is the seminar course associated with the FYE program. Making Connections is offered as either a discipline-specific course or an exploratory course. This course is a requirement for all first-year students.

This course combines foundational content with student experiences to orient students for success in college. Balancing the introduction of content and experience is probably the greatest challenge for faculty teaching Making Connections, but also the area where faculty may have the most creativity and flexibility within the course.

Utilizing intentional content and experiences will be essential for your students' progress toward achieving the student learning outcomes set before you.

Making Connections calls for a level of intrusiveness from faculty that may not be found in other courses. For students enrolled in Making Connections, faculty are a primary means for information delivery, resource referral, and campus connectedness.

Making Connections Objectives

Student Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for the Making Connections will be evaluated through a Pre/Post-Test administered by the First Year Experience Coordinator on a program level. Both programmatic and course-level learning outcomes are the same. However, if you teach within a discipline-section of Making Connections, you may choose additional learning outcomes that are course-specific.

1. **Students will correctly identify A-State resources, policies, and organization.**
2. **Students will manage study behaviors.**
3. **Students will develop a sense of belonging to the campus community.**
4. **Students will report an understanding of their degree requirements**

Guiding Questions

Anticipating our desired learning outcomes, we have developed “guiding questions” that may help dictate how you approach teaching each of the SLOs. Below are sample questions that students should be able to answer by the end of the course (with the understanding that there could be more than one “right” answer). These questions may take on additional meaning or emphasis if you are teaching within a discipline-section of Making Connections.

1. **If you were struggling in a course, what resources/personnel would you reach out to for assistance? In what order would you reach out to these resources/personnel?** Topics could cover resource centers (i.e., learning support, counseling, access and accommodations, pack support, etc.), faculty structures (i.e., reach out to course faculty prior to approaching a department chair with a course concern), as well as policies concerning grades (i.e., plagiarism, dropping a course, academic good standing, etc.).
2. **What habits, strategies, and behaviors have you developed for long-term learning in college? How do you determine which behavior to implement in a particular scenario?** Students may discuss study strategies, time-management behaviors, and other well-being practices that they learned about, practiced, and implemented in their first semester. Understanding that there are multiple strategies that they could use for success, students should be able to determine the best strategy (for them) to implement depending on the circumstance.
3. **What experiences might help you create a fulfilling college career? How will you leverage your participation in these things for the richest college experience?** Students may identify activities, clubs, resources, etc. that they have already participated in (inside or outside the class), or plan to participate in in the future and how these experiences will enhance their college careers. Experiences could also include resources/personnel.
4. **When will you complete your college degree, and what resources will help you to achieve your goals?** Students should have an intimate understanding of the advising process (even if exploratory), and requirements for their degree completion (if declared), the process for declaring (if exploratory), and a general understanding of the offices/faculty who will walk with them in this process throughout their college careers.

Course Requirements

Abbreviated Course Requirements

Below are the abbreviated course requirements. *Italicized* items are not required, but are a best practice.

- FYE Programming
 - Active Shooter Response Training
 - Title IX Training
 - FYE Academic Expo
- FYE Pre/Post Survey
- *Career Assessment (Focus 2)*
- *1 project, 1 paper, and 1 presentation*
- 8-Semester Degree Guarantee
- *Common Reader*
- Core Content
- *Faculty-Student Meeting*

Additional Requirements for Exploratory Sections

- Exploratory FYE Programming
 - College & Career Visits
 - Advising Prep, University Advising Center
- Career Project

Detailed Course Requirements

FYE Programming

- 1** **Protect the Pack: Active Shooter Response Training (9/16-17, [Schedule Here](#), Student Union Auditorium)**
Active Shooter Response Training will be held in the Student Union Auditorium.

- 2** **Protect the Pack: Title IX Training (9/25-26, 10/7-8, [Schedule Here](#), Centennial Hall)**
Title IX Training will be held in Centennial Hall. Follow-up discussions regarding Title IX topics by the faculty or the Title IX Coordinator are encouraged. A Protect the Pack Rally will be held on Heritage Plaza Lawn to encourage students to engage in political protesting in a productive way, and to introduce them to additional resources related to Title IX, Campus Safety, Mental Health, etc.

- 3** **FYE Academic Expo (11/13 10AM-2PM, [Sign-Up Here](#), Centennial Hall)**
The FYE Academic Expo is an event that showcases project-based learning efforts produced by first year students. Projects generally focus on degree-specific exploration, and hands-on learning.

How to Participate: Faculty should facilitate project building throughout the academic semester. Presentations may take the form of poster projects, videos/recordings, live presentations or performances, etc. [View 2021 submissions here.](#)

Prior to October 31st, faculty should confirm participation for their class including their category of choice (i.e. philanthropy, connections, or research), and request any additional supplies needed for the day-of (iPad, extra chairs/tables, etc.) provided on a first-come first-served basis.

[Find more information on the event format here.](#)

[Find more information on the judging rubrics here.](#)

4

Career Development & Major Selection

The Focus 2 Career Inventory, an activity that helps provide direction for both major selection and career options. Students can complete the Focus 2 independently (full instructions on page 8). Following the assignment, request the Counseling Center conduct an in-class presentation to assist students in understanding their results.

Email: counseling@astate.edu

Call: 870-972-2318

FYE Pre/Post-Survey and Connections Campaign

Pre-Assessment (8/26-8/30), Post-Assessment (11/25-11/29-12/5)

The Pre-Assessment is available to students in Canvas. Faculty will need to make sure these are viewable. FYE Community Leaders will review pre-assessment data and make outreach via phone and email. Post-Assessments are administered the same way, but include faculty and course evaluations.

Spring Pre/Post Survey

Pre-Assessment (1/20-1/24), Post-Assessment (4/21-4/25-5/1)

For the faculty who teach FYE during the Spring semester, the process for the Pre and Post-Assessment is the same as listed above.

1 Paper, 1 Project, 1 Presentation

These may take on any format that you desire and can cover any topic of your choosing. These may be discipline-specific, center around FYE Programming, the Common Reader, a Career Project, etc. This requirement best fits under SLO 2 or 4, where Making Connections is helping to prepare students for future courses and overall college success.

