

FRINQ Future(s): Putting Community-Centered Ideas to Work

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The goals outlined in our initial proposal were achieved:

The team created and presented workshops, and created digital resources for faculty, peer mentors and students. The aim of these materials is to better understand the significance of student success in the fall quarter, with the longer term goal of retaining an increasingly diverse cohort of first year students. UNST will continue to monitor persistence and DWFIX rates for FRINQ students in AY21-22, as this might give us insight about the longer-term impact of our work.

A brief description that will be posted on the OAA Relmage Initiative website:

FRINQ Future(s): Putting Community-Centered Ideas to Work (\$7000) built on the research of a 5-member faculty working group in University Studies to create and present workshops and digital resources and printed materials, specifically focused on student success in the fall term of FRINQ.

How did the completed work support the goals of the Relmage Initiative?

This project assumed that the first year program has gaps that need to be addressed in order to create and cultivate more equitable student success; this is particularly true as we welcome students from the "Open For All" initiative. As the demographics and preparation of our first year students change, we need more holistic ways to address and communicate support for both students themselves, and their teachers and peer mentors. This project specifically addresses the following goals:

- Addressing systematic racism within PSU and working, in collaboration with other campus priorities, to achieve equity in curricular development, access, and assessment
- Accommodating for the changing circumstances of our student's lives, including increasing needs for support with financial aid, housing, mental health services, and academic skills preparation
- Challenges that require cross-disciplinary and cross-college/school engagement

Background for the project

In Spring 2021, Associate Director of University Studies, Sarah Newlands, convened a team of five FRINQ faculty and began a survey and interview project to collect data about the FRINQ program from faculty, peer mentors and students. The research has focused on current assessment practices, obstacles to student success, and program learning goals and outcomes. The intention of this process was to make assessment practices, program goals, and support for students more consistent across the program.

This project developed workshops for faculty and peer mentors that specifically address our findings and respond to the input of the people who serve our students. Our project produced awareness and tools regarding the fall term of FRINQ, in the intent of helping struggling FRINQ students stay in school, able and ready to persist beyond their first year of university.

Improving our ability to assist students as they navigate their first year at PSU and develop their identities as students/members of our community is especially important as we retool to meet the needs of students who come to the university through the *Open For All* initiative, and through the summer bridge program. The reach of the potential impact of this project is University-wide, since FRINQ instructors and mentors support students across the departments and majors of the university. As research shows, passing FRINQ is the most significant predictor of student persistence.

These activities aim to increase the retention and success of students we currently have and to address essential questions of equity in assessment across the program. We believe this process of clarification and development of communication tools can also benefit wider messaging about the opportunities for prospective students at Portland State. This project directly impacted over 1300 students, over 30 faculty, and more than 30 undergraduate peer mentors.

Workshops: Our workshops were developed over the summer and offered to faculty and peer mentors before classes begin in the fall. Our goals were: (1) engage faculty to reflect on their current assessment practices; (2) work in community to revise or align assessment to be more connected with the larger program; (3) work with faculty and mentors to better address and engage the needs of struggling students. We saw these workshops as having potential to make more community centered connections between FRINQ faculty, FRINQ peer mentors and their students. We offered the workshops once for faculty and twice for peer mentors). *We shared workshop materials with all FRINQ faculty. >>PDF of presentation is attached to this report.*



Digital Resources: We facilitated the creation of a student-designed website (<https://psufrinq.editorx.io/resource>) and printed postcard with a QR code, leading students to a website with useful information, distributed to all FRINQ classes. These materials will be converted to a D2L/Canvas module for use by FRINQ instructors. This material will help first year students understand the goals of the

University Studies Program, its role in the university, and its value as part of a liberal arts education. Helping students to understand the *why* and the *how* of their general education journey will support their persistence, no matter if they are a Physics major, a Music major, or a Social Work major. Using evidence-based storytelling, the module provides students with strategies for success in college, catalysing critical thought and agency in their educational paths. Finally, it provides a map and clearinghouse for PSU support resources and advice.



