

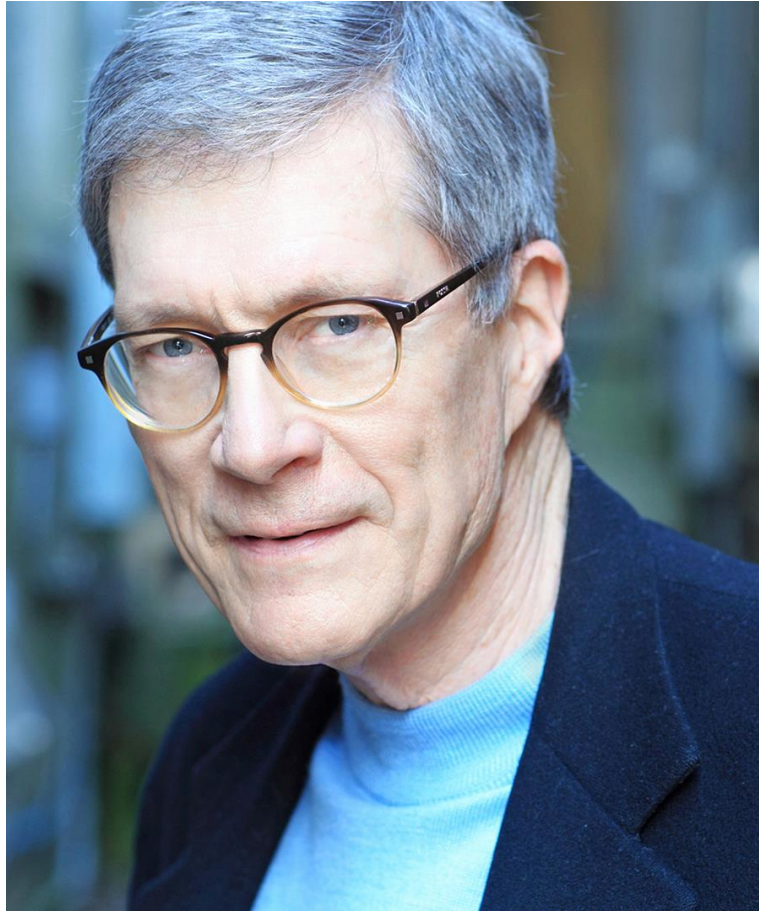


2018 Brock International  
Prize in Education Nominee

**John Gardner**

*Nominated by Lemuel Watson*

## Nomination Portfolio for the 2018 Brock International Prize in Education



### **John N. Gardner**

Noted as one of the top change agents in higher education and student affairs by the American Association of Higher Education and other national and international organizations for champion the first year experience over the last four decades and creating a movement that change higher education for the better. John is an educator, university professor and administrator, non-profit organization chief executive officer, author, editor, public speaker, consultant, change agent, student retention specialist, first-year, sophomore, transfer, and senior year students' advocate, and initiator and scholar of the American first-year and senior-year reform movements. He serves as President of the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education (JNGI).

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Nominated and Prepared  
by  
Lemuel W. Watson  
Executive Director and Professor of Leadership, College of Education  
The University of South Carolina at Columbia



Lemuel W. Watson is a seasoned executive and his career spans across various industries. His expertise is in Talent Management, Systems Design, Diversity, Policy Analysis, research design, and Leadership. Lemuel W. Watson is ***Executive Director for the Center for Innovation in Higher Education*** and the former Dean of the College of the College of Education at the University of South Carolina and Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policies. Dr. Watson was also the former Executive Director of the Center for P–20 Engagement and Dean at Northern Illinois University. He brings more than 25 years' experience at various public land-grant and research institutions that prepared him to deal with all areas of operations. Watson completed his undergraduate degree in business from the University of South Carolina, a master's degree from Ball State University, and his doctorate from Indiana University in Bloomington. Dr. Watson was a Senior Research Fellow at the C. Houston Center at Clemson University and Research Fellow at the Institute for Southern Studies at University of South Carolina. He is a Fulbright Scholar to Belarus and has written articles, books, and served as editor for several volumes related to organizational behavior, educational leadership and administration, human development, public policy, K-12 issues, and higher education.

***Lemuel W. Watson participated in the University 101 course at the University of South Carolina in the fall of 1982.***



## Official Nomination

I am humbled and honored to be asked to participate as a juror in this year's award. I took the responsibility of selecting a nominee seriously, carefully, and intentionally while adhering to the specific requirements for the Brock International Prize in Education. The one person that I could think of who fit all of the criteria was John Gardner. John's dedication and commitment to continue to be innovative in his unique contributions to the science and the art of education remains relevant and undiminished after 40 years and is rooted in best practices that impact the entire higher education enterprise resulting in the enhancement of students' experiences. What was special about my nomination is that I have experienced as a student the efforts of John's investment in enhancing the educational experiences students. As a high achieving young man, from a small and rural school, coming to an urban institution in a large city, as a first-year college student, I am glad that my alma mater was the institution where John Gardner did his foundational work. His work is the focus of this nomination. The program, at the University of South Carolina, that Gardner led provided me the necessary tools to adjust and adapt to my new environment through the "First-Year Experience" (a concept he trademarked in 1982) course, University 101.

The design of the curriculum and the attention to pedagogy for those who would teach the course was transformative. The instructors of record were well trained to transform the student and academic culture of the institution, which in returned created a sense of belonging and enhanced the students' problem-solving skills to find the resources needed throughout their college experiences for success. Considering the context of higher education over the last 75 years, access to higher education has been enormous, yet challenging for first generation and minority students. This course certainly added value to all of my college experiences and academic and professional development. In the gap of knowledge and experiences that first generation and minority students and their parents experienced, John Gardner witness, assisted, redesigned, and lead an initiative that would support them in adjusting to organizations, environments, and culture that would influence retention and matriculation for thousands of students and thereby supporting institutions by stabilizing enrollments and economies of scale. John has stayed focused for more than 50 years on a belief that all students can learn and be successful in college if taught the appropriate skills to do so. He remains diligent and determined to continue making a difference through his never ending love to lead major grants, share his wisdom around the world, and spend time with professionals who have been inspired to follow his legacy.

### **Recognizes an Individual – John Gardner the Individual**

John is an educator, university professor and administrator, non-profit organization chief executive officer, author, editor, public speaker, consultant, change agent, student retention specialist, first-year, sophomore, transfer, and senior year students' advocate, and initiator and scholar of the American first-year and senior-year reform movements. He serves as President of the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education (JNGI).

The Institute was founded by John and his wife, Dr. Betsy O. Barefoot, in October 1999 as the Policy Center on the First Year of College. The Policy Center was launched by an initial grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, and has been subsequently funded by additional grants from Pew, The Atlantic Philanthropies, Lumina Foundation for Education, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, and USA Funds. In 2007 the Policy Center underwent a legal and name change to the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education and an expansion of its mission to focus more broadly on excellence in undergraduate education, as a fully autonomous 501(c)(3) non-profit entity. Since its inception in 1999, the Institute has received approximately \$8,000,000 in support from its philanthropic partners, most recently again from Lumina Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Kresge Foundation.

JNGI works with colleges and universities to strengthen their resolve and processes to undertake assessment and other improvement actions to increase student learning and retention. JNGI focuses its work on the use of a previously non-existent set of aspirational standards for improvement of the first-year, the transfer student experience, and the gateway course experiences of students at all undergraduate levels. These first-year and transfer standards are known as JNGI's "Foundational Dimensions<sup>®</sup>" in a process called Foundations of

Excellence® in the First College Year or Foundations of Excellence® – Transfer Focus. In addition, JNGI offers several additional processes for student learning, success, retention and completion including Gateways to Completion® (G2C®) to improve student performance in high failure rate gateway courses and Retention Performance Management® (RPM®) to improve retention rates for specific cohorts such as first year, sophomores, first-generation, low-income, etc.

John is also the Founding Director and Senior Fellow of the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, and Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Library and Information Science at the University of South Carolina. The National Resource Center, founded by Gardner in 1986, organizes the popular and influential conferences on The First-Year Experience, Students in Transition, and also disseminates information through an extensive series of scholarly publications, videos, national and international conferences, workshops, seminars, and teleconferences. Gardner “retired” from the University of South Carolina in 1999 after 32 1/2 years of service to the people of South Carolina, but continues to serve them in a reduced and more focused way in his role of Senior Fellow (in addition to his full-time appointment with the Gardner Institute). He served as Executive Director of both the first-year seminar course, University 101, from 1974-1999, and the National Center from 1986-99. From 1983-96, he also served as Vice Chancellor/Associate Vice Provost for Regional Campuses and Continuing Education.

In his capacity with the National Resource Center, John provides advice, counsel, and intellectual leadership and vision as called upon by his colleagues in the Center. He is actively involved in hosting and presenting at Center conferences, seminars, workshops, and teleconferences. He also remains very involved, as always, in the Center’s scholarship and research activities as in its monograph series and other publishing activities.

Thanks to the US Air Force, Gardner had been involuntarily sent to South Carolina in 1967 where he served his active duty assignment as a psychiatric social worker in the 363rd Tactical Hospital at Shaw Air Force Base. At the direct order of his squadron commander he became a part-time adjunct instructor for the University of South Carolina while he was on active duty. After completing his military service, Gardner held a two-year temporary appointment as Instructor of History at Winthrop College from 1968-70, and then began his full-time faculty career at USC Columbia in 1970. He taught courses in American and South Carolina history, interpersonal communications for librarians, public speaking, higher education administration, and other special topics. He also regularly taught the first-year seminar, University 101, and a special topics graduate seminar course he developed for the College of Education on “The First-Year Experience.” From 1994-1998 he developed and taught University 401, Senior Capstone Experience (as a sequel to University 101, only for departing students), and this remains one of his legacies to USC about which he is most satisfied in terms of the help it offers students.

Gardner is the recipient of numerous local and national professional awards including USC’s highest award for teaching excellence, the AMOCO Award for Outstanding Teaching (1975), and the Division of Student Affairs Faculty Award “for outstanding contributions...” (1976). The University of South Carolina Alumni Association conferred upon him its highest award for a non-alum, the Honorary Life Membership “for devoted service in behalf of the University” in 1997. He was also named the 1998 recipient of the University’s Administrative Affirmative Action Award “for an outstanding job in promoting equal opportunities at the University.” In 1999, he was the recipient of a University award created and named in his honor, “The John N. Gardner Inspirational Faculty Award” to be given henceforth to a member of the University faculty “who has made substantial contributions to the learning environment in campus residence hall life.”

John has received 12 honorary doctorate degrees from small elite private to large elite research institutions and has been recognized for his work with the FYE from large national and international organizations. For example, 1986, the American Association for Higher Education selected John as one of the 20 faculty members in the U.S. who “...have made outstanding leadership contributions to their institution and /or American higher education”. Other national groups include the American College Personnel Association, the Council of Independent Colleges, the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services, the Council of Learning Assistance and Developmental Education Association, to name a few. Other external affirmation and

recognition of the scope and scale of Dr. Gardner's work is echoed in national periodicals like Change Magazine and The Chronicle of Higher Education where he has been listed as a top ten professionals who has influenced student affairs professional and listed as one of the movers and shakers in higher education (1998). In 2002, he was also recognized with an award for "Vision and Leadership in the National Movement of Research and Advocacy on Behalf of First-Year Students".

He has served on the Board of Directors/Trustees for the American Association for Higher Education, the International Partnership for Service Learning, Marietta College, and the Brevard Music Center; and on advisory boards for The American Council on Education, The Association of American Colleges and Universities, *The New York Times*, and Lumina Foundation for Education.