8-Semester Degree Guarantee

Due to the Registrar's Office prior to a student's first advising meeting. Must be delivered by hand, departmental mail, or directly from the student's email to the Registrar's Office. Copies of this form should be kept by the student's advisor (the FYE instructor may be considered the advisor for purposes of the 8-Semester Degree Guarantee), the students, and the Registrar's Office.

The 8-Semester Degree Guarantee is a form that guarantees traditionally-admitted first-time freshmen with declared majors the opportunity to complete a Bachelor's degree within four academic years. This is a required form for all first-year first-time freshmen according to Act 1014 of the 2005 Arkansas Legislature.

Below is a Memorandum from Dr. Nikesha Nesbitt regarding the forms, followed by the form itself.

Memorandum

To: Academic Departments

From: Nikesha Nesbitt, University College

RE: Collection of Four-Year Guarantee Forms

Below you will find copies of the Four-year Guarantee forms to collect from all first-year students in your Making Connections course. Completion of these forms by all first-time, first year students prior to their first advising session is required by Act 1014 of the 2005 Arkansas Legislature. Act 1014 states universities will “provide any student who has declared a major with a written, eight (8) semester course of study” with “a recommended sequence for all course requirements for completion of most bachelor’s degrees within eight (8) semesters. ...If a student does not choose to commit to completion of the degree requirements within eight (8) semesters, the institution shall obtain a signed, written waiver from the student which clearly outlines the student’s rights under this section and verifies that the student chooses to not enter into the commitment.”

Please make sure all your Making Connections students with a declared major are aware of the 4-year/eight semester plans for your majors so that they have a comprehensive understanding of degree requirements before opting in or out. There is no detriment to the student for either selection. By selecting the plan, students must complete all courses in the required order of the 4-year plan for their major. If they do so, A-State assures the student that all courses will be available to them.

Making Connections instructors will receive an email from Ms. Kelli Listenbee, FYE Coordinator, on what to do with these forms. The completion date is Friday, October 8. Please keep a department copy and send the remaining copies to the Registrar’s Office. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at nnesbitt@astate.edu. Thank you for your assistance.

In order to accept, students must be:
1) Declared 2) First-time, Full-time
3) No developmental courses

All other students must waive

**Arkansas State University – Jonesboro
8-Semester Degree Guarantee Program & University Policy**

Pursuant to Act 1014 of 2005, qualified first-time freshmen may elect to participate in a guaranteed 8-semester degree completion program for most bachelor's degree programs. The list of degree majors that are included in the 8-semester degree completion program is published on the institutional website and in the undergraduate bulletin. A student must accept or waive participation in the 8-semester degree completion program.

When choosing to participate in the guaranteed 8-semester degree completion program, a student accepts responsibility for monitoring his/her/their progress toward a degree and for making choices that will lead to graduation in four years.

Please check one of the following options:

- ACCEPTANCE:** As a first-time freshman, I have declared a major in _____ at Arkansas State University and wish to participate in the guaranteed 8-semester degree completion program. I acknowledge that:
- 1) I must follow exactly the 8-semester degree plan for my major;
 - 2) I must make satisfactory academic progress and maintain a grade point average of 2.00 or greater;
 - 3) I must complete at least 30-36 semester credit hours of appropriate course work each academic year as outlined in my degree plan;
 - 4) I must have my class schedule approved by my official departmental advisor and register for classes each semester during my designated registration period;
 - 5) I must accept any available course section that can be accommodated in my class schedule; and
 - 6) If I change my major, the guaranteed 8-semester degree plan is voided. Other events based on my actions that may void the guarantee include the dropping or failure of a course, withdrawal from the university, non-payment of fees, non-participation in required assessments and disciplinary actions.

- WAIVER:** As a first-time freshman, I do not wish to participate in the guaranteed 8-semester degree completion program, due to the following:
- I have not declared a major and I am not eligible to participate in the guaranteed 8-semester degree completion program.
 - I understand that my declared major is not included in the guaranteed 8-semester degree completion program.
 - I am not eligible to participate in the guaranteed 8-semester degree completion program because I must enroll in one or more developmental courses (pre-college level) or pre-requisite courses required in my selected major.
 - I have been admitted conditionally (admitted with restrictions) to Arkansas State University.
 - I am not eligible to participate in the guaranteed 8-semester degree program because I am not a full-time student. None of the above. I do not wish to participate in the program.

If students waive, they must select one of the following options:

I understand that I have waived my rights under Act 1014 of 2005 and the guaranteed 8-semester degree completion program if I fail to return this form with my signature to my official departmental advisor prior to the first day of classes for the first semester that I attend the university.

I acknowledge that my ASU email account is the official means of university communication and I am responsible for checking my account regularly and maintaining the status of my account mailbox. I understand and accept that I am responsible for any official notifications and communications transmitted to my official email address.

I understand that I am responsible for participating in any mandatory state and institutional assessment exams during my degree program and that my failure to participate in required assessments can prevent my registration for subsequent terms and may delay my degree completion and graduation.

I acknowledge that I have received information concerning the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), as amended, and understand my rights as provided by this Act.

Student Name (print)

Student ID Number

Student Signature

Date

Advisor Signature

Date

Can be signed by an academic advisor or the FYE faculty

After completion, must be delivered or emailed to the Registrar's office!

The Common Reader

What is a Common Reader?

A Common Reader is a book that is read by a group of people to give them a common interest, topic for creative thinking, or discussion point. A-State FYE has a common reader program to introduce first-year students to a specific theme or topic and connect it to their discipline.

What is the A-State Common Reader?

We have three choices for the 24-25/25-26 common readers:

- Evicted by Matthew Desmond
- Tales of Two Planets edited by John Freeman
- The Sum of Us by Heather McGhee

What are the Common Readers about?

Robert Robinette has done an excellent job creating LibGuides for each of the Common Readers! Each LibGuide includes additional resources that students might benefit from, examples of activities/assignments that connect to the book, and brief excerpts about both the book itself and the author. [Common Reader LibGuides](#)

How might I implement the Common Reader in Making Connections?

Each Making Connections course is required to participate in the Common Reader program but may implement material from the reader in a variety of ways. Some instructors may choose to select specific topics to emphasize in class or may choose to have students write reflections of their own experiences with the material, or center class discussion around readings.

