

# The Second-Year Student Assessment™ Resource Guide

The Retention Management System Plus™

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## What is the Second-Year Student Assessment?

The Second-Year Student Assessment (SYSA) is an early alert measurement tool designed to inform interventions with students in their second year of college. Based on students' self-reported responses to items on the SYSA, this instrument assesses students' motivational patterns, coping skills, specific needs and interests, and satisfaction with their educational experience at your institution.

The purpose of the SYSA is to provide institutions with information that facilitates more timely and precise responses to needs and expectations of the individual student, as well as specific cohorts of students. Institutions are able to assess the ongoing influence of their first-year initiatives into the second year as they continue their proactive roles of shaping this important milestone for these students. For transfer students, the SYSA is equally important in that the institution is able to learn more quickly about the specific needs and expectations of these students in transition to a new educational environment.

## What are the features of the Second-Year Student Assessment?

The SYSA is comprised of 68 items distributed across the following four primary areas with one additional item indicating the student's authorization to share results:

- 1. Student Information
- 2. Motivational Assessment
- 3. Receptivity: Student Needs and Interests
- 4. Institutional Impressions (Satisfaction)

Highlights of these four areas suggest the scope and importance of the information provided by the SYSA.

#### **Student Information**

This assessment of student background information provides the context for discussing motivational patterns, needs and interests, and institutional impressions. The student information includes work plans, current grade point average (GPA), ethnicity, enrollment status, credits earned, concurrent enrollment(s), study plans, decision on major, degree plans, and college/program completion plans.

#### **Motivational Assessment**

This assessment gives rise to the motivational scales which identify the student's areas of greatest strength and challenge at a glance. Reported as a percentile rank and a bar graph, these interrelated motivational scales may be subdivided into three clusters:

Academic Motivation relates to the capacity to develop and maintain long-term goals that provide broad self-direction to one's work, to obtain immediate gratifications from the learning process, and to maintain daily self-discipline in their pursuit of immediate academic success.

Social Motivation relates to the capacity to make one's own decisions, to become more engaged and integrated into college life, and to project confidence in one's ability and acceptance as a leader.

General Coping relates to the capacity to manage the personal and interpersonal challenges of college life that have the potential to interfere with one's ability to meet the intellectual challenges of college.

## **Receptivity: Student Needs and Interests**

This assessment creates an instant action plan for each student based on the student's yes/no responses to: 1) having received assistance last year and 2) wanting to receive assistance this year. The student's responses to fifteen specific areas of need and interests are used to inform program and service outreach across five broad areas:

- 1. Academic Assistance
- 2. Advising
- 3. Career Planning
- 4. Finances
- 5. Personal Support and Counseling

## **Institutional Impressions (Satisfaction)**

This assessment defines students' current impressions of the institution as defined by the student's levels of satisfaction (1 = low, 7 = high) with various aspects of their college experience. Identified in the retention literature as potential influencers of student persistence in the first two years of college, these items include students' perceptions relating to:

- Variety of majors and courses available
- Degree of academic challenge
- Leadership and service opportunities
- Internships and activities within major
- Financial assistance available
- Communication or interactions with advisor, instructors, and other students

# What types of reports accompany the Second-Year Student Assessment?

The Second-Year Student Assessment features two primary reports to support your use of the results and inform your subsequent interventions: the Student Report and the Summary and Planning Report.

## **The Student Report**

The first page highlights each student's motivation scores (Academic Motivation, Social Motivation, and General Coping), Student information, and Institutional Impressions of his or her educational experience thus far. The second page features the results of the student's self-reported receptivity to assistance—needs and interests, doubling as a student-generated action plan.

#### Identifying Information (upper right-hand corner)

This section gives the student's name, identification number, gender, age, and the name of your institution.

#### Restricted Report (upper middle of page)

If the student has responded "no" to the last item (68) of the SYSA, then a statement appears at the top of the report: Restricted to Program Coordinator at the Request of the Student. If a Restricted Report is accessed by mistake, it should be returned promptly to the coordinator.

### Instructions (near the top, stretching across the page)

This is a brief statement to the student regarding the nature of the scores on the report. The basis for comparison with other students is explained to the student, as well as what the percentiles mean.

#### Motivational Assessment (left column)

These scores provide an opportunity for advisors to observe each student's perceptions of their strengths and challenges. Scores for each of the seven motivational scales are displayed in two ways, as percentile ranks and with bar graphs. These scores are calculated for academic motivation, social motivation, and general coping.