Gardner's work has been favorably reviewed in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The New York Times*, *The Times of London*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Money magazine*, and numerous other publications. In the January 1998 issue of *Change*, Gardner was cited in an article naming approximately 80 people as the "past, present, and future leaders of higher education." The authors of this study drew on the results of 11,000 questionnaires to name the leaders whom *The Chronicle of Higher Education* dubbed "the movers and shakers." Gardner was included in a special category of eleven so called "agenda-setters." Also in 1998 Gardner was named as one of the "top ten professionals who have most influenced student affairs practitioners." This was based on a random sample of practitioners throughout the country as part of a study entitled "The Professional Influence Project" sponsored by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Foundation and conducted by The University of Georgia.

In 1999 Gardner was awarded by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) the Virginia N. Gordon Award for Excellence in the Field of Advising, to recognize his contributions towards the enhancement of academic advisement in American higher education. One of the nation's two major professional organizations for student affairs officers, The American College Personnel Association, recognized him with its highest honor, the Lifetime Achievement Award, in 2002.

Gardner is best known as the initiator (in 1982) of an international reform movement in higher education to call attention to and improve what he originally coined "The Freshman Year Experience" and then renamed by him as "The First-Year Experience." Moreover, since 1990 he has developed a special focus on a second critical transition during the college years to improve and champion: "The Senior Year Experience." In 1995, he renamed the Center he directed at USC to The National Center for The First- Year Experience and Students in Transition, to signify a broader and more generic focus on the need for institutions to focus more intentionally on "students in transition." John and his colleagues at USC also initiated a new national discussion about another critical transition in college and have authored a recent book, published by Jossey-Bass, on the sophomore year experience in 2010.

Gardner's special area of expertise in higher education was for almost three decades the creation of programs to enhance the learning, success, retention, and graduation of students in transition, especially first-year students, for example through first-year seminar courses. But more recently, since 2003, his efforts have been directed almost exclusively to working with institutions to look beyond this long standing "programmatic" approach to improving the first year and instead to focus the entire experience of first-year and/or transfer students. Gardner has also served as a workshop leader or trainer in hundreds of faculty development events and has spoken on/consulted with over 500 campuses in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Canada, United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Denmark, Norway, and Qatar, on issues related to first-year and senior students.

John would say in terms of his legacy that one of the most important works of his career is his current career capstone push to reduce unacceptable rates D, W, F, I grades in gateway courses (through the Institute's Gateways to Completion, G2C, process) which have a hugely disproportionate impact on students being able to fulfill their dreams and aspirations and on high attrition rates. This is the latest manifestation of his career long focus on improving student success in the critical first year.

John has delivered hundreds of papers, speeches, presentations, workshops, and seminars in the U.S. and abroad on issues related to the success of first-year students. John has authored or co-edited more than seven books about student success that are directly related to the impact of the first year experience. In addition, he continues to have one of the most sought after textbooks related to understanding the college experiences for undergraduate students in higher education, in fact, *Your College Experience* is in its 13<sup>th</sup> edition.

### **Specific Contribution**

Because multiple research studies indicate that there are numerous adjustment issues to the college culture for many students, especially for first generation, low income, and minority students, the work of John Gardner is not only important, but essential for the future success of higher education and society. John's and others' research indicates that for these "new" students' success depends on the way they transition from secondary school into college or university studies. John calls this the "freshman experience." The influence and impact on the field of higher education and student affairs for the programs he has developed are well documented in the literature and numerous research studies indicating the dramatic achievement in engaging faculty and administrators in rethinking the students' experiences. In addition, this initiative has also given the student insight about him or her abilities, ways to become involved and engaged, and how to navigate the college campus and community. The work of John has been focused on a singular contribution, University 101 or commonly known now as "the First-Year Experience" (FYE), which is found in 90% of US accredited colleges and universities. Central to the FYE was a new approach to faculty development that prepared academicians and staff to engaged with the students in ways that were supportive of personal growth as they taught the courses. The specific contributions that I will highlight from John's work is detailed below:

- A national and international conference series known as "the First-Year Experience;"
- An educational philosophy and set of practices known as "the first-year experience";
- A registered trade-marked intellectual property known as "the first-year experience®";
- Founded two national higher education centers/non-profit entities to promote his ideas for improving the first year of higher education;
- Launched a movement to focus on other student transitions known as "the Senior Year Experience" and "the Sophomore Year Experience" and "Students in Transition";
- Created another new course "University 401 Senior Capstone Experience" to illustrate his focus on the importance of senior students;
- Established a research literature base and a stream of publications for higher educators to disseminate these concepts in effect creating a whole new field of scholarship in the discipline of higher education;
- Established a whole new college textbook genre for what is known as "college success" texts used now by hundreds of thousands of college students and emulated by all the major textbook publishers;
- Launched a set of conferences known as "Conferences on Students in Transition";
- Established a new process for assessing the institutional effectiveness of the first college year using a hither to before non-existent set of standards of excellence for the first year of college;
- Launched a national movement to reduce failure rates in so-called "gateway" courses, to remedy what he calls "the gateway course experience.

### **The Science and Art of Education and Significant Impact on Practice**

*Science* is defined as the intellectual and practical activity encompassing the systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment, and one definition of *art* is a skill at doing a specified thing, typically one acquired through practice. Hence, *education* is an enlightening experience, which promotes the development through science and art. The FYE experience encompasses both the science and art of education through best practices and the multitude of research within an institution and across institutional types. Therefore the FYI experiences have made a "science" out of the art of education through a research based "art" of increasing first-year student success which is being replicated by others. For example:

- (1) A specific course at USC; has enrolled well over a hundred thousand students; found on all campuses of the University; has powerful research outcomes on increased retention and graduation rates with

especially noteworthy impacts on African American students. John was NOT the founder of this course—USC President Thomas F. Jones was in 1972. However, John was the first faculty director, serving in this role from 1974-99, starting after Jones was forced out of his presidency. John also gave focus, vision, and depth to move the FYE concept to greater impact. He is generally credited for keeping it alive initially and then for its flourishing and replication world- wide.

(2) Also a course genre replicated at some thousands of institutions worldwide—often using that very same name. Also called college success, student success, college 101, introduction to higher education, etc.—many other spin off titles. Multiple studies have found that this course genre now found at 90% of the regionally accredited colleges and universities in the US. This means that literally, MILLIONS, of students have had this experience. Universal outcomes are improved retention and student success metrics that are a benefit to the student and institution.

(3) a philosophical concept for higher education improvement which argues that students can and should be taught how to be successful in college; that it is our obligation to do so; that faculty and staff should be trained in how to do so; this also created for the first time specific faculty development initiatives to understand and address the needs of student population; and that degree applicable credits should be awarded for such instructional and learning activities.

**A national conference series:** John Gardner launched the first conference on the topic of serving freshman students in 1982 at USC. It was a pilot at best, but the 173 who attended encouraged him to continue; hence, this coming February USC will host its 37<sup>th</sup> annual Conference on the First-Year Experience. In its multiple adapted forms, this meeting series has been attended by over 100,000 higher educators. This led to universal dissemination of the concept, The Freshman Year Experience, trademarked by Gardner for USC's ownership in 1982. This conference series has had an enormous impact on how the rest of the higher education community regards USC and, outside of athletics, is one of the most widely known components of the University's brand.

**The International Conferences on The First-Year Experience and the Canadian/American Conferences on the First-Year Experience** were launched by John in 1986 and held every year through his time at USC in locations in the US and Canada, England, Scotland, Denmark, and the Republic of Ireland. This series encouraged multiple nations to create their own conference series which is now the case in Australia, Japan, Republic of South Africa, and what has become known as “the European FYE Conference.” Thus the USC FYE concept has become truly internationalized.

### **Understanding and Innovation – “changed the way we think and act”**

John's work has created a new field of scholarship, research, dissemination and practice “to enhance the field of education” ...specifically, what can be done to improve student success outcomes in the first year of college. In fact, this movement created an entirely new focus within student affairs and helped bring about the importance of enrollment management for higher education. John's hope, dream and goal when he started the USC National Resource Center for the First Year Experience was to also launch a new field of scholarly endeavor for research, publication and dissemination about higher education efforts to improve student learning, retention, and success, especially for first-year undergraduates. The publication series which he launched in 1988 continues to flourish. The penultimate manifestation of this is the blind-refereed *Journal of the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition*. He modeled the practice of this new field of scholarship through his own publishing, to date, seven different Jossey-Bass volumes. Now many other journals, theses, and dissertations focus on the concept he created, known as The First-Year Experience.

It is also important to recognize that John's commitment to social justice and equality is at the heart of his work by recognizing the responsibility that institutions of higher education have to ensure that all of its students have the opportunity to succeed if given the right tools from the start. His singular focus has been all about “change” - changing the design of the beginning college experience to adapt it more successfully to the new kinds of students—low income, underrepresented, minority—admitted since 1965 but for whom most of America's colleges and universities were not designed.

***Therefore, changing the dispositions and beliefs that some faculty have about the world and students have central to the success of the FYE.*** While there have been courses to help students adjust to college offered since 1882, the unique innovation here which was embedded first in the USC model, was that faculty should be provided faculty training for this instruction—AND that what was learned in the training would be used by faculty in many other areas of their professional work. Hence the course has a much broader and more profound spin off effect. The philosophy behind the training is to humanize the student experience of starting college, a high risk endeavor for so many of them. It is important to reflect on how most faculty in higher education are prepared. Decades ago and now, the majority of faculty in higher education were (are) prepared at research universities that do not necessary teach graduate students or future faculty members about pedagogy or students learning and development. Most are taught by faculty who were prepared to work with a homogenous student body and culture. This work has improved and enhanced the process of education at the onset of the college experience thereby affecting “improvement of education at any level” and more specifically at the levels of first year, sophomore, transfer, and senior year, all being areas of focus for Gardner’s writing and activism for change to promote social justice. His ideas and practices are uniformly regarded as “innovations” that have made “meaningful changes” in how higher educators “act and think” about first-year, sophomore, transfer, and senior students

***The FYE—First-Year Experience concept:*** this has truly been institutionalized in the lexicon and culture of international higher education. Virtually every U.S. institution of higher education and many other institutions internationally have so called “FYE” programs, courses, and initiatives underway. It is the norm, not the exception. John first wrote about this concept in a refereed journal in 1986, and I will put a copy of this article in the portfolio. Even though many educators interpreted his work to represent a particular type of programmatic intervention, like University 101, what he was really arguing for was a unique philosophy for higher education. This would argue that first-year students are important and deserve more attention and much better treatment than they had historically been accorded. About his work, John’s writes,

*“And that is exactly what has happened—and is probably my greatest accomplishment. No longer a kind of fringe curiosity of a young reformer, this is a mainstream world higher education endeavor. A related but similar concept I developed and trademarked at USC is: The Senior Year Experience”.*

#### **Underlying themes of all the work:**

1. Increase social justice outcomes
2. Reduce failure in beginning college experience
3. Promote partnerships between faculty, student affairs and academic administrators
4. Making previously taken for granted sub populations rise to the level of respect, importance and attention from college leaders at all levels, especially discriminated students such as first-year and transfer students and all people who don’t look like him: low income, first gen, minority, and non-white.
5. Using assessment processes and tools to undertake self-studies of entire institutions and high failure rate courses in order to develop action plans for improvement which then must be implemented

Therefore, he keeps on following his passion and commitment to make the world a better place while infusing innovation, creativity, justice, and access for others.

## Nominee's CV

JOHN N. GARDNER

President, John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education  
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### Education.

