

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Faculty Senate, March 13
(This document has been edited and only includes elements directly concerning the
First-Year Experience. For the entire document, go to the Faculty Senate archives
on the website.)

The Faculty Senate met on Tuesday, March 13, 2007, at 5:00 p.m. in Beatty Center 115 to begin discussion of the proposals on General Education submitted by the Ad-Hoc Committee on General Education.

Speaker of the Faculty Bob Mignone recognized Julia Eichelberger, Chair of the Ad-Hoc Committee on General Education. Ms. Eichelberger, in turn, invited brief comments from student Lauren Rushing of the Student Government Association (SGA) Academic Affairs Committee and from Provost Elise Jorgens. Ms. Rushing reported that on January 20, by unanimous consent, the SGA supported the proposals currently on the floor. She added that students are excited about the plan. Provost Jorgens said she's very pleased about the Senate having reached this moment, when we're ready to take action on general education. She was gratified to see the amount of interest these proposals have generated across campus, and she argued that such dialogues can do nothing but good. Ms. Jorgens applauded the Senate's efforts, and said she looks forward to whatever may come out of our discussion this evening.

The Senate then turned to the actual motions proposed by the Ad-Hoc Committee.

[edited portion]

Proposal for a Required First-Year Experience

I. Entering students be required to complete a First-Year Experience (FYE), whether in a First-Year Seminar (FYSR) or a Learning Community (LC).

Ms. Eichelberger introduced the motion by announcing that the Ad-Hoc Committee would accept Hugh Wilder's amendment (distributed before the meeting) to delete language from the fourth bullet point of the proposal ("small class size for at least one of the classes in each Learning Community), as friendly. The fourth bullet point will now read "Small class size for all sections of FYSR."

Mr. Wilder said he would like to speak strongly in favor of this motion. First-Year Experiences have been on the faculty and administration agenda for years. Part of this proposal might revise the First-Year Seminar we currently have. He added that he also regards Learning Communities as important. Gerry Gonsalves, Chair of the Curriculum Committee, said that his committee has approved a stand-alone First-Year Seminar proposal which will be presented at the next Senate meeting.

Mary Beth Heston said that she was concerned about the estimated cost of this proposal, the resources it would take to implement, and the effect it would have on every other initiative at the College. Ms. Eichelberger replied that, in relation to the entire college's budget, the resources that will be devoted to the First-Year Seminar are not as big a piece

of the pie as they may first appear. There is already a Quality Enhancement Project (QEP) dealing with the First-Year Experience, which is going forward, regardless. The Senate is being asked whether such an experience should be a requirement for all students or not.

Calvin Blackwell (Economics/Finance) asked how a typical freshman's schedule would differ if we required such an experience. He wondered how the proposal would affect students' ability to fit needed courses into their schedules. Ms. Eichelberger replied that registration for entering students might be easier than it currently is, because so many First-Year Experience courses would be offered. Entering freshmen will not be competing with already-enrolled students for these classes, as they might when they enroll for, say, SPAN 101. Joe Kelly then pointed out that he had talked to Mindy Miley about Learning Communities and discovered that students will already be enrolled in these classes before they come to the College.

Melissa Hughes then returned to the issue of resources. The Senate, she pointed out, doesn't have a say over the College's budget. She wondered whether there would be any guarantee these courses would actually be funded if we approved this motion, or if we would simply end up with an unbudgeted mandate. Provost Jorgens replied to Ms. Hughes, pointing out that, while no one may be able to guarantee an exact number of dollars right now, she could nevertheless confirm that President Benson has seen the proposal, has seen its budget, and didn't "pass out." Mr. Benson understands the benefits such a requirement will bring for students and recognizes that this First-Year Experience will offer other kinds of payback to the College. Ms. Jorgens affirmed that the administration will stand behind this proposal. It might not have every bell and whistle, but it will be funded. Further, she doesn't believe that funding the First-Year Experience will rob resources from other programs. Part of the SACS accreditation process requires that we put money into improvements. So resources will be required in any case.

Jennifer McStotts, Chair of the Senate Budget Committee, said that she has not seen a budget for the Quality Enhancement Project (QEP), but she has seen a budget for the proposed First-Year Seminar courses. Ms McStotts argued this budget was clear, reasonable, and well-justified.