What is the common theme of the Reader?

The common theme to be explored across all disciplines is the idea of accountability.

What are some critical questions we might explore?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ✓ How does accountability affect student success? | ✓ Accountability is often characterized as a personal trait. How does the idea of a broader accountability to our communities, society, and planet manifest in the common readers? |
| ✓ Who or what should I be accountable to? | |

When will students receive the Common Reader?

Students may purchase the Common Reader(s) from the A-State Bookstore.

How long do we use a Common Reader?

Once selected, the Common Reader is used for two consecutive years at A-State. New common readers will be announced in Spring 26 for use beginning in Fall 26.

Core Content

Core content is explored more fully in the *Making Connections Handbook*. Core content may be covered by: FYE Programming, Making Connections faculty through lecture, in-class or out-of-class readings, in experiential learning through an assignment, etc. The core content is not an exhaustive list of what *could* be covered in a Making Connections course, but offers main points that *should* be covered throughout the semester.

Topic	Students Should Know
College 101 & A-State Policies & Procedures Advising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A-State's Academic Standing and Misconduct Policies ● How to drop a course ● A-State's grading system
Campus Safety & Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How to report a Title IX incident ● How to safely intervene as a bystander in Title IX incidents ● Information about unplanned pregnancy (Act 943) ● Information about the Counseling Center and stress management
Campus Conversations Civility & Communication Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How to communicate electronically and face-to-face with instructors ● How to have civil discourse inside and outside of the classroom ● How diversity is represented ● How to appreciate diversity on-campus and in the classroom
Task & Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How to manage time for a successful college experience
Critical Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How critical thinking will benefit them in college & the workplace ● How to apply critical thinking skills to their coursework
Study Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How to take useful notes in class ● How to effectively use technology for educational purposes ● How to develop good study skills ● How to apply these skills within their chosen field of study
Academic Integrity & Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What support is available to students seeking academic assistance ● The importance of asking for help early ● A-State's policies on Academic Integrity
Degree Planning & Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How to locate their advisor ● How to look up classes in Banner ● How to create a schedule ● How to schedule an advising appointment ● How to read a transcript ● How to navigate the A-State Bulletin ● How to change their major ● Exploratory: How to declare a major ● How to register for classes ● Where to locate holds in Banner ● What holds prevent registration ● How to have holds cleared
Financial Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understanding how to navigate MyBill ● How to find the Financial Aid office

Faculty-Student Meetings

Faculty-Student Meetings should occur AT LEAST once per semester. These meetings may take as little as 15 minutes per meeting, but should be one-on-one.

Best Practice: These meetings are meant to re-engage our students, and help them connect with you as faculty. Let these be student-led meetings with no faculty-set agenda. Consider having students journal or brainstorm a few questions beforehand to help less-talkative students engage with increased confidence during this meeting.

FYE Programming

FYE is working on developing a more robust calendar of activities, specifically aimed at Freshmen students in both the Fall and Spring semesters! Keep an eye out for emails and updates about programmatic offerings throughout the Academic Year.

Experiential Learning

Getting students out of the classroom can not only help them broaden their understanding of campus, but also of the society and culture around them. Visits to the Red Wolf Center or Union can help them find and explore the resources that are talked about in FYE, without the pressure of searching alone.

Experiences like the Bradbury Art Museum or the A-State Museum in the Dean B. Ellis Library can help students explore cultural resources already on campus

Additional Course Requirements for Exploratory Sections

Below are explanations of additional requirements for Exploratory Sections. While these requirements are mandatory for Exploratory Sections, any section of Making Connections is welcome to participate in any of the following activities.

Exploratory FYE Programming

1

A Night to Network TBD

This event is crafted to lead first-year students on a path of self-discovery in major and career exploration. Students will have the opportunity to engage with experts and business leaders within their areas of interest. A Night to Network will empower students to make well-informed decisions regarding their major and career pursuits.

2

Advising Prep, University Advising Center (To be Scheduled Prior to October Registration)

These presentations will be hosted by the University Advising Center, and will be scheduled prior to October Registration. Advisors will present on the topics of: advising preparation, general education advising, degree programs, checking holds, how to find an advisor, transcript review, scheduling advising appointments in Pack Support, and using the schedule planner.

Career Assessment

To Be Completed by the Sixth Week of Class, Full Instructions to Follow

The Focus 2 Career Inventories is a web-based self-paced program for personal career exploration designed to help students choose or confirm their choice of academic major. Your class is to complete the self-assessments: Work Interest, Values, Skills, Leisure and Personality Assessment sections. Students will need this assessment at their first appointment with the Wilson Advising Center. Best Practice: Invite the Counseling Center to review these results with your students. Contact Amber Martin in the Counseling Center at along@astate.edu.

Focus 2 Career Assessment Directions

Wilson Counseling Center

107 North Caraway Road

(Across from the Eugene Smith building and next to the Post Office parking lot.)

870-972-2318

counseling@astate.edu

<https://www.astate.edu/a/counseling-services/>

Focus 2 is a web-based self-paced program for personal career exploration designed to help you choose or confirm your choice of academic major. By completing the assigned Self-Assessments, you will gain a better understanding of your personal traits as they compare to various careers/occupations. This information will assist you in making an informed choice of major and career plan. Your assignment is to complete the Self-Assessments: Work Interest, Values, Personality, Leisure and Skills. You are welcome to explore any additional modules and you may re-access Focus2 at any time. If you have questions or need assistance you may contact the Wilson Counseling Center between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

1. Ctrl Click on the following Focus 2 Career link (If you prefer, copy/paste the link into your browser):



<https://www.focus2career.com/Portal/Login.cfm?SID=957>

2. Click "Create An Account"

New To Focus 2?

CREATE AN ACCOUNT

3. Enter the access code: **redwolves** (all lower case).
4. Fill in the requested information. You must use your Astate email address for the system to recognize your login.

All fields marked with an * are required.

Personal Details

Your Access Code

First Name * Last Name *

Email * Confirm Email *


Cell Phone * Preferred Contact Method *

select one

5. In the **Center Category** box near the bottom of the page select **Making Connections**. It will ask for your instructor's name. You do not have to select it to proceed and you do not have to put your instructor's name in to complete the assessments. However, if your instructor's name is in the list; then select it.