Marietta College, Marietta, Ohio. 1961-1965, Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences  
Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, 1965-1966, Master of Arts in American Studies

### Honorary Doctoral Degrees.

Marietta College, 1985, Doctor of Laws, Honoris Causa  
Baldwin-Wallace College, 1990, Doctor of Education, Honoris Causa  
Bridgewater State College, 1991, Doctor of Public Education, Honoris Causa  
Millikin University, 1999, Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa  
Purdue University, 2000, Doctor of Higher Education, Honoris Causa  
Teesside University (United Kingdom), 2000, Doctor of Letters, Honoris Causa  
Rowan University of New Jersey, 2001, Doctor of Humanities, Honoris Causa  
Thiel College, 2006, Doctor of Humanities, Honoris Causa  
Indiana University, 2008, Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa  
Clarion University, 2009, Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa  
Northwest Missouri State University, 2013, Doctor of Pedagogy, Honoris Causa  
University of South Carolina at Columbia, 2013, Doctor of Education, Honoris Causa

### Employment History.

#### *Present*

2007 – present. President, John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education, Brevard, N.C.  
October 1999 – 2007. Executive Director, Policy Center on The First Year of College, Brevard, N.C.  
1999 – present. Senior Fellow, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition  
1999 – present. Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Library and Information Science, University of South Carolina

#### *University of South Carolina (1967 – 1999)*

1970 – present. Faculty member at ranks from Instructor to Distinguished Professor Emeritus; awarded tenure as Associate Professor in 1976; promoted to Professor in 1981  
1986 – 1999. Executive Director, National Resource Center for The First Year Experience and Students in Transition  
1983 – 1996. Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Associate Vice Provost, Regional Campuses and Continuing Education  
1974 – 1999. Executive Director, University 101  
1967 – 1968. Adjunct Instructor, College of General Studies/Branch Campuses

#### *Winthrop College, Rock Hill, S.C.*

1968 – 1970 Instructor in History

#### *United States Air Force*

Active Duty. 1966 – 1968; Psychiatric Social Worker, Shaw AFB, S.C. With honorable discharge

#### **Awards and Honors. University of South Carolina**

- Amoco Outstanding Teaching Award, 1975
- Division of Student Affairs Faculty Award “for outstanding contributions,” 1976

- Honorary Life Membership, USC Alumni Association, the highest award to a non-alumnus “for devoted service in behalf of the University,” 1997
- Administrative Affirmative Action Award, “for an outstanding job in promoting equal opportunities at the University,” 1998
- Administrative Award for Outstanding and Dedicated Service USC Black Faculty and Staff Association, 1998
- John N. Gardner Inspirational Faculty Award, “to be given henceforth to a member of the University faculty who has made substantial contributions to the learning environment in campus residential life,” 1999
- Certificate of Service in recognition and appreciation for more than 30 years of loyal and faithful service to the State of South Carolina, January 1, 1999
- Designation as Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Library and Information Science, June 30, 1999

### **Recognition from Professional Associations.**

Selected by the American Association for Higher Education as one of 20 faculty in the U.S. who “... have made outstanding leadership contributions to their institutions and/or American higher education,” 1986

Outstanding Contributions Award to the Orientation Profession, National Orientation Directors Association, 1995

Honorary Member, Canadian Association of College and University Student Services, “in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the Association,” 1995

Academic Leadership Award, Council of Independent Colleges, “for exemplary contributions to American higher education,” 1996

Virginia N. Gordon Award for Excellence in the Field of Advising, National Academic Advising Association, 1999

Recipient of “Honor for dedicated service and for inspiring the TRIO community to meet challenges of the new millennium,” Georgia Association of Special Programs Personnel and the South Carolina Council of Educational Opportunity Programs. April 12, 1999

Recipient of Lifetime Achievement Award, American College Personnel Association, 2002

Recognized as a “Diamond Honoree” for “Outstanding Contributions to the Field of Student Affairs, American College Personnel Association, March 22, 2010

Inducted as a Fellow of the Council of Learning Assistance and Developmental Education Associations, in recognition of Lifetime Contributions to Learning Assistance and Developmental Education, March 29, 2011

Distinguished Scholar Award, North Carolina College Personnel Association, February 1, 2013

### **Other Forms of Professional Recognition**

In the January 1998 issue of *Change* magazine, Gardner was cited in an article naming approximately 80 people as the “past, present, and future leaders of higher education.” The authors of this study drew on the results of approximately 11,000 questionnaires to name the leaders whom *The Chronicle of Higher Education* dubbed “the movers and shakers.” Gardner was included in a special category of eleven so-called “agenda-setters.”

In 1998 Gardner was named as one of the “top ten professionals who have most influenced student affairs practitioners.” This was based on a random sample of practitioners throughout the country as part of a study entitled “The Professional Influencer Project” sponsored by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Foundation and conducted by the University of Georgia.

Recognized by North Carolina State University’s First-Year College with an award for “Vision and Leadership in the National Movement of Research and Advocacy on Behalf of First-Year Students,” January 28, 2002.

### **Presentations**

Gardner has delivered hundreds of papers, speeches, presentations, workshops, seminars in the US, Puerto Rico, Canada, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, Denmark, and Norway, and Qatar on issues related to the success of first-year, sophomore, transfer, and senior students.



## **Consultancies.**

Gardner has served as a consultant to more than 500 colleges and universities in seven nations.

## **Board Service.**

Chair, Board of Trustees, Brevard Music Center, Brevard, NC, November 2009 – 2011

Member, Board of Trustees, American Association for Higher Education, 1990 – 1994

Member, Board of Trustees, Marietta College; additional service as member of the Board Executive Committee and Chair, Academic Activities Committee, 1993 – 2005

Member and Treasurer, International Partnership for Service Learning Board of Trustees, 1992 – 2002

Member, National Advisory Board, American Association of Colleges and Universities Health and Higher Education AIDS and HIV Project, 1996 – 1999

Member, National College Advisory Board, *The New York Times*, 1997 – 2002

Member, American Council on Education National Advisory Board to the Cooperative Institutional Research Program, 1996 – 1999

Member, Academic Advisory Council, Lumina Foundation for Education, 2001 – 2003

## **Publications**

### ***Books (For College and University Educators)***

Felten, P., Gardner, J.N., Schroder, C.C, Lambert, L.M., & Barefoot, B.O. (2016). *The undergraduate experience: Focusing institutions on what matters most*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Greenfield, G.M., Keup, J.R. & Gardner, J.N. (2013) *Developing and sustaining successful first-year programs*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Hunter, M. S., Tobolowsky, B. F., & Gardner, J. N. (2009). *Helping sophomores succeed: Understanding and improving the second-year experience*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Barefoot, B. O., Gardner, J. N., Cutright, M., Morris, L. V., Schroeder, C. S., Schwartz, S. W., Siegel, M. J., & Swing, R. L. (2005). *Achieving and sustaining institutional excellence for the first year of college*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Upcraft, M. L., Gardner, J. N., Barefoot, B. O., and Associates. (2005). *Challenging and supporting the first-year student: A handbook for improving the first college year*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

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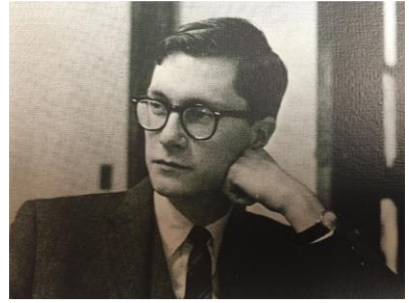
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# Photographs





Students

## South Carolina's Gardner: Self-Appointed Spokesman for the 'Largest Educational Minority'—Freshmen

He's at forefront of nationwide movement to improve colleges' record in retaining their students



John Gardner, with students at the University of South Carolina: "We still haze freshmen. We still have them register last, and then we give them the largest classes."

PHOTOGRAPH FOR THE CHRONICLE BY JEFF ANDREWS

By ELIZABETH GREENE

COLUMBIA, S.C.

When John N. Gardner proselytizes, he does so in behalf of three million American college freshmen. He'll tell you so, without hesitation: "I see myself as a kind of self-appointed spokesperson for what I think is the largest educational minority we have."

"I'm carrying on a national crusade." At 43, this administrator at the University of South Carolina is a national guru of sorts, not to be confused with the late John Gardner, the novelist, or John W. Gardner,

the former Cabinet member and ex-head of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

### 2 Books for Freshmen

Today, with a second book for freshmen just out, another book due soon, and his National Center for the Study of the Freshman Year Experience getting under way, he's at the forefront of a vibrant movement in higher education, if not leading it.

Student-personnel administrators everywhere are wrestling with ways to im-

prove student retention, and are focusing on the freshman year—a traditionally difficult time, during or immediately after which half of the students who will drop out, do so.

At the University of South Carolina at Columbia, Mr. Gardner directs University 101, a three-credit, one-semester course designed to teach freshmen some basic "college survival skills," such as study techniques, constructive ways to relate to peers and professors, and how to use the career center.

The elective course, with more than 60 classes scheduled for this year, was established at the university in 1972. Two years later, Mr. Gardner, a non-tenured history professor at the time, was asked to direct it. Since then, and especially in the last few years, it has been copied by hundreds of colleges in the United States, Canada, and Britain.

### Conferences Well Attended

But Mr. Gardner is perhaps best known as the host of annual conferences on the freshman year. In 1982, 175 educators showed up in Columbia for his first National Conference on the Freshman Orientation Course/Freshman Seminar Concept. The participants made it clear there was a good deal of interest in programs for first-year students, beyond the freshman seminar, so Mr. Gardner broadened his scope to encompass much more, renaming the event the National Conference on the Freshman Year Experience.

A wide range of topics are now covered

## At Many Colleges, Orientation Has Become a Serious Introduction to Campus Life

ATLANTA

"I'd rather work for a male."  
"AIDS is a signal to the homosexual community that its behavior is wrong."  
"Oliver North was telling the truth."  
"My main purpose in coming to Georgia Tech was the social life."

After each statement, the freshmen at orientation here last month were asked to stand under a placard—"Agree," "Neutral," or "Disagree"—that best fit their response.

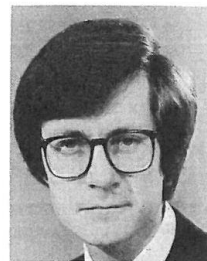
Most chose "Neutral" for the first statement and "Disagree" for the second. As for Colonel North's testimony in the Iran-contra affair, the students were divided evenly among the three categories. And very few said they had selected the notoriously rigorous Georgia Institute of Technology for its social life.

"The main reason we had you do this was for you to see where you stood in relation to your peers," Tracey Thomason Hess, a student orientation leader, told her group. "It's real important to realize that you're coming into a larger community than you had in your high school."

Georgia Tech is one of many colleges and universities around the country that are taking freshman orientation far more seriously than in the past. The institutions are challenging students before they start classes and giving them a more thorough introduction to campus life than ever before.

Students still register for classes and attend barbecues and luau, but they also talk about such topics as sexism, homophobia, racism, and the purpose of higher

Continued on Following Page



**John N. Gardner**  
Director, University 101  
Associate VP for University  
Campuses and Continuing  
Education  
University of South Carolina  
Columbia, South Carolina

"Getting freshmen off to a good start"

The early 1970s—in the aftermath of student disaffection and violence following the United States' invasion of Cambodia—found the University of South Carolina struggling to revitalize the freshman year. Student retention was at an ebb. The president and faculty of the university wanted to design a course that would make students "more effective consumers of their education," promote faculty development, and humanize the university environment. Enter John Gardner, professor of library and information science.

Gardner played a major role in implementing a Ford Foundation Venture Fund Grant proposal. Out of this effort was born University 101, now recognized around the country as an exemplary freshman program. University 101 is designed to get freshmen off to a strong and successful start in college. "Make students write," Gardner tells faculty who teach in the course. "Have them visit the library. Explore careers and majors. Teach good study habits. Give your students some of 'you.'"

Gardner espouses training faculty as mentors to give them a true understanding of what freshmen are like and what the freshman experience is. In 1982, he organized and hosted the first National Conference on the Freshman Orientation Course/Freshman Seminar Concept. The conference was so successful that it has become an annual event now known as the National Conferences on the Freshman Year Experience. Gardner is also currently

Change July/August 1986

## THE IDEA CHAMPIONS

**I**n the last two decades, much of the leadership in higher education has come less from individuals in "influential positions" than from people who carved out an issue and found or created ways to bring it persuasively to the attention of the academy as a whole. For their roles as agenda-setters,

Change recognizes these 11 influential leaders:



ASTIN

**Alexander Astin** of UCLA has used his yearly student surveys to roll out powerful arguments for research-based efforts to improve undergraduate education. Father of the "value added" approach to college quality, he is also a theorist-advocate-practitioner of assessment.



