

Example of a Well-Designed Course in: "First-year Experience Transition"

Name: Glenda Hensley

Name of Institution: Western Carolina University

1. Specific Context

- **The subject matter:**
First-year Experience transition and introduction to Leadership
- **The title of the course:** The Creative Life
- **Typical class size:** 25
- **Level of the course:** freshman
- **Mode of delivery:** face-to-face
- **Type of institution:** University

2. General Description of the Course

Course Description: [*Pathways to LEAD the way!*](#)

This course provides an introduction and opportunity for you to transition to university life, as you discover the resources available (academic, co-curricular, community). You will examine the principles of leadership through the thematic lens of the arts. This subject of this course is *you*. It is intentionally designed to promote your self-awareness and personal success—in college and in life after college—by empowering you with flexible skills and strategies that are applicable across subjects (transferable, cross-disciplinary skills) and across time (durable, lifelong learning skills).

LLC - Living Learning Community: In a [Living-Learning Community](#), students are organized into living-learning cohorts that appeal to their interests and goals, thus the classroom and the living room reinforce and promote integrated learning. These communities connect residential life with one course or a full academic cohort. Your LLC will work collaboratively and expressively in an exploration of the arts, leadership, and learning as you transition to college life at WCU.

3. Big Purpose of the Course

My hope is that 5 years after my students leave the institution, as a result of this course, they can identify their life and career goals and possess the skills,

attitudes, and knowledge to analyze choices, act on purpose, and reflect on the outcomes; face opportunities and challenges with confidence, creativity, critical reflection, and clarity of intent and values; and work well with others.

The *Life Value* of the course is to prepare students to

- define and refine their goals and possess the skills, attitudes, and knowledge to analyze choices, act on purpose, and reflect on the outcomes - adjusting as warranted;
- learn how to find and use the resources and services available that will support their goals empower successful outcomes (personally, academically, socially, and civically).
- face opportunities and challenges with confidence, creativity, critical reflection, and clarity of intent and values;
- and work well with others and live with integrity.

Purpose as stated in course Syllabus:

The Purpose of this course is to:

1. *connect* you with other **students**—i.e., to help you form peer-support networks and peer-learning communities;
2. *connect* you with the **college**—i.e., to promote (a) your appreciation of the meaning and relevance of the college *curriculum* (liberal arts & sciences), (b) your involvement in the *co-curriculum* (out-of-class experiential learning), and (c) your use of *campus support services* (academic-support and student-development services);
3. *connect* your **present** college experience with your **future** goals and plans—i.e., to help you relate your current college experience with your upcoming decisions about your college *major*, your future *career* path, and your life beyond college.
4. *connect* you with the principles of **leadership** - i.e., to help you understand the importance of leadership to your college experience and your life.

4. Important Situational Factors/Special Pedagogical Challenge

1. Specific Context – Expectations of others – Characteristics of the subject:

A. Context: This face-to-face course is a first-year (first-semester), 100-level course with 2 credit hours. It is housed in the Leadership minor in the College of Education and Allied Professions - School of Teaching and Learning. The Leadership minor is in the department of Human Services. It meets two times per week for 50-60 minutes. The class size is capped at 25 students who are also co-located in a residence hall with other themed LLC's in one of 3 different halls - 2 of which are exclusive to first-year's and the 3rd is a mixed population. Students are enrolled by the advising center during summer orientation based on their top preferences selected via our on-line admission-to-orientation Catwalk system.

B. Expectations: All of our transition pathway courses are expected to introduce students to a set of learning outcomes that encompass an introduction to 17 aspects of university life defined as the Core elements - those procedural, social, personal

development resources, etc. that will foster successful transitions to college life. In addition to these outcomes, the LEAD LLC courses also provide an introduction to the principles of leadership and thus have an added dimension. Finally the LLC's are thematic and as such, each frames learning outcomes by the thematic focus and reframes or establishes one or more thematic learning outcomes.

C. Subject: The subject matter for the course (student success) is both convergent and divergent. Some content is basic, fact-driven, resource or service based information. "Advising day is set and this is how you register for classes." However attending and writing a reflection about an event or service-learning project are open-to diverse views. Learning to get along in a new community of learners is a wonderful and messy process - with many ways to accomplish the goals and many ways to experience success. The course is to prepare them for the many aspects that make up college life and as such is multi-dimensional and complex.

