

Messina

Sophomore Interview Findings

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Table of Contents

Summary of Sophomore Interview Discussions	2
Key Findings of Interviews	2
Changing Behaviors between First Year and Sophomore Year.....	2
Messina Fosters a Sense of Preparedness for the Sophomore Year	2
Sense of Belonging at Loyola in the First Year	3
Recommendations	3
Detailed Findings.....	4
Introduction	4
Methodology.....	4
Participants and Procedures	4
Data Analysis.....	4
Key Findings	5
Key Finding 1: Changing Behaviors between First Year and Sophomore Year	5
Key Finding 2: Messina Fosters a Sense of Preparedness for the Sophomore Year.....	5
Future Recommendations	10
Sense of Belonging at Loyola in the First Year	8
Interview Questions and Corresponding Collected Data.....	13
Question 1: Academic Differences in Sophomore Year	13
Question 2: Personal Differences in Sophomore Year.....	14
Question 3: Messina Marketing, Expectations vs. Reality	15
Question 4: Differences of Messina vs. Non-Messina Courses	16
Question 5: Messina and Preparedness for Sophomore Year	17
Question 6: Messina and Opportunities for Preparedness for Sophomore Year	19
Question 7: Messina Spring Enrichment Session Topic Recommendations.....	20
Other Comments.....	22
Appendix A: Interview Questions	24
Appendix B: Demographic Information Sheet	25
Appendix C: Breakdown of Information Sheet Individual Responses	26
Appendix D: Description of Terms	27

Summary of Sophomore Interview Discussions

This is an assessment of sophomores, students of the class of 2020. All participated in Messina in their first year at Loyola. The project described here is qualitative in nature and the purpose of this study was to do the following:

- Gain an understanding of how the sophomore year has been different both personally and academically in comparison to the first year at Loyola,
- What aspects of participating in Messina were helpful or would have been helpful to prepare students for sophomore year,
- Differences in how the Messina course was structured in comparison to non-Messina courses,
- How students learned about Messina and if the messaging reflected the reality of their experience, and
- Three topics students consider essential to cover in spring semester enrichment sessions.

These interviews were conducted over a number of days between April 9, 2018-April 11, 2018. In addition to the interviews, students also completed an anonymous demographic sheet that captured when students felt a sense of belonging in the first year. The complete assessment of data and final report was completed in August 2018.

Key Findings of Interviews¹

What follows is a brief summary of relevant findings from data collected through the interviews. Details about the methodology and an expanded explanation and discussion of the findings of this study can be found in the report, after this summary. Interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

Changing Behaviors between First Year and Sophomore Year

Students indicated coming in with a different mindset in the sophomore year. Part of this was learning from their first year experience- knowing the habits and behaviors they needed to practice in order to be successful. For some students, this was also due to having earned leadership positions and jobs that forced them to be more organized and prepared. There was a sense from sophomores that they know their way around Loyola and have established relationships with a core group of supportive individuals.

Messina Fosters a Sense of Preparedness for the Sophomore Year

Students indicated feeling a sense of preparedness for the sophomore year both academically and personally. The areas below represent three main aspects of Messina that contributed to this area.

Community Developed Through Participation

Students valued relationships developed with peers through Messina. The participatory nature of the Messina class and enrichment forced students to interact with others which students found helped them in forming relationships with other students beyond their Messina experience. These relationships have continued into the sophomore year- occasionally evolving into new roommate groups.

Supportive Faculty

On the whole, students felt that faculty working with Messina genuinely want students to succeed and devote more time to creating opportunities for students to be academically successful. The approachability of Messina faculty has empowered students to feel more confident in seeking out help

¹ Subsequent findings are listed alphabetically

and guidance from non-Messina faculty. Several students commented on how relationships established with their Messina faculty still exist beyond the first year. The only aspect that differed from these sentiments were mixed experiences students had with their faculty as their core advisor.

Unique Pedagogical Approach

Students described that while their Messina courses were similar in regard to academic demand compared to other courses, the act of learning through conversations versus lecture forced them to be more engaged in the course. This engagement helped students feel better prepared as they began to take major courses in the sophomore year. Along with this approach was also the topics covered in enrichment sessions that forced students to develop habits to support their academic and personal growth, introducing them to resources that support these areas during their time at Loyola.

Sense of Belonging at Loyola in the First Year

Students completed an information sheet prior to being interviewed that asked questions about their first year including where they lived, their Messina pairing experience, if they had thought about transferring out of Loyola in their first year (if yes, when), and the factors that led to them staying at Loyola.² 57 students completed these sheets. Of these, 23 thought about transferring during the first year with September/October and November/December being the months when students thought the most about transferring. The top three reasons for students remaining at Loyola were finding a group of friends or other peer supports (15), a conversation with a family member or someone outside of Loyola (11), and deciding what their major/minor would be (9).

Recommendations

The researcher proposes the following recommendations based off of information collected in this study. These recommendations are explained in greater detail on page 10 of the report.

Examination of Messina Section Offerings

The majority of Messina sections are courses that fulfill core or major requirements. However, there are a few sections that do not fulfill a core requirement. This is something students indicated preferring. Tied to this were sentiments of worry of falling behind their anticipated graduation date if they switched majors or were in majors with more restrictive requirements in regard to electives.

Marketing Messina to Prospective Students

Students indicated not always being fully aware of what Messina fully entails when they were considering Loyola and felt that this is an area at times that could be a missed opportunity. It is recommended this report be shared with Marcomm and Admission as an area to further explore.

Spring Enrichment Session Content and Frequency of Meetings

Topics suggested by students for the spring semester were consistent with existing data Messina has on popular sessions covered by working groups in the spring semester. However, two other areas to promote with groups are students desire to have more career exploration/preparation opportunities and sessions related to elements of the academic transition. There was a general sense that the amount of enrichment sessions in the spring could be reduced, but the majority of students did not feel that these should be entirely eliminated.

² A complete analysis of these results is on page 8

Detailed Findings

Introduction

This study focused on students in the class of 2020 that participated in Messina during their first year at Loyola University Maryland. The purpose of conducting these interviews was to gain an understanding of how the sophomore year has been different both personally and academically in comparison to the first year at Loyola, what aspects of participating in Messina were helpful or would have been helpful to prepare students for sophomore year, differences in how the Messina course was structured in comparison to non-Messina courses, how students learned about Messina and if the messaging reflected the reality of their experience, and three topics that students consider essential to cover in spring semester enrichment sessions.