BERNSTEIN

**Alison Bernstein**, from her position at the Ford Foundation, has been strategist, prompter, and funder of dozens of projects that over time have reshaped campus appreciation of the benefits of diversity. She is also a champion of the importance to minorities of community college and transfer.



CHAIT

**Richard Chait**, currently at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, has been an influential writer and consultant to boards of trustees for years. Now, not without controversy, he leads efforts to rethink faculty careers and the future of tenure.



EDLEY

**Christopher Edley, Jr.**, of the Harvard Law School, came to attention as President Clinton's point man in the administration's rethinking of affirmative action. He now continues this effort through his writing, speaking, and co-leadership (with Gary Orfield) of the Harvard Civil Rights Project.



EWELL

**Peter Ewell** of NCHEMS probably has consulted in more statehouses and on more campuses than any other individual over the past dozen years. From that knowledge base he has become the academy's chief analyst for issues of accountability, accreditation, assessment, and now distance education.



GARDNER

**John Gardner** of the University of South Carolina turned sincere care for freshmen into a "Freshman Experience" secretariat, with conferences and consultancies nationwide and abroad. Hundreds of campuses have implemented his "University 101" and related program elements.



MACGREGOR

**Jean MacGregor** of the Evergreen State College used grassroots organizing skills to co-found (with Barbara Leigh Smith) the much-admired Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education. She now heads up a national consortium to advance the idea of freshman learning communities.



PALMER

**Parker Palmer**, an independent teacher and writer living in Madison, Wisconsin, has inspired a generation of teachers and reformers with evocative visions of community, knowing, and spiritual wholeness. His latest book, *The Courage to Teach*, was published in December.



RICE

**Eugene Rice** of AAHE was first noticed through his leadership of an experimental college at the University of the Pacific, then as a foundation executive and originator of the four-part view of scholarship brought to wider attention by the late Ernest Boyer. He now heads the influential Forum on Faculty Roles and Rewards.



O'BANION

**Terry O'Banion** has turned the League for Innovation from a small club into the most dynamic organization in the community college world—now championing Barr and Tagg's "learning paradigm" ideas, which call college to shift the emphasis from teaching to learning.



ZEMSKY

**Robert Zemsky** of the University of Pennsylvania has influenced administrative thought for two decades, initially on matters of budget and strategy, more recently on restructuring, technology, and the power of markets. His Pew/Knight roundtables now function on 140 campuses.



# THE FIRST YEAR AND BEYOND

CHARLES SCHROEDER TALKS TO JOHN GARDNER



**W**HEN JOHN N. GARDNER JOINED THE FACULTY of the University of South Carolina in 1970, the collection of offerings that would become known as the first-year experience did not exist. Over the next three decades, Gardner and his colleagues succeeded in shifting higher education's attention to the experience of first-year students and, more recently, to the experience of all students in transition.

Charles Schroeder spent some time with Gardner recently, asking him to turn his experienced and critical eye on the educational establishment he has worked for more than thirty years to change. Here is what he had to say.

**CHARLES SCHROEDER:** Your name is synonymous with the first-year experience. What was the catalyst that prompted you to devote most of your life to this aspect of undergraduate education?

**JOHN GARDNER:** It was a phone call, an invitation from a university president who cared enough about younger developing faculty members to invite them to participate in certain types of innovative efforts to rethink undergraduate education. I'd been at the University of South Carolina [USC] for two years, minding my own business, teaching history to beginning college students. In July 1972, a month after Watergate,

## Has the first-year experience come of age? There's no question that this way of thinking has become institutionalized to varying degrees across the four thousand or so postsecondary institutions.

Thomas F. Jones, president of USC, invited me to a workshop, but he wouldn't tell me what it was about. A little over two years before he had been barricaded in his office during a student riot, which led him to put together a faculty-student affairs committee to study the causes of the riots. But he got impatient with the progress of the committee deliberations and came up with the idea that the key to preventing future riots was to restructure the whole socialization process of bringing students into a major research university. He wanted to develop a process to redo the first year and teach students to love the university rather than be angry and trash it.

**SCHROEDER:** I know our readers are aware of the significance of the first year and all the positive changes that have occurred over the past two decades. In your judgment, has the first-year experience come of age?

**GARDNER:** I probably need to define *first-year experience* in order to answer your question. When we first started using the term in 1982, we didn't offer a definitive meaning and use for it, so people started using it however they wanted. In my use, the term meant a national and international effort to improve the first year, the total experience of students—and to do this intentionally and by rethinking the way the first year was organized and executed. Many other people in higher education thought the term meant a particular type of program or intervention for first-year students, most notably the first-year seminar concept with which I've been associated. But the concept of the first-year experience, however it is defined, has been in the lexicon now for twenty years, and our research has found dramatic increases in its use and in all of its potential applications. So I would say there's no question that this way of thinking about undergraduate education has definitely matured and become institutionalized to varying degrees across the four thousand or so postsecondary institutions.

**SCHROEDER:** In recent years we've certainly seen more attention given to advising and a proliferation of first-

year seminars, and we're now seeing at least one-fourth, perhaps one-third, of first-year students involved in some kind of learning communities, and we are seeing a lot of Supplemental Instruction. Are there additional challenges that you see in terms of helping to realize the full educational potential of the first-year experience?

**GARDNER:** There are many additional challenges. How much you value and are willing to invest in education for first-year students has always been an issue that campuses have faced, but it has become more difficult given the enormous economic constraints that many of us now face. I believe that institutions always find the money to do what they most value, so the question is, What do we most value? For many campuses, doing the foundation year well may not be a high priority, particularly when you have decreasing resources. So one basic challenge is simply to maintain the resource base. Beyond that, many of the initiatives you just summarized have been efforts to change the first year by going outside of or around the faculty. When American higher education wanted to improve academic advising, what did it do? It went out and hired thousands of professional nonfaculty advisors, and it founded a professional organization that represents many faculty but also a disproportionately far greater number of nonfaculty professional staff administrators. Many of the first-year seminars have been launched and sustained with disproportionately greater uses of staff than faculty. This is understandable; when you want to change a campus, you go to those areas that respond most immediately to change, and they may be

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*Charles Schroeder* is professor of education at the University of Missouri-Columbia and a contributing editor of *About Campus*.

We love feedback. Send letters to managing editor Paula Stacey ([pstacey@josseybass.com](mailto:pstacey@josseybass.com)), and copy her on notes to authors.

the ones that also are subject to administrative fiat and dictum—often administrative areas. The remaining challenges for making the first year better lie almost exclusively in what faculty do, not only in advising and first-year seminars, but especially in introductory college courses in the traditional disciplines.

**SCHROEDER:** Let's pick up on that, because I've read the manuscript for the book that you and Betsy O. Barefoot and M. Lee Upcraft are going to publish later this year, where you focus a great deal of attention on the first-year classroom. Why is this so important and what are the implications for faculty development? What do you want faculty to know and be able to do with first-year students?

**GARDNER:** The first-year classroom is so important because the majority of first-year students are now and will increasingly be in nonresidential institutions. The typical American first-year student is a commuting student. Such students are much less likely to get involved with many of the areas that have been so enriched through the first-year experience movement. Commuting students are less likely to have contact with student affairs officers and obviously don't live in residence halls, so their real contact with the college or university is only in the classroom. To reach them, you've got to get at what happens in the classroom. This means that the efforts to tinker and restructure and change the first year outside the classroom, while necessary, haven't been enough. Even at residential institutions, the real heart of student academic success still rests in what goes on in the classroom. So especially in commuting institutions, but also in residential institutions, the last frontier is what goes on in those classrooms. There are all kinds of implications concerning how faculty understand students; how they understand student learning styles, characteristics, and needs; and how they think about more effective ways to communicate their discipline to those students. This has impli-

cations, as you said, for faculty development.

**SCHROEDER:** Well, aren't students' expectations another critical factor in the first-year experience equation, particularly as they relate to the classroom? What have you and your colleagues learned about the expectations students bring with them to college? And how do these expectations, particularly academic ones, match the reality of first-year experiences?

**GARDNER:** First of all, it is a pipeline issue, relating to teaching and learning strategies in secondary schools and how connected they are to what is expected in college. I'm persuaded that much of the last year of high school is a waste, that we are probably letting many students stay in high school too long, with too much time on their hands. The whole notion of what I have to do in order to be successful academically is continually debased. When you have high school students making A's and B's while putting in remarkably little time and effort, it is no wonder they have lower expectations for the academic enterprise in general. My point here is not to bash the secondary schools system, because they are part of a larger culture that encourages students to work outside school, earn large amounts of spending money, spend large amounts of time watching television, and purchase consumer goods. Students live in a society that is in many ways anti-intellectual, that discourages reading and critical thinking. I think you have to link all of this to the failure of many colleges and universities to really invest in the whole process of preparing the next generation of teachers and students. Colleges of education on most campuses are very low status units; they are assigned overwhelming responsibility for teacher education even though those of us in the liberal arts are not very invested in it and don't give our education colleagues a lot of support for this mission.

I think we make the outside-of-class life look a lot more attractive and involving and engaging than we do the in-class life. When students join a college, initially

We make the outside-of-class life look a lot more attractive and involving and engaging than we do the in-class life. We unintentionally socialize students into college more in terms of the social aspects of the experience than in terms of the academic experience.

they have very little contact with faculty, they have very little contact with what the academic enterprise is all about, and they are welcomed into the academy by some very enthusiastic, friendly, and competent social administrators and staff. I think we unintentionally socialize students into college more in terms of the social aspects of the experience than in terms of the academic experience.

**SCHROEDER:** So is part of the problem that perhaps we are giving students mixed messages?

**GARDNER:** I don't think there is any question about it. We certainly are. All you have to do is look at any admissions promotional materials, such as a college view book or Web site, and the way the college experience is portrayed visually for students. If you do a content analysis of the photographs, you are going to find in most publications a disproportionate number of photos showing students in recreational, leisure, and social pursuits. It really sets a tone.

**SCHROEDER:** You've been involved with a variety of initiatives that have been designed to stimulate higher levels of student engagement. Are there any best practices that you could identify?

**GARDNER:** I think we have a pretty clear idea of some best practices, but it is often a quantum leap to move from that to being willing to invest in best practices. For example, the evidence supporting Supplemental Instruction is very, very powerful: students who spend a minimum of fifty minutes a week receiving Supplemental Instruction led by another student typically do much better than like-qualified students who don't participate. This is a concept that is twenty-six years old, that has been used in a dozen countries and on about seven hundred campuses, and that is supported by a huge amount of research. It tells me that if we invest more time in having faculty as well as other types of educators, but especially faculty, recruit and supervise and

reward and evaluate their very best students for teaching other students, we will have a lot more successful student learning. A lot of examples drawn from pedagogies involve more active learning group work or formalized study groups, not only making assistance available but actually making students use it. I think we are very reluctant to use the authority we have to compel students to do some of the things we know are better for students if only they will do them. I think we've gotten too focused on treating them as independent adults and letting them sink or swim on their own. I was more inclined to do that when I was younger, but the older I got the more I realized that at least my students in South Carolina were more likely to be successful if I made them do certain things. Once the students did them, they found out that they were helpful, and then they pursued them voluntarily. One of the things we've learned from the instrument Your First College Year, which can be used as a posttest of the UCLA Freshman Survey, is that students recognize they need help and they report all kinds of stress, but do they go get the help? No, they don't. A best practice would be to mandate student participation in more of these interventions.

**SCHROEDER:** Are you suggesting, similar to Dick Light at Harvard, that we need to become more intrusive in students' academic life?

**GARDNER:** Yes, I think we've given them far more freedom than they know what to do with, and I don't think they are making very constructive use of it. They are making lots of choices in the cocurriculum and in the off-campus employment sector, but they are not making as many or as wise choices about what might keep them more focused on the academic side of the college experience.

