

To: GE Subcommittee
From: Alexandra von Meier, FYE Coordinator
Date: March 14, 2006

Re: FYE Pilot Assessment plan

This memo is intended to provide an outline of our overall strategy to assess the 2006-07 FYE Pilot. Please note that specific aspects of the assessment are still under development in collaboration with the entire FYE faculty team, as the building of the assessment plan and selection of instruments by necessity follows the completion of the syllabus and learning outcomes. In this process, we are open to your thoughts and suggestions. We expect that the assessment will be robust and rigorous, and will make public the final plan as soon as it is completed this spring.

The FYE assessment will be conducted by a team comprised of two faculty participating in FYE (**Greta Vollmer, Tom Shaw**), two faculty not teaching or planning FYE, (**Teresa Ciabattari, Carlos Benito, Rose Bruce** from the Office of Institutional Research, as well as a non-SSU external evaluator (to be named).

In general, we see two major areas of focus for the assessment process: First is an across-group comparison, looking at the FYE students and their experience vis-à-vis other defined groups, those being a comparable (in number) group of non-FYE freshmen and Hutchins majors. We have also considered that if there is a group of wait-listed FYE students they would offer an interesting comparison, as they would presumably share interests and motivations (i.e., self-selection characteristics) with students enrolled in FYE and could thus help us control for differences among groups, in addition to known student characteristics. The second focus is internal, in which we assess the effectiveness of the program's curriculum and implementation. The emphasis of this component is to inform efforts to revise and improve any potential future versions of an FYE course.

For the comparative assessment, we will begin with already existing survey instruments administered and analyzed by the Office of Institutional Research, such as the CIRP survey for academic motivation given at orientation, and YFCY, a nationally recognized instrument to measure change for freshmen that includes academic as well as social and individual characteristics (satisfaction with college, sense of belonging, academic motivation, etc.). The profiles compiled by the Office of Research also include high school GPA and standardized test scores, ethnicity, and parents' education to establish a quantitative baseline that will allow us to look carefully at the make-up of the FYE cohort to examine self selection biases.

The team is developing a plan for assessment based on specific progress on actual assignments, comparisons with sections of ENG 101 and PHIL 101/2, and with the Hutchins School. We will give pre- and post-assignments for FYE students and traditional delivery students, providing for a qualitative measure of change observed over the course of the year. Ideally, we would give the same writing and critical thinking assignments to these different groups and compare how students in each group fare, taking care to assess the learning rather than the teaching. We have discussed the possibility of coordinating an identical writing assessment between FYE and ENGL 101 classes, and undertake a parallel assessment of critical thinking between FYE and Critical Thinking (PHIL 101). Our next steps are to identify specific assignments that would be workable in such a comparison, as well as colleagues teaching the traditional 101 courses to participate in this endeavor.

Besides the technical competencies in reading, writing, critical thinking, and information literacy, important FYE objectives include student development and synergistic outcomes such as social integration, sense of

belonging to a community, ease of the high school-college transition, clarity about academic and disciplinary paths, and a growing sense of academic passion. The assessment of some of these outcomes will require longitudinal study, examining, for example, retention rates and declarations of major. In the near term, assessment tools for these dimensions will include students satisfaction surveys (SAEs) and possibly a few small focus groups (addressing the same topics) to give more depth to the breadth of information supplied by the quantitative surveys.

For the internal assessment, we will look specifically for evidence of growth and learning among FYE students as critical thinkers, writers, readers, and critical consumers of information. Data sources may include writing assignments, a final project, a critical thinking assignment, and an information competence survey.

We also are interested in student assessment of the FYE curriculum and implementation, along with an overall student satisfaction rating of the program. For this purpose, we will collect student evaluations at the end of each semester.

Finally, we plan a faculty survey at the end of each semester that indicates how FYE teaching faculty feels about their experiences in the FYE class room, addressing their assessment of curriculum and implementation, time commitment, challenges experienced, and overall satisfaction.

Assessment Resources

The Provost's budget allocates funding from the Ford Foundation grant to support assessment. The final plan, which will account for personnel, time and resources, will be scaled to the allocation. Obviously, this would include administering assessment measures, analyzing the data, and writing up findings and conclusions for the university community. While any assessment effort is realistically constrained by time and resources, the assessment team is committed to producing the most informative and unbiased evaluation of the FYE Pilot possible.

| EVALUATION QUESTION | DATA SOURCE | TIMELINE | ANALYSIS |
|--|---------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| ACROSS POPULATIONS | | | |
| What is the incoming profile of FYE population? | CIRP | Summer 2006 | |
| How do students self-evaluate on measures of: | Your First College Year Survey | Spring 2007 | Factor analysis as per normed survey instrument |
| * academic focus | | | |
| * social adjustment | | | |
| * satisfaction w/ university experience | Small focus groups | Spring 2007 | Thematic coding |
| * Ease of transition | | | |
| * Motivation | | | |
| * Other factors as specified on the survey | | | |
| WITHIN FYE | | | |
| What evidence of growth do FYE students exhibit | | | |
| * As writers | Common writing assignments | | Holistic assessment |
| | Early, mid-year, end of year | | (rubric driven) |
| * As seminar participants | Audio-taped seminar | | Discourse analysis |
| (voice, confidence, critical thinkers) | | 1st sem/2nd semester | |
| | See above & CT assignment (TBD) | | |
| * As readers | | | |
| * As critical thinkers | Cumulative final project | | Faculty evaluation (rubric?) |
| * As consumers of information | Info comp survey | | Statistical compilation of responses |
| * Effective study habits | TBD | September / May | |
| What is student assessment of FYE Curriculum/implementation? | Evaluations | Mid-year & end | Faculty review/summary |

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|---|---------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| (Including perceived goals & fit) | | | |
| What is faculty assessment of FYE curriculum/implementation? | Evaluations | Mid-year & end | Faculty review/summary |
| To what extent do FYE students interact meaningfully w/ faculty | FCY survey & other instrument TBD? | | |
| What is the persistence over time of the following factors? | | Years 2 & beyond | |
| * Strength of identification with a particular discipline | TBD | | |
| * Retention at SSU | " | | |
| * Meaningful relationship w/ faculty | " | | |
| * Sense of community | " | | |
| * Sense of academic passion | " | | |
| TBD = TO BE DECIDED | | | |