

Foreword

Introducing T-FYE: A First in the World for Taiwan!

Dear Reader and Colleague:

I will start out by saying with my characteristic honesty, that the most important thing you should conclude about who is providing this foreword, is where he is/or is not from. Specifically, I am an American higher educator which I wish to tell you immediately means that the interest in the subject of this volume, the role of Taiwan in introducing a global higher education concept to Taiwan, is of vital interest now to people in both Taiwan and outside Taiwan including the US. This means that American higher educators, yes, we know you are the # 1 designer and manufacturer in the world of our chips! We know you are a global model for integration of higher education, pioneering research, and design of technology advances which support the whole world. This means we are all dependent on you! And this means in terms of whom I am not, obviously, I am not a higher educator from Taiwan, but one who has had the experience of doing exactly what has just been done by a substantial group of Taiwanese higher educators and Taiwanese first-year university students in Taiwan. And just what is the “this?” It is the organization of the first-ever nation-wide meeting for Taiwanese educators on the topic of improving the success of your first-year university students. The future of higher education is so important to

your entire nation that a new approach to introducing your prized, new, university students to the demanding university experience, is now being undertaken. This will build further on the already established elements of success in Taiwanese higher education. And other educators around the globe, such as myself, are very interested in what you are doing! And will do.

To point this in a more historical context of innovation in global higher education, your effort developing “Taiwan FYE,” is the first such effort launched with the involvement and support of that nation’s government for a nationwide action and improvement effort ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD. You are not only then the first and only in your part of the world, but in comparison to the rest of the world. Yes, there has been a very substantial set of efforts in some other countries and regions, but not in your sphere– and instead, especially in:

- *The University States since 1972

- *Canada since 1978

- *South Africa since the early 1980’s

- *Australia since the late 1980’s

- *The UK since 1986 with the creation of the British-American International Conferences on The First-Year Experience.

- *Europe, since 2006, the Annual Conferences of the European First-Year Experience.

- *Denmark since the first conference on the FYE in 1990 at Aalborg University

- *Ireland since the first International FYE conference in 1994

*And now, Taiwan since 2026!

But none of these organized by one national government for its entire complement of nationally funded universities---EXCEPT Taiwan

This inaugural meeting was held on April 10-11, 2026; it was attended by approximately 180 people who engaged with eighteen presentations across six sessions. And a survey was presented of the national landscape for first-year student success drawn from 38 universities.

A second national conference-- which will be designated as "T-FYE" will be held at Shih Chien University in Taipei on April 16th-17th NEED TO VERIFY THESE DATES—I THOUGHT THE MEETING WAS THE 15-16TH OF APRIL 2027. Herein again, quite candidly, I hope your reading what has been done as the foundation will encourage you to join this next T-FYE Conference which will build on the successes of T-FYE 1!

What I have in common with the focus of this volume is that 44 years ago as an American university professor I did something that a large group of Taiwanese higher educators has just done because it was the right thing to do. That is I was the first convener anywhere on the globe of higher education faculty, administrators, student services professionals to discuss how we could pay more attention and support to beginning university students so as to increase their first to second year "retention" and thus to increase significantly their ultimate probability of completing a university degree and being more successful in adult life, and, as a result to support the further prosperity of our students after university all in our national interest. We termed this first

American conference and the resulting national movement it encouraged “the first-year experience.” And now “the first-year experience” has come to Taiwan as a unique Taiwan higher education concept and experience for students, faculty and staff.

In 1982 I was responsible for initiating the first in the US higher education conference to bring our higher educators together in one shared geographical location (the University of South Carolina in Columbia, South Carolina), to discuss what our country was doing well and not so well, in introducing new American higher education undergraduate students to the challenges that lay await for them in beginning a university education. And this is what has now just happened in Taiwan

Below you will find a sneak preview at least in the listing of the articles I am commending to your attention in this unique proceedings. These will inform you explicitly of some of the important academic content provided at this inaugural meeting:

1. T The First-Year Experience in Taiwan: From Fragmented Practices to an Institutionalized Field
2. First-Year Courses as Pathway Entry Points in Taiwan: Implementation Patterns, Design Approaches, and Institutional Conditions
3. From Exploration to University Transition: Practical Reflections and Innovative Practices in First-Year Introductory Courses under Taiwan’s Curriculum Reform
4. “Self-Growth” as an Experiential Focus in First-Year Experience Curriculum Design: The Course “Hero’s Journey” at Taipei

National University of the Arts

5. Bridging Taiwan's New Curriculum Reform and Higher Education: Effects of First-Year Seminars on College Adjustment and Academic Burnout