**SCHROEDER:** You just mentioned one of the instruments that you and your colleagues have been involved in,

We are approaching colleges and universities with the assumption that they already know what they need to know about their first-year students and about how that knowledge is related to student success—but they just don't know they know it.

## Many colleges and universities are run like the American corporation: they want a quick financial return and are not thinking twenty, twenty-five years out.

Your First College Year, which is a joint project with UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute. I believe you also have a couple of other assessment initiatives under way—a national benchmarking survey and a first-year data audit tool kit. Will you tell us a little bit about these initiatives and how they can be used to improve the first-year experience?

**GARDNER:** They grow out of three grants that we, the Policy Center on the First Year of College, received to develop some new tools and procedures for assessing the first college year. I want to stress that it's the *first college year* because we have been trying to get campuses to develop a better understanding of the whole of the first-year experience, both the curriculum and the cocurriculum. We have developed the national benchmarking survey First Year Initiative in collaboration with the for-profit firm Educational Benchmarking, Inc., to evaluate the first-year seminar. First-year seminars have been around since 1882, but there has never been a nationally produced, readily available instrument to evaluate the effectiveness of these courses, which are now found on 80 percent of the baccalaureate campuses and 62 percent of the campuses of two-year community colleges.

We've finished our second year of administering the First Year Initiative, a tool developed by my colleague Randy L. Swing, at eighty-five schools, and we're very encouraged by the first year's results at sixty-two institutions. Each institution picks five peers against which to benchmark. You don't know the scores of the other five institutions, just the aggregate scores and your scores. So there is nothing competitive about this, which we expect will produce more genuine motivation and broader participation. Some thinking about what we call the *pedagogy of engagement* has emerged from the first survey. Swing found that the seminars most highly rated by students are those that are most likely to use what we are calling *engaging pedagogies*. This takes us back to the behavior of the instructor as opposed to the behavior of the student. We are also finding that the seminars thought of most highly are those in which student leaders play a key role, and we find for the first time some pretty persuasive evidence that students rate more highly

courses that have at least two, preferably three, hours of credit as opposed to the one-credit model. This is very important because the one-credit model is the most common. My hope is that the evidence we are producing will encourage colleges to do a better job of training their instructors to use more of these engaging pedagogies and to give serious consideration to increasing the amount of credit to at least two and preferably three hours per term, and perhaps even over multiple terms.

The second instrument, the Data Audit Tool Kit, is a project we undertook with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. This was initially the brainchild of Peter Ewell, their senior scholar, and I sort of leaped on it and suggested that we collaborate. The tool kit teaches colleges how to extract more and better data from their existing sources and then synthesize the data to create a more complete picture of what's really happening to their first-year students. We are approaching colleges and universities with the assumption that they already know what they need to know about their first-year students and about how that knowledge is related to student success—but they just don't know they know it. In other words, they have the information but don't know where it's found and how to get it. Most schools are not going to make serious changes in what they do for first-year students without some form of evidence, and this is a further effort to try to produce more evidence to help bring about change.

**SCHROEDER:** So all three of these tools—Your First College Year, the First Year Initiative, and the First Year Data Audit Tool Kit—really can help institutions improve and create even more innovative ways to connect with first-year students.

**GARDNER:** That's right. They're all designed to improve assessment of the first-year student experience, with the hope that you then use that information to actually make decisions. This is the heretical notion that you'd actually use assessments to bring about educational improvement.

**SCHROEDER:** Let's shift to another kind of heretical notion, which I think is becoming more accepted: the



One reason that so many of the student affairs units got clobbered during the last recession and will get clobbered again this time is that the key decision makers saw them as being so separate and therefore less important.

emphasis not so much on teaching but on student learning. You've been a strong proponent of the *Student Learning Imperative* [SLI, published in 1996 by the American College Personnel Association]. What do you see as the current status of the SLI? Also, how would you characterize the state of academic-student affairs partnerships in relation to student learning?

**GARDNER:** I'm glad you asked me this because it is something I've been increasingly concerned about. I am a tremendous fan of the *Student Learning Imperative*. I think it made a tremendous amount of sense. It painted in concise, understandable, and clear language a comprehensive and thoughtful picture of where and how learning takes place and how learning can be more effectively achieved if faculty and student affairs officers work together to pursue a more holistic approach to student learning. I think the strategy was necessary after the last recession, during which many student affairs positions were cut, and I saw a lot of attention to SLI between 1994 and 1998. Since then, unfortunately, it has just dropped off the screen. When I've asked people if they are using SLI, I get these great big blank looks. I think that student affairs folks have abandoned a valuable intellectual tool, and I frankly haven't seen anything else they have produced that could replace it in terms of intellectually viable substance. When I reflect on this, I see that my student affairs colleagues have been major partners and agents for change with respect to how we think about undergraduate education; but quite uniquely, the intellectual leadership is provided by people who aren't in student affairs. That is, a number of seminal thinkers and scholars of higher education have developed a body of theory that is put into practice by student affairs officers rather than having student affairs officers develop both the theory and the models for practice. Many, if not most, of the leading thinkers for the profession are very near retirement or have already retired, and I'm concerned about where the next generation of intellectual leadership in student affairs is. The failure to make the most out of the *Student Learning Imperative* further signals to me that there is a funda-

mental problem. On some campuses I see student affairs units that are working hard to rethink, reorient, restructure themselves to be firmly focused on the learning mission. But on other campuses it's as if this attention given to student learning and the *Student Learning Imperative* never happened. We are still into running housing for housing's sake, and activities for the sake of activities. I don't know why they don't get it.

**SCHROEDER:** In light of your concerns, are there some implications for the preparation programs? For example, the master's programs that are designed to form young student affairs educators? Are there some things that need to be done at that level?

**GARDNER:** I question whether the most appropriate preparation route for student affairs professionals is or should be the terminal degree in education. When I see the way the system is now working, and the enormous cultural divides that exist between the way student affairs professionals think and the way faculty think, I have to ascribe some of this to their training. Frankly, I think that many of the student affairs professionals I've known would have been just as well served had they stopped with a master's in college student personnel administration and then earned a doctorate in a traditional academic discipline. They would have been able to teach, to hold some type of faculty appointment, and they would have learned to take a more analytical approach to matters. Now, I know it's more complicated than that—a lot has to do with personalities and with the nature of their undergraduate experiences—but I am just not persuaded that the advanced degree in education is serving many of these people when they actually get into the profession.

**SCHROEDER:** Given the need for student affairs folks and academic affairs folks to work cooperatively and indeed collaboratively to create a more seamless first-year experience, what kind of institutional leadership is needed to make this a reality?

**GARDNER:** Clearly this has to start with the chief executive officer of the institution. For the kind of integra-



tion we are talking about, the president of the university or the college has to insist on integration and true collaboration. This is a challenge because the majority of American college campus leaders are people who never used student services. In the 1950s or 1960s in most American colleges, other than the few big research universities, there just weren't student affairs officers. There were no financial aid offices prior to 1965 and there weren't any career centers. It will be some time before we get more people moving into the ranks of CEO-level jobs who experienced an environment that was shaped in some meaningful way by the input of student affairs professionals. For much of the past half century, the argument has been that we are going to be better off if we have a totally separate student affairs division reporting to a vice president who reports directly to the president. I am not persuaded any longer that this is the most effective model.

**SCHROEDER:** So would placing student affairs under the provost be one strategy to increase integration and coherence?

**GARDNER:** There is no question that there would be more integration if everything passed through academic channels. One reason that so many of the student affairs units got clobbered during the last recession and will get clobbered again this time is that the key decision makers saw them as being so separate and therefore less important. That created a self-fulfilling prophecy, and we are feeling the consequences today.

**SCHROEDER:** Let's shift gears. We've been talking about the first-year experience, but you've been a strong advocate all your life for the senior-year experience. Tell us a little bit about its current status: What is going well, and what needs to be done in terms of addressing unfinished business?

**GARDNER:** More and more educators are realizing that the two key windows for capturing data on students for assessment purposes are when they enter college and when they leave it. You need to know about them when they enter so you've got a baseline against which to measure what you've done for and with them as they

leave. And I think the assessment movement, thanks to the accreditors, has encouraged more attention to be paid to the senior-year transition. As educators became increasingly interested in the first year, they recognized a lot of similarities between the first year and the last year, and that many of the strategies we have been developing for the first year might also help pave the way for a successful transition out of the university or college. I'm talking about partnerships between faculty and student affairs officers, special seminars on transition issues, much more integration of career planning, ritual and ceremony for arriving and departing students, and efforts to build enthusiasm for the institution as students arrive and as they depart. In addition, colleges need to be more successful in cultivating alumni because of the decline in state appropriations and the realization that we are going to be continually more dependent on discretionary gifts from our alumni. So more attention is being paid to the senior year and there has been a renaissance of interest in the medieval practice of the capstone course. These courses are labor intensive and very expensive, but colleges are realizing that you need to provide the most empowering, introspective, reflective, intellectual experiences for your departing students or they are not going to think much of you as they walk out the door. I have to say, however, that it is a lot harder to sell college and university administrators on investing in the senior-year initiative than in the first-year initiative because they don't see an immediate return of financial resources from the investment in the senior year. Many colleges and universities are run like the American corporation: they want a quick financial return and are not thinking twenty, twenty-five years out. But there are institutions saying that if we provide a certain experience for a student when he or she is twenty-two years old, we're more likely to receive major gifts when they are fifty-two.

**SCHROEDER:** You and Betsy Barefoot recently founded the National Policy Center on the First-Year of College at Brevard College in North Carolina. What is its purpose and what are some of the major projects you are sponsoring?

If we provide a certain experience for students when they are twenty-two years old, we're more likely to receive major gifts when they are fifty-two.

## Press Samples (newspaper articles, television stories, etc.)

### Press articles

- LA TIMES 2/5/88 [http://articles.latimes.com/1988-02-05/news/li-27542\\_1\\_freshman-year-experience](http://articles.latimes.com/1988-02-05/news/li-27542_1_freshman-year-experience)
- CHE 3/21/90 <http://www.chronicle.com/article/CoursesPrograms-to/70052>
- CHE 1/30/98 <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Journal-Names-More-Than-80/99478>
- CHE 10/7/87 <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=john+AND+gardner&pg=5&id=EJ359594>
- NYT Education Life 11/6/88 <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/11/06/education/survival-courses-for-freshmen.html?pagewanted=all>

### Textbooks

- Your College Experience  
<http://www.macmillanlearning.com/Catalog/product/yourcollegetextbook-twelfthedition-gardner/about/overview#tab>
- Step by Step to College and Career Success  
<http://www.macmillanlearning.com/Catalog/product/stepbysteptocollegeandcareersuccess-seventhedition-gardner/about/overview#tab>
- Your College Experience  
[https://books.google.com/books/about/Your\\_College\\_Experience.html?id=zsBzPQAACAAJ](https://books.google.com/books/about/Your_College_Experience.html?id=zsBzPQAACAAJ)

## Videos and/or presentations available online

### Video presentations

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hI-YgmNulY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVbYnJoMCGQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTKicX7zIAI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7uAI5II6fE>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rs\\_riEEaPAY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rs_riEEaPAY)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYKhFc3s\\_GM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYKhFc3s_GM)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2mDfEGulkk>

### Link to a Gardner Institute web page that contains additional video

<http://www.jngi.org/celebrating-excellence-in-undergrad-education/>

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Analyze & Plan To Build a Plan	Act & Monitor To Implement a Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retention Data</li> <li>Analytics Data (Historic)</li> <li>Planning Retreat</li> <li>Action Plan Templates and Support</li> <li>Visit</li> <li>SIPS Survey</li> <li>Advisory Support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation Templates and Support</li> <li>Retention Data</li> <li>Analytics System</li> <li>Predictive Analytics Collaborative</li> <li>Optional Visit</li> <li>SIPS Survey</li> <li>Advisory Support</li> </ul>

**OUR MISSION:** The John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education is a non-profit organization dedicated to partnering with colleges, universities, philanthropic organizations, educators, and other entities to increase institutional responsibility for improving outcomes associated with teaching, learning, retention, and completion. Through its efforts the Institute will strive to advance higher education's larger goal of achieving equity and social justice.