#### 1. Academic Motivation

Academic Confidence. This scale measures the degree to which the student feels capable of doing well in college. It is not intended as a substitute for aptitude assessment, but rather as an indicator of self-esteem relative to this type of task. A comparison between the student's standing on this scale and an aptitude measure or achievement test can be very revealing. Some talented students underestimate their abilities and need to be strongly encouraged to recognize their talents. Students with low scores can be referred to services that will help them strengthen their confidence.

Sample Item: "I am able to grasp complicated ideas."

Commitment to College. This scale measures the degree to which the student values a college education, the satisfactions of college life, and the long-term benefits of graduation. It identifies students who possess a keen interest in persisting, regardless of their prior level of achievement. With low-scoring students, an advisor can explore their beliefs and values related to college. In some cases, additional clues about scores for this scale can be informed by low parental education levels or low scores in career planning or academic confidence.

Sample Item: "I am quite confident that my decision to go to college was right for me."

Engaged Learning. This scale measures the student's positive energy invested in his or her own learning, as evidenced by meaningful processing, attention to what is happening in the moment, and involvement in learning activities. Schreiner & Louis (2008)¹ found that engaged learning contributes substantially to the variation in students' learning satisfaction, as well as their critical thinking skills, interaction and satisfaction with faculty, overall satisfaction with the college experience, and, to a lesser extent, their grades.

Sample Item: "I feel energized by the ideas I'm learning in most of my classes."

#### 2. Social Motivation

Leadership. This scale measures the student's feelings of social acceptance, especially as a leader. This scale simply reflects the student's feelings about how others perceive his or her leadership. It does not measure leadership ability or even potential. Students with low scores can be encouraged to participate in activities that will build their leadership skills, whereas high-scoring students can be encouraged to assume some leadership responsibilities in student organizations.

Sample Item: "Over the years, I have frequently been selected as a spokesperson or group leader."

#### 3. General Coping

Transition. This scale measures the student's basic feeling of security amid the changes that often accompany one's college career. Its main focus is on feelings of security in the campus social environment.

Sample Item: "It has been easy for me to make friends in college."

Family Support. This scale measures the student's satisfaction with the quality of communication, understanding, and respect they have experienced in their family. These are factors that can influence their ability to adapt to the stresses of college life. An advisor can offer encouragement and empathy to low-scoring students, or they can refer these students for personal counseling. Low family support may be especially challenging to students who are struggling academically.

Sample Item: "I have always felt that the rest of my family was firmly behind me."

Financial Security. This scale measures the extent to which the student feels comfortable about his or her financial situation, especially as it relates to their current and future college enrollment. The scale is not intended to measure the objective level of financial resources that the student has, only their feeling of being financially secure. Some students with quite modest means may feel more secure than do students with much greater means and higher expectations. With low-scoring students, an advisor can explore their financial needs and refer them to appropriate offices for assistance.

Sample Item: "I have the financial resources that I need to finish college."

#### 4. Miscellaneous

Internal Validity. This scale measures the student's carefulness in completing the inventory. Each question asks the student to follow a simple instruction and it is scored in terms of whether or not the student followed the instruction. The scale is useful in identifying students who might have responded randomly in order to finish quickly.

Sample Item: "Enter a '3' for this item."

1. Schreiner, L. & Louis, M. (2008) The Engaged Learning Index: Implications for Faculty Development. Azusa Pacific University.

#### Institutional Impressions (bottom of left column)

This section provides specific indications about the student's level of satisfaction with thirteen aspects of the college experience that are referenced in the retention literature as areas of high expectation for students. These scores are intended to provide additional context for the motivational assessment results, as well as the current needs and interest of each student. On the SYSA student report, the thirteen aspects are listed by the rank of each item on a scale of 1 - 7, 1 = low (very dissatisfied) and 7 = high (very satisfied).