2. Characteristics of the Students & Teacher:

A. Students: Because students arrive with a tremendous range of readiness for the transition to college life, they also arrive with a range of attitudes about the need for or purpose of the course. Many assume they do not need help with adjusting to college life (personal, social, or academic). Many assume that because high school was easy for them, so will be college. Many others are fearful of the change and what to expect - even if not willing to admit it. Some may be ready academically, but not socially or personally and also the reverse. Some are independent, confident and easily slide into gear. Others do not. However, they all have to learn how to navigate the new terrain and each will have different needs and different pacing. Therein lies the problem - how to make sure they have all been introduced to the basic needs while keeping them motivated and excited - helping them discover how to 'do' community and to help each other - how to foster individual growth in a healthy garden. Student expectations also have an impact. The nature of the course lends itself to being considered 'non-academic' and not serious on first entry - a perception also perpetuated by many academic departments/faculty. Therefore, some students are resistant to course assignments and particularly those that require reading and writing -- thus some will resent the course and instructor when they discover they actually have assignments and grades.

B. Teacher: I love teaching with creative strategies and challenging students to find their creative voice and in that sense this course should be easy for me - a perfect fit. I am very organized and love to plan programs and events - another plus for this class and its thematic focus. I am deeply committed and eager that they each have a positive and successful learning experience and that they find themselves ready for their next steps - again a positive for the role. However, prior to this course, I have not had any formal background in leadership programming - so that became new content for me to integrate. Further, my teaching approach is more faculty than staff mindset - yet most of those who teach our transition courses are staff, many of whom are student affairs professionals. So I found myself constantly questioning myself and my normal ways of teaching this past fall, hoping that I was not expecting too much of the students

Special Pedagogical Challenge:

- Student Characteristics: essentially those factors I described above.

5. 3-Column Table

Use this table below to provide information about these three aspects of your course design.

Learning Goals:	Assessment Activities:	Learning Activities:
<p>1. Foundational Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understand academic policies, procedures and how to access information and resources; ▪ identify principle Leadership and personality traits / styles (ethics, integrity, communication skills, perseverance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Pre-Post survey *</u> ▪ <u>'Quiz-bowl' style game simulations</u> ▪ <u>'Class Pass': Index card with key points from assigned reading</u> ▪ <u>Leadership Practice Inventory (LPI) workshop & self-assessment</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Lecture/presentation</u> ▪ <u>'Quiz-bowl' style game simulations</u> ▪ <u>Reading /Class discussions & dialogues</u> ▪ <u>Guest speakers/presentations</u> ▪ <u>"Lost" simulation</u> ▪ <u>Leadership Practice Inventory (LPI) workshop</u>
<p>2. Application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ assess personal needs and goals to effectively connect with the campus community (academic, social, co-curricular, and civic): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ practice the Social Change Model of Leadership, ○ analyze how the arts inform and are informed by social, cultural, and personal stories; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Goal-setting workshop and journal</u> ▪ <u>'Five-fingers Mandala' (goal project)</u> ▪ <u>Create personal Values Shield</u> ▪ <u>Service learning project</u> ▪ <u>Analysis charts/papers for events</u> ▪ <u>Products created for art exhibit *</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Goal-setting workshop and journal</u> ▪ <u>'Five-fingers Mandala' (goal project)</u> ▪ <u>Education Briefcase (eB) workshop</u> ▪ <u>Create personal Values Shield</u> ▪ <u>Service learning project</u> ▪ <u>Attend arts events and analyze/reflect</u> ▪ <u>Art Museum: Process drama workshop</u> ▪ <u>Create /identify products for art</u>