6. Then read the Focus 2 policies, and click the box to agree.

7. Click, 

8. Complete the two security questions and click. 


9. On the inventories page, scroll down to the Self-Assessment area. Complete the five inventories listed under Self-Assessment (Interest, Personality, Leisure and Skills). At the end of each assessment, you will be asked to either click Continue, Finish, or View Results. If there is a tie between two areas you will have to choose one of them.

10. Each time you have completed an inventory, you will be provided a list showing how your results match various occupations. You can explore the list of careers. You can also save the ones that interest you; but this is not required.

11. To return to the Assessments page, click on the "Exit to Dashboard" icon at the top of the righthand side of the page and scroll down to the Self-Assessments to begin the next inventory.

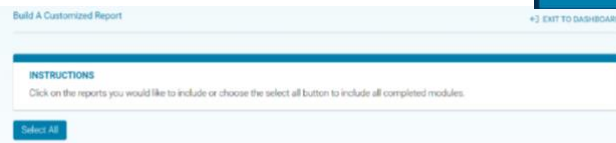
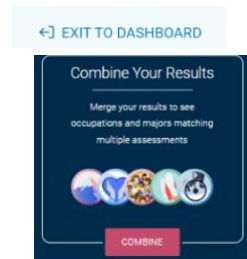
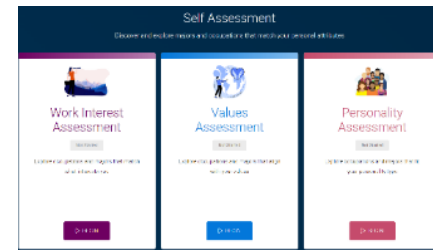
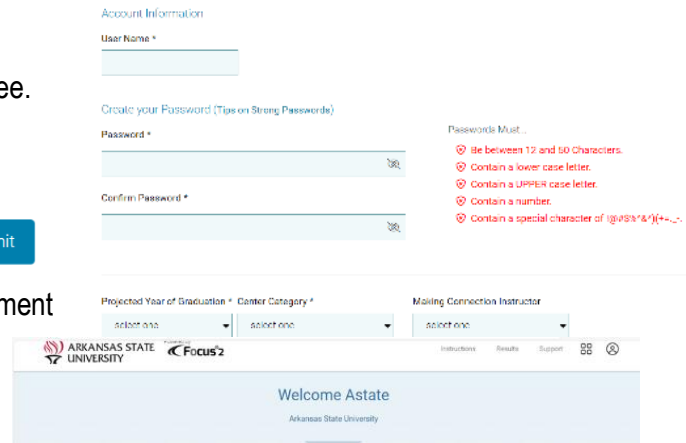
12. When you have completed the inventories, you may want to click the "Combine Inventories" button, but this is not required.

13. After you have completed all five inventories, scroll to the bottom of the page to the "Reports" and click on "My Summary Report /View - Your Report".

14. Click continue. 

15. Choose **SELECT ALL**,

16. Scroll down then click



Continue

17. When the **Focus 2 Portfolio** opens up, you can print a summary of your results. Also, you can choose “PDF” to save a summary of your results. It will download to your computer or device.



18. You may log back into Focus 2 at any time you choose to explore how your inventories match various occupations.
19. A staff member from the Wilson Counseling Center will be presenting a group review and discussion about the results of the inventories during a future Making Connections class. You will want to be able to access your results during that presentation.
20. If you would like to engage in further career exploration, you can email, call or come by the Wilson Counseling Center to make an initial appointment.

Career Project

The Career Project is generally a cumulative project built across a number of assignments that are offered throughout the semester (i.e., reflections and results from the exploratory FYE requirements, coupled with degree planning materials and career exploration). The final product may be a paper, presentation, portfolio, etc. What is included in the final project and the format it takes is completely up to the faculty. Best Practice: Many instructors for exploratory sections use the Career Project as the submission for the FYE Academic Expo.

Formative Assessment

Looking for ways to assess true-learning in real-time? Consider [using this formative assessment guide](#) to check learning inside and outside of the classroom. Once you've assessed learning, make it actionable. Are you good to move on? Should you circle back to something that wasn't quite grasped?

Therapy Assistance Online (TAO)

TAO is an online platform that offers supplemental support for students needing assistance in the areas of anxiety, time management, anger management, preparedness, imposter syndrome, worry, motivation, etc. The tool utilizes short to mid-length video discussions that are built to offer support to students in need. This doesn't replace counseling. Instead, it offers additional information for self-help for students who just need an extra hand. Consider utilizing these resources in your FYE course. [When Life Hands You Lemons](#). Contact Kelli Listenbee to request a faculty account for TAO.

Making Connections Handbook

Using the Text *Making Connections Handbook*

The text for the course can be used in a variety of ways. At the very least, you can assign chapters to read and discuss in class. Other potential uses for the book include the following:

- **Modeling active reading and note-taking strategies**—for example, as a class, read aloud and annotate a chapter or part of a chapter.
- **Demonstrating communication strategies**—for example, divide the class into groups of 2-3 students and ask them to prepare a short summary of assigned pages that will be shared with the class as you facilitate the discussion.
- **Presenting on the book**—for example, use the pages of the book as the basis for your lecture slides.
- **Developing information literacy skills**—for example, provide additional short readings on topics that complement the chapters in the book. Ask students to synthesize the information from the sources.
- **Build on concepts using activities/assignments**—for example, replicate in class or assign students to try out one of the exercises in the book or in this Instructor's Resource Manual to build on classroom and experiential learning.

Section 1: Resources, Policies & Organization

Section 1 Outline

Campus Connectedness & Navigation

- 1.1 Getting Started
- 1.2 Campus Safety & Wellness
- 1.3 Civility & Communication
- 1.4 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice

Section 1 Learning Objectives

In this section, students will learn about campus policies, safety measures, communication techniques, and diversity on-campus. By the time that students complete this section, they should know the following:

- A-State's Academic Standing Policies
- How to drop a course
- A-State's grading system
- How to report a Title IX incident
- How to safely intervene as a bystander in Title IX incidents
- Information about unplanned pregnancy (Act 943)
- Information about the Counseling Center and stress management
- How to communicate electronically and face-to-face with instructors
- How to have civil discourse inside and outside of the classroom
- How diversity is represented
- How to appreciate diversity on-campus and in the classroom

Guiding Questions for Section 1

The following questions are ones that students often ask when focusing on topics in this section. Be prepared to address them or to preempt them through lectures, activities, and discussion.