Methodology

Participants and Procedures

Interviews were conducted between April 9-April 11, 2018 in Boulder 2.0, Champion Tower, and Newman Towers at Loyola. A total of three series of interviews were conducted with a total of 57 participants. Students represented in the interviews represented a variety of genders and participated in different Messina sections during their first year.

Using an open-ended interview format, one administrator facilitated these interviews. Interview questions (see Appendix A) were designed to cover topics that would provide insight about the influence of Messina beyond the first-year. Questions used for these interviews were reviewed by the Messina Advisory Board prior to this study. All interview discussions were audio recorded with permission of the participants. The anonymity of participants in the interviews is protected in this report, and in some instances the use of “they” or “their” as the first person singular pronoun has been chosen to further protect the identity of participants.

In addition to the interview questions, participants were asked to complete an anonymous information sheet³ collecting demographical information about their first year at Loyola. Before responding to interview questions, they were also asked to review a sheet⁴ that described areas that would be covered in the interview, specifically, “personal focus, academic focus, and Messina.” Students were then able to refer back to this as needed while responding to interview questions.

Data Analysis

Interview audio recordings went through several phases of analysis. First, all recordings were listened to so that the research coordinator could get a general sense of common themes mentioned by students. Next, a more detailed analysis took place in a second listen in which data was divided into a number of common topic areas. A third analysis took place to refine categories of responses. Occasionally a highlight from one student’s experience was an area another student thought was something could be improved. Efforts were made in the analysis to highlight these areas of overlap.

³ See Appendix B

⁴ See Appendix D

Key Findings

Below are key highlights pulled from all of the interviews and future recommendations. The section that immediately following the recommendations section beginning on page 13 provides specific responses to the seven questions that were asked to students and may give some more detailed insights including other aspects that make up these findings but are not specifically listed in detail in this section.

Key Finding 1: Changing Behaviors between First Year and Sophomore Year

Students indicated coming in with a different mindset in the sophomore year. Part of this was learning from their first year experience- knowing the habits and behaviors they needed to practice in order to be successful. This included practical behaviors such as when to wake up for class but has also been influenced by students beginning to take more courses toward their major. While students acknowledged feeling their major courses have been more difficult, there was a general sense of excitement and a feeling of investment by students in regard to taking the time to put in extra work toward these courses. In addition to putting in extra work, students indicated having confidence in actively participating in course discussions and approaching professors during the sophomore year for help or guidance. This was a practice attributed to ways Messina classes were structured.

For some students, this was also due to having earned leadership positions and jobs that forced them to be more organized and prepared. There was a sense from sophomores that they know their way around Loyola and have established relationships with a core group of supportive individuals. This core group has been important to students because it has meant one less area of uncertainty or stress compared to when they entered Loyola as a first year student.

Involvement in out of classroom activities has also been an area of change for students. As mentioned above, earning leadership positions was one part of this. Another aspect has been the change of trying to be involved in everything during the first year to narrowing down involvement to those things that are most personally meaningful for students. For some, this has also been spurred by opportunities to come in the form of internships and intended participation in study abroad during their junior year.

Key Finding 2: Messina Fosters a Sense of Preparedness for the Sophomore Year

Students indicated feeling a sense of preparedness for the sophomore year both academically and personally. The areas below represent three main aspects of their Messina experience that contributed to this area.

Community Developed Through Participation

Students placed a high value on the relationships they developed with peers through Messina. There was a sense of relief felt by students that while they may have struggled with different elements of their transition to college, knowing that you were going to spend time each week with the same group of students all year was comforting. Two students mentioned having to switch Messina sections in between fall and spring semesters. Despite this, both mentioned still maintaining friendships with those students in their fall semester that carried into the spring and in their sophomore year.

"I thought of it [Messina] as just another class but it ended up being your group that was always constant throughout the whole year. You knew that they were your friends."

Students indicated that these close relationships were shaped by the participatory nature of the Messina class and enrichment. The sometimes forced interaction fostered by working groups to get students to interact with others helped students in forming relationships with other students beyond their Messina experience. These relationships have continued into the sophomore year- occasionally evolving into new roommate groups.

In some instances, these relationships also led to students feeling comfortable with having deeper conversations and interactions in their Messina course and enrichment in the spring. For those Messina sections where the topic of social justice was discussed in the spring, students were more willing to be vulnerable and actively participate which they attributed to the work done in their fall semester Messina experience in fostering moments where students were expected to interact with each other and the course content. A few students mentioned that the spring semester of Messina provides an opportunity for deeper exploration of topics related to diversity and connecting content to Baltimore or current events due to the rapport developed in the fall semester.

Supportive Faculty

On the whole, students felt that faculty working with Messina genuinely want students to succeed and devote more time to creating opportunities for students to be academically successful. The approachability of Messina faculty has empowered students to feel more confident in seeking out help

"I still meet with my first professor from Messina...I will stop by her office if the door is open or if I need advice on something."

and guidance from non-Messina faculty, as early as their first year and have continued since then.

Several students commented on how relationships established with their Messina faculty still exist beyond the first year and have led to those faculty writing letters of recommendation, offering advice, and providing other guidance. There was an appreciation for the faculty chosen to teach in

Messina and a feeling that these faculty were selected for their intentionality in developing relationships and approach to their work.

Students did indicate that in some cases, advising information provided by their core advisors could be improved. This sentiment is similar to what has been expressed in past focus groups and other Messina assessments. However, beyond that area, the majority of students felt a strong positive difference in their interactions specifically with their Messina professors.

Unique Pedagogical Approach

Students described that while their Messina courses were similar in regard to academic demand compared to other courses, the act of learning through conversations versus lecture forced them to be more engaged in the course. While intimidating at first, this expectation became more natural to students over the course of the first year. This engagement helped students feel better prepared as they began to take major courses in the sophomore year. Tied with this practice was the way in which some faculty connected course content to current events or local issues. This occasionally overlapped with an excursion into Baltimore. These excursions,

"You felt more comfortable participating or asking questions because you knew the people you were with. It was a no judgement zone."

whether social in nature or tied to course content were strongly valued by students. These opportunities to explore the city fostered students feeling more confident in doing this on their own.

