

Faculty Fellows Final Project Report

Supporting student success from start to finish....and beyond

Ruth Heisler
Dept of Integrative Physiology
heisler@colorado.edu

Across campus, incoming freshman face the challenges of adjusting to a new campus environment. Within a short time, they are expected to navigate a new campus, find new friends and peer groups, become proficient with a new Learning Management System, be independent in their learning, and figure out where to turn for help. At the same time, upperclassmen are completing their degrees and trying to figure out what they want to do post-graduation and how to make it happen. The goal of this project was to implement low stakes and course-based support that could be utilized across many departments to help our students transition onto campus, as well as transition to life post-graduation.

Describe the challenge you addressed in your department with this project.

Two of the biggest transitions students face while at CU Boulder is in their first semester freshman year adjusting to their new world as a college student, and in their last semester figuring out how they will launch into the world post-graduation. There are a variety of ways in which the campus tries to support students at the beginning and end of their CU journey, but we know from student feedback that many still struggle with these transitions. Furthermore, they don't always feel that their major department is assisting with or cares about their struggles. The challenge I have chosen is that of creating a low stakes course-based support for students within IPHY, with the intent to share the course concept and materials with as many departments as possible.

Describe desired result.

Desired results can be broken down into 3 categories:

- **Short-term:** See an increase in retention rates between first (fall) and second(spring) semester of incoming IPHY majors
- **Medium-term:** See an increase in graduation rates, a more positive pre-graduation outlook, and an increase in graduates finding a satisfying job within 6 months after graduation.
- **Long-term:** Here back from our graduates wanting to stay connected to the department. This increased connection could provide valuable mentoring experiences for our undergraduates, increasing the support we can provide to our majors.

Describe the project. What did you do?

1. ***Created a Canvas Community site with resources needed for a department or group to launch their own version of the IPHY 1020 course in their own department.*** IPHY 1020 Intro to IPHY is a course that was first offered Fall 2021 and will continue to be offered in the fall for all incoming freshmen and transfer students who have declared IPHY as their major. The overall course objective is to help students find

their footing in their first semester and make sure they have found the right academic home. Each weekly 50 minute class introduces a different topic, each of which has been carefully chosen to connect them to resources on campus, reinforce skills that will help them succeed, and introduce them to faculty and courses in the department. Resources available in the Canvas Community site include:

- a. Sample course proposal
 - b. Sample syllabus
 - c. Contacts to various groups on campus willing to come speak to the class and engage with the students
 - d. Sample assessments and grading ideas.
2. **Created a new course *IPHY 3020 Next Steps*.** This course will first be offered Fall 2023 to junior and senior IPHY majors. The course objectives are to help students identify their skillsets and skill gaps based on their career interests; explore career options; draft a resume; practice interview skills; and provide support as they approach stepping out into the post-graduation world.

Describe the outcome. What worked, what didn't work, lessons learned.

This is a work in progress. Data around retention rates, graduation rates, and employment success will take years to gather. But there are some early signs of success.

- **What worked:** There are only two years of freshman data available at this point, but both show an increase in the % of IPHY freshman who continued on into the spring semester. This increased retention rate was especially noticeable in the first-generation group of IPHY majors in 2021, where 100% returned for the spring 2022 semester. This was significantly higher than at the College or Campus level.
- **What didn't work:** The Canvas Community site is completed and ready to go. As of yet, it has been hard to spread the word. Some departments I have talked with are confused by the lack of curricular content and the focus on what they consider to be non-academic stuff. More focus will have to go into promoting or advertising the availability of this resource.
- **Lessons learned:** I think I am better at building and executing than I am at advertising. I still hope to be able to share the benefits of these courses, and as more data becomes available that may be a way to encourage other departments to implement similar courses.

Reflect on your experience in the Faculty Fellows program and working on your project.

Support and motivation. Sometimes that's all we need to keep moving forward. The Faculty Fellows provides both of these things. Support comes in the form of the individuals at ASSETT who continue to find creative ways to foster growth in our campus educational system. The community created by these workshops and programs extends across campus and creates connections between departments that would not naturally form on their own. So, as I reflect on my experience in this program, it is intertwined with other workshops I have been involved in. Faculty Fellows introduced new ways of approaching challenges in our classrooms and departments. Some of the topics were not ones I was over enthused about, but that is the point. Sometimes being pushed outside our comfort zone is important. Thanks for all you do!

Include other artifacts and visuals (data, weblinks, pictures, student work/examples, write-ups, sharable templates). Student artifacts are particularly impactful.