- What can I do if I feel my rights have been violated?
- How important is it for me to respect the rights of others?
- How is that respect demonstrated?
- What are the different types of stress?
- How can I illuminate or minimize one stressor in my life?
- What resources are available to me on campus?
- What are the different types of communication?
- What is civility and how do we demonstrate it?
- What is diversity and how does it appear on-campus?

General Suggestions for Section 1

First-year students benefit greatly from engaging lectures. When giving independent work, ensure that expectations are clear. To some students, this course may seem extraneous; make a case for the course. Making Connections will provide them with connections to peers, faculty, and their college, as well as efficient strategies for succeeding at A-State.

Some topics covered in Making Connections, like Title IX, can weigh heavy with your students. Mixed in with other course content, like academic advising, these heavy topics might get lost in the shuffle of things or seem insignificant. Take time after topics like these to debrief in smaller settings that allow students to openly ask questions. If you don't feel confident in your ability to facilitate these conversations, call in an expert from around campus.

Students may have different levels of experience, understanding, and comfort with cultural competence, bias, inclusion, diversity, etc. Providing information through the voices of others and allowing students a safe place to talk through their understanding of how to navigate a diverse world are two strategies that can lessen apprehension you may have with this topic.

Sample Activities and Assignments for Section 1

The following examples are provided as options for both in-class activities and out-of-class assignments. Included in this section are the following:

Week 1 Goal Setting for the Semester
Lost in Translation
First Week Checklist
College Organization
Moving from Stress to Success
Control Over Conflict
Healthy Eating and Drinking Analysis
Campus Resource Scavenger Hunt
Engaging Students
Send a Professional Email
Civility Discourse Self-Reflection and Discussion Starter
Tolerance to Acceptance
Civility Project

FYE Requirements for Section 1

The following are mandatory FYE Programming that fall under this section.

FYE Pre-Assessment

Title IX Training

Active Shooter Response Training

Section 2: College Level Learning

Section 2 Outline

College Level Learning

2.1 Task & Time Management

2.2 Critical Thinking & Learning

2.3 Study Skills

2.4 College Level Writing

Section 2 Learning Objectives

In this section, students will learn about general academic success skills including: task and time management, critical thinking, and study skills. By the time that students complete this section, they should know the following:

- How to manage time for a successful college experience
- How critical thinking will benefit them in college & the workplace
- How to apply critical thinking skills to their coursework
- How to take useful notes in class
- How to effectively use technology for educational purposes
- How to develop good study skills
- How to apply these skills within their chosen field of study

Guiding Questions for Section 2

The following questions are ones that students often ask when focusing on topics in this section. Be prepared to address them or to preempt them through lectures, activities, and discussion.

- How do I set goals?
- What is critical thinking?
- What type of learner am I?
- Which study management techniques work for me?
- What is academic integrity and what are the consequences of violating the Academic Misconduct and Academic Integrity policies?
- What steps should I take to become a better learner?

General Suggestions for Section 2

Check to see if students have access to the required course materials for all of their classes. Ask if they have read and understood each of their course syllabi. Have they created a schedule that balances classes with other obligations?

Remind/inform students of the support services on campus: tutoring, counseling, students support services, etc. Some services may not offer direct academic support (e.g., the counseling center), but could be the resource students need to have a successful semester.

Sample Activities and Assignments for Section 2

The following examples are provided as options for both in-class activities and out-of-class assignments. Included in this section are the following:

Learning Goals
Prioritizing
Developing an Organizational System
Bloom's in the Classroom
Thinking in the Disciplines
Note Taking with Lecture Exercise
Learning Styles
Growth Mindset for Greater Success
Test Autopsy

FYE Requirements for Section 2

The following are mandatory FYE Programming that fall under this section.

Section 3: Commitment to Completion

Section 3 Outline

Career Readiness & Degree Completion

- 3.1 Degree Planning
- 3.2 Career Planning
- 3.3 Registration
- 3.4 Financial Planning

Section 3 Learning Objectives

In this section, students will learn about degree planning, major and career selections, and campus involvement and support. By the time that students complete this section, they should know the following:

- How to locate their advisor
- How to look up classes in Banner
- How to create a schedule
- How to schedule an advising appointment
- How to read a transcript

- How to navigate the A-State Bulletin
- How to change their major
- How to declare a major (for Exploratory Sections)

Guiding Questions for Section 3

The following questions are ones that students often ask when focusing on topics in this section. Be prepared to address them or to preempt them through lectures, activities, and discussion.

- What value can General Education courses offer me in the workforce? As a citizen?
- What types of careers are available to me with my current major?
- Where might I find meaningful engagement on campus?
- How and when should I register for next semester?
- How will I pay for college?

General Suggestions for Section 3

Students may have different levels of exposure to particular career fields, majors, educational opportunities, etc. Consider partnering with Career Services to bring in local professionals or faculty to discuss career fields specific to your discipline or your students' interests.

You may pull in college advisors, career coaches, internship coordinators, etc. from your college to discuss on-campus opportunities including minors, or college-specific resources and connections.

Sample Activities and Assignments for Section 3

The following examples are provided as options for both in-class activities and out-of-class assignments. Included in this section are the following:

What I Love to Do
 Values Exercise
 Career Planning Exercise
 College Major Analysis
 4-Year Degree Plan
 Roadblocks and Pathways
 Backwards Resume
 Registration Checklist
 Next Gen Personal Finance
 Know Before You Owe

FYE Requirements for Section 3

The following are mandatory FYE Programming that fall under this section.

Scarlet to Black Event
 8-Semester Degree Guarantee
 All Major/Career Fair (Exploratory Sections)
 Career Project (Exploratory Sections)
 Advising Center Drop-In (Exploratory Sections)
 Advising Prep

Section 4: Belonging

Section 4 Outline

Belonging

4.1 Campus Involvement

4.2 Academic Supports

Section 4 Learning Objectives

In this section, students will learn about registration and financial planning. By the time that students complete this section, they should know the following:

- How to get involved on campus
- What academic supports are available

Guiding Questions for Section 4

The following questions are ones that students often ask when focusing on topics in this section. Be prepared to address them or to preempt them through lectures, activities, and discussion.

