

FIRST-YEAR TRANSITION

Though your freshman year holds excitement and promise, you might also encounter obstacles like the ones listed below. If any of these represent a concern for you, please feel free to speak with your academic advisor, your faculty advisor, or your First Year Fellow for support.

HOMESICKNESS AND FITTING IN

Most students leave home to attend Eugene Lang College. Although it is an exciting time, some students experience homesickness during the first semester in college, which might result in questions about whether it was the right decision to attend Lang (or sometimes, to attend college in general). Friends and families remain back home, and an important challenge for students is developing new friendships and support networks. Although this can be a natural process for some students, it represents more of a personal challenge for others. The groups formed through advising courses and peer advisor workshops often facilitate some of these connections. Involvement in the academic community and student organizational life of Lang College represents another critical dimension in the undergraduate experience through which students derive a sense of belonging.

THE TRANSITION FROM HIGH SCHOOL

An important lesson for first-year students during the first few weeks is the structural difference between high school and college, including classes meeting twice weekly, the seminar format, academic workload, work/life balance, dormitory life, registration procedures, and deadlines. The curriculum here also affords students more academic freedom than high school. For many students, the transition proves difficult, though it helps cultivate important decision-making skills. Likewise, some students are unaccustomed to speaking with teachers, counselors/advisors, and other figures of "authority" in the school. The seminar approach requires student to participate routinely in class, which is unfamiliar or uncomfortable to some freshmen. Each student must therefore assume some ownership for their education, and devise methods to communicate with faculty, administrators, and peers. In developing these communication skills, students learn more about themselves.

ACADEMIC PREPARATION AND MOTIVATION

Some students feel inadequately prepared for the reading- and writing-intensive seminars, in addition to the academic discussions of the seminar courses. We often hear students who report having perceptions of their classmates being more literate and "smarter" (although that's often nothing more than perception). In addition, a lack of motivation often surfaces sometime during the middle of the semester, especially if the student has struggled with other aspects of the college transition. These motivational problems could be manifested as absenteeism, fatigue, dissatisfaction with courses, and perhaps quick frustration with the situations all college students naturally confront.

TRIAL AND ERROR

Freshman year is also considered a "trial and error" period where students explore academic disciplines. Though some students arrive feeling convinced about a particular major, exposure

to other subject areas allows them to make more informed decisions (and refine those decisions) about their educational goals. Often students could "stumble" onto another academic passion. The faculty advisors encourage breadth among courses chosen, and recommend against too many courses in a single subject.

IDENTITY

As freshmen, students embark on an important time for personal development, exploring the limits of their personal identities and perspectives, and rendering critical decisions in response to the question, "Who should I be in life?" Often students endure anxieties about these fundamental issues of identity. The seminar approach to teaching, however, promotes the development of an individual "voice," which helps students organize their numerous identities.

THE FUTURE

Sometimes first-year students feel the expectation to have decided on an academic major, a professional career, and other life matters. Future planning leaves some freshmen feeling overwhelmed. Through faculty and peer advisement, we reinforce the concept of academic exploration, as well as the acquisition of the decision-making skills that can help comfortably provide for your future.

Because of these potential obstacles for all first-year students, we encourage you to meet with an advisor several times during the semester to ensure you have all the necessary support to resolve any problems you encounter.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL FIRST YEAR

As you navigate through the academic and extracurricular opportunities offered at Lang, we have some helpful suggestions for you:

- Meet with your faculty advisor at least twice a semester outside of the classroom; the faculty advisors are valuable resources for you!
- Familiarize yourself with the many services available to students at the New School, including libraries, computer labs, health and counseling services, and the Writing Center.
- Explore the student clubs and organizations available at the university. Involvement in student activities provides important opportunities to stay "in the know" about Lang College, The New School, and New York City, and you will meet many interesting people.