<p>3. Integration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ identify the interactions & relationships among the curricular, co-curricular, social, and personal dimensions of their college experience with future goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ connect learning theories (cognitive & emotional) with performance outcomes (academic, social, personal) ○ integrate artistic media and methods with communication and presentation skills; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Cognitive Map & Timeline</u> ▪ <u>Residential program design</u> ▪ <u>Resume and cover letter</u> ▪ <u>Education Briefcase</u> ▪ <u>Individual multimedia presentations</u> ▪ <u>Design/plan/host art exhibit</u> 	<p><u>exhibit</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Generate Cognitive Map & Timeline using text and campus documents.</u> ▪ <u>Design /present a Residential program</u> ▪ <u>Peer Career Mentor presentation: Resume and cover letter</u> ▪ <u>"If I could major in fun"</u> ▪ <u>eB: how to organize by learning goals</u> ▪ <u>Individual multimedia presentations</u> ▪ <u>Art Museum: facilitated workshop</u> <p><u>How to: Design/plan/host art exhibit</u></p>
<p>4. Human Dimension:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ interact with other students in order to form peer-support networks and peer learning communities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ understand Leadership as a relationship process, • Self: ○ clarify values and develop a sense of responsibility for their academic, personal, and career development, • Other: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Residential program debrief dialogue *</u> ▪ <u>Service learning reflection paper</u> ▪ <u>Diversity project/presentation</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>About Me paper</u> ▪ <u>Residential program debrief dialogue</u> ▪ <u>Service learning project debrief dialogu0065</u> ▪ <u>Attend Diversity focused event or presentation and create a project/presentation - follow with</u>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ develop empathy, respect, and appreciation for others who are different in terms of the ways our society defines human and group differences, including race, ethnicity, religious backgrounds, linguistic differences, socioeconomic levels, age, geography, sexual orientation, and national origins; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Art exhibit reflection paper with focus prompts on leadership</u> 	<p><u>full class discussion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Art exhibit debrief discussion and critique.</u> ▪ <u>Celebrate the Creed Project</u>
<p>5. Caring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ value the meaning and relevance of the college curriculum (liberal arts & sciences); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Pre-Post survey *</u> ▪ <u>Faculty interview report</u> ▪ <u>'White Collar' investigation report & simulation</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Faculty interviews</u> ▪ <u>'White Collar' investigation report & simulation - a "mantel of the expert" design for problem solving.</u>
<p>6. How to Keep on Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ create study, inquiry, and problem-solving skills and strategies that are applicable across subjects (transferable, cross-disciplinary skills) and across time (durable, lifelong learning skills). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>'Study-hall group' - Journal</u> ▪ <u>Personal learning plan: chart for year 2 noting timeline and resources.</u> ▪ <u>Letter: advice to next year's class on how to success during your 1st year.</u> ▪ <u>Research diagram for Art Exhibit</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>'Study-hall group' meetings & Journal</u> ▪ <u>Study Skills Consultants Workshop</u> ▪ <u>Study journal worksheets</u> ▪ <u>Work in progress folio: course summative document.</u> ▪ <u>Education Briefcase</u> ▪ <u>Art museum: Research for Art Exhibit</u>

- Add 1-2 paragraphs of comments about the goals or your effort to identify good goals and appropriate learning and assessment activities.

As indicated in the 'Situational Factors' above, this course is expected to address the goals and outcomes identified by the Office of First Year Experience guidelines. They are excellent guidelines and vetted through our FYE Cabinet, comprised of members representative of units across campus and divisions. Within that context, my goal is to identify how I can meet those goals using my teaching strengths and in alignment with my own pedagogical approach. The process of figuring out how those expectations could merge with this taxonomy/ table challenged me to a process of contemplation, revisioning, and ultimately seeing the absolute compatibility. The process strengthened my resolve that our courses are on a firm foundation overall, but also the need to provide professional development opportunities for the FYE instructors on our campus that will prompt them to engage a similar process.

6. Weekly Schedule

Teaching Strategy		1st day of each unit: framework is discussed - the last day events charts are due. Daily flow indicated below.				
WEEK	Unit	LLC Framework	Tuesday (In-class)	Between classes:	Thursday (In-class)	Between classes
			Goals /Creed /eB Build community Scaffold learning	Class pass for text/media assignments. Prep for workshops and discussions	Individual application or reflection posts	Active learning & educative assessment techniques
1.	UNIT 1 Discover College <i>Connect with College: Adapting to a new environment</i>	I will celebrate and take pride in WCU Residential Program Campus WOW & athletics events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class discussion & dialogue: "People before paper" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading Blackboard Access Confirmation * 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class Pass: BB access Lecture/presentation "Form & function" Needs assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: "Campus Know-it-all" Pre-Post survey About Me paper
2.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class Pass Guest speakers/ presentation - Wellness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study journal worksheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Lost" simulation About me paper Due Residential dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading/media 'Study-hall group' meetings & Journal
3.	UNIT 2 Calibrate your Compass	I will respect the dignity & rights of all persons. Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class Pass Lecture/discussion: Values & goals Goal-setting workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create personal Values Shield Goals Journal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate Cognitive Map & Timeline using text and campus documents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading/media 'Study-hall group' meetings & Journal: Mapping success