Along with this approach was also the topics covered in enrichment sessions that forced students to develop habits to support their academic and personal growth- introducing them to resources to support these areas during their time at Loyola. Examples of this included enrichment sessions where students were led in a writing workshop examining a previous written assignment, time management, and how to study. Part of this was due to the intentional timing of these sessions- for example, a how to prepare for finals session prior to finals. One student mentioned that while these resources could have been accomplished in a different setting such as a campus program or a residence hall event, covering this in an enrichment session forced you to be exposed to these topics as opposed to being able to opt out. This was valuable to that student who acknowledged they would be less likely to seek out that information on their own even if they thought it may be beneficial to them.

Sense of Belonging at Loyola in the First Year

Prior to being interviewed, students completed an information sheet⁵ that asked questions about their first year experience. 57 students completed these sheets, below is a breakdown of responses.

Sophomore Focus Group/Interview Demographic Information Sheets: Students Anonymously Completed These Papers Prior to Their Conversation (n=57)	Total Count	Thought About Transferring Total ⁶
Student Residence for Majority and/or all of the First Year		
Flannery	22	8
Campion	12	5
Hopkins	9	3
Butler	7	3
Hammerman	7	5
Off Campus	0	0
Messina Pairing Status		
Switched Messina section in the fall ⁷	1	1
Switched Messina section in the spring ⁸	6	2
Same Messina pairing all year	50	22
Messina Core Advisor		
Core Advisor was fall professor	47	18
Core Advisor was spring professor	10	6
Thoughts on Staying or Leaving Loyola During the First Year		
Never thought about transferring	33	0
Thought about transferring	23	23
When Student Had Thoughts About Transferring (select all that apply)		
September / October	13	
November / December	14	
January / February	9	
March / April	8	
Reasons for Not Transferring (select all that apply)		
Finding a group of friends or other peer supports	15	
Conversation with a family member or someone outside of Loyola	11	
Deciding what my major / minor would be	9	
Getting more involved at Loyola in a club, sport activity, student group, and/or job	8	
Conversation with my Evergreen and/or Resident Assistant	6	
Conversation with a peer	6	
Receiving an academic honor	6	
Applying for and getting a leadership position on campus	5	
Going on a retreat or service experience	5	
Conversation with my Messina mentor	3	
Conversation with a professor (non-Messina)	3	
Other (if you feel comfortable, please specify) ⁹	2	
Conversation with my Messina professor	2	
Conversation with an administrator (non-Messina)	2	
Change in roommate situation	1	

⁵ Appendix B includes a copy of this information sheet and Appendix C includes a breakdown of responses

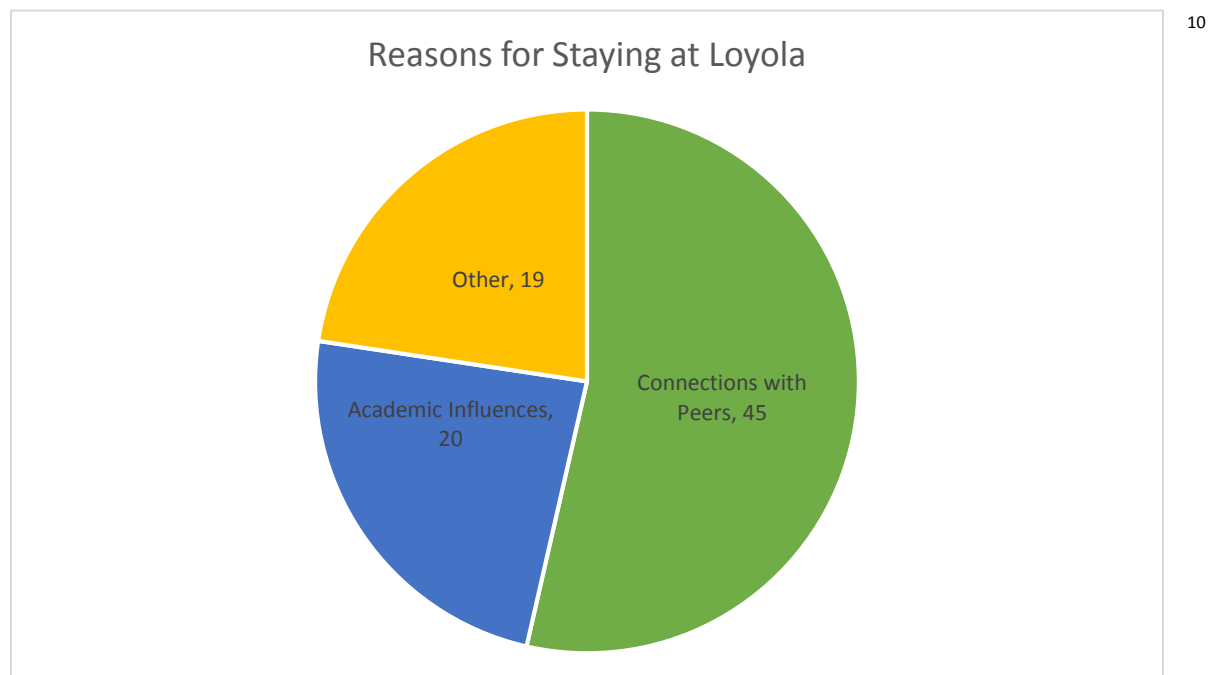
⁶ Items in pink indicate >50% thought about transferring

⁷ This applied to students who switched Messina sections after the academic year began

⁸ This applied to students who switched Messina sections either prior to or during the spring semester

⁹ Only one student gave an open-ended response. It was: "just changed my mind I guess"

Reviewing the previous chart, reasons for not transferring can be broken into three main areas: peers, academics, and other influences.