- 1. Frequency of interactions with my instructors
- 2. Frequency of communication with my academic advisor
- 3. Variety of majors available here
- 4. Variety of courses available in my (desired) major
- 5. Degree of academic challenge in my classes here
- 6. Opportunities to get involved in activities and events associated with my (desired) major
- 7. Availability of service learning, internships, and/or other work experiences associated with my career interests
- 8. Adequacy of financial assistance available to me
- 9. Leadership opportunities in student government and other organizations

- 10. Social life (both on and off campus)
- 11. Level of interaction with other students
- 12. Sense of belonging to the college community
- 13. My overall experience as a student at this institution

#### Student Information (top of right column)

This report provides an overview of the student's current grade point average, study plans, selection of a major, work plans, degree plans, college plans, ethnicity, current enrollment status, college credits earned here and at other institutions, and classes undertaken at other institutions this term. This information provides a context for understanding student motivation patterns, receptivity to specific programs and services, and institutional impressions.

Current Grade Point Average

Study Plans

Selection of a Major

Work Plans

Degree Plans

College Plans

Ethnicity

**Current Enrollment Status** 

College Credits Earned Here and at Other Institutions

Classes at Other Institutions This Term

#### Receptivity: Student Needs and Interests (page 2)

Student needs and interests in the SYSA are presented in the context of receptivity to institutional help. Student needs and interests are categorized by Academic Assistance, Advising, Career Planning, Finances, and Personal Support and Counseling. Students are asked to indicate whether or not they received help or information last year, and then whether or not they wish to receive—or continue to receive—help and information this year.

#### How can we maximize the benefits of the information provided in the student reports?

The following questions provide a framework for assessing potential concerns raised by the motivation items by category and across categories for both the individual student and the second-year student cohort:

#### **Academic Motivation**

- Do your students have confidence in their ability to do well in college?
- Do your students value a college education and staying focused on their goal(s)?
- Do your students invest in their own learning?
- Do your students get personal satisfaction from doing well in college?

#### **Social Motivation**

• Do your students have confidence in their leadership skills?

## **General Coping**

- Do your students feel comfortable with the changes they have experienced as college students?
- Are your students experiencing good communication with their families?
- How do your students feel about their financial situation?

## Miscellaneous

• Were your students careful when completing the survey — did they select the responses as directed for the two internal validity items (21 and 32)?

## **The Summary and Planning Report**

The Summary and Planning Report is a resource tool to be used for institutional planning. The analysis includes all of the means of students who completed the Second-Year Student Assessment, presented in three statistical summaries, including the total sample, males only, and females only. All means are computed from percentile scores. Since these scores are viewed in relation to national norms, the means provide a useful indication of how your students' overall motivational patterns compare with that of a national sample of comparable institutions, broadly defined.

## **Student Information or Demographics**

An aggregate report of all student information gleaned from the demographic variables for the SYSA is presented. The number and percent of students responding are reported for each option for each item.

Second-Year Student Assessment™
Summary and Planning Report for Sample College
Completion Date: MM/DD/YYYY to MM/DD/YYYY

Section A

Primary Sample Statistics	N	%	National Comparison Group
Number of Females	1042	68.5%	Four-Year Public Institutions
Number of Males	480	31.5%	
Total Number of Students	1522	100.0%	

#### Student Information

	N	Campus %	National %
Work Hours This Term			
0 (I do not work)	622	41.5%	42.7%
1-10 hours per week	192	12.8%	14.1%
11-20 hours per week	328	21.9%	22.6%
21-30 hours per week	232	15.5%	12.7%
31-40 hours per week	96	6.4%	5.3%
Over 40 hours per week	30	2.0%	2.7%
Self-Reported Grade Point Average			
3.5 - 4.0	636	42.4%	38.0%
2.5 - 3.49	716	47.7%	50.5%
1.5 - 2.49	140	9.3%	10.6%
1.0 -1.49	8	0.5%	0.6%
Less than 1.0	0	0.0%	0.3%
Study Plans This Year			
Won't need to study as much as I did last year	52	3.5%	2.8%
Will need to study about the same amount as last year	364	24.4%	26.1%
Will need to study more than I did last year	1076	72.1%	71.1%

	N	Campus %	National %
Racial/Ethnic Origin			
American Indian or Alaskan Native	88	5.9%	2.5%
Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	68	4.6%	4.4%
Black/African-American	46	3.1%	16.1%
White/Caucasian (non-Hispanic)	502	33.6%	48.3%
Mexican or Mexican American	40	2.6%	5.3%
Puerto Rican	22	1.5%	2.1%
Other Hispanic or Latino	522	34.9%	12.8%
Multiethnic	128	8.6%	5.2%
Other	38	2.6%	2.0%
Prefer not to respond	40	2.7%	1.2%
Highest Degree or Program Sought			
One-year certificate	0	0.0%	0.2%
Two-year certificate or associate degree	4	0.3%	0.8%
Four-year college degree (bachelor's)	438	29.4%	33.4%
Master's degree	556	37.4%	36.4%
Professional degree (medicine, dentistry, law, Ph.D., or similar degrees)	478	32.1%	28.7%
Other	4	0.3%	0.2%