- What do I want to participate in my time at A-State?
- What resources should I take advantage of to be academically successful?

General Suggestions for Section 4

Expose students to as many opportunities as you can while tailoring the events/organizations/resources to their expressed needs and interests. Work with the campus leadership team to develop a body of resources that make sense for your students.

Sample Activities and Assignments for Section 4

The following examples are provided as options for both in-class activities and out-of-class assignments. Included in this section are the following:

Visit a campus learning center
Create a Pretend Club

FYE Requirements for Section 4

The following are mandatory FYE Programming that fall under this section.

Leadership Team Classroom Visits

Faculty Resources

Included in the Canvas shell, and linked here in the Instructor's Manual, faculty can find a plethora of resources to assist them in developing activities, assignments, and/or an overarching plan for their Making Connections course!

Sample Syllabi & Planner

Using the Sample Syllabi and Course Planner

These sample syllabi and planner present alternative ways to introduce course materials rather than linearly, as presented in the course text *Making Connections Handbook*.

- **Syllabus**—Sample Syllabi located in the Canvas Shell. [Sample Syllabi](#)
- **17-Week Course Planner**—This course planner covers the entire 17-week semester, and offers a breakdown for when course materials, activities, assignments, etc. could be presented, and tips for doing so successfully. The course planner was generated based on the Exploratory Section Syllabus. However, the suggestions found in this course planner could easily apply to major-specific sections of the course. Additionally, each week includes suggestions for major-specific sections. [Syllabi Course Planner](#)

Syllabi Creation Resources, A-State

The A-State Office of Assessment offers [Syllabi Creation resources here](#). These resources include general syllabi requirements for A-State, samples, and language suggestions.

Activities, Assignments, FYE Requirements, & Readings

These sample activities/assignments and readings were pulled from a variety of sources, and may be edited at the instructor's discretion, excluding only the Mandatory activities/assignments as listed under the "Course Requirements" section of this manual.

Sample activities, assignments, and reading are separated by section, in the order that they appear in the "Making Connections Handbook." These offerings follow the Making Connections Handbook linearly. The order of these activities, assignments, and readings, follow the "Major-Section Syllabus," but can be used in any order.

All of the listed activities/assignments can be found in the Canvas shell!

Section 1: Resources, Policies & Organization

Activities/Assignments:

Week 1 Goal Setting for the Semester: A general overview of each of the student learning outcomes for the course that allows students to set their own unique goals as they tie to the SLOs.

Lost in Translation: This activity provides your students with insight into “hidden curriculum” and the language used in higher education. Students first complete the definitions, and then you can choose certain terms to discuss in class. You could modify this for use as a syllabus quiz.

First Week Checklist: A general checklist for students to review in the first week of school.

College Organization: This is a short activity that can help your students better understand the structure of their college. While not comprehensive, this may help students recognize faculty within their major, and the communication chain-of-command should they have a future problem.

Moving from Stress to Success: This activity will give students an opportunity to reflect on how stress is manifested in their own lives, and practical ways to manage that stress.

Control Over Conflict: This activity is similar to Moving from Stress to Success, but involves a little bit of light research, and helps to discuss a narrative of “control” or lack thereof.

Healthy Eating and Drinking Analysis: This exercise asks students to review what they have had to eat and drink over the past two days and analyze their choices. Students can research how their consumption aligns with USDA dietary guidelines, and what the implications of this are.

Campus Resource Scavenger Hunt: This scavenger hunt can be adapted to any format that you’d like (i.e., individual, group, virtual, etc.). Edit locations to best suit the needs of your students. This should create awareness of campus resources and generate student interaction. Submission styles for this assign vary, some faculty use GroupMe for students to submit photos, but you can also create the assignment in Canvas for students to upload files.

Engaging Students: This activity is reminiscent of the scavenger hunt, but allows students to recall available campus resources in regard to a problem scenario or potential growth moment.

Send a Professional Email: Students must be fluent in all types of communication, and email is especially important in campus life. This activity should allow your students a low-stakes opportunity to send a professional student email.

Civility Discourse Self-Reflection and Discussion Starter: Self-reflection should allow students time to process their own understanding and demonstration of civility. The discussion prompts may be used in small groups, for class discussion, or to create a civility pledge.

Tolerance to Acceptance: A series of self-reflection, discussion, observation, participation, and preparation. Define DEIJ terms, understand how to contribute to a diverse campus community and prepare to make campus a better place for all.

Civility Project. Consider asking students or their groups to present their plan as if they were standing in front of a city council. By asking students to bring in examples, you help to eliminate any bias you may have brought into the classroom.

Section 2: College Level Learning

Activities/Assignments:

Learning Goals: This activity, allows students to apply what they are learning about grit and goal setting to their personal goals. Students may need some help writing clear, specific, measurable goals, so take time to demonstrate how to do so. Debriefing on what they anticipate or have experienced as it relates to challenge and overcoming challenge can be helpful.

Prioritizing: This activity will give students the opportunity to evaluate some of their actions over recent days to determine how they prioritized their time. This includes time for self-reflection.

Developing an Organizational System: Understanding more about goal setting and prioritization are all great, but sometimes our students need action steps that put theory into practice. This activity can be a little more extensive and very hands-on, but allows students the time and space to take actionable steps toward better organization for college success.

Bloom's in the Classroom: First, introduce students to Bloom's Taxonomy. The end goal of this activity is not to create experts in Bloom's Taxonomy, but to help them identify the levels in their work and realize that as they move up the Bloom's Taxonomy from lower-level to higher-level assignments, they will need to schedule more time for the task. Additionally, learning is not linear and they may find themselves in multiple stages of Bloom's all at once.

Thinking in the Disciplines: Students may need to research these disciplines if they are not familiar with them. Then, briefly write down the content these disciplines focus on and types of thinking required to study in these disciplines. For example, Literature includes fiction, poems, plays, short stories, etc. The thinking used in Literature courses includes analysis, primarily as students break down writing into its elements and both creative and critical thinking.