Connections with peers whether through conversations, campus involvement, or student leaders is integral to students feeling a sense of belonging at Loyola.¹¹ When indicating three topics to cover in the spring semester enrichment, some students indicated an interest of still covering the topic of getting involved on campus- noting feeling intimidated by the size of the fall Student Activities Fair. There is a smaller version of this fair in the spring semester but an area that could be beneficial to explore is working with the student leaders that work with Messina to see if there are ways they can help their first year students navigate this event or getting involved on campus earlier in the fall semester since it is a factor in students making friends and deciding to remain at Loyola.

Finally, more work would need to be done to see if there are any trends that would suggest living in a particular residence hall, if you switched Messina sections, or if the semester you had your core advisor as your faculty member make you more likely to think about transferring. While numbers were noted when they were higher than 50% it is not highlighted to imply that this was a causation.

¹⁰ Colors and segments of this chart correspond with the table directly above this element.

¹¹ This finding is similar to information collected in the Fall 2017 Messina Mid Year Student Survey of first years.

Future Recommendations

The researcher proposes the following recommendations based off of information collected in this study.

Examination of Messina Section Offerings

The majority of Messina sections have been courses that fulfill core or major requirements. However, there are a few sections that do not fulfill a core requirement. Students indicated that they prefer if every Messina fulfills a core or major requirement. Tied to this was sentiments of worry of falling behind their anticipated graduation date if they switched majors or were in majors with more restrictive requirements in regard to electives. This was a concern expressed by students who identified as being in science and business disciplines.

There is intentionality behind the way students are placed in Messina pairings- beginning with the Messina pairing preference survey they complete prior to summer orientation that does provide recommended pairings based off of a student's intended major and interests. Something to explore could be providing different messaging to students in a centralized area on understanding the broader picture of the Messina pairing in the context of intended major and Loyola's core and diversity requirements.

A broader theme mentioned in these interviews and in other Messina assessments has been the ways in which students describe the core- specifically the expression of getting the core "out of the way" and getting to take classes toward their major described by students as "classes that count." Conflicting with these sentiments was the way students described their Messina course- at times speaking highly of the content and that the topic was more interesting than what they had expected.

It is recommended that as conversations occur about core courses it may be worth doing more to examine student perspectives about the core by their intended disciplines to see if this perspective is isolated to particular disciplines or if this is something felt across all disciplines. If this is limited to particular areas, this could mean that messaging changes about the core in regard to how these courses foster learning and applying knowledge in different ways. In these Messina core courses, some students described realizing that they wanted to pursue a minor or change their intended major as a result in taking their Messina course. Providing more context from the onset of their experience may help foster students being more open to what the core has to offer.

Marketing Messina to Prospective Students

Students indicated not always being fully aware of what Messina fully entails when they were considering Loyola and felt that this is an area at times that could be a missed opportunity given the benefits they shared about their experience in the program. Part of this reason was feeling that there was a lack of marketing and the overwhelming feeling of trying to wrap up their senior year of high school while navigating their college decision process. For the most part, all students indicated having heard of the name Messina in passing either on the website, on a campus tour, or at an Open House but that it could be further emphasized or described in more depth to students.

In regard to expectations of what Messina was, students believed they would find a core group through participation and that it would help students with acclimating to college life. These are two areas in which students felt expectations met reality. More ambiguous to students was that Messina was an actual course and not just a group activity and the role of the Messina themes. In regard to the themes,

students mentioned hearing about these at events like an Open House, but that it was inconsistent as to whether or not you would experience the themes as described.

This report will be shared with Loyola's Marketing and Communications office and Admission as document to review if they have conversations about marketing Messina to prospective and newly admitted students. Some steps Messina has taken in conjunction with both of these offices in previous years have been meeting with all Admission ambassadors and professional staff, working with Marcomm as they developed an animated video for our website clarifying Messina and the first year at Loyola, and presenting at fall and spring Open Houses. It appears Messina can continue to explore other ideas of ways to help newly admitted students better understand the opportunities they will experience as first year students in this program.

Students did mention feeling that the time their Evergreens took during Fall Welcome Weekend to revisit what Messina is and what students could expect in regarding to Messina and their first year experience was really beneficial for students and helped set the tone for the semester. This is something that will be reiterated with student leaders working with Messina because the peer-to-peer explanation was helpful for students.

Spring Enrichment Session Content and Frequency of Meetings

In light of conversations occurring at Loyola in Fall 2017, a question was asked to students about the three topics they deemed essential to cover in spring semester enrichment sessions. Topics suggested by students for the spring semester were consistent with existing data Messina has on popular sessions covered by working groups in the spring semester—particularly sessions on housing selection and study abroad. However, two other areas to promote with groups are students desire to have more career exploration/preparation opportunities and sessions related to elements of the academic transition including selecting a major/minor.

I also liked the enrichment hour because it was an hour to exhale and that was one hour where you had no interruptions you had to be in that class...It taught me that you need an hour a day to do whatever I want no matter how busy I am whether it was go to the gym or go outside and then get back to your work."

In regard to academic transition, there was a feeling that spring semester could be a good time to revisit conversations around time management, study skills, or writing a paper in light of wrapping up their first semester of college when things may not have gone as well as they anticipated in regard to grades. There was a sense that not every student needed this so it may be beneficial for the working group to check in to see if this is something of need by their students in the beginning of the spring semester.

In regard to the career exploration/ preparation opportunities students were interested in topics such as resume writing, knowing more about Career Center resources that help students begin to explore internships and job opportunities, and possible opportunities for students to engage with peers or professionals on career possibilities related to specific majors. Messina has worked with the Career Center to offer modules to Messina sections on these topics and will continue to recommend these areas as topics to consider when planning out spring semester enrichment sessions.

In regard to the frequency of meetings in the spring semester, there was a general sense that the amount of enrichment sessions in the spring could be reduced, but the majority of students did not feel that spring enrichment sessions should be entirely eliminated. Students viewed the spring as a time to revisit topics now that the newness of the first semester was over, being an opportunity to challenge students to become more involved on campus, and an opportunity to connect the fall and spring Messina course experience including diving deeper into topics on current events, diversity, and Baltimore now that students had established a stronger rapport with their Messina peers.

Interview Questions and Corresponding Collected Data¹²

Question 1: Academic Differences in Sophomore Year

In what ways has your sophomore year been different for you academically in comparison to your first year at Loyola?