## Means for the seven SYSA motivation scales

Summary and Planning Report for Sample College Completion Date: MM/DD/YYYY to MM/DD/YYYY Section B

	Campi	us Results		Student Academics	Nat	ional Compari	son Group Re	sults
Scale score	Item means: 1-7 score range	Responses: 1-4 score range	Responses: 5-7 score range	Academic Motivation Students' level of agreement with each of the scales and items below: (Scale score of 100% = complete agreement; for items, 1=low, 7=high)	Scale score	Item means: 1-7 score range	Responses: 1-4 score range	Responses: 5-7 score range
76.1%				Academic Confidence	77.8%			
	5.3	20.7%	79.2%	I have a good memory of the information that my instructors present in class.		5.4	20.1%	79.9%
	5.2	24.8%	75.1%	I am good at figuring out what material is most important for an exam.		5.3	22.6%	77.4%
	5.6	13.7%	86.2%	I am able to grasp complicated ideas.		5.7	13.1%	86.8%
	5.2	27.3%	72.7%	During an exam, I'm able to concentrate and keep my thoughts well organized.		5.3	23.9%	76.1%
76.4%		22.0%	77.9%	Engaged Learning	77.5%		20.9%	79.1%
	5.2	28.7%	71.3%	I feel energized by the ideas I'm learning in most of my classes.		5.3	25.5%	74.5%
	5.5	16.7%	83.2%	I feel as though $\Gamma m$ learning things in $my$ classes that are worthwhile to me as a person.		5.6	16.0%	84.0%
	5.4	20.0%	79.9%	I find myself thinking about what $\Gamma$ m learning in class even when $\Gamma$ m not in class.		5.4	21.4%	78.6%
	5.3	22.80%	77.1%	I can usually find ways of applying what $\Gamma m$ learning in class to something else in my life.		5.4	20.7%	79.3%
	Received assistance	Want assistance	Increase/ Decrease in	Student Needs and Interests	Received assistance	Want assistance	Increase/ Decrease in	
	last year	this year	receptivity	Students' receptivity to assistance in each area below:	last year	this year	receptivity	
	✓	✓		Academic Assistance	✓	✓		
	29.7%	49.2%	19.5%	Get help with study skills (time management, exam skills, etc.)	31.2%	42.5%	11.3%	
	35.6%	56.4%	20.8%	Find tutors in one or more of my courses	32.5%	49.2%	16.7%	
	Item means: 1-7 score range	Responses: 1-4 score range	Responses: 5-7 score range	Institutional Impressions Students' level of satisfaction with each of the areas below: Each item is ranked by its satisfaction score (1 = low, 7 = high).	Item means: 1-7 score range	Responses: 1-4 score range	Responses: 5-7 score range	
	4.7	40.0%	60.0%	Frequency of interaction with my instructors	5.1	29.3%	70.7%	
	5.3	24.6%	75.4%	Variety of majors available here	5.4	23.4%	76.6%	
	5.2	28.6%	71.4%	Variety of courses available in my (desired) major	5.3	25.4%	74.6%	
	5.4	22.0%	78.0%	Degree of academic challenge in my classes here	5.6	18.4%	81.6%	
	4.4	49.6%	50.4%	Opportunities to get involved in activities and events associated with my desired major	4.9	38.8%	61.2%	

## **Students Needs and Interests**

An aggregate report of the needs and interests of all students who completed the SYSA is displayed. The report shows the number of students who received information or assistance in 15 specific areas during the first year, as well as the number of students who would like to receive assistance this year.

