

COMPARING SECOND YEAR STUDENT EXPERIENCES ACROSS THE PACIFIC

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KEYWORDS: sophomore slump, student transition, international comparison

ABSTRACT

Second year students often struggle with personal identity, self-confidence, autonomy and academic commitment (Graunke & Woosley, 2005). We have observed declines in student grade performance, attitude and program satisfaction in our second year science students and these findings appear to share commonality with the *sophomore slump* phenomenon reported at American colleges. To investigate this, 84 third year science (exercise and biomedical) students completed the 2012 online Sophomore Experiences Survey developed to measure academic, social and psychosocial aspects of students' second college year (Schreiner, 2010).

Griffith students reflective responses were compared against 915 sophomore students from seven North American Universities and were found not to differ significantly on the following 6 (high)-point scale student outcome measures (mean GUVsUSA): Engaged Learning Index (4.16vs4.19), Academic Determination (4.29vs4.64), Diverse Citizenship (4.03vs4.35), Positive Perspective (4.32vs4.62), Social Connectedness (4.08vs4.16). However Griffith students report a lower level of being consistently or mostly *thriving* (30vs45%) compared to their USA peers.

More analysis follows but these pilot findings confirm the presence of homogeneous transpacific second year student experiences, thereby justifying further investigation into the successful US sophomore initiatives aimed to improve community, social and academic engagement, student-staff interactions, career exploration and leadership in this forgotten student cohort (Tobolowsky, 2008).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is supported by a Griffith Grant for Learning and Teaching (Gregory) and Griffith Health Group Lifecycle Funding (Harrison).

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