- Academic rigor (31)
 - Taking more major courses (18)
 - Finding major courses to be more enjoyable
 - At times these courses are more difficult but student is more invested in dedicating time to these courses
 - Appreciation of having courses that “count”
 - Feel these courses will help with life after Loyola
 - Declaring a major
 - Has been helpful both academically and personally
 - Determining what they wanted to do vs. following their parent’s professional path
 - Taking more courses per semester (4)
 - Has a better understanding of the expectations so this isn’t an issue
 - Honors courses and major courses are more of a challenge (4)
 - Working with a major advisor (3)
 - Has been better, more knowledgeable about their major
 - At times, first year courses seemed to include more “busy work,” this year has been more serious (3)
 - Student has needed to “buckle down”
 - More willingness to do this because other areas of life are good including friends and feeling more secure
 - Meeting more academically like-minded students (1)
 - During the first year, some students were okay with just coasting
- Change in personal behaviors (26)
 - Having a stronger concentration on what needs to get done for a course in order to succeed (12)
 - Has been important to be proactive in finding out what you need to do in order to be successful
 - Less procrastination- developing a routine has aided in time management
 - More prepared for courses
 - Includes when to wake up for a course
 - Have a different mentality toward work and college
 - Confidence in talking with professors (3)
- Has not been different (10)

¹² The numbers in parentheses in this section represent how many students specifically spoke to this area during the interviews conversations. In some cases, students verbally agreed with an idea being shared which is why there may be instances where there are more numbers than comments.

- Messina and other courses in the first year prepared student for future courses to feel less challenging (4)
- Solid preparation in high school (1)
- Similar GPA from year one to year two (1)
- Current honors program courses have a similar feel to first year Messina honors courses (1)
- Participation in MAP and ISP pre-fall programs helped to prepare for future work ahead (1)
- Other differences (4)
 - Planning for other academic opportunities (study abroad, graduate school) (2)
 - Considering what core courses need to be saved for abroad experience or will help with grad school application process
 - Messina didn't prepare student as well as it could have (1)
 - Enrichment sessions cut into time student had to do work
 - Courses weren't of interest- counted for core but weren't personally important to student
 - Supportive Messina professors (1)
 - Still provide advice and guidance when needed in sophomore year

Question 2: Personal Differences in Sophomore Year

In what ways has your sophomore year been different for you personally in comparison to your first year at Loyola?

- Change in personal behaviors (17)
 - Involvement at Loyola (5)
 - Applied for and earned a leadership role
 - Change of focus from doing everything in the first year to getting involved in things that are personally meaningful
 - More involvement on campus forces you to stay on top of everything
 - Having established peer and professional supports (5)
 - Knowing their way around Loyola
 - Knowing of and being able to utilize supports here, both people and resources
 - Came in with a new mindset for the school year (2)
 - Trying new things and opportunities at Loyola
 - Preparing for study abroad while managing job responsibilities (1)
 - Practicing self-care (1)
 - More boring socially because the freedom of being away from home is no longer a new thing (1)
- Changing friendships (14)
 - Broadening friend/ peer group (10)
 - Solidifying a friend group (3)
 - Forming more meaningful relationships
 - Managing friends that transferred out of Loyola (1)
- Housing situation has been different (9)
 - Living with friends as opposed to a random roommate (6)
 - Having a stronger support and encouragement system with this change
 - Has been helpful in that this has caused less stress for student

- During first year, student's friends all lived in the same building, now they live in different areas (1)
- Had roommate issues but friends beyond this have helped (1)
- Living with more people- i.e. going from a double to a six person apartment (1)
- Has not been different (2)
 - Same group of friends from the first year (1)
 - Student athlete- used to the routine now (1)

Question 3: Messina Marketing, Expectations vs. Reality

Think back to how you learned about Messina prior to arriving at Loyola. What type of experience did you expect from taking part in Messina? (Optional follow up) Given what you described, was your experience in Messina what you thought it was going to be? How so?

Learning About Messina

- Open Houses/ Summer Orientation (11)
 - Saw a presentation but still didn't connect that this was something all first years did (3)
 - Registering for courses at summer orientation made it more understandable (2)
 - Could better explain what this is on tours of campus (1)
 - Learned about Messina and the core during summer orientation (1)
- Prior to coming to Loyola, didn't know what Messina was (10)
 - Lack of advertisement about the program (4)
 - Could be a better selling point for the university with more advertising
 - Knew about the course pairings but had to sit down and read more after summer orientation (1)
 - Parents probably were aware of what Messina was (1)
 - Senior year of high school was overwhelming and was main focus for them (1)
- Fall Welcome Weekend (4)
 - Better timing for student (2)
 - Evergreen was integral to understanding what Messina entails (1)
- Other ways students found out about Messina (3)
 - First week of school was when Messina began to make sense (1)
 - Read about it online after getting accepted to Loyola (1)
 - Saw YouTube video (1)
 - Sister who also went to Loyola helped student select pairings that would connect to their major (1)

Experience You Expected Versus What It Actually Was

- Finding a core group through Messina participation (17)
 - Expected a course with some bonding between students (8)
 - This expectation was the reality (6)
 - Messina was the one a course you could count on where you knew everyone and it was helpful
 - For courses where students connected it was beneficial, for less social groups it was tough (1)
- Acclimating to college life (7)

- Knew it was a first year program that connected everything about your experience- living together, classes, friends, etc. (2)
- The exposure to different resources helped (2)
- Trips into Baltimore (1)
- Messina themes (4)
 - Emphasis on this in the marketing as something you would experience in the coursework but didn't actually experience this across the Messina courses and with professors despite them trying to do so (2)
 - Confusing- didn't really know what these were (2)
 - Difficult to make the connections to the theme on your own
- Thought it was going to be a group activity, not a course (4)
 - Felt that it could have been less frequent (enrichment sessions) over the course of the year
- Messina course offerings (5)
 - Never took the Messina pairing preference survey (2)
 - Opportunity to take a course more difficult/no prior experience with and get additional support (2)
 - Thought it would be more interdisciplinary and crossing course connections but it wasn't (1)
- Lack of expectations about Messina (2)
 - Student wasn't interested in the course pairings- may have gotten more out of it if these were courses they were interested in (1)
- Lack of consistency between fall and spring Messina experience (2)
 - Working group was not always unified- this was apparent to students (1)
 - Had a professor that expressed feeling strained from Messina
 - Expected to do more excursions and engagement in Baltimore (1)
 - Happened in one semester, not both
- Feeling a drop off from first year to sophomore year- student is missing the connections formed in Messina (1)
- Program seemed similar to first year transition programs at other schools (1)

Question 4: Differences of Messina vs. Non-Messina Courses

Messina is structured to have an academic course paired with a weekly enrichment session in both the fall and spring semesters. While a Messina student, did you notice any differences in the way that your Messina a course was taught compared to other courses you were taking during your first year? If yes, what was that difference?

