

Text You'll Find Useful When Developing Your Funding Proposal or School Redesign Program Plan

What is the Freshman Transition initiative model developed by the Freshman Transition Initiative at The George Washington University, and why does it work?

The Freshman Transition Initiative model is a school-wide, systemic school redesign model where:

- ❑ Every entering freshman completes a semester or year-long, standards-based, Freshman Transition course...
- ❑ That culminates in the creation of a comprehensive and meaningful online 10-year plan...
- ❑ That is updated in academic classes in subsequent years
- ❑ And used by all instructors for advisory and academic coaching purposes

The Freshman Transition Course

When individuals have a **productive vision of their future** (a vision that matches their goals, identity, aptitudes, personalities, lifestyle expectations, and passions) and a **quantitative 10-year plan of their own making**, the value of applying themselves to their education becomes abundantly clear. Students will leave the Freshman Transition course motivated to achieve because they not only understand the benefits of their efforts in school but, more important, they also understand the consequences of not getting a good education. The *process* taught in this standards-based course helps each student quantify the *reasons they should apply themselves to their academic studies*.

The School-wide Initiative

The intervention cannot stop at the end of the freshman year. During the Freshman Transition course, **students put their 10-year plans online** so, guided by their instructors and counselors, they can continually update their growing and changing plans.

To maintain motivation and direction, students revisit their online 10-year plans in each of their academic classes in subsequent years. All instructors are trained to use students' individualized online 10-year plans as a tool to inform advisory and academic coaching functions, continuing the motivation to graduate and reach the goals that will lead to an economically self-sufficient adulthood.

The online 10-year plans provide educators with important information for data-driven advisories. Because each student's **My 10-Year Plan Summary Page** is designed for quick review, academic instructors and counselors can review individual plans so they can better personalize their instruction, using student's lifestyle goals as the "carrot" for the purpose of academic coaching and remediation. Academic instructors throughout the school are trained to use the online 10-year plan for data-driven advisory purposes and for personalization of instruction. This comprehensive, yet cost-efficient strategy helps to address the elusive goal of a successful transition from high school to college.

Why is a Freshman Transition course, based on the Course Standards for Freshman Transition Classes from The George Washington University's Freshman Transition Initiative, a critical piece in any high school or college completion efforts?

All students benefit from a comprehensive guidance course.

- ❑ For students raised in privation, this course provides remediation in developmental and self-sufficiency topics missed when role models and support at home are lacking.
- ❑ For teens on the track to college, the fact that only 56% graduate within six years points to the need for early interventions to provide them with a vision of a productive future and the understanding of the consequences for dropping out.
- ❑ For the highest functioning students (the 19.7% who go directly to college and graduate within 150% of program time), learning the process for personalized career decision-making will provide a skill and an understanding that will propel them to make the best choices for themselves. When individual career choice matches personal attributes, productivity increases along with life satisfaction.

Whether students are headed for an Ivy League college or an entry-level job, they all crave a clear sense of direction for their lives. Based on research and a strong belief that all students deserve an excellent education, a Freshman Transition course guides students through a crucial self-discovery process and transforms them into self-motivated learners. Students develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes to successfully examine their own lives, evaluate a wide range of educational options, explore career and life paths, and establish reasoned and researched goals for their future.

What does a Freshman Transition course entail?

Commonly known as a comprehensive guidance course, entering freshman students engage in the process of answering these fundamental questions:

- ❑ Who am I?
- ❑ What do I want? and
- ❑ How do I get it?

These three questions drive the standards-based *Career Choices* series, making it relevant, rigorous, and effective at increasing engagement and motivation. The course culminates with students developing an individualized, online 10-year plan that charts their journey through high school and post-secondary education or training and into the workforce.

The *Career Choices* curriculum and the school-wide initiative support guidance services available on campus, aligns with The George Washington University's Freshman Transition Initiative whole-school redesign model and its accompanying set of standards, as well as supporting the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts. *Career Choices* also matches the U.S. Department of Education's six recommendations for effective dropout prevention programs and can be used to provide a solid first-term experience like that recommended by the American Association of Community Colleges in *Reclaiming the American Dream: A report from the 21st-Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges* (April 2012).

(See pages 19-25 for the Freshman Transition Standards and pages 180-182 for the U.S. Department of Education Dropout Prevention Practice Guide alignments.)

Text You'll Find Helpful When Developing a Proposal that Includes the *Career Choices* Series as Part of the Plan

What makes the *Career Choices* series a unique and effective curriculum?

Simply put, it is an academically-based curriculum—repackaged in a thematic format to address the developmental needs of the transitional student. How?

- It teaches a critical-decision making process for life-defining decisions
- It culminates in a 10-year career and education plan that helps individuals envision a productive life of their own choosing
- It helps students grapple with a pressing and crucial question: Why do I need a good education?
- It is “different by design” and, therefore, less threatening for all students
- It melds high tech with high touch, which is important for student buy-in of the content and concepts presented

The bottom line: By changing attitudes, it changes lives.

Whether your students are headed for an Ivy League college or an entry-level job, they all crave a clear sense of direction for their lives. A required class, based on the Standards for a Freshman Transition Course from The George Washington University, can help students develop a personalized, career-inclusive 10-year education plan.

As they work through the coursework, students learn a self-discovery and planning process that culminates with a plan to:

- Make high school graduation a reality
- Enter and **complete** college or post-secondary education or training
- Help them transition into a productive and self-sufficient adulthood

This interactive course captures the attention of **all** students because it deals with their most critical issues: themselves and their future.

In addition, this semester or year-long course can integrate academics and technology in meaningful ways, so students see the relevance of these skills to their lives.

The 10 years between ages 14 and 24 are one of the most critical decision-making times in anyone's life. Known as the “decade of transition,” young adults start making choices that will impact the rest of their lives. Some of these choices have far-reaching consequences:

- To stay in school or not
- To become sexually active or not
- To apply themselves to their education or not

When young people have a **productive vision of their future**, that matches their goals, identity, aptitudes, personality, lifestyle expectations, and passions, along with a **quantitative 10-year plan of their own making**, the value of applying themselves to their education becomes abundantly clear. The *process* taught in this standards-based course quantifies the *reason to learn*.