Memorandum

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FROM: Shannon Tinney Lichtinger, Associate Director and Coordinator of First-year Research &
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DATE: May 26, 2011

RE: Educational Intentionality Study Sophomore-Year Interview Briefs, Part I: Sophomore-Year
Challenges and Transitional Issues

In spring 2010, panel members from the Educational Intentionality Study were interviewed about their sophomore year, and asked a variety of questions so that we may understand: (1) sophomore-year challenges and transitional issues; (2) advice current sophomores would give to rising sophomores based upon their experience; and (3) engagement in Sophomore Initiatives' programs (including Ad Infinitum), how sophomore programs facilitate sophomore transitions, and the knowledge, skills, and abilities students gain from participation in these programs.[1] This is the first of four briefs to highlight top-level descriptive findings from the sophomore interviews with regard to these areas of inquiry. These findings can be used for planning purposes.

During the sophomore year, students often experience challenges in their academic life, in their relationships, and in their extra-curricular experiences, and they are confronted with questions about their identity, purpose in life, and goals.[2] During the sophomore-year interview, panelists were asked, "Thinking back on this past year, what was one of your greatest challenges?" Responses to this question, or any excerpts where panelists mentioned significant challenges, were content analyzed for basic and

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[1] In fall 2008, the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) embarked on a mixed methods panel study using the class of 2012 to understand how students' intentions, expectations, and goals for pursuing a college degree evolve as they progress at the University, and how curricula and programming contribute to their learning and development. A panel of 60 first-time, full-time students from the Class of 2012 were recruited during the administration of a fall orientation survey. The sample was selected and stratified based upon gender, race, and a combination of high school GPA and SAT to garner a representative sample based upon the class of 2012. Students are interviewed at five points (first semester to senior year) to coincide with significant milestones.

[2] Schaller, M.A. (2005). Wandering and Wondering: Traversing the uneven terrain of the second college year. A*bout Campus*, July-August, 17 – 24.

Schaller, M.A. (2007). The development of college sophomores. In B.F. Tobolowsky & B.E. Cox (Eds.) *Shedding light on sophomores: An exploration of the second college year* (Monograph No. 47, pp. 1 – 12). Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition.

Tobolowsky, B.F. and Cox, B.E (2007). Shedding light on sophomores: An exploration of the second college year (Monograph No. 47). Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition.

organizing themes to explain the global theme—sophomore-year challenges and transitional issues.[3,4] Presented below are the basic themes that constituted 12 organizing themes to elucidate this global theme; they are presented from most prevalent to least prevalent:

1. Managing multiple roles and finding balance
2. Academic performance
3. Time management
4. Roommates and relationships
5. Declaring a major/minor
6. Study abroad
7. Taking time for/caring for oneself
8. Feeling confident/competent
9. Identity
10. Leadership
11. Life after Loyola
12. Stress management

Beside each organizing theme (in bold) is the number of panelists who mentioned a challenge that was associated to it. Below each organizing theme are the basic themes that emerged to constitute it. Next to each basic theme is the number of panelists who mentioned a challenge associated to it. It is possible that the total number of panelists by basic theme is greater than the number of panelists noted for the organizing theme, as one panelist could have mentioned multiple challenges that were associated to more than one basic theme assumed under an organizing theme.

Managing Multiple Roles and Finding Balance (n = 21)
- Balancing/finding time for/prioritizing any combinations of or all of the following: friends/school/work/social life/extra-curricular activities (n = 16)
- Saying "no" to or choosing some activities/opportunities over others to find balance (n=4)
- Taking time for oneself because of a busy schedule (n = 2)
- Demanding schedule, i.e. juggling six classes
- Significant life event—death in family

Academic Performance (n = 18)
- Keeping pace with course load/coursework (n=7)
- Challenging courses/degree requirements–particular ones mentioned (n = 4)
- Achieving good grades/doing well (n = 4)
- Being prepared for class/one's focus is on academics (n = 4)
- Getting/staying motivated to do work (n = 3)
- Academics, general (n = 2)
- Not performing academically up to one's own expectations (n = 2)

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[3] For a description of the qualitative analytical technique used please see Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: An analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 1, p. 385 – 405.
[4] Forty-eight interviews were conducted spring 2010. There were three interviews in which this question was not asked and students had not indicated any challenges; they are removed from the analysis (n = 45).

- Achieving professors' expectations
- "Cramming"—learning better alternatives to this
- Organizing space to be conducive to work—creating a work station

Time management (n = 17)
- Time management (n = 13)
- Making/prioritizing/finding time to prepare for classes (n = 5)
- Planning ahead (n = 2)
- Demanding schedule (n = 2)
- Keeping to one's routine

Roommates and Relationships (n = 13)
- Making friendships/meeting new people (n = 7)
- Roommate relationships/issues (n = 6)
  - Division of labor when it comes to chores (n = 2)
  - Learning to pick your battles
- Becoming distracted by friends/peers/roommates (n = 2)
- Trying to fit in
- Finding out who true friends are
- Accepting others unlike oneself
- Being surrounded by people who don't seem to imbue Loyola's values
- Establishing boundaries with tutees
- Frustration with swimming teammates

Declaring a Major/Minor (n = 7)

Study Abroad (n = 4)
- Making big decisions—whether or not to and where to study abroad (n = 2)
- Staying focused on the present because of thinking ahead about Thailand (study abroad)
- Applying for study abroad
- Competition for study abroad slots

Taking Time for/Caring for Oneself (n = 3)
- Finding time (making time) to go to the gym as a way to take care of oneself
- Taking time for oneself because of busy schedule
- Taking time to care for oneself—one's body and mental health
- Balancing school/ work/ friends/ FAC (physical activity)/ eating healthy
- Managing time to get sleep

Feeling Confident/Competent (n = 3)

- Engaging in many things, but doing well in everything (n = 2)
- Gaining confidence in oneself

Identity (n = 3)

- Finding one's authentic self
- Navigating public and private spheres—much overlap in college—which can create role/identify conflict
- Trying to fit in
- "Coming out" as a homosexual
- Gaining confidence in oneself

Leadership (n =2)

- What does it mean to be a leader in light of one's own lifestyle and choices?
- Leaders as role models—what does that mean for everyday behavior in light of temptations or wanting to let lose?
- Confronting one's own behavior in light of what's acceptable/not acceptable given role as "leader"
- Delegating tasks in groups/feeling you have to do things yourself if you want it done right—in organizations where one has a leadership position

Life after Loyola (n = 2)

- Parents have been talking about the future and what's after graduation; dealing with the fact that the future needs to be planned for
- Pressure from father to go to medical school, but not convinced she wants to

Stress management (n = 1)