Discussion ended, and the motion passed on a voice vote. (Please see Appendix 2 to read the entire motion, as amended.)

II. Conditions for Faculty Teaching FYE courses

The next motion introduced by the Ad-Hoc Committee proposed that First-Year Seminar (FSYR) courses be taught by roster faculty, that faculty members undergo a summer training session (for which they will receive a stipend) the first time they teach such a course, and that faculty members be provided resources to encourage informal contact with students outside of class.

Darryl Phillips (At-Large, Classics) said that he was concerned about faculty endorsing policies in which faculty members are paid to undergo training. He would rather see money go to raises to reward performance after the fact than to stipends awarded here and there. Susan Kattwinkel (Theatre) responded by arguing that the Ad-Hoc Committee believes these training sessions are very important. Faculty members are not under contract in the summer, so this is essentially time paid. Mr. Phillips replied that he's very much in favor of training faculty, but that all faculty members conduct activities when off contract, whether course preparation or research. He is opposed to paying for one and not for another. He suggested a friendly amendment to strike out the words "for which they will receive a stipend" from the proposal. After conferring briefly with the Ad-Hoc Committee, Ms. Eichelberger did not accept the amendment as friendly.

Denis Keyes (Foundations, Secondary, and Special Education) then proposed changing the phrase "will receive a stipend" to "**may** receive a stipend." This proposal was not accepted as a friendly amendment either. Mr. Keyes then moved his proposal as an (unfriendly) amendment. Discussion turned to Mr. Keyes' proposed amendment. Terry Bowers (English) said that while he largely agrees with Mr. Phillips' larger point about stipends, he feels that, until faculty members get the type of raises Mr. Phillips would like to see, it makes sense to take the money offered. George Hopkins (History) then spoke against Mr. Keyes' amendment, pointing out the unfortunate implication that it could allow for some faculty members to be paid for summer training and others not to be.

Mr. Keyes' amendment failed on a voice vote, and discussion turned back to the main motion.

Paul Young (Mathematics) asked who would provide the training that the proposal requires. Ms. Eichelberger replied that the sessions would most likely be set up by the Director of the First-Year Experience and the First-Year Experience Committee. Kay Smith, Associate Vice President for the Academic Experience, added that the training would be a joint effort by everyone who has worked to develop the QEP plan. The sessions most likely will address writing, interdisciplinarity, etc.

Jim Newhard (Classics) next offered a friendly amendment to strike "summer" from the language used to describe these training sessions, arguing that many faculty members have research and travel obligations in the summer, and the training might have to occur at a different time. Ms. Eichelberger, on behalf of the Ad-Hoc Committee, accepted Mr. Newhard's amendment as friendly.

Melissa Hughes (Biology) expressed concern that the proposal requires these courses to be taught by roster faculty. She argued that the proposal would force departments to use roster faculty members in ways they might not wish to. Hugh Wilder replied that he agrees that faculty resources are an important issue. This proposal represents a shifting of priority to focus roster faculty resources on first year students in ways we haven't done in the past. This will be easier for some departments than for others. But, Mr. Wilder added that, with this proposal, new lines would come to departments to address a variety

of needs, including the issues raised by Ms. Hughes. No one expects an equal contribution toward teaching these FYE courses from every department.

David Gentry (At-Large, Psychology) asked if it would be burdensome to those departments who do contribute to the FYE courses, if we don't expect all departments to contribute equally. Mr. Wilder predicted that such a contribution would not be burdensome, pointing out that departments contribute differently to our current general education curriculum, but they have the resources to do this. The same sort of support should be available for the First-Year Experience proposal. Mr. Gentry then asked what the proposal would do to upper-level class sizes. Mr. Wilder replied that he hopes it will do nothing to sizes of other classes. The administration will have to take these issues into account.

Calvin Blackwell said that his department, Economics/Finance, does not currently teach freshman courses. He wondered if faculty members in his department would be required to teach the proposed FYE courses. Provost Jorgens replied that they would not. Mr. Blackwell then moved to amend the motion by striking the second bullet point (concerning summer training sessions) completely. After the motion to amend was seconded, Senate discussion turned to the amendment. Doryjane Bierrer (English) spoke against removing the bullet point, arguing that the College is a teaching institution, and it's important that faculty members get paid for training to teach a new kind of course they haven't taught before. Mary Beth Heston (Art History) agreed, arguing that if the Senate approves these courses, we will need training.

