To: Faculty Senate

From: Tracey Hunter-Doniger, Chair, First Year Experience Committee, 2015-2016

Date: April 25, 2016

Re: End-of-the-Year Report

I. This year the First Year Experience Committee reviewed and approved the following courses for the 2016-2017 academic school year.

A. Learning Communities:
   - Feminist Jiu-Jitsu for Self-Defense
   - Psychological and Literary Analysis of Harry Potter
   - Latin America and the French Caribbean
   - Cross-Cultural Communication and Experience: Destination-Latin America

B. Freshman Seminar:
   - Conflict and Cooperation in American Politics
   - Pop Culture and Education
   - Ethics and Physics
   - The Zombie Brain and Non-zombie Brain: A Beginner’s Guide
   - Biology in Pop Culture
   - Out of the Lab and Into the World: Science, Media, and Society
   - Advocacy in Early Childhood Education
   - Teaching Fellows
   - Playing House, Making a Home: Houses and Families in Greece, Rome, and America
   - The Human Animal: Paleolithic Bodies in a Modern World
   - American War Literature, Hemingway to 9/11
   - Mayhem and Murder: 19th-Century Gothic Monsters
   - Vampires
   - Biomimicry: Nature as Mentor
   - Electroacoustic Worlds: Sounds and the Modern Imagination
   - Us and Them: The Politics of Identity
   - Jack the Ripper: Man and Myth
   - The Architecture of Utopia

II. Additionally the FYE Committee accomplished the following charges during the 2015-2016 academic calendar year:
   - Designed and distributed a survey to all faculty who teach FYE courses.
   - Created a student survey
   - Discussed Longitudinal Study with student interview questions
   - Investigated the raw data from 2014-2015’s senior survey
   - Revised the description for the FYE position
   - Aligned the Student Learning Outcomes to possible measures
• Review other institutions methods of collecting data for external reviews
• Discussed FYE External Review- Goals and Data Collection
• Designed a FYE Self-Study
• Reviewed the results of the faculty survey.

III. Results of Faculty Survey for the FYE Faculty Workshop

The FYE Faculty Workshop a teaching workshop for faculty new to the FYE program that occurs each May. It is designed to introduce new faculty to the history and goals of the program while helping them to infuse first-year student pedagogies into their First Year Seminars and Learning Communities. This is an interactive workshop that will help faculty design their course by modeling effective course strategies. Over 100 FYE faculty member, past and present, provided feedback on their workshop experience and identified various benefits of participation (Table 1).

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<th>Table 1. The FYE Workshop and Program…</th>
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<tr>
<td>Prepared faculty to teach an FYE and support students in their first year</td>
<td>93/95</td>
<td>98</td>
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<td>Helped faculty better identify students that need support</td>
<td>73/94</td>
<td>77</td>
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<td>Provided the support to successfully teach in the program</td>
<td>86/93</td>
<td>92</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impacted faculty’s pedagogy in other classes</td>
<td>81/93</td>
<td>87</td>
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FYE prepares and supports faculty throughout their FYE

Of the survey respondents, felt that the workshop adequately prepared them to teach an FYE (yes: 60%; somewhat: 38%). Particularly, faculty noted the benefit of learning incoming students’ statistics and defining the qualities and challenges of being a freshman (n=10). Furthermore, participants commented on the usefulness of the workshop for improving their syllabus and course ideas, such that “the workshop provided some good conceptual anchors for how to approach new college students” (n=4). Additionally, 77% of the respondents felt that the workshop helped them support students (yes: 37%; somewhat: 40%). The workshop achieved this mainly through teaching or re-introducing faculty to the various campus resources available (n=3).

In addition to preparing FYE faculty before their course, the FYE program also aims to support faculty throughout their teaching experience. 92% of the respondents reported that they were provided the support they needed to successfully teach their FYE class. For those that felt unprepared or unsupported to teach an FYE, they generally expressed that they needed more training for providing remedial instruction to students that are really struggling, particularly in the spring (n=2), and more support linking their class with the Synthesis Seminar and Peer Facilitators (n=2).

FYE (improves/expands/impacts) faculties’ pedagogical approaches

Faculty experiences from the FYE Workshop and teaching in FYE carried over to their pedagogical approach in other courses, according to 87% of respondents (yes: 52%; somewhat: 35%). The main impact of FYE was that it encouraged faculty to integrate more interactive or participatory methods into their other classes (n=17). A faculty member explains, “I’ve had to learn how to engage students new not just to college but new to the idea of being in charge of their learning.” Faculty members were also reminded that all students – freshman and upperclassmen – have personal issues that may need greater understanding and support (n=11). One respondent is expressed that “I believe that my increased understanding has improved my patience and made me more sensitive to the issues that all students face.” Another notable change was that faculty realized the importance of clear course syllabi, assignment directions, and rubrics, which improved their clarity in other courses (n=11). Additionally, faculty felt that they were better able to adjust expectations of students and express these through course goals (n=6). Last, faculty generally noted that after teaching an FYE, they were able to better put the development of upperclassmen into perspective (n=3).
**FYE is a unique teaching experience**

Leading an FYE provides faculty with a teaching experience different from many of their regular courses. In some ways, teaching an FYE is challenging in that first years can be behind in their preparedness to work at the college level (n=19), maturity (n=7) and engagement (n=3). Working through these challenges, particularly in Learning Communities where coordination is required, may mean that the course takes more effort to run (n=3). However, participants express a number of positive experiences related to teaching an FYE. First, respondents explain that the class was really enjoyable due to the students’ enthusiasm and opportunity for alternative projects and activities through FYE (n=13). For example, one faculty member expressed, "I love it! I love the feeling of being a mentor and a team member. I love the outside activities. And I love having all freshmen because they’re so eager to please." Additionally, faculty feel that the small class size and activities out of class made FYE more personal and helped build relationships between students and with faculty (n=9). They explain “FYE courses seem to provide students with a cohort and as the faculty member teaching an FYE, more of my FYE students interact with me throughout their academic career.” Lastly, respondents really enjoy the unique experience of working with a Peer Facilitator and the Synthesis Seminar (n=5). Overall, the FYE workshop helps faculty prepare for these unique challenges and rewards, and aims for pedagogical improvement within and beyond the first year courses.