

# Developing an Appropriate Evaluation Formative First-Year Program Tool for Boston College's Experience, Reflection, Action (ERA) First-Year Program

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## ERA-FYP Introduction

- The ERA-FYP focuses on formative development, design thinking, and developing care for individuals, community, and the world through the cycle of experience, reflection, and action based on Ignatian pedagogy.
  - It builds a foundation for students that focuses on meaning, purpose, wholeness, and community to address and work together to solve complex individual, local, and global challenges.
  - It also helps transform the way students build bridges to local and global contexts and provides support as they begin to engage in real action and scholarship of deep importance.
- Guest speakers present on a variety of interdisciplinary topics to students that touch on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging.
- Class sessions consist of lecture and small group, breakout discussion components.
- Breakout discussion groups foster community and encourage supportive belonging for groups of 8-10 first-year students in the Lynch School of Education and Human Development (LSEHD) with a graduate student instructor and two or three upper-level undergraduate peer mentors to reflect on guest speakers.

## Research Purpose

- Traditional end-of-semester course evaluations do not appropriately measure first-year programs and their impact on students beyond their first year.
  - This is especially true for first-year programs that focus on the formative development of undergraduate students.
- Creating and developing a culturally responsive measurement and evaluation tool allows data, particularly anecdotal evidence, to be collected from all students in the program to better understand the program's impact on students' sense of belonging.



**Left:** Julia E. DeVoy, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Students and Faculty Director for the ERA First-Year Program, with 2022-2023 ERA Graduate Instructors



**Right:** ERA Class of 2026 in Fulton Hall 511

## Methodology

- 103 first-year students responded to a 23-question pilot Google Form survey about their experience in November 2022.
  - Half of the questions asked students about community-building and feelings of community in the ERA program.
  - The remaining half asked them about the academic content of the program.
- 14 questions used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree with an additional option to select N/A.
  - Students were given the opportunity to elaborate when appropriate.
  - Other question formats included dropdown and yes/no questions.
- Questions were informed by qualitative interviews with upper-level undergraduate peer mentors recounting their own experiences as first-year ERA-FYP students.

## Results

- ERA promotes a strong sense of community and belonging at the LSEHD
  - **80.6%** of students agreed that their breakout discussion group makes them feel part of a community.
  - **90.2%** of students agreed that their section staff made their breakout section group feel like a community. No students strongly or slightly disagreed with this statement.
  - Students overwhelmingly identified community as the most meaningful aspect of ERA for them.
- Students believe that ERA embodies values of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
  - **82.3%** of students agreed with this statement; 53.9% strongly agree.
- ERA provides students with developmental feedback and meaningful opportunities to reflect.
- ERA provides a strong introduction to the LSEHD and undergraduate course advising at Boston College.
  - **91.3%** of students agreed with this statement.

## Future Directions

- Additional surveys were developed and distributed to undergraduate students in the LSEHD in early May of 2023.
  - The second survey for first-year students (ERA Class of 2026) was redesigned to look into the outcomes around students' experiences with their Spring semester-long research project with the additional aim of holistically collecting more data about the program as students near completion of the program
  - Another survey was created for upper-level students who have completed the ERA program in the past few years, aiming to better understand the longitudinal outcomes of the ERA program beyond their first year.
- Surveys will be analyzed in the summer of 2023, and the ERA leadership team will consider findings when revising the ERA curriculum and developing future surveys. The ERA leadership team will use this information to continue developing community-centered ERA program experiences for first-year students.