	<i>Connect with self: Finding your place in the world</i>	Program & Dialogue Diversity event: Red Zone + Chart <i>Clarify Values</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Five-fingers Mandala' 			
4.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class Pass Guest presentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership Practice Inventory (LPI) workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LPI self-assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design a Residential program to host: Red Zone/Diversity Dialogue/presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading/media 'Study-hall group' meetings & Journal: Plans for Residential program
5.	UNIT 3 Think First <i>Developing skills for life</i>	I will practice personal & academic integrity. Residential Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class Pass Lecture/discussion: Solve complex problems Guest presentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study Skills Consultants Workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study journal worksheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Quiz-bowl' style game simulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Study-hall group' meetings & Journal: Media: 'White Collar' Present Residential program
6.		Leadership event + chart <i>Solve complex problems</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'White Collar' investigation report & simulation - a "mantel of the expert" design for problem solving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study journal worksheets Faculty interviews 	<i>Mantel of the Expert:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> White Collar investigation: "If I could major in fun" Leadership program debrief dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Study-hall group' meetings & Journal: 'White Collar' investigation report
7.	UNIT 4 Exchange Ideas <i>Connect with others: Telling stories</i>	I will engage myself in the arts, culture and intellectual life of WCU. Residential Program & dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture/discussion: Effective communication Guest presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Art Exhibit workshop: How: design/plan/host 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading/media Study journal worksheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class Pass Class discussion/dialogue: review Leadership principles. Design/plan art exhibit - class discussion & strategy session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Study-hall group' meetings & Journal Identify Exhibit recommendations
8.		Arts event + Chart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Art Museum: Process drama workshop: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study journal worksheets 	<i>Art Museum:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process drama workshop Research for Art Exhibit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading/media 'Study-hall group' meetings & Journal Create /identify products for art exhibit, cont.

9.		<i>Communicate effectively and responsibly</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class Pass Guest presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Briefcase (eB) workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study journal worksheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> eB: how to organize by learning goals Analysis charts/papers for arts event DUE 'Quiz-bowl' style game simulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Study-hall group' meetings & Journal: eB building
10.	UNIT 5 Connect the Dots <i>Seeing the big picture</i>	I will demonstrate concern for others and live up to my community responsibilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture/discussion: Integrating information Peer Career Mentor presentation: "Resume and cover letter" White Collar report & Faculty interview DUE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resume and cover letter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arts products DUE - class discussion/review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Study-hall group' meetings & Journal Research diagram for Art Exhibit
11.		Residential Program & Dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibit selection & mapping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study journal worksheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibit installation Resume and cover letter DUE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Study-hall group' meetings & Journal drop
12.		Event of choice + Chart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host art exhibit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Art exhibit reflection paper: focus prompts on leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Art exhibit debrief discussion and critique Art exhibit reflection DUE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Study-hall group' meetings & Journal drop
13.		Service learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss culminating project for the Creed Education Briefcase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Briefcase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service learning project debrief dialogue Service learning reflection paper DUE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Study-hall group' meetings & Journal: Celebrate the Creed Project presentation
14.		Integrate information from variety of sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture/discussion: Civic Engagement Education Briefcase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Briefcase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Briefcase - all posts DUE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Study-hall group' meetings & Journal Celebrate the Creed Project presentation
15.	UNIT 6 Be involved <i>So what? - Why it matters</i>	Practice civic engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual multimedia presentations: Celebrate the Creed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study journal worksheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual multimedia presentations: Celebrate the Creed Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-Post survey Study for final quiz Letter: advice

			Project			Progress Folio
16.	Final Exam		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'Quiz-bowl' style game simulations & survey ▪ Letter: advice to next year's class on how to success during your 1st year. ▪ Work in progress folio: course summative document. 			