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**John N. Gardner Institute**  
FOR EXCELLENCE IN UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

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August 25, 2017

Lemuel W. Watson,  
Executive Director - Center for Innovation in Higher Education  
Professor and Fulbright Scholar  
Educational Leadership and Policies  
College of Education  
University of South Carolina  
820 South Main Street  
Columbia, SC 29208

Dear Dr. Watson,

Thank you for the invitation to write this letter of support for your nomination of John N. Gardner for the Brock International Prize in Education. I cannot imagine a more worthy candidate for this honor. I have had the honor of knowing and working with John Gardner for 20 years now, since I first began working for the Higher and Adult Education book series for Jossey-Bass (now an imprint of Wiley). As lead editor of that series for more than a decade, I came to trust John as one of the key thinkers (and do-ers) in the field of higher education. Not only was his own work of unquestionable importance, but his insights on the issues of the day and the important work that others were doing were also a great help to me. John has continued to be a great advisor to me since I moved to Stylus Publishing in 2015, and I look forward to working with him on any future book projects that he may undertake.

My professional interactions with John have included work on several books, all of them important resources for the field. The books we worked on together have the great combination of immediately actionable advice for practitioners in whatever part of the field he's addressing (faculty, student affairs staff, administrative leaders), along with a solid knowledge base that makes them perfect for course texts in graduate programs that train the next generation of practitioners, thereby spreading best practices through the field. The impressive numbers of sales nationally (and internationally) prove to me that he knows what sort of resources are needed to make an impact on issues that really matter. And they matter in the sense of making a difference not only to those who read the books, but the students who benefit from improved programs, better teaching, and so on. Those students are more likely to stay in college until they complete their degrees, and then go on to become productive and well-adjusted members of society. We know those students will earn more throughout their lives, be better equipped to manage changing careers, and also be more engaged as citizens in their communities.

That is a common thread: John's work benefits those who work in higher education because he helps tackle the toughest challenges institutions and educators face. But the issues he takes on ultimately benefit the students, improving their experience, and helping them connect college to

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Mr. Lemuel W. Watson  
August 25, 2017  
Page 2

success in life. Thus the great benefit is to society as a whole, as John's work leads to more successful graduates.

John was a leader in the field before I met him, and he's still out there pushing the envelope. No doubt he is best known for the many editions of his excellent books for undergraduate students (Your College Experience, etc.), but I am more familiar with his work on the professional side, helping campuses do a better job of serving students. His foundational work on the First Year Experience has made a tremendous impact over the years, as more and more institutions put in place better experiences for first-year students, thus keeping more students in school during that crucial year. Those efforts naturally led to other issues of student in transition from year to year in college, transfer students, sophomore slump, and making sure the senior year is an effective transition to the world beyond college. This important work was promoted through publications, direct work with colleges, annual meetings in the US, and eventually an international conference as well.

Never one to rest on his laurels, John looks around and finds the next challenge that needs his attention. Having brought along the next generation of leadership for the First Year Experience organization he founded, John has now turned his attention to one of the greatest challenges for higher education in our time, the gateway courses. Seeing that these courses were causing massive numbers of students to drop out of college, he took on the task of studying and organizing a response to the problem, once again directing the focus to the toughest problem with the most potential impact from its solution.

I consider John a living national treasure, but the irony is that he is the most unassuming person, never one to toot his own horn. Therefore it gives me great pleasure to recommend John Gardner for the honor of the Brock International Prize in Education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David S. Brightman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

David S. Brightman  
Senior Editor, Higher Education  
Stylus Publishing, LLC



27 August 2017

Selection Committee  
Brock International Prize in Education

To the Committee:

I would like to nominate John N. Gardner for the Brock International Prize in Education.

According to the description I read, the Brock International Prize in Education recognizes an individual who has made a specific innovation or contribution to the science and art of education, resulting in a significant impact on the practice or understanding of the field of education.

No one that I can think of has made as substantive, impactful, and widespread a contribution to education as John Gardner. His work is widely known and routinely applauded for its enormous impact on literally thousands and thousands of undergraduates throughout the United States and beyond. John was the inventor of the first year seminar while he was a longtime faculty member at the University of South Carolina. Under his thoughtful guidance, the first year seminar became virtually a default program in many if not most of the colleges and universities throughout the United States. He not only worked to create and elaborate that course at the University of South Carolina, but he consciously and deliberately built an organization to disseminate the ideas and the work, resulting in its widespread diffusion. The organization that he created at the University of South Carolina still exists today as a robust and vibrant organization dedicated to first-year students and students in transition.

After an enormously successful 30 year career at the University of South Carolina, John then continued his work, broadening and deepening his focus on student success through what began as a policy center on the first year in North Carolina. The organization that he created is now, after 18 years, another major force in American higher education. Appropriate to his own ever-expanding understanding and interest, the John N. Gardner Institute now addresses a variety of student success issues, still principally in the first year of college. Some of his most important recent work has focused on redesigning gateway courses in a project known as Gateways to Completion. He and his talented staff at the Gardner Institute have been working with colleges and universities throughout the United States, providing both inspiration and very explicit guidance about how to improve student success.


His record is simply astonishing. He continues to create innovative and consequential programs that have contributed significantly to increasing student success on literally hundreds of campuses throughout the United States. His work has been recognized by countless groups for its impact on student success, particularly for low income, first-generation and students of color.

John's record of success and impact is unassailable. But what the record does not show is the nature of the man. So let me also add a personal comment. I have known John since 1999, and have served on the board of the Gardner Institute for the past five years. So I have watched John interact with institutions, with colleagues, with his board, and with his own staff. What his formal record of accomplishment does not reveal is the depth of passion and commitment John has for student success. He has literally devoted his life to that work, and now, at an age when many would be content to rest on their laurels, John continues to push himself and those around him to achieve greater impact, to design more innovative programs, and to advocate in many different quarters for the transformation of our institutions. John does so despite being very humble about his own accomplishments. What I have particularly noticed while watching him interact with his staff is that he is a kind and decent human being, deeply principled, who is concerned for the welfare of others. He is also profoundly committed to the future of the United States, particularly to assure that we have a thoughtful and educated citizenry to preserve and protect our democracy.

As I said at the beginning of this letter, I literally can think of no one in the field of higher education today who has done more, over a longer period, to affect the lives of students and their families through his persistent and laser-like focus on student success. Thousands and thousands of students have had their lives transformed by his creative and imaginative program designs.

I strongly recommend John N. Gardner for the Brock International Prize in Education. There is no one more deserving of this prestigious award.

Sincerely yours,



George L. Mehaffy  
Vice President for Academic Leadership and Change  
American Association of State Colleges and Universities  
1307 New York Ave NW  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
P. 202 478-4672 (direct)  
C. 202 468-4781



UNIVERSITY OF  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**

Harris Pastides  
President

August 24, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: The Brock International Prize in Education

It is my great pleasure to provide a strong letter of recommendation for John N. Gardner, Senior Fellow and Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of South Carolina, for the Brock International Prize in Education Award. It is fitting that this nomination should come at such a turbulent time in world history as some of John's greatest work began in response to another time of unease in America.

In May of 1970, following the tragic protests on the campus of Kent State University, over 700 university and college campuses across the nation, including the University of South Carolina, erupted in anti-war protests. On the Columbia campus, two buildings were overtaken by students, hundreds were arrested and there was substantial property damage. In the wake of this civil disobedience USC Professor Gardner decided to create an educational experiment designed to, "build trust, understanding, and open lines of communication between students, faculty, staff and administrators." Launched as University 101 in 1972, the course encouraged students to "connect" with their campus — to have more positive attitudes and behaviors toward the university. It was also designed to increase student retention. And yet another component included a major faculty development initiative to improve teaching in all undergraduate courses.

Today, 45 years later, John's work with first-year students has been recognized and implemented nationwide. In fact, 90 percent of colleges and universities across the country now have a first-year seminar. In 2016, at Carolina, 3,878 students enrolled in 218 sections of University 101 making it the largest course offering on campus. The GPA of students who enrolled in University 101 was higher than those who did not, and the six-year graduation rate for students who took University 101 was significantly higher. Also great news, 95 percent of our instructors shared with us that they "enjoyed teaching University 101." U.S. News and World Report, for 14 consecutive years, has ranked the first-year experience as "a program to look for." And, as John will often tell you, there hasn't been a riot since.



Today, John serves as the founding director and Senior Fellow with the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. He provides professional development events and develops new topics for publication. He is a prolific writer on the First-Year Experience and serves as a member of the Advisory Committee for the USC Connect Initiative on our university. Clearly, John's 1999 "retirement" never happened. He continues to shape and improve the First-Year experience and his rich legacy has given us more graduates, better teaching, and students who have learned how to persist and discover both academic and social success.

I believe that John's educational "experiment" will continue to evolve as he and others address such critical issues as the shrinking middle class, increasing measures of poverty and rising levels of inequality. John's work has been and continues to hold a transformational power. His reach is wide – changing lives from the Pacific coast to the heartland to the Atlantic shores while also attracting global interest. For these reasons, I heartedly recommend Dr. John N. Gardner for this prestigious award.

Sincerely,

Harris Pastides



HP/kgj



UNIVERSITY OF  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**

College of Arts and Sciences

Ken D. Shimizu  
Professor and Chair

Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry

August 18, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

**Dr. Lemuel W. Watson, a juror for the Brock International Prize in Education, has requested that I provide of letter of support for Dr. John Gardner whom he is nominating for this award. I am both happy and privileged to do so. Because of my many years in higher education and my intense interest in educational innovation, I am familiar with the Brock Prize. John Gardner is definitely deserving of serious consideration for this most prestigious award.**

**It is hard to know where to start in a letter for John. He and I both spent most of our academic careers at the University of South Carolina. He arrived in 1967 and I arrived in 1969. I first met John in the mid-70's when he began presenting his ideas about the freshman year experience in a university course numbered University 101. I continued to follow his ideas as I taught general chemistry and saw many students fail to be successful in freshman year "gateway courses". I next encountered John in his role in the Provost's office as an Associate Provost for Regional Campuses. I was working to coordinate freshman and sophomore chemistry courses with my regional campus colleagues. John was always most helpful when I had questions or concerns.**

**However, John and I began to develop a true professional and even personal relationship when I became Chair of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry in 1986. That was the same year that John became Executive Director of the University of South Carolina's National Resource Center for the First Year Experience. John and I both believed that University 101 courses were more meaningful when taught by the best faculty teachers in a unit. However, our best teachers were also, in many cases, some of our best researchers. We devised a plan where the department would match the stipend offered by John's Center and we would personally encourage targeted faculty to teach University 101. When I became Dean of the College of Science and Mathematics, we shared the same plan**

for all departments in the College. I need to emphasize the idea was John's and I supplied funds from the unit. The plan was successful enough that John then turned to the College of Computing and Engineering so that students in a 101 class were all potential engineering majors and the engineering faculty taught those classes. From all reports that idea was also very successful.

John and I developed a close relationship when I became Provost and I began to have a true understanding of how significant John's contributions were on a national and even international platform. Anywhere and everywhere I traveled, when academics learned that I was from the University of South Carolina, I almost always received some comment about John Gardner and our Resource Center. You might think one would know a dean or faculty member or even a football coach, but it felt so rewarding to have a positive comment or compliment about an academic program at the university.

John's CV essentially speaks for itself. His many accomplishments are outstanding to say the least. Being a scientist, I have had the opportunity to meet and interact with many creative and hard-working people. However, I can confidently say that John Gardner is the most creative, innovative, dedicated and hard-working person that I have ever known. He never stops thinking about the college experience and how it can be improved. I once remarked to John in a telephone conversation that I was teaching a senior-level chemistry course and many of the students seemed to be "cruising" instead of truly applying themselves. The next day, I received in campus mail a copy of John's book The Senior Year Experience (Josey-Bass Inc. 1998). He was always one step ahead!