Ongoing work related to this project

Assess FRINQ DFWI rates through 21-22 school year and carefully monitor FRINQ withdrawals; find out if and how FRINQ teachers, mentors and students are using the digital tools.

How were the allocated funds utilized?

4 stipends of \$1500/each for team members	\$6000
Design and creation of materials (postcards, website), paid to student artists	\$1000
Total	\$7000

University Studies contributed \$250 for postcard printing above this amount.

Screenshots from the website developed for this project:



What is FRINQ?

Freshmen Inquiry is a year-long course that ALL first-year students take at PSU. You'll stay in the same FRINQ for the whole year (fall, winter and spring terms).

FRINQ IN LESS THAN 25 WORDS:

"Writing meets the world and then tries to talk about it. A place where things come together in ways they don't normally. That's the beauty of complexity."

"A diverse, intentional community focused on inquiry, developing skills and knowledge, providing support, and learning through connecting with each other."



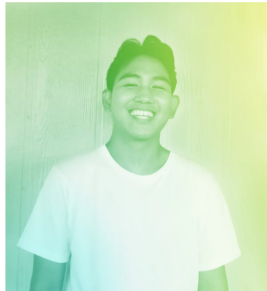
Why do I have to take FRINQ?



Student Stories



Kristina C.



Ron J.



Daisy N.

Slide show from faculty workshop

FALL really MATTERS

Workshop AGENDA:

- Our project and research process (10 mins)
- Salient data/findings (10 mins)
- Introduce wicked problems (5 minutes)
- Workshop FRINQ wicked problems (15 minutes)
- Share Out (remaining time)

The project with which we were tasked:

Address grading discrepancies among FRINQ classes. Figure out what is going on there.

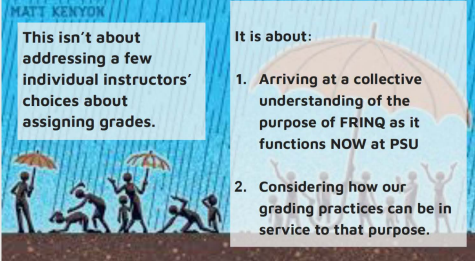
This is about ensuring equitable experiences for all FRINQ students and identifying support gaps so all students have the opportunity to succeed.

MATT KENYON

This isn't about addressing a few individual instructors' choices about assigning grades.

It is about:

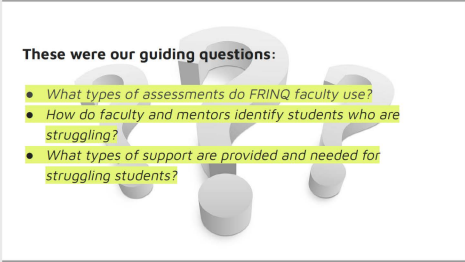
1. Arriving at a collective understanding of the purpose of FRINQ as it functions NOW at PSU
2. Considering how our grading practices can be in service to that purpose.



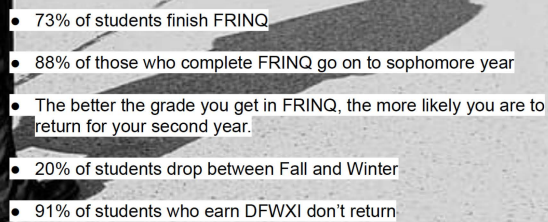
Our research process:

- Previous research on first year experience
 - Katherine's analysis of first year student success
 - Survey of faculty, mentors, students
 - Focus group conversations with faculty and mentors
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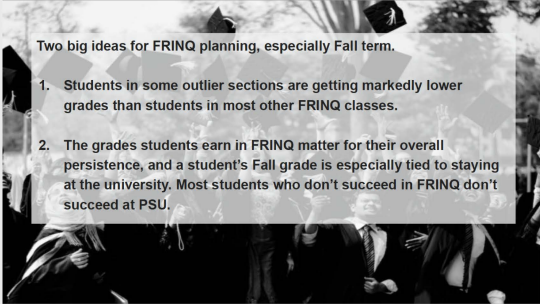
These were our guiding questions:

- What types of assessments do FRINQ faculty use?
 - How do faculty and mentors identify students who are struggling?
 - What types of support are provided and needed for struggling students?
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Katherine's analysis: The predictors of freshman persistence

- 73% of students finish FRINQ
 - 88% of those who complete FRINQ go on to sophomore year
 - The better the grade you get in FRINQ, the more likely you are to return for your second year.
 - 20% of students drop between Fall and Winter
 - 91% of students who earn DFWXI don't return
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Two big ideas for FRINQ planning, especially Fall term.

1. Students in some outlier sections are getting markedly lower grades than students in most other FRINQ classes.
 2. The grades students earn in FRINQ matter for their overall persistence, and a student's Fall grade is especially tied to staying at the university. Most students who don't succeed in FRINQ don't succeed at PSU.
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The data we collected came from:
19 faculty
15 mentors
307 students
(33% of 20-21 FRINQ students)

Our survey and focus groups helped us to understand the challenges that instructors, mentors, and students see as the primary obstacles to successful completion of FRINQ.

Survey and focus group overall findings

- The first indication that students are struggling is missing assignments or missing class
- Students, faculty, and mentors identify time management as a key challenge for students who are struggling
- Students also face challenges outside of the classroom
- Those challenges include: trying to juggle work, school, family, mental health issues; financial issues
- Meeting one on one with students is one of the most effective interventions

From the perspective of faculty and mentors

- time management/procrastination
- writing
- reading
- research

From the perspective of students

- keeping up with assigned work
- turning in work on time
- work-life balance
- staying motivated
- time management

Sometimes students drop out

Students need an exit strategy. Part of FRINQ is figuring out if college is the right choice for right now. How can we effectively support students who want to leave, and possibly return later?

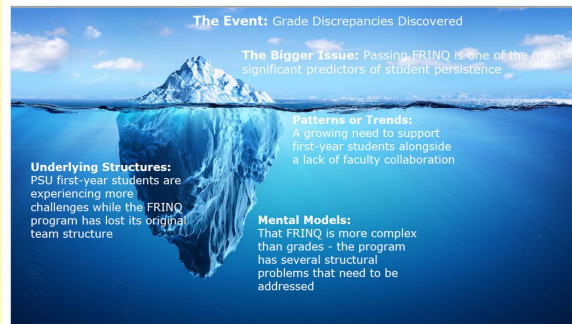
Last day to drop with 100% refund: October 3

Last day to drop without a "W" withdraw on academic record: October 10

FRINQ class size should shrink

Faculty and mentors sometimes feel they are giving heavy resources to students who are struggling, to the detriment of other students, and to the detriment of their own well-being.

Could more students get what they need to succeed if classes were smaller?



Workshopping a Wicked Problem:

There are inconsistencies in student experiences in the FRINQ program

Choose one aspect of this wicked problem to discuss (self-select):

1. **How much commonality should there be across FRINQs?** Should we use common assignments? Are there shared expectations for how much work students do and what we should be teaching beyond the four goals? What should a freshman student "know" when they finish FRINQ? Can we have collective intentions for grading that serve collective ends? How do we incorporate care and connection into our desired outcomes?
2. **How relevant is the original vision and structure of FRINQ today?** How can we enhance the interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning? What role should teams play? How can we strengthen collaboration among FRINQ faculty, the UNST program, and the wider University?
3. **What does equitable access to thriving look like in a student's first year and beyond?** What role do teachers, mentors and university support systems play in this thriving? What roles should they play? How can the UNST program and the University support faculty and mentor efforts? What does equitable student thriving look like?

- Generate Questions about the Problem(s) - 5 minutes
- Generate ideas/actions related to your group's Problem - 10 minutes
- Share out ideas/actions to the larger group - 5 minutes