Pete Calcagno (Economics/Finance) asked exactly what the training would involve, pointing out that all faculty members already have areas of expertise, we all teach. Mr. Calcagno wondered what the sessions would train us to do differently. Kay Smith replied that the training sessions would focus on how to elicit qualities such as academic rigor, etc. that we want students to experience in an FYE. Calvin Blackwell said that he does all of those things in his classes already, adding that he finds it insulting that he would be required to take a class in how to teach a class. He said that he has yet to hear anything to convince him that what he would teach in an FYE course would be different than what he teaches in his other classes. Larry Krasnoff (guest, Philosophy) replied that he believes the reason for the training is to focus on core, common content that would be shared by all of the FYE classes, a content that would bind them together and distinguish them from other classes. Mr. Wilder agreed with Mr. Krasnoff's comments, adding that there really is something unique to these courses that is different from introductory courses he's taught in the past. Every student will be a first year student. He's learned that there's a body of literature about how to teach first year students **as** first year students. These students have different needs and interests than other students in our introductory courses.

Mr. Blackwell's amendment was voted down on a voice vote.

The Senate then turned back to the main motion, which was approved on a voice vote. (Please see Appendix 3 to read the entire motion, as amended).

III. Structure for the Administration of FYE Courses

The discussion began with a lengthy amendment from the By-Laws Committee concerning the composition, duties, and implementation of the Advisory Committee on the First-Year Experience. Ms. Eichelberger announced that the Ad-Hoc General Education Committee would like to accept this as a friendly amendment, which would substitute for items 1-4 in the original General Education proposal. In addition, the Ad-Hoc Committee would accept Richard Nunan's amendment concerning item 6 of this proposal as a friendly amendment. Mr. Nunan's amendment adds language to item 6, which reads, "But because of their low enrollment ceilings, the enrollments of FYSR courses will be double-counted with respect to teaching workload target figures, or departments will otherwise be "held harmless" with respect to the potential effect of these courses on workload target figures." Mr. Nunan withdrew his other amendment relating to the administration of FYE courses because the issues it takes up are addressed by the amendment proposed by the By-Laws Committee.

Discussion then turned to the main motion, as altered by the friendly amendments. Larry Krasnoff, saying that he thinks it is crucial to offer students smaller classes, spoke in support of the proposal, especially in light of Mr. Nunan's friendly amendment. Melissa Hughes asked why it would be necessary to form a committee to meet the goals of the proposal. She said that she saw the need for a director, but was concerned about the creeping committee structure at the College. Susan Kattwinkel replied that, even though the director will come from the faculty, there has been great concern about faculty oversight of the First-Year Experience and fear that this will become an administrative effort rather than a faculty effort. Darryl Phillips asked for clarification on the difference between the proposed Director of the First-Year Experience and the Associate Vice President for the Academic Experience. He wondered how the duties of these two positions would differ. Kay Smith replied that the Director of the First-Year Experience would report to her, but have wide latitude. She argued that it is important that programs like these have faculty very much involved in directing them. She has other duties, including advising and orientation that involve a similar reporting structure. Melissa Hughes then asked why we would need a committee if we have a faculty director and faculty teaching in the program. Idee Winfield (Sociology/Anthropology) said that part of the committee's duties would be curricular. They would be required to approve courses, much like the Faculty Curriculum Committee currently does.

Discussion ended, and the motion passed on voice vote. (Please see Appendix 4 to read the entire motion, as amended).