- Difference to the academic approach in Messina (32)
 - Learning through conversation/engagement of students vs. paper, lecture, and/or test intensive (13)
 - Same demand academically but you needed to be more engaged than in other courses
 - Enrichment sessions (5)
 - Content: meaningful topics for students connected to their transition (ex. stress management, paper writing workshop, etc.)
 - Discussion based content was beneficial
 - Student appreciated this being immediately after the Messina course

- Feeling that there was extra help in these courses (10)
 - At times felt less strenuous than other courses because of the different approach
 - Seemed that there was an understanding that these courses may not be topics you would opt in on your own so professors worked with you more so you weren't struggling
 - Had a slower pace than the non-Messina version of the course which was helpful
- Excursions into Baltimore/surrounding area (4)
 - Sometimes these were connected to the Messina course (1)
- Smaller class size helped with transition (3)
- Discussing current events in the context of the course topic (2)
- Spring course connected content learned in the fall course (2)
- More challenging than other courses but this was appreciated (2)
- Messina professors had a stronger personal connection with students (25)
 - Cared about students (12)
 - Professors genuinely want you to succeed
 - Seemed that professors were intentionally chosen to be a part of this program
 - Students still meet with their Messina professor(s) for help/guidance/advice
 - This also helped because the professor was also the student's advisor
 - When the other Messina professor didn't have this type of relationship, it was noticeable
 - Friendly and approachable (8)
 - Student felt more comfortable asking questions (3)
 - Led to student feeling better in doing this with other professors
 - Professors would weave their outside passions into the course (2)
- Closer relationship with students in their Messina course vs. other courses (12)
 - Group work was easier because of these relationships (2)
 - Student was in a Spanish course composed of a more diverse a course- in other courses that student may be one of two non-white students but their Messina course was more diverse which led to more open discussions and connection with peers (1)
- No difference between Messina and other courses (5)
 - Academically similar to other courses in regard to expectations/ work
- Living in proximity to other students in your Messina course (2)
 - Beneficial to be in the same building (1)
 - Appreciated that course was held in their residence hall (1)
- Course topic was not something student would have signed up for on their own (1)
 - Student enjoyed the course (1)
- Opportunity for student to explore a course in their anticipated major (1)
 - Helped student discern that it wasn't the right fit early on (1)

Question 5: Messina and Preparedness for Sophomore Year

In what ways did your Messina courses and/or your Messina enrichment sessions prepared you for your sophomore year? When you are thinking about preparedness, consider both the personal and academic aspects of your experience.

- Specific enrichment sessions, pedagogy (35)

- Housing selection/ what you value (11)
- Study abroad (9)
- Course registration (7)
- Developing life skills/ how to be a better student, i.e. time management, studying, etc. (3)
- Being forced to talk in class and enrichment helped student to participate more in other courses (2)
- Attending enrichment fostered the personal practice of taking one hour a day to do what you want and get back to your work- this was helpful in the spring semester (1)
- Covering topics in enrichment session forced you to learn about processes/habits- student appreciated this structure vs. if they had to opt to go to a program on campus about a topic (1)
- Diversity wall activity- fosters students to have deeper conversations about topics of interest to them (1)
- Excursions into Baltimore/surrounding area: going out on your own can be intimidating, these trips help you integrate into the community (1)
- Time management (1)
- Topics covered helped you understand the culture of Loyola (1)
- Transition wasn't as difficult because student was aware of and utilized supports (28)
 - Examples include participating in a pre-fall program, having strong Messina mentors, faculty, Evergreens and Resident Assistants (15)
 - Advising from faculty- both on academic and personal topics
 - Recommended slowing down in taking major courses because the student was struggling academically- this turned out to be helpful advice
 - Conversations to talk through major and minor
 - This has continued beyond the first year into sophomore year
 - Evergreens were helpful both during enrichment and outside of that time
 - Feeling that you have a niche of people that were champions and cheerleaders
 - Fostered encouragement to apply for leadership positions
 - This support led to student deciding to stay at Loyola
 - Helped you figure out a routine to help you in sophomore year (3)
 - Confidence in communication- Messina forced you to participate more and develop curiosity (1)
- Developed friendships through participation in Messina (15)
 - Was good to understand what it is like to be with a different group of people (5)
 - You don't get along with everyone but this helped with relationships in the sophomore year
 - You may not be best friends but you had a familiar face which helped
 - You have a connectedness with these peers unlike any other experience (3)
 - It is nice to know when you are struggling people are going through the same thing
 - Students would get dinner together after enrichment
 - Student switched Messina courses between fall and spring but felt they could still rely on the relationships developed in the fall semester with original Messina group (2)
- Specific Messina courses, pedagogy (6)
 - Acclimating to college level work with support/ guidance (3)

- Course pairing forced you to be more prepared for other courses
 - Helpful having a session on how to use the library integrated into the course
 - The essay assignments helped student to be a better writer (2)
 - Helpful having Messina courses that met major requirements (1)
- Student could not recall what they did in enrichment (1)

Question 6: Messina and Opportunities for Preparedness for Sophomore Year

In what ways could your Messina courses and/or your Messina enrichment sessions have better prepared you for your sophomore year? Once again, when you are thinking about preparedness, consider both the personal and academic aspects of your experience.