Summary and Planning Report for Sample College Completion Date: MM/DD/YYYY to MM/DD/YYYY

Section B

	Campi	us Results		Student Academics	National Comparison Group Results				
Scale score	Item means: 1-7 score range	Responses: 1-4 score range	Responses: 5-7 score range	Academic Motivation Students' level of agreement with each of the scales and items below: (Scale score of 100% = complete agreement; for items, 1=low, 7=high)	Scale score	Item means: 1-7 score range	Responses: 1-4 score range	Responses: 5-7 score range	
76.1%				Academic Confidence	77.8%				
	5.3	20.7%	79.2%	I have a good memory of the information that my instructors present in class.		5.4	20.1%	79.9%	
	5.2	24.8%	75.1%	I am good at figuring out what material is most important for an exam.		5.3	22.6%	77.4%	
	5.6	13.7%	86.2%	I am able to grasp complicated ideas.		5.7	13.1%	86.8%	
	5.2	27.3%	72.7%	During an exam, I'm able to concentrate and keep my thoughts well organized.		5.3	23.9%	76.1%	
76.4%		22.0%	77.9%	Engaged Learning	77.5%		20.9%	79.1%	
	5.2	28.7%	71.3%	I feel energized by the ideas I'm learning in most of my classes.		5.3	25.5%	74.5%	
	5.5	16.7%	83.2%	I feel as though $\Gamma m$ learning things in my classes that are worthwhile to me as a person.		5.6	16.0%	84.0%	
	5.4	20.0%	79.9%	I find myself thinking about what I'm learning in class even when I'm not in class.		5.4	21.4%	78.6%	
_	3.3	22.80%	77.1%	I can usually find ways of applying what I'm learning in class to something eise in my life.		5.4	20.7%	79.3%	
	Received assistance last year	Want assistance this year	Increase/ Decrease in receptivity	Student Needs and Interests Students' receptivity to assistance in each area below:	Received assistance last year	Want assistance this year	Increase/ Decrease in receptivity	75570	
	✓	✓		Academic Assistance	✓	✓			
	29.7%	49.2%	19.5%	Get help with study skills (time management, exam skills, etc.)	31.2%	42.5%	11.3%		
	35.6%	56.4%	20.8%	Find tutors in one or more of my courses	32.5%	49.2%	16.7%		
	Item means: 1-7 score range	Responses: 1-4 score range	Responses: 5-7 score range	INSTITUTIONAL IMPRESSIONS  Students' level of satisfaction with each of the areas below: Each item is ranked by its satisfaction score (1 = low, 7 = high).	Item means: 1-7 score range	Responses: 1-4 score range	Responses: 5-7 score range		
	4.7	40.0%	60.0%	Frequency of interaction with my instructors	5.1	29.3%	70.7%		
	5.3	24.6%	75.4%	Variety of majors available here	5.4	23.4%	76.6%		
	5.2	28.6%	71.4%	Variety of courses available in my (desired) major	5.3	25.4%	74.6%		
	5.4	22.0%	78.0%	Degree of academic challenge in my classes here  Opportunities to get involved in activities and events associated with my	5.6	18.4%	81.6%		
	4.4	49.6%	50.4%	desired major	4.9	38.8%	61.2%		

## **Institutional Impressions**

An aggregate report of the satisfaction ratings by all students completing the SYSA is displayed. The number and percent of students are reported by level of satisfaction (low =1 and high=7), as well as the overall campus mean for each satisfaction item.

Summary and Planning Report for Sample College Completion Date: MM/DD/YYYY to MM/DD/YYYY