I will never forget the day that John and I met for what I thought was to be another outstanding report about what he and his colleagues were doing at the Center. Instead, he informed me that he had decided to leave the university and move to the mountains of North Carolina. I was truly devastated! I asked him several times what I could do to change his mind and I was prepared to do almost anything. However, he had clearly made his decision. The university has done everything possible to ensure that John remains associated with us in any way possible. Although he lives in Brevard, NC., John is at the university on a regular basis and is still very active as an adjunct faculty member.

As I noted earlier, there is no need for me to go through all of John's publications, books, awards, etc. The list is extensive and demonstrates how hard he works. I would call attention to the fact that he has been a consultant to over 500 schools nationally and internationally, has received numerous awards and has received

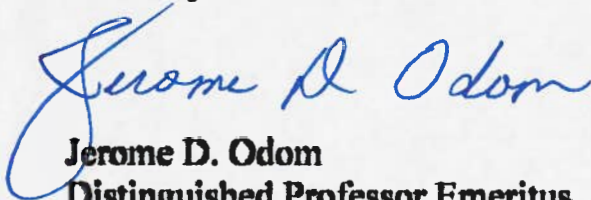


twelve honorary degrees. Notable among these are Purdue University, where John received his MA in 1966, Indiana University and the University of South Carolina. Very seldom does a university bestow an honorary degree on one of its own faculty.

My wife and I have visited John and his wife, Betsy Barefoot, several times in their beautiful mountain home. We always have wonderfully stimulating conversations and it is crystal clear to me that John has no intention of stopping, or even slowing, his creative thinking and hard work to advance his ideas of the college experience. As it changes, he changes and is always ahead of the curve.

It is difficult for me to envision anyone more qualified than John Gardner to receive the Brock International Prize in Education.

Sincerely,



**Jerome D. Odom**  
**Distinguished Professor Emeritus**  
**Provost Emeritus**  
**University of South Carolina**



UNIVERSITY OF  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**

Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs,  
Vice Provost, and Dean of Students

August 24, 2017

To whom it may concern:

As a colleague and admirer of John N. Gardner for nearly 40 years, it is a privilege for me to write in support of his well-deserved nomination for the Brock International Prize in Education.

Gardner's innovations and contributions to higher education have had seismic impact on the practice of both curricula development and co-curricular strategies over the past 40-plus years. His work in the early 1970s on the concept of the freshman seminar laid the foundation for the proliferation of a new concept in American higher education – that of student success as a result of intentional institutional efforts in helping new students transition to college.

Gardner's work, and the resulting First-Year Experience movement, was an outgrowth of the changes in American society and higher education in the post-WWII landscape. With expanding numbers of college students resulting from returning GIs and increasing numbers of women attending college, the higher education industry faced ever-expanding challenges over several decades in the middle of the 20th century. The institutional approaches and administrative attitudes of "survival of the fittest" pervasive in higher educational institutions at the time needed to change to one of an ethical and moral responsibility to the students the institution accepted for admission. No longer could institutions take pride in the percentages of students who were weeded out, but instead, needed to change to take pride in the success of the students who graduated and went on to make important contributions to their families, their communities, their fields and society at large. Gardner's early work at the University of South Carolina, where I met him, provided the foundation for his later, and more far-reaching, work nationally and internationally.


The concept of support during times of transition is the foundation for his work and influence. Early on Gardner realized that his experience in basic training for the U.S. Air Force provided him and his fellow new officers a very intentional enculturation to the new environment of the armed forces. He also knew that American corporations invested significant resources to training new management employees. He asked, why do colleges and universities not also focus efforts and resources to helping new students transition to their new learning environment?

Gardner's early work in designing the curriculum for and providing administrative leadership for USC's freshman seminar became a model for colleges and universities across the country. His early use of assessment strategies to identify what worked, what didn't work and how data can help improve a program caught the attention of campus leaders beyond his own campus. Gardner gave generously of his time and energy to help other institutions throughout the United States, in Canada and abroad to replicate and adapt strategies at USC to other institutional settings. As this work spread and took hold, a new discipline emerged: the First-Year Experience. Developments over the past 40 years, with the support and leadership of a center Gardner founded at USC, The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, and his more recent John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education continue to this day. Today, more than 90% of colleges and universities of all types and in all sectors of American higher education have a freshman/first-year seminar. In addition, other efforts considered first-year experience initiatives are

ubiquitous on the higher education landscape. Graduate programs in higher education and student affairs have created courses on the First-Year Experience, and one institution, Kennesaw State University, even has created a master's degree program in the First-Year Experience. It is clear that the influence of this one individual has been, indeed, significant. Collaboration has been a hallmark of Gardner's lifelong work, all with the ultimate goal of helping students succeed.

The long-term benefit to institutions and individuals, as well as society in general, of the work of John N. Gardner cannot be underestimated. Countless students have persisted at colleges and universities because of the influence and impact of the courses and programs that Gardner championed. And so it is with sincere enthusiasm that I provide this letter of support for John N. Gardner's nomination for the Brock International Prize in Education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dennis A. Pruitt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "P".

Dennis A. Pruitt

August 14, 2017

Lemuel W. Watson  
Executive Director – Center for Innovation in Higher education  
Professor and Fulbright Scholar  
Educational Leadership and Policies  
College of Education  
University of South Carolina  
Columbia, SC

Dear Professor Watson,

Please accept this letter of reference on behalf of Dr. John N Gardner who has been nominated to receive the Brock International Prize in Education Award. Although his resume is quite robust and revealing, it still does not do justice to the broad impact that his shadow has cast upon higher education and on individual leaders like myself. I have known John for approximately 30 years and I consider him to be a professional colleague, a fellow scholar, and a cherished personal friend. His personal and professional values have never wavered in support of diversity, equity, and inclusion. His research and writings have shaped the ideas, structures, strategies, and programs nationally about the Student Experience in the First Year of College. Thousands of students owe their success in the First Year to John, his wife, Betsy Barefoot, and his colleges.

Let me begin with an example of John Gardner's influence on me and ultimately how this reshaped the First Year of College at a major research university. One of my proudest moments occurred in the spring semester of 2001 when USA Today newspaper wrote a featured article (front page of the LIFE section) about efforts on college campuses to assist entering students with their adjustment to college. One of my creations, the First Year College at North Carolina State University, was highlighted throughout the article as a model of success. When I was interviewed many times following the publication of the article and I was asked where I/we came up with the concept, I always answered: "It was the breakthrough research and practical application of the work of John Gardner and his colleagues at the University of South Carolina that inspired me to evolve from successful First Year courses and seminars to a comprehensive First Year College". The FYC model at NC State soon became a national model for large research universities that, heretofore, admitted large numbers of students directly into engineering and other STEM areas only to see half that number exit in 2-3 semesters. I had seen John present at conferences; I had read his scholarly work; and I visited the University of South Carolina. I was one of his converts and I was able to conjoin his work to my analyses of student learning styles, faculty teaching styles and effectiveness, diversity, and student persistence/retention. My affiliation with John caused my scholarship to be more rigorous and productive.

An analysis of the scholarly publications of John, many together with his wife Betsy Barefoot, chronicles the evolution of his/their thought and the application of his/their ideas. His work has taken the form of the theoretical underpinnings of his ideas about students in the First Year, a user's handbook for improving the first college year, textbooks for undergraduate students, incorporating writing into the student learning process, first year civic engagement as a transformative theme, library issues in the first year, the role of department chairs in the first year, instructor training and first year seminars, the role of learning communities in the first year, and residence life and the first year. Few authors, writing about the student experience, have chosen such a broad array of topical areas, but it was important for John to make all of these connections and to share his insights with us.

Another example of John's comprehensive vision was on exhibit as the Gardner Institute hosted a conference whose theme involved the impact of Gateway courses on diverse students in the first year. Who has difficulty with Gateway courses: first-generation students, low-income students, students of color, some community college transfers and returning adults? Students who do not negotiate Gateway courses in the first three semesters often do not persist or their performance is predictably low. I was honored that John chose me to be the keynote speaker for his conference. John wanted me to confront those in the audience with the stark facts about the inequities that exist for certain students in the first year and the differential impact on their academic and personal performance when we do not confront such inequities.

Other testaments to John's national reputation and his impact on the higher education landscape are reflected in the 12 Honorary Doctoral Degrees that he has received together with the Recognitions and Awards from Professional Associations. While these awards are important I can personally speak for the thousands of students who have matriculated through the First Year College at NC State, who graduated on time, and who are on successful career pathways. I said earlier that I was one of John's converts, but more than that I was/am one of his instruments. I have spread his gospel for 25 years and have generated new First year Programs/Structures at my last four institutions (NC State U., Texas A&M U., SUNY Albany, and now Fayetteville State University). I have consulted with another 100 institutions and state systems and have initiated the creation of their First Year efforts.

I cannot think of anyone more committed and student-centered than John Gardner. As such, I offer my highest recommendation for his candidacy for the Brock International Prize in Education Award.

Sincerely,

James A. Anderson  
Chancellor  
Fayetteville State University





August 21, 2017

*Office of  
the President*

Brock International Prize in Education  
2021 S. Lewis, Suite 415  
Tulsa, OK 74104-5733

Dear Members of the Award Selection Committee:

I am very pleased to offer my strong support of John N. Gardner's nomination for the prestigious Brock International Prize in Education. Throughout his long and distinguished career, Gardner has contributed significantly to the "science and art of education" reform, transforming the landscape of undergraduate education through his unwavering, innovative focus on and dedication to the design, delivery, quality, and assessment of the entire undergraduate enterprise with a transformative focus on students. He has done this through efforts that span student affairs, academic affairs, business affairs, and research and assessment units. Gardner's reform movement has spanned decades and has become "business as usual" in most institutions of higher education nationally and internationally, including at the University of Texas at El Paso.

Beginning in 1967 with his own teaching of UNIV 101 at the University of South Carolina (USC), as adjunct faculty, Gardner saw immediately the immense gap in students' preparation as they transitioned to higher education—whether public or private, 2- or 4-year. Beginning with an emphasis on the First-Year Experience (what was then known as the Freshman Year Experience), within a decade Gardner recognized that students across the undergraduate spectrum could benefit significantly from attention to their transition to higher education well beyond academics. At that point, he expanded his efforts to include not only first-year students, but also students in transition throughout the undergraduate experience, including transfer students and the Senior Year Experience. Over the past four decades, John N. Gardner has systematically impacted the national and international scholarship on and practice of delivering undergraduate education, focusing his attention on student success—retaining students, beginning with the first day of college, through completion of the undergraduate degree.

Gardner's impact is widespread nationally and internationally. Because of his efforts in leading this reform movement in higher education, most institutions of higher education have implemented a context-specific program to enhance student success. Gardner and his staff have facilitated context-specific efforts at programming, considering institutions' fiscal capacity, student population, vision and mission, and demographic profile. For example, UTEP has benefited significantly over nearly three decades from Gardner's insights into initiating, sustaining, and developing programs to support the college entry, retention, and completion of our Hispanic-majority student body. During that time, UTEP transformed into a National Research University; our needs changed, and our resource capacity also changed. Very much sensitive to this growth and change, Gardner offered significant insights into our programming beginning in 1999 when we designed our initial First-year Seminar that evolved into our current international award-winning program, the UTEP Entering Student Program. From nineteen sections of a first-year seminar in 1999—designed as an academic model to offer students support for their entry into college, and college credit so as not to require our financially-sensitive student body to incur additional costs—to more than one-hundred sections today, the First-year Seminar has been a dynamic course that has evolved over time with the changing institution, most of this evolution accompanied by intensive consultations with Gardner and/or his colleagues and attendance at annual conferences and special meetings.