- Change enrichment sessions (7)
 - Student did not find these to be valuable (2)
 - Not all sessions were as beneficial and could be structured differently (2)
 - Helpful sessions included study abroad and rooming/roommates for sophomore year
 - Reduction in amount of sessions during the spring (2)
 - Still beneficial, but could meet less frequently
 - Engaging students and encouraging them to be less passive during these sessions (1)
- Possible enrichment session topics (5)
 - Doing more major exploration (2)
 - Helpful to cover this in the spring semester
 - Info sessions about processes (ex. study abroad), provided the working group is able to answer questions or be able to better direct students to the resources with answers (2)
 - Begin to lay career foundation work through resume writing (1)
- Ensuring all Messina courses fulfill core or major requirements (4)
 - Wanted to take more business courses in the context of Messina to determine specific specialization area for major (2)
 - Student was in a communications course that counted toward an elective, would have preferred being in a course connected to a major or interest (1)
 - Felt that this wasn't beneficial because their Messina course was not related to the major (1)
- Advising (4)
 - Having a different support in the context of advising (2)
 - Core advising wasn't great (1)
 - Recommend that professors print out or direct students to the academic worksheets- student just learned about this in the fall semester of sophomore year (1)
- Messina provides opportunities (3)
 - Nature of it being both an academic and community-based program- presents opportunities for engagement in different ways (2)
 - Messina is a foundation for students to figure out their interests/major. This could be fostered by placing students in course pairings connecting with personal interests.
 - Messina could not have prepared student differently (1)
- Evergreens (3)

- Being able to have their own session without the professor- having conversations without that person present (2)
 - Recommended to do this in both fall and spring semesters- because students can sometimes have a difficult time expressing that a course/teaching style is difficult and an Evergreen can share tips/ideas on how to do this
- Having someone more social that wants to get to know students beyond giving advice (1)
- Exposure to and navigating Baltimore and the surrounding area (1)
 - Learning more about the city, its history, and neighborhoods (1)
 - Excursions are valuable experiences to those students who attend (1)
 - Helps to see possibilities beyond other students who just want to socialize through drinking alcohol (1)
 - Learning about the MARC train that provides an affordable DC trip option (1)
- Having Messina professors stay in touch with students beyond Messina (1)

Question 7: Messina Spring Enrichment Session Topic Recommendations

When you think about the spring semester Messina a course and enrichment session experience, what are three topics that you think would be essential to cover?

- Housing selection value activity (24)
 - Clarifying the nuances between styles of housing, number of roommates, etc. (1)
 - Managing relationships with roommates/living with others (1)
- Study abroad (20)
 - Emphasize to students importance of thinking about this during the summer (2)
 - What you should think about over the summer before sophomore year to do some pre-planning
 - Looking for more details on the application process (1)
 - Helpful session but it was also information you could find on your own (1)
 - Using your Evergreen to talk about this, particularly if they went abroad (1)
- Registering for courses (17)
 - Saving courses for other opportunities (ex. study abroad) (1)
 - Reasons for getting the core out of the way (1)
 - Conversations about choosing courses based off of interests (1)
 - Evergreen is helpful in showing the process (1)
- Academic transition topics (14)
 - How to properly study (4)
 - Occurred when an alum of Loyola came in to lead a personality test connected to studying
 - Preparing for finals week
 - How to write a paper and reminding students of the Writing Center (3)
 - Campus resources to help you be academically successful (2)
 - Time management (3)
- Choosing a major/minor (10)
 - Reassuring students to explore other majors, consider options (2)
 - Understanding deadlines/ requirements (2)
 - Information on the process of switching a major if you decide to do so

- How to reach out to a major advisor or someone who can advise better in regard to a particular major in the first year (1)
 - Student almost had to take courses beyond the standard four years because they were almost behind on what needed to get done because of inaccurate advising
- Career exploration and preparation (9)
 - Resume writing (2)
 - Internships/ job opportunities (3)
 - Career Center resources (ex. Handshake) (1)
 - Having outside speakers talk about their careers (1)
- Navigating/ exploring Baltimore (7)
 - How to get around the city (1)
 - More info about festivals, events, things happening in the city (1)
- Preparing for next year and presenting sophomore-specific opportunities, i.e. retreats, Road Trip (5)
- Promoting student leadership positions and getting involved on campus (4)
 - Conversation looks different in the spring, could be a follow up on any fall conversations (1)
 - Promoting the spring activities fair (1)
 - Fall fair is intimidating to first year students
 - Having a campus job helps you manage your time but activities can also support this (1)
- Sessions connected to course topics (4)
 - Tying course topics to Baltimore (1)
 - In one course they explored food deserts in Baltimore and had a service experience tied to this topic. There was prep work done in the fall to help students experience this in the spring.
 - Environmental justice (1)
 - Tying course topics to Loyola (1)
 - The head of Loyola's dining services came to a course- students then saw their recommendations being implemented in campus dining
- Personal wellness, specifically healthy behaviors/practices around drinking alcohol (3)
- Diversity (2)
 - Isn't covered enough at Loyola- students and staff need to lean into discomfort more. Recommendation to introduce conversations about identity in the fall and dive deeper in the spring semester. (1)
 - Some type of social justice session/activity (1)
 - Student acknowledged that some Messina courses do this in partnership with the York Road Initiative but on the whole, every course should be doing something
- Reflection activities (1)
 - Letter to self that was completed in the fall and revisited at the end of the spring semester showed growth throughout year (1)
- Current events (1)
 - Getting people in the habit of keeping up what is in the news on their own (1)
 - In election years it is important to emphasize this (1)