Note Taking with Lecture Exercise: Use this exercise after introducing the types of note-taking. Provide students with a short lecture over a topic. If it is complex or full of unfamiliar vocabulary terms, even better (major sections could teach something from within their discipline). Or show a short video from an expert on a topic (Randy Pausch's "The Last Lecture," the 13-minute version, and any Stephen Chew video on study strategies works well). Consider creating a short quiz on the topic and give it to students after they take notes. Create challenging quiz questions so students have to think about what they listened to and committed to notes. Finally, debrief on the process—what worked, what didn't—how can they apply these strategies in other classes.

Learning Styles: This assessment will help students evaluate their preferred learning style, and how to incorporate their own learning techniques to better suit their learning preferences. Remind students that everyone uses all learning styles--these just offer a framework for better learning.

Growth Mindset for Greater Success: This assignment is best used after learning about growth and fixed mindset. While changing your "words" as they relate to mindset doesn't mean students will automatically adopt a growth mindset, it does demonstrate the power of perspective in how they frame challenges. Ask students individually or in small groups to complete the activity and share their results. Consider asking them to apply the growth mindset statements to a current issue they have and write about how the statement affects their behavior or attitude.

Test Autopsy: The template provided can be modified for a test that your student has taken. If you have a common test, you can guide the students through the activity one question at a time. This activity can help students determine if they studied enough, if they studied the right material, or if they studied in “the right way.” If students missed ALL multiple-choice questions, maybe they should study for multiple choice in a different way.

Getting to Know the Library: This assignment allows students to discover the resources available to students through the Dean B. Ellis Library. You might consider making this assignment tie into a research project for your course.

FYE Requirements:

Common Reader Event
Academic Expo Event

Readings:

2.1 Task & Time Management
2.2 Critical Thinking & Learning
2.3 Study Skills

Section 3: Career Readiness & Degree Completion

Activities/Assignments:

What I Love to Do: This exercise asks students to brainstorm what they like to do to get them to think creatively about their interests. Encourage silliness (e.g., “I like to eat” or “I like to sleep.”) and creative solutions for how to earn money and how to benefit others. Students may want to work in pairs to help each other think more broadly. Be sure to debrief by highlighting the most unusual ideas.

Values Exercise. The purpose of this exercise is to get students to think about what motivates them. Connecting these values to a major and career can help them determine if the pathway they are considering aligns with their core values and purpose.

Career Planning Exercise: This exercise may require that students do additional research about themselves, potential careers, and offerings from their institution. If you decide to assign it as an out-of-class project, consider collectively brainstorming answers to each question as a class so students can determine what questions need research.

College Major Analysis: This exercise will require some research. Consider walking students through an example of each answer so they can see what kind of information they should be looking for. They may want to brainstorm with another student to come up with possibilities. The goal of this activity is to get them to think beyond the name of the major or the clear career path, and to consider the different ways their major may prepare them beyond college.

4-Year Degree Plan: While sample 4-year degree plans are available in most departments for most degrees, this activity will give students a hands-on approach to degree planning that is specific to their situation.

Roadblocks and Pathways. This activity can be completed individually, in small groups, or as a whole class. Provide a few examples of common roadblocks that students may experience at your institution, whether small (not getting a class at preferred time of day) or big (not getting into

the nursing program), and potential pathways around the roadblock. Be sure to debrief and allow students to brainstorm other potential pathways.

Backwards Resume: This assignment allows students to think hypothetically about what they might participate in or achieve during college to get closer to their career goal. Completing this resume exercise should give students ideas for short and long-term goals while in college, and will help you explore opportunities to meet those goals. Students may look at example resumes to identify what is valued in their intended career field.

FYE Requirements:

Title IX Event
FYE Pre-Assessment
Active Shooter Response Event
All Major/Career Fair (Exploratory Sections)
College and Career Visits (Exploratory Sections)
Career Project (Exploratory Sections)

Readings:

3.1 Degree Planning
3.2 Major & Career
3.3 Campus Involvement and Support

Section 4: Cultivating Your Future

Activities/Assignments:

Registration Checklist: Walk through the registration checklist with students, and help them indicate what items they need to do on their own before and during registration.

[Next Gen Personal Finance](#): This is a site full of online resources for your students to learn more about money management. We specifically suggest the game “payback” which walks students through paying for college.

Know Before You Owe: This activity allows students to learn about how to use the tuition and fees calculator and how to calculate expenses and “income” from scholarships, grants, and loans. This activity can be done individually or in pairs. Once students have calculated the differences for each student, help them brainstorm ways to spend excess aid that aligns with educational expenses and ways to find additional funds to pay the rest of the example student’s bill. If students are unfamiliar with other options, spend time covering additional strategies such as work-study, part-time jobs, campus employment (e.g., Resident Assistant), etc.

FYE Requirements:

8-Semester Degree Guarantee
Wilson Advising Center Drop-In (Exploratory Sections)
Advising Prep (Exploratory Sections)

Readings:

4.1 Registration
4.2 Financial Planning

Developing Connections and Community

Sense of belonging is a crucial component to student success, and strategies that help develop sense of belonging include making connections with others, especially in students' first few weeks. Additional research has indicated that first-year students often experience loneliness, isolation, and homesickness. Many of our students admit that they worry about making friends and will share that they are not good at "small talk" needed to break the ice and get to know others.

When planning your course, consider including exercises in the first few class meetings that encourage or require students to introduce themselves to others and to make deeper connections. You may also want to use small group work intentionally during exercises in class or through out-of-class assignments. These intentional acts of developing community in your classroom (and even online) can mitigate the less personal experiences they may have. If each of your students develop at least one relationship of depth while in your class, then you have contributed to their long-term success in college.

Acknowledging First-Year College Milestones

The following two tables labeled First Semester and Second Semester provide an overview of what your students may face during their first year of college. Of course, the student body and institutional make-up will influence these milestones. Consider sharing with your students the typical rhythms of the semester and how best they can prepare for them.