Section B

	Campi	us Results		Student Academics	National Comparison Group Results				
Scale score	Item means: 1-7 score range	Responses: 1-4 score range	Responses: 5-7 score range	Academic Motivation Students' level of agreement with each of the scales and items below: (Scale score of 100% = complete agreement; for items, 1=low, 7=high)	Scale score	Item means: 1-7 score range	Responses: 1-4 score range	Responses: 5-7 score range	
76.1%				Academic Confidence	77.8%				
	5.3	20.7%	79.2%	I have a good memory of the information that my instructors present in class.		5.4	20.1%	79.9%	
	5.2	24.8%	75.1%	I am good at figuring out what material is most important for an exam.		5.3	22.6%	77.4%	
	5.6	13.7%	86.2%	I am able to grasp complicated ideas.		5.7	13.1%	86.8%	
	5.2	27.3%	72.7%	During an exam, I'm able to concentrate and keep my thoughts well organized.		5.3	23.9%	76.1%	
76.4%		22.0%	77.9%	Engaged Learning	77.5%		20.9%	79.1%	
	5.2	28.7%	71.3%	I feel energized by the ideas I'm learning in most of my classes.		5.3	25.5%	74.5%	
	5.5	16.7%	83.2%	I feel as though I'm learning things in my classes that are worthwhile to me as a person.		5.6	16.0%	84.0%	
	5.4	20.0%	79.9%	I find myself thinking about what $\Gamma m$ learning in class even when $\Gamma m$ not in class.		5.4	21.4%	78.6%	
	5.3	22.80%	77.1%	I can usually find ways of applying what $\Gamma$ m learning in class to something else in my life.		5.4	20.7%	79.3%	
	Received assistance last year	Want assistance this year	Increase/ Decrease in receptivity	Student Needs and Interests Students' receptivity to assistance in each area below:	Received assistance last year	Want assistance this year	Increase/ Decrease in receptivity		
	✓	✓	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	Academic Assistance	✓	✓	,		
	29.7%	49.2%	19.5%	Get help with study skills (time management, exam skills, etc.)	31.2%	42.5%	11.3%		
	35.6%	56.4%	20.8%	Find tutors in one or more of my courses	32.5%	49.2%	16.7%		
	Item means: 1-7 score range	Responses: 1-4 score range	Responses: 5-7 score range	Institutional Impressions Students' level of satisfaction with each of the areas below: Each item is ranked by its satisfaction score (1 = low, 7 = high).	Item means: 1-7 score range	Responses: 1-4 score range	Responses: 5-7 score range		
	4.7	40.0%	60.0%	Frequency of interaction with my instructors	5.1	29.3%	70.7%		
	5.3	24.6%	75.4%	Variety of majors available here	5.4	23.4%	76.6%		
	5.2	28.6%	71.4%	Variety of courses available in my (desired) major	5.3	25.4%	74.6%		
	5.4	22.0%	78.0%	Degree of academic challenge in my classes here  Opportunities to get involved in activities and events associated with my	5.6	18.4%	81.6%	.	
	4.4	49.6%	50.4%	desired major	4.9	38.8%	61.2%		

#### **Student List**

Lists are provided for students who responded to each of the four options for the item, "My current college or program completion plan is:..." The four options include:

- 1. I plan to complete my degree or program at this college or university.
- 2. I plan to transfer to another college or university to complete my degree or program.
- 3. College is not right for me at this time, and I do not plan to continue.
- 4. I am undecided about my plans at this time.

Second-Year Student Assessment™
Summary and Planning Report for Sample College
Completion Date: MM/DD/YYYY to MM/DD/YYYYY

Section G

#### College Plans

#### Explanation:

The student lists below represent the four response options for the demographic item relating to enrollment plans. Students are asked to indicate the "statement that most accurately describes my current college or program completion plans."

I plan to complete my degree/program at this college or university.

- 1. Studen
- 2. Student
- 3. Student
- 4. Student

I plan to transfer to another college or university to complete my degree.

- 1. Student
- 2. Student
- 3. Student
- 4. Student

College is not right for me at this time, and I do not plan to continue.

- 1. Student
- 2. Student
- 3. Student
- 4. Student

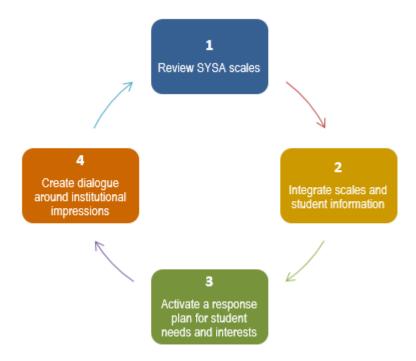
I am undecided about my plans at this time.

- 1. Student
- 2. Student
- Student
   Student

## How do we get started with the interpretation of the SYSA?

There is a wealth of valuable information included in the SYSA reports. One of the strategies we recommend for getting started is to examine individual or group reports systematically. The key to a deeper understanding of this assessment tool is integration of information across sections of the report, whether individual or group.

Here's a process that can guide you through four basic steps to understanding the value of the SYSA:



## Sample Interpretation of a SYSA Student Report

For an interpretation of a SYSA Student Report, use the following link: Interpretation of a SYSA Report

## What is your role in advancing the SYSA student success strategy?

We are looking forward to hearing about your strategies for maximizing the benefits of the Second-Year Student Assessment in your student success plan. It is only through your ongoing feedback that we can keep the dialogue moving forward on ways to better serve second-year students.

Thank you in advance for your commitment to second-year students and your willingness to share your successes.