Other Comments¹³

- Enrichment sessions (7)
 - Changing spring semester enrichment (4)
 - Reducing amount of spring semester enrichment
 - Make this every other week
 - Use alternate weeks to have more meetings with your advisor
 - Eliminating all of spring semester enrichment
 - Having more discussions around communication with others, navigating/ managing difficult roommate situations
 - Some conversations felt forced at times (1)
 - Field day at Sherwood Gardens helped foster community (1)
- Relationships formed through Messina (6)
 - Helpful faculty, mentors, and Evergreens (2)
 - Students in the Messina course are still taking courses together (1)
 - Formed close relationships (1)
 - Even if you struggled with the course, the relationships with peers helped you have a good experience (1)
 - Helped with transition to sophomore year (1)
- Messina courses (4)
 - Perspective changed over time- in first year this felt like another course but in time saw the benefit of the fall and spring semester experience (2)
 - If you choose your pairings based off of your major interests it may be more beneficial (1)
 - All students need to take it more seriously so it can be as beneficial as possible (1)
- Core advising could be improved (3)
 - Frustration over being given inaccurate advice/ guidance- student was recommended to take upper level core courses early vs. saving them for study abroad (1)
 - Too inconsistent among students/ groups (1)
 - Advisor was not approachable (1)
- Baltimore excursions (3)
 - Not necessary for students (2)
 - Beneficial- student appreciated an excursion planned through the Evergreen reaching out to the group to see what they were interested in (1)
- Messina housing (1)
 - Student expected to be living in an area with other students in their Messina course- more could be done to ensure this occurs (1)
- Navigating a Messina course when you don't connect with your others in the course (1)
 - Advice for students and support from faculty and administrator (1)
- Acknowledgement of the newness of the program (1)
 - Hasn't been around long enough for issues to be worked through (1)
- Helpful faculty, mentors, and/or Evergreens (1)
 - Knowledgeable faculty member (1)

¹³ At the conclusion of the interview, students were offered a chance to make any final comments. These results are from those students who opted to provide additional information.

- Student experiences when you are not the majority on campus (1)
- Recognizing that there are other resources beyond ALANA to direct students to for support/ guidance- default recommendation is always ALANA (1)

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. In what ways has your sophomore year been different for you academically in comparison to your first year at Loyola?
2. In what ways has your sophomore year been different for you personally in comparison to your first year at Loyola?
3. Think back to how you learned about Messina prior to arriving at Loyola. What type of experience did you expect from taking part in Messina? (Optional follow up) Given what you described, was your experience in Messina what you thought it was going to be? How so?
4. Messina is structured to have an academic course paired with a weekly enrichment session in both the fall and spring semesters. While a Messina student, did you notice any differences in the way that your Messina a course was taught compared to other courses you were taking during your first year? If yes, what was that difference?
5. In what ways did your Messina courses and/or your Messina enrichment sessions prepared you for your sophomore year? When you are thinking about preparedness, consider both the personal and academic aspects of your experience.
6. In what ways could your Messina courses and/or your Messina enrichment sessions have better prepared you for your sophomore year? Once again, when you are thinking about preparedness, consider both the personal and academic aspects of your experience.
7. When you think about the spring semester Messina a course and enrichment session experience, what are three topics that you think would be essential to cover?

Appendix B: Demographic Information Sheet

Interview Information Sheet: Please respond to the following questions. Do not write your name on this sheet. These sheets will be collected at the conclusion of these interviews.

1. In my first year at Loyola, I lived here (*if you switched residence halls at any point during the first year, please check the box of the residence you lived in the longest*)

<input type="checkbox"/> Campion Tower	<input type="checkbox"/> Butler Hall
<input type="checkbox"/> Flannery O'Connor	<input type="checkbox"/> Hammerman Hall
<input type="checkbox"/> Hopkins Hall	<input type="checkbox"/> I commuted to Loyola
2. Please select the box that best describes your participation in Messina

<input type="checkbox"/> I stayed with the Messina pairing I was originally placed in throughout my entire first year
<input type="checkbox"/> During the fall semester I switched into a different Messina section after the academic year started
<input type="checkbox"/> Prior to or during the spring semester I switched into a different Messina section
3. My core advisor was... (*please check one*)

<input type="checkbox"/> My fall Messina professor	<input type="checkbox"/> My spring Messina professor
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4. I thought about transferring out of Loyola in my first year

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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5. If you checked "Yes" to question 4, please select the box(es) that best describe when you had this thought.

<input type="checkbox"/> Beginning of fall semester (September and/or October)
<input type="checkbox"/> End of fall semester (November and/or December)
<input type="checkbox"/> Beginning of spring semester (January and/or February)
<input type="checkbox"/> End of spring semester (March, April and/or May)
6. If you checked "Yes" to question 4, please select the box(es) that best describe what led you to decide to stay at Loyola. (*please check all that apply*)

<input type="checkbox"/> A conversation with a peer
<input type="checkbox"/> A conversation with my Evergreen and/or Resident Assistant
<input type="checkbox"/> A conversation with an administrator (non-Messina)
<input type="checkbox"/> A conversation with a professor (non-Messina)
<input type="checkbox"/> A conversation with my Messina Mentor (the administrator)
<input type="checkbox"/> A conversation with my Messina Professor
<input type="checkbox"/> A conversation with a family member or someone outside of Loyola
<input type="checkbox"/> Getting more involved at Loyola in a club, sport, activity, student group, and/or job
<input type="checkbox"/> Finding a group of friends or other peer support
<input type="checkbox"/> Going on a retreat or service experience
<input type="checkbox"/> Deciding what my major/minor would be
<input type="checkbox"/> Applying for and getting a leadership position on campus
<input type="checkbox"/> Receiving an academic honor (possible examples could include receiving a scholarship, publishing a work in a student magazine, being recognized by a professor, making Dean's List, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> A change in my roommate situation
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (if you feel comfortable, please specify)

Appendix D: Description of Terms

The following is a guide to the areas we will be covering at today's interviews:

Academic Focus

Questions in this area are designed to gain a better understanding of your academic experience at Loyola. As you respond to these questions, please take into consideration different aspects of your academic experience- including:

- Courses you have taken
- Projects or assignments you have worked on
- Lectures or events you have needed to attend for a class
- Your relationship with your core advisor from your first year

Personal Focus

Questions in this area are designed to gain a better understanding of your personal experience at Loyola. As you respond to these questions, please take into consideration different aspects of your personal experience- including:

- How you have formed relationships with peers
- Your involvement in campus clubs and activities
- Participation in service
- Living on campus/navigating roommate situations
- Events you have attended

Messina Focus

Questions in this area are designed to gain a better understanding of your time participating in Messina during your first year at Loyola. As you respond to these questions, please take into consideration different aspects of the Messina experience- including:

- The specific fall and spring Messina classes that you were enrolled in
- The weekly enrichment sessions during the fall and spring semesters
- The relationship you had with your Messina faculty, administrator, and Evergreen
- The different on campus and off campus events you attended with your Messina class