6. Developing First-Year University Students' Narrative Competence through Inquiry-Based Questioning

7. Research on Design Trends and Career Orientation in First-Year Departmental Exploration Courses

8. Peer Coaching and Expansive Learning: The Role Formation of Peer Coaches in Supporting First-Year Student Transition

9. Beyond High Engagement: Flow Theory Reveals Imbalanced Investment in First-Year Students' Project-Based Learning

10. Facilitating First-Year Adaptation: Practice and Reflection on a Design Literacy Curriculum

11. Exploring the Relationships and Group Differences Among First-Year Professional Course Grades, Unearned Credits, Depression Screening, and Academic Performance

12. A Psychological Remedy for the First-Year Experience: Building Systematic Support Through Curriculum Innovation

13. Innovative Teaching Design and Learning Adaptation Analysis of First-Year University Accounting (II)

14. Developing First-Year University Students' Narrative Competence through Inquiry-Based Questioning

15. Development of a Self-Directed Learning Experience and AI Literacy Scale for University Students and Investigation of Its Influencing Mechanisms

A special note of respect for the leadership of the substantial sized planning group for this first T-FYE conference that was so ably led by

Dr. Chuan-Chin Chiao, Distinguished Professor of Life Science, and Dr. Hsinyi Peng, Director, Center of Exploration and Life Transitions, National Tsing Hua University.

Dr. Ming-Chi Wu, Assistant Professor, Center for General Education, National University of Tainan.

Suggestions for Deriving Maximum Benefits from a Thoughtful Consideration of these Proceedings

A word about the traditional meaning of a conference Proceedings. It is the conventional practice that this genre of publishing refers to an academic event that has already taken place. This this volume definitely fits in that parameter. However, this Proceedings should also be examined as an important statement of future directions of this work. Specifically, because this Proceedings documents what Taiwanese higher educators are already focusing on in their launching of the inaugural categorized higher education efforts known as “the first-year experience” this volume also is an important indicator of directions that will be further pursued to rethink, refine, revise, deepen, strengthen the FYE going forward in the nation of Taiwan.

Thus, when you read the substantive articles in these. proceedings it is important to note the following:

1. What is the problem of practice in Taiwanese higher education, especially for first-year students that this topical article was addressing?

How significant does this particular problem strike you? Should you be looking forward to what this group does and produces in the second year?

2. What is/are the disciplinary/professional backgrounds of the authors of these articles? What does that tell you about the types of higher educators engaged in this evolving work?

3. How do you react to the specific topics of concern in these articles? Have you also already had concerns about this topic? Or was this a topic you had not considered previously?

4. What insights within these articles into the characteristics, needs, and challenges of Taiwanese first-year students are revealed? And how does this influence your own perception of these students?

5. What do these articles suggest to you should be the priorities for Taiwanese educators, policy makers and government officials and resource allocators should be paying to these particular issues?

6. Across these 15 articles what are any common themes, problems, issues that you find to be particularly noteworthy?

7. What do these articles suggest to you that the 2027 conference should be paying attention to? And by whom?

8. Overall, what are your conclusions about the status quo of how well Taiwanese higher education is responding to the need to improve the first year of its higher education system?

9. Based on what you have learned then what do you think should be the most important priorities for next steps this nation taking an even more intentional and evidence-based action approach to improve the first-year foundation of its higher education system?

In conclusion then, if you use these Proceedings for this purpose, what you have here is a roadmap of what has been, and now is being done to improve the foundation of Taiwanese students' university education. You also have concrete suggestions of what can and even should be done going forward.

In my experience I know of no other country in the world that has taken a more specific set of approaches to improve this critical period of higher education in all of its nationally directed and funded public universities. Thus, we have here an extraordinary experiment of what a government and its higher educators can do to improve the experience of all its university students. This is an extraordinary opportunity that I am persuaded will lead to significant efforts to even further improve what is already a very robust system of national post-secondary education which is taking concrete actions to further strengthen how it can best serve its nation's students.

I leave this review even more impressed with what this tiny, but ingenious, globally far more important to the rest of the world, nation state than its geographic size alone would suggest. I am inspired by what this nation is doing with its freedom to improve its higher education system for all its students. Taiwan then is emerging as a world leader for increasing the national level of concern for success of its first-year university students whom we want even more of them to persist and graduate to help their country fulfill its destiny.

With great respect,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John N. Gardner', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

John N. Gardner

September 2, 2026

Distinguished Professor Emeritus and Senior Fellow, University of South Carolina USA;
and Co-Founder and Executive Chair, John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Higher Education USA