

EDITORIAL

Preface by the guest editor

Annsilla Nyar*

Welcome to the special SANRC guest-edited issue of the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa (JSAA)*. The South African National Resource Centre for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition (SANRC) is pleased to have been afforded this opportunity by the *JSAA* to highlight some of the excellent work being undertaken in the first-year experience (FYE) knowledge community. Many of the contributors whose work is reflected in this issue are friends and colleagues of the SANRC. For example, the scholarly contributions received from our staunch supporters, Drs Jennifer Keup and Dallin George Young from the National Resource Centre for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition (NRC) based at the University of South Carolina in the United States, reflect the strength of the SANRC's three-year partnership agreement with the NRC. Other key contributions, such as that of Dr André van Zyl from the Academic Development Centre at the University of Johannesburg and Prof. James Garraway, the extended programme co-ordinator at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, are testimony to the strong support behind the establishment and consolidation of the SANRC.

What has been assembled here from the various contributors represents only a snapshot of some selected aspects of the FYE. A full and comprehensive treatment of the FYE in South Africa is not yet possible. The field of FYE remains under development and a robust culture of in-depth research into FYE is still being nurtured by the many scholars and practitioners who are passionately promoting the idea of the first year of study being integral to student transitions and success. It is these FYE scholars and practitioners who gather at the annual SANRC FYE Conference in search of the kinds of scholarly information, research and best practice that continues to inform and enrich the field of student success in South Africa. The SANRC is constantly working to draw such scholars and practitioners into a national space of collaboration and networking that will grow the field of FYE and eventually produce the kinds of researchers and academics who will make a tangible difference to how students are successfully retained in South Africa's higher education system.

* Director: South African National Resource Centre for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition (SANRC)

What is not found in this FYE-themed journal issue is set to be the subject of ongoing and future research by the SANRC. The challenge of ‘understanding the first-year experience’ – for example, through first-order questions about the theoretical underpinnings of FYE, definitional clarity, etc. – will be taken up by the SANRC in its mandate to examine the first year experience in its entirety critically. Further research outputs building on the richness of a journal issue such as this one can be expected as the SANRC grows and consolidates its place in South Africa’s higher education sector.

Annsilla Nyar