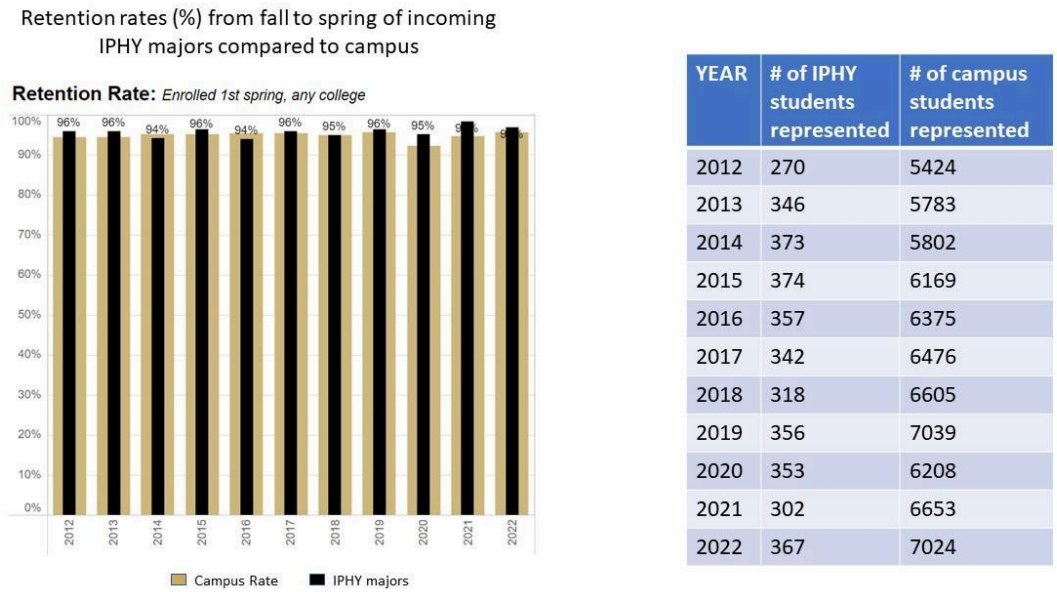
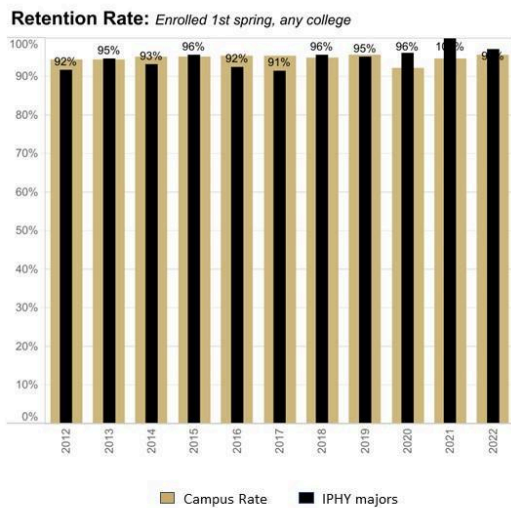


Figure 1. Comparison of retention rates between first (fall) and second (spring) semester of incoming IPHY majors compared to all incoming freshman on campus. (<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/university.of.colorado.boulder.ir>)

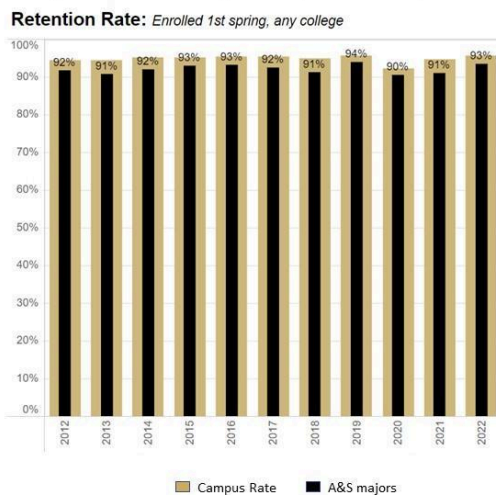
Retention rates (%) from fall to spring of incoming first-generation IPHY majors compared to campus



YEAR	# of first-gen IPHY students represented	# of campus students represented
2012	48	5424
2013	74	5783
2014	87	5802
2015	67	6169
2016	66	6375
2017	70	6476
2018	46	6605
2019	62	7039
2020	51	6208
2021	41	6653
2022	70	7024

Figure 2. Comparison of retention rates between first (fall) and second(spring) semester of first-generation IPHY majors compared to all incoming freshman on campus. (<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/university.of.colorado.boulder.ir>)

Retention rates (%) from fall to spring of incoming first-generation A&S majors compared to campus



YEAR	# of first-gen A&S students represented	# of campus students represented
2012	618	5424
2013	696	5783
2014	729	5802
2015	817	6169
2016	772	6375
2017	758	6476
2018	698	6605
2019	535	7039
2020	374	6208
2021	346	6653
2022	472	7024

Figure 3. Comparison of retention rates between first (fall) and second(spring) semester of first-generation Arts and Sciences majors compared to all incoming freshman on campus. (<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/university.of.colorado.boulder.ir>)

