

Ad hoc Committee to Evaluate the FYS

Report to the Faculty Council

March 10, 2010

This report is based primarily on the 23-item FYS Faculty Questionnaire with 144 responses. In addition, the Committee met and discussed the FYS bi-weekly throughout the fall semester and up through March 9.

1. Based on our survey of the faculty, it is clear that faculty who have taught under both models prefer the new one and consider it superior to what has gone on before (see item #4, 22 faculty responding). We were unable to obtain usable data from a set of student questions on the FYS. At least two of the members feel that we ought not to consider the FYS evaluated until we have systematic student assessment. Failing such an assessment, the course should be suspended.
2. Faculty derive little personal development from the FYS experience, although few expected any carryover (see items #15-17). This suggests that FYS duty might best be treated as service.
3. Faculty report that FYS does not contribute positively, even if indirectly, to their research and scholarship (see item #16).
4. The Committee feels that the data from item #20 ["I feel that the time and resources devoted to FYS have been worthwhile."] bears special scrutiny. While 39% of the respondents either agree or strongly agree with the statement, over 35% either disagree or strongly disagree. Moreover, some 25% could not even manage to express an opinion on a matter of grave concern to the faculty (the Committee feels this is a very negative answer). This question asks faculty to weigh the costs in time and resources against the benefits of the FYS, and we find the results troubling, at the least.
5. There seems to be no carryover from topics covered by FYS and the student's academic career at JCU (see items #21-22). Perhaps this should be kept in mind when it comes to the time and effort expended by the University in selecting and developing FYS topics. This may suggest that selection of FYS topics and readings might be better left to individual faculty teaching the FYS, rather than collective or small group choice.
6. Beyond our empirical findings (and the Committee's interpretation thereof), we recommend that, if the FYS is continued, we extend and broaden our experiments seeking the optimal model for the FYS.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack Soper, Chair

On behalf of the Committee:

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