First Semester

	WHAT STUDENTS EXPERIENCE	WHAT CHALLENGES THEY MAY FACE	WHAT STRATEGIES CAN BE EMPLOYED
1ST M O N T H	Excitement of moving in and moving on to the next phase of their lives	Homesickness, loneliness and isolation, relationship changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize that they are beginning the process of transitioning to adults Show up and speak out to make friends
2ND M O N T H	The reality of college expectations, a more "relaxed" schedule	Uncertainty about what they should be doing, low initial grades, stress from "adulting" for several weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find a peer mentor or coach Talk with advisor and financial aid counselor Develop effective time management strategies
3RD M O N T H	Feeling more comfortable with the pace of college, confident they can handle social activities with academic work	Increased course work demands, unwillingness to ask for help, attempting to resolve relationship or roommate issues themselves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check in with grades and make adjustments Visit tutoring and other resources Visit counseling

4TH M O N T H	Expanding their circle of friends, discovering new intellectual experiences	Changes in family dynamics, registering for next semester, health issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Get involved in campus organizations ● Communicate with family ● Seek medical attention <i>early</i> for health issues
5TH M O N T H	Completing final projects and final exams, looking forward to break from college	Stress, uncertainty about the future, anxiety about final grades, financial strains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Check in with faculty for final push ● Ensure all final tasks are complete before break

Second Semester

	WHAT STUDENTS EXPERIENCE	WHAT CHALLENGES THEY MAY FACE	WHAT STRATEGIES CAN BE EMPLOYED
1ST M O N T H	Excited for new semester, new start, feeling “wiser”	Unresolved academic struggles, renewed homesickness, self-management challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Form study groups and visit tutoring early ● Be proactive about health issues ● Use planner to set goals and tasks
2ND M O N T H	Feeling more “at home” and comfortable, relationships strengthening	Experiencing change in personal values, health issues, feeling like an “imposter”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deepen current relationships and develop ones with faculty and staff ● Balance personal activities with classes
3RD M O N T H	Eager to think more broadly about career and life plan	Concerned about spring break plans and expenses, stress from planning for summer and next fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Investigate summer classes, internships, and employment possibilities ● Check in with advisor about degree plan

4 TH M O N T H	Choosing a degree plan, feeling like an adult “finally,” making better choices with time and self-care	Anxiety about choosing a degree and increased expectations, continued struggles with self-care (sleeping, eating, avoiding alcohol and drugs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop positive, affirming strategies for reducing the effects of stress • Explore future goals with an advisor or career coach • Participate in campus information sessions on study abroad, internships, service
5 TH M O N T H	Planning for summer work, internship, travel, or classes; looking ahead for next year	Stress, uncertainty about the future, anxiety about final grades, financial strains, needing a break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in with faculty for final push • Talk with advisor and financial aid counselor • Ensure all final tasks are complete before break

Teaching Online or Hybrid Courses

At the moment of writing this manual, we are in the middle of a pandemic, which has made us more keenly aware of not only how important this course and content are, but also how likely we will need to deliver this course in a variety of formats. As we get more practice adapting our course to the ever-changing needs of our students and the ever-changing improvements in technology, we envision that we will add more resources for instructors who are teaching this course with a reliance on online delivery. Here are some things to consider as you are planning your course in 2020:

- **Make onboarding simple and engaging.** Students will want to feel welcomed and empowered. This is critical to their success, especially in the first few weeks.
- **Build connections for your students.** Find ways to get them to interact with and develop relationships with you and others in the class.
- **Adapt where necessary.** Most of the exercises, assignments, activities, and case studies can be easily modified for online delivery. In some cases, you may want to model the end result or record an explanation of the assignment so that students benefit from more than the written instructions.
- **Help them build an organizational plan.** Many a good student has fallen victim to forgetting about online work. A strong time management system is key and will need to be co-created.
- **Keep them motivated.** Small check-ins, funny or clever memes, general silliness are all encouraged to help them feel excited about getting online for your class. Consider asking them to write down what motivates them and keep that near the computer.
- **Communicate your communication expectations.** How do they ask questions, get help, work with others? Clearly outline your expectations and availability and give them multiple channels. Some will not feel comfortable with video calls, others with phone calls, and others with chat or text. Provide alternatives and explain how to use them.
- **Demonstrate how to work with others.** This is a great professional skill—working synchronously and asynchronously with small groups. Build in opportunities, but teach students

how to do it well.

- **Check in on their states of mind.** Ask how they are doing periodically and not just how they are doing within their courses. Keep information about resources handy in case your students have needs beyond your knowledge base. Referrals to peer coaching, counseling, financial aid, etc. can help students get on track with personal issues that can then help them focus in your course.

Faculty Connections

While this manual is meant to prepare you to teach Making Connections, it can't possibly answer ALL of your questions. Consider utilizing the following resources:

- Email or call your FYE Coordinator, Kelli Listenbee klee@astate.edu 870-972-3150
- If you have questions or recommendations about FYE programming, email or call the FYE Assistant Coordinator, Kyle Walker kwalker@astate.edu 870-972-3935
- Use the A-State FYE Faculty Listserv to ask questions of your peers
- Participate in supplementary discussions hosted by FYE throughout the academic year
- Connect with a member of the FYE Faculty Advisory Board to ask questions, or brainstorm
 - Valarie Hilson
 - Stacey Sloas
 - Stacy Walz
 - Sandra Hawkins
 - Jeff McLaughlin
 - Yeonsang Hwang
 - John Hershberger
 - Pamela Henderson
 - Kerry Tew
 - Arianne Pait
 - Ashley Walls
 - Catherine Beaver
 - Allysa Weaver
 - Nikesha Nesbitt
 - Christopher Thigpen
 - Andrew Nolley
 - Bruce Faske
 - Johnathan Reaves
- If you are interested in coordinating classroom visits from members of the campus community, we have listed contact information for relevant departments to FYE:
 - Amber Long (Counseling) – along@astate.edu or 870-972-2318
 - Trey Hicks (Red Wolf Center) – chicks@astate.edu or 870-680-8599
 - Tabatha Simpson-Farrow (Writing Center) – tsimpsonfarrow@astate.edu or 870-972-8039
 - Matt Robins (Communication Center) – mrobins@astate.edu or 870-972-2557
 - Tiffany Mosley (Title IX) – tnmosley@astate.edu or 870-972-2015

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