- Include, if possible, a brief description of your teaching strategy
 My strategy uses variable approaches, depending on the part of the term -- so students will work within teams, but also as a full group as they build skills and are able to begin to connect the dots. My strategy also weaves in an additional strand via its identity as a living-learning community. The goal for the LLC is to walk the walk of holistic pedagogy and be authentic in how the course embeds residential programs and how they integrate course goals.
Note: my concept of team-based lies within the fact that the class will be divided into study groups throughout the semester as one aspect of their Learning community framework – thus, the team.

<i>Strategy for a 1-week unit - typical of the first half of the course</i>					
In Class		Readiness assured <i>Class pass</i> Unit Intro via workshop & discussion.		Use content via Active learning & educative assessments & projects	
Out of class	Text/Media assignments + <i>LLC Framework</i> To connect living to learning		Review: Individual application or reflections.		Review/reflect Use content: Application Problems Small groups

Strategy for a 1-week unit - typical of the first half of the course

In Class		Readiness assured <i>Class pass</i> Unit Intro via workshop & discussion.		Use content via Active learning & educative assessments & projects	
Out of class	Text/Media assignments + <i>LLC Framework</i> To connect living to learning		Review: Individual application or reflections.		Review/reflect Use content: Application Problems Small groups

- Add 1-2 paragraphs of comments about anything special you needed to do, to make this course work right.

Timing and preparation are intertwined, thus I have addressed the solutions as connected.

- Timing: Striking a balance between 'having enough content to keep the course dynamic and to hold student attention' and 'having so much students become overwhelmed and tune out' can be difficult. This is especially true with this course in that it is comprised of two distinct content areas of curricula (Transition to College and Leadership Principles) with a thematic overlay embedded in the LLC framework. So the idea of 'covering' can lead to trying to include too much. A second possible problem that emerges from the interdisciplinary nature of the course is me -- I tend to see all sorts of connecting points and intersections and mergers -- to see the relationships and how they inform the big picture. This is neither good nor bad unless I fail to be mindful of my students' readiness to also see the connections.
- Preparation: Varying levels of student preparation for being 'college ready' is a second problem - one that is not only possible, but a known situational factor. As is true with all first-year courses, we encounter students at all levels of the preparation continuum as they arrive from different high school districts, each with different levels of expected rigor and different resources to provide enrichment opportunities that will enhance student learning. Also factors such as first-generation, early college, honors, and socio-economic realities have a tremendous impact on student preparedness. The GPA and SAT clearly do not tell the full story. So this course is particularly tuned in to these realities and must find ways to address students at a personal level. The reason I choose to revisit this point (that I addressed in my situational factors) is how it informs the notion of 'Timing' as a possible problem. For this course, I see them as twin sisters in a delicate dance to find appropriate balance - a balance I have not yet found with this course, having only taught it one time so far.
- Solution: Therefore, the solution to both possible problems (Timing and Preparation) is to work with them as the twins they are. Ultimately, I think the solution boils down to being attentive, flexible, collaborative, and responsive. Steps that I can take include:
 - Maintain enough flexibility in the schedule to allow for a 'status check' conversation to derail the plan of the day without derailing the big-picture learning objectives. The plan must include room to stray from the plan! Thus, I will probably need to build in some 'TBA' options or at least identify particular content plans that I can let go of or embed into another area.

- Utilize the resource networks established for the LLC (RA's, ARC's, and resource specialists) to help me monitor needs.
- Host scheduled and unscheduled conversations with individual students and with teams throughout the semester.
- Use the pre-survey to inform how the course needs to be individualized where possible up front. Also use the post-survey to inform where the course needs to change in future iterations.

7. Evidence of Impact (optional)

Provide any evidence you have, quantitative or qualitative, about the impact of the re-designed course on:

- The overall level of student engagement
- The kinds of learning achieved
- The proportion of the class that achieved high levels of learning

(space for comments)

8. Most Exciting Aspect of the Re-Designed Course for Me (optional)

Add 1-2 paragraphs about anything that was especially exciting to you, about the re-designed course, for example:

- Enabling you to come up with a creative exercise
- The reaction of students, the energy level of the class
- Etc.

(space for comments)

9. My Contact Information

My name and institution:

Glenda Hensley

Director, First Year Experience

Western Carolina University

Cullowhee, NC 28723

My email address: ghensley@wcu.edu