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El Paso, Texas 79968  
(915) 747-5555  
FAX: (915) 747-5069*



Shortly after the first-year seminar was developed and offered at UTEP, the Entering Student Program was created, adding several additional components bearing Gardner's signature efforts: learning communities, peer leader support, library and advising collaborations, and end-of-the-year research symposia for students to show their work. Each of these components is closely linked to Gardner's contributions and his philosophical assumptions regarding entering students and students in transition. Even today, the result of his input into UTEP's 2016 QEP, the UTEP seminar is undergoing significant curricular reform and revision. Literally thousands of students' lives worldwide have been qualitatively changed and dozens of faculty's pedagogical approach to and understanding of students' needs have been impacted over the years, just as UTEP's students' lives have been transformed.

John N. Gardner's work has evolved over more than four decades from teaching the first-year seminar at USC to the establishment and sustained growth of a major policy institute that has become a driving force in undergraduate education: The John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education. During his career, Gardner has created two higher education centers dedicated to the efforts surrounding student success:

- The National Resource Center on the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition (established as The National Resource Center on the Freshman-Year Experience) and
- The John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education (founded as the Policy Center on the First-Year of College).

Looking at the trajectory of these two centers provides a glimpse into the dynamic change agent that Gardner has been in higher education. From its inception, The National Resource Center has been a dynamic force, beginning as a center to address the first-year experience and growing into a center that addresses all students in transition to and through their higher education experience.

Gardner's work for student retention and completion quickly extended beyond the First-Year Seminar addressing the needs of students entering and completing their senior years, as well as students transitioning from a 2-year to a 4-year institution. Gardner's ongoing attention to the national and international higher education landscape led him to the bold move in 1999 of uprooting from the USC to found the second center, again with an initial focus on the first year of college and very quickly expanding to offer services that provide excellence for the whole of the undergraduate experience. Today, the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education offers five signature services (as identified on the Institute's website):

- Teaching and Learning Academy (evidence-based collaboration where educators examine teaching practices to improve student learning in rigorous, high failure rate gateway courses)
- Retention Management (an analytics-based approach to retention for targeted cohorts)
- Gateways to Completion (a service that offers course transformation, especially for gateway courses with high failure rates)
- Foundations of Excellence (a comprehensive process and product to assist institutions create analytics-based plans for the first-year and transfer students)
- Analytics in Pedagogy and Curriculum (a focused effort to help faculty apply analytics in their courses).

UTEP benefited, in particular, from the Foundations of Excellence service, one of the inaugural efforts of the Policy Center on the First-Year of College. Foundations of Excellence is an innovative self-study approach, inviting institutions to broadly examine their policy and process practices using an evidence-based approach in collaboration with Policy Center staff. In 2007, UTEP partnered with the El Paso Community College to employ this service. Speaking again to Gardner's dynamic approach to change and reform, UTEP was among the first, if not the first, to employ the Foundations of Excellence service collaboratively with another institution. Because UTEP and EPCC are in a tight working relationship, often sharing students and fostering growth in the number of transfers each year, the facilitated study and improvement of those practices had the potential to significantly impact on students of both institutions. Today, UTEP and EPCC have processes in place that have grown and evolved based on the Foundations of Excellence.

In addition to these many examples of John Gardner's impact on UTEP, we have been very fortunate to be able to count on his frequent support in formal and informal roles. Specifically, his formal role as our SACSCOC Lead Evaluator in 2006 transformed not only our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) but our subsequent ten-year effort to reform UTEP's curriculum and advising which were the theme of the 2006 QEP, *Student Success in the Middle Years*. Because of Gardner's ongoing work with UTEP that began with the first-year experience in the mid-1990s, he provided highly relevant insights into how, moving forward, we might manage the middle years. Ten years later, UTEP was poised for the 2016 QEP to consider the whole of the undergraduate experience and student success beyond the undergraduate degree. Gardner was UTEP's "critical friend" throughout the development process for the 2016 QEP, *The Next Generation of Student Engagement and Professional Preparation at UTEP*, now branded the *UTEP Edge*. Gardner offered countless hours of phone consultations and insightful suggestions regarding the 2016 QEP; this had a substantial impact on what is evolving into yet one more transformational effort at UTEP that has been impacted by the work of and the conversations with John Gardner.

In 2007, together with his wife and scholar Betsy O. Barefoot, Gardner was awarded UTEP's highest honor, the Gran Paseño Award, given infrequently to non-alumni and supporters of UTEP. At that time, for more than 20 years, "they ha[d] shared their professional expertise, ha[d] been a sounding board for our ideas, ha[d] motivated and encouraged all of us, and ha[d] given UTEP visibility on national and international stages" (from Convocation remarks, 2007). A decade later, we could repeat those comments with increased enthusiasm.

Notably, Gardner has been awarded twelve honorary doctoral degrees, has published dozens of articles and book chapters, as well as co-authored or co-edited numerous books for both university educators and for students. His awards and presentations, workshops, institutes are too numerous to count, as seen on his CV. But, it is John Gardner's personal touch with individual institutions that transforms, creates significant impact, and serves to disseminate these practices and philosophies of change, just as it has at UTEP.

There is little doubt that John N. Gardner's lifetime of work, beginning modestly by teaching a first year seminar at USC, has inspired international reform efforts that span decades, including extraordinary innovations dedicated to growth and change, all to improve the success rates of undergraduate students. The lives of millions of students have been transformed by his work; their professional opportunities and quality of life have been impacted in countless ways. His recognition that students needed and deserved assistance in navigating the complicated tapestry of higher education institutions has changed the face of higher education. While Gardner's work is not overtly one of social justice, it most certainly is one of the most significant social justice efforts anywhere; attaining an undergraduate degree changes students' lives and their potential forever.

John N. Gardner's impact in education has been both widespread and profound. His groundbreaking work has and will continue to provide innovative ideas for meaningful change in how educators think about and plan for student success in the years ahead. I greatly appreciate this opportunity to recommend him for the Brock International Prize in Education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diana Natalicio". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Diana Natalicio  
President



# RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

August 30, 2017

Lemuel W. Watson  
Executive Director - Center for Innovation in Higher Education  
Professor and Fulbright Scholar  
Educational Leadership and Policies  
College of Education  
University of South Carolina  
[watsonlw@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:watsonlw@mailbox.sc.edu)

Dear Jurors of The Brock International Prize in Education:

This letter of support is for Dr. John N. Gardner, President of the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education, and his candidacy for The Brock International Prize in Education.

In my 26 years as a higher education administrator and having worked at large, small, urban, rural, public and private institutions, I cannot think of a more compelling individual for this prestigious award than Dr. John N. Gardner. The degree and scope of impact he has had on both theory and practice related to college student success, in my estimation, is unparalleled. His leadership in advancing the national discourse on the First-Year Experience has transformed the way higher education administrators think about college student programming, evidence analysis and performance outcomes as well as the infusion of academics and student affairs operations philosophically and in practice. The Brock International Prize in Education criteria of innovation or contribution to the science and art of education are categorically exceeded with Dr. Gardiner's nomination.

Specifically, Dr. Gardner's examination of the first year experience through extensive research, books and articles as well as the creation of the Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education, establishing annual national conferences, and creating the Foundations of Excellence (FoE) have changed the way higher education officials think about supporting all college students in their first year. For well over three decades, Dr. Gardner has been unwavering in this commitment to helping thousands of institutions, serving hundreds of thousands of students, toward improving student success. This exemplary work speaks unequivocally to The Brock International Prize in Education Award.

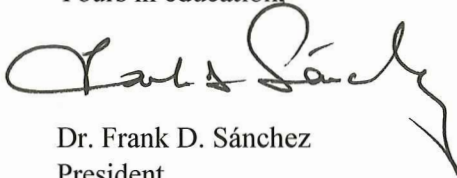
I have had the opportunity to observe Dr. Gardner in his role as national leader in the field and as a practitioner working with him at two separate institutions. Most recently, I worked with Dr. Gardner as the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at the City University of New York (CUNY). While at CUNY, now the largest urban, public university in America, I worked with Dr. Gardner to examine the first year experience at four colleges as part of a Foundations of Excellence (FoE) effort. Dr. Gardner's wealth of knowledge and experience along with the FoE template successfully guided four institutions to complete a first-year experience analysis, and FoE plan, implementation strategy and evaluation methods. The success of this work is showing improved student services by enhanced student retention, satisfaction and, ultimately, student success.

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Having the opportunity to meet thousands of higher education scholars and administrators, I would place Dr. John Gardner in the top 1 percent of individuals who have demonstrated an exemplary career in teaching, administration and service to the higher education field. Please accept my strong recommendation of Dr. Gardner for The Brock International Prize in Education.

Yours in education,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank D. Sánchez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that extends downwards and to the right.

Dr. Frank D. Sánchez  
President

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**To do any significant, focused work in higher education, each of us has to have an individual philosophy of education, which contains certain core value positions and beliefs. Here is mine, for example, which is my basis for my efforts to improve assessment of the first college year. I do not mean this to be a proscriptive recitation, instead, merely a catalyst for your own thinking.**

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1. Successful access to and attainment in higher education is the principal channel of upward social mobility in the United States.
2. Rates of failure and attrition are unacceptable and represent an enormous waste of human resources and capital. The largest amounts of failure and attrition during the college experience take place during or at the completion of the first year (or the equivalent thereof).
3. Necessary changes in pedagogies, policies, and curriculum must be based on sound assessment practices and findings, but this assessment must be mission-related and must pay appropriate respect to the vast diversity of American postsecondary institutional types. Institutions want and need to be able to compare their performance in the first college year with peer institutions and/or with aspirational groups in terms of learning outcomes vis a vis recognized, desirable standards.
4. The public demand for accountability is increasing and will continue to do so. In order to satisfy this demand, campuses must have more data on their student characteristics, what those students experience in college, how and what they are learning, and whether they are improving and receiving value-added knowledge and experiences.
5. Any efforts to improve the beginning college experience must be more connected to the K-12 pipeline than they are today. Although there are many notable efforts, the pre-college and college experiences are still largely unconnected.
6. Any effort to more seriously improve academic success during the first college year must involve more of the faculty and must be legitimized by the disciplinary cultures and bodies which measure and determine the criteria for success and advancement of faculty in their subcultures. A central issue is faculty resistance to change and the resulting need to vastly increase faculty buy-in to these proposed first-year initiatives.
7. The roles of campus chief executive, chief academic and chief financial officers, and trustees are also critical for mobilizing institutional change, for determining priorities, and for finding and allocating necessary personnel and fiscal resources; more attention must be paid to the knowledge of the first college year possessed by these four leadership categories and how they act upon this knowledge. In addition all important campus middle managers—deans and department heads—who either promote or inhibit change, must also be addressed in like fashion. Another key cohort is the institutional research professionals and other colleagues who are responsible for assessment and reaccreditation self-studies.
8. The most dominant perception held by the public and its elected representatives in terms of where responsibility for college student learning/failure rests is that the problems we face in higher education attainment are most fundamentally due to the failure of college students to take sufficient responsibility for their own learning. Pat Callan's National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, in its 1999 report "Taking Responsibility," stated the following:

*We also found agreement on what these leaders take to be the most serious problem facing higher education. For these leaders, the real obstacle is not the price tag, but the fact that many students are not sufficiently prepared to take advantage of a college education . . . the most critical factor in higher education is the responsibility taken by students themselves*

While we recognize the enormous importance of student responsibility as a basis for their learning, we will not join in full agreement this chorus of student bashing and blaming the victim. Instead, we believe that responsibility has to be jointly and equally shared by the postsecondary institutions that have admitted these students and by the students themselves.

9. The first college year should be transformational; pedagogies of engagement are known, necessary, and desirable, and student learning in the first year also must be tied to issues of civic concern.
10. The foundation of all the outcomes we desire from American higher education, for better or worse, is laid in the first college year. Unfortunately, most campuses have very little research-based data on the effectiveness of their first college year, and thus more assessment of that year (and the tools to do so) is in order.