At this point, it was 7:00 p.m., and the meeting ended. This discussion will continue at the next regular Senate meeting, on March 27.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Farrell
Faculty Secretary

[edited portion]

Appendix 2. Motion that every entering student be required to complete a First-Year Experience (FYE), whether in a First-Year Seminar (FYSR) or a Learning Community (LC) (as amended)

I. The General Education Committee proposes that every entering student be required to complete a First-Year Experience (FYE) in a First-Year Seminar (FYSR) or Learning Community (LC), and that the following qualities should characterize every student's First-Year Experience:

- Academic rigor
- High expectations within a course designed for entering students
- Assignments that require students to demonstrate understanding of course material through writing, research, and presentations
- Small class size for all sections of FYSR
- Each FYSR, and at least one course in any LC, will require writing and speaking appropriate to the discipline, and will provide students with feedback and opportunities for revision.
- FYE provides research experience that focuses on information literacy.
- FYE includes class discussion and collaborative learning.
- FYE gives students experience in some type of oral presentation.
- FYE is taught by a roster faculty member with specialized training in content area who introduces students to the discipline and to its connections with other disciplines; course objectives are explicitly connected to Gen Ed curriculum as a whole.

Appendix 3. Conditions for Faculty Teaching FYE courses (as amended)

II. The Committee proposes the following conditions for faculty teaching FYE courses:

- FYSR Courses are to be taught by roster faculty. For Learning Communities, at least one class will be taught by roster faculty.
- All faculty teaching FYSR and LC courses will undergo a training session before the first time they participate in the program, for which they will receive a stipend.
- Faculty teaching FYE courses will be provided with resources that encourage contact with their students on campus outside of formal classroom settings.

Appendix 4. Structure for the Administration of FYE Courses (as amended)

- Faculty By-Laws, Art. IV, Sect. 3.

Insert a new Standing College Committee, the Advisory Committee on the First-Year Experience.

a. Composition: Seven regular faculty members, at least three of whom shall be teaching in the First-Year Experience program (i.e., teaching either a First-Year Seminar or a Learning Communities Course) during the relevant academic year or have taught in the First-Year Experience program during the preceding academic year. Preferably, each academic school should be represented on the committee. The committee shall have one voting student member selected by the Student Government Association. The Associate Vice President for the Academic Experience (or other administrator designated by the Provost), the Assistant Vice President for New Student Programs (or other administrator designated by the Provost), the Dean of Students, and the Director of the First-Year Experience program are *ex officio*, non-voting members.

b. Duties:

(1) In consultation with the relevant administrators, to support and advise the First-Year Experience program on all matters relevant to the program, including program development, budget requests, and other issues germane to program support;

(2) In consultation with the Director of the First-Year Experience program, to review and assess the First-Year Experience program and to make non-binding recommendations for revisions to the program;

(3) To request and review proposals for First-Year Experience courses (sections of FYSM 101 and Learning Communities); and

(4) To assist the Director of the First-Year Experience program in recruiting students for First-Year Experience courses and to recruit and plan the training for new First-Year Experience faculty and peer facilitators for Learning Communities.

c. Implementation: The Advisory Committee on the First-Year Experience shall be constituted only if the Provost and the Speaker of the Faculty certify in a written notice addressed to the members of the Faculty Senate that a coordinated, comprehensive, and unified First-Year Experience program has received the necessary approvals and shall be implemented in a timely fashion. Such written notice shall be supplied no later than August 15, 2009, or the ratification for which Art. VI, Section 1.A. provides shall be null and void and this committee description shall be removed from the Faculty By-Laws.

- Students fulfill the FYE requirement through successful completion of either a FYSR

or an approved LC. The credit hours for either FYE (3 hours or more) will count towards the 122 hours required for the degree, and in many instances, will also fulfill other General Education requirements pending approval by the Faculty Senate. Individual courses within LCs, like any other College course, may be approved for General Education credit through the normal approval process. If the FYE committee believes that a FYSR course should receive General Education credit, it will forward a proposal for that course to the General Education Committee, who will send its recommendations to the Faculty Senate.

- First-Year Seminar courses will be designated FYSR (not the designation of the home department of the faculty member). Additional designation may be required for the Registrar – to determine which General Education requirements may also be met, and to adhere to college rules such as the prohibition of taking more than two Humanities classes based in one department. For the purposes of faculty administration, the course will be counted as if it were designated in the faculty member’s home department. But because of their low enrollment ceilings, the enrollments of FYSR courses will be double-counted with respect to teaching workload target figures, or departments will otherwise be “held harmless” with respect to the potential effect of these courses on workload target figures.