

## FYE Town Hall Meeting #2 (Students)

**Date:** Tuesday, April 10, 2012  
2:00-3:00 p.m., Capitol Rooms

**Individuals Present:** 5 students, 5 staff members

### MINUTES

Introductions of FYE Team (Nancy Parsons)  
Thank You to FYE Review Committee Members  
FYE Overview (Katrina Daytner)

#### **FYE Charge #1 – Clarify and revise as necessary the goals of FYE**

- Have any of the students in the room read the review online?
  - No.
- What do you think should the goals of FYE be?
  - Provide opportunities to get involved on campus

#### **FYE Goal #2 – Examine and select FYE components to meet the goals of FYE**

- Common Reading
  - Students agreed with the recommendation to remove it
  - Didn't use it in their FYE class
  - Said ½ of their peers didn't read it
  - Left it on their desk after they got it at SOAR
  - Didn't read it because it wasn't mandatory
  - Michelle Janisz – is there another way to have a common experience rather than the book? (feedback from students at SGA previously)
    - Looked at movie, performance, etc. potentially, but currently the common reading will be recommended to be eliminate and will look at other ideas in the future
  - Peer Mentor in the room said she read it and it was beneficial
  - Don't think we should make FYE easier just because they don't like it, so why are we removing this book?
    - Currently her FYE class she is Peer Mentoring in makes it mandatory to be engaged in co-curriculars and the common reading
    - We are recommending to have a common textbook in the FYE transition course instead, so there will be a common experience with a book in a different format than the current one
  - Smashed was relatable, Nickle and Dimed was a bit of a stretch, Last Lecture was great, but the last book was "really?" (implied: it was not applicable)
    - Strong impact from Smashed because that is applicable to students' lives and decisions they have to make regarding drinking
    - Maybe eliminating it is a good route
  - Educational YouTube video might be better route to go
    - Something that students will face in their time here, not just in the classroom

- Books work if it's the "right" book, but other things could work if it's the "right message"
- Our WIU book has been connected to the WIU yearly theme, but other schools in the US use books that are just related to transition concerns
- Other book ideas thrown around previously
  - Glass Castle (homelessness)
  - Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks (medical ethics)
  - The Naked Roommate (transition issues)
- Agreement to not make FYE easier, but also not making it harder either, but focus on what will really help them be successful to grow as a person and make that the basis of the FYE program

### **FYE Goal #3 – Recommendations regarding the appropriate content for FYE courses**

- Nancy – outlined the 2 ideas for FYE classes
- Will the Transition course be taught by the professor or the Peer Mentor?
  - Staff or faculty, not Peer Mentors
  - Peer Mentors would be in this class to assist and be involved in this aspect, as opposed to the FYE GenEd currently
- What are your thoughts on Spring FYE classes?
  - Would like to see the Fall Transition course, and then the FYE GenEd in Spring
  - Potentially looking at doing some type of service learning project in the Spring instead
  - Some did not even remember their Spring FYE course
- Transition course will be set topics for each week
  - Common experience of all students
  - Hopefully the GenEd teachers will be able to "pull it off" to help teach the applicability of the skills taught in Transition Course
- Huge issue with professors who are not invested in the current program
- Also some Peer Mentors not invested as well
  - Selection for Peer Mentors should be stricter, not necessarily with higher grades but students who really want to have this role and really help make a difference for students
- Co-curriculars
  - Some events only social but not educational or deeply reflective to help students actually learn something other than being social
  - Some better ideas might be service learning or topics that students can learn from, such as cultural exchange, vagina monologues, etc. that tie back to the class, rather than only going to a social event such as a football game
  - Others felt they are essential part of the program currently and students can benefit
- Issue not really the FYE program itself, but the people who are in it
  - Students agreed with this idea that Peer Mentors should have to apply
  - Peer Mentor in this session felt that this could be the most beneficial change to the program
  - Nancy – will also be asking teachers who wants to teach this to get more engagement from them to help with this concern

- Concern currently that there is so much to cover in the topic of the discipline, that it is difficult to teach the transition components as well
  - Such as: learn to write a resume, how to organize, what are the resources on campus, and then can apply it in an FYE second semester
- Really liked the common standard syllabus across sections to get at a common experience for students
- GenEd class “could work out, if it works out” ...don’t have a lot of confidence in the current FYE teachers to actually do this in the new program and actually focus on the transition components
- Disconnection between the transition components and the discipline, so concern for the GenEd class still being part of the FYE program
  - But like the small class size
  - Stretch for some of the courses to do this currently
  - What is the point of the GenEd class?
    - Transition course would scratch the surface on these ideas and then you can go a bit further on these transitional topics in the GenEd course (whether it is in the Fall or Spring)
    - The professionals will be trained in this, as well as what happens in the Transition course so that they can help to further those concepts in their GenEd course
- Lot of support for the Transition Course as a staple course, just a question now if we want to provide the opportunity to have a smaller FYE class to add on to this
- Support for FYE as a good experience
  - Even if FYE students don’t currently like it, this doesn’t mean that it’s not beneficial for them
  - Freshman student expressed appreciation of smaller classes
- Course content for transition course
  - Important to teach the new incoming students how to use things on campus, and how to use Western Online and Zimbra
  - Little bit of Western Pride, little bit of responsibility, little bit of academics → large spectrum of things students will use in their next 3 years here
- Liked the idea of applying what they learn in the Transition course into the GenEd
  - They (first year students) might not like it at first, but they will like it after they see the value in it!
- The Transition course sounds like what FYE Seminars in the residence halls are doing currently – will this be removed then?
  - Tera Monroe: yes, these seminars will be removed. But the programming that RAs are doing in the halls will be trained in what the FYE students are learning, so they will know what students are learning each week and will be able to further these ideas in their programs, etc. (ex. Students learn about learning styles in transition course, and then their RA puts new door tags to show what type of learners everyone in the community is to further the discussion about this academic topic within their residence community)
  - Student support for the connection between classes and residence life
  - Professors could come into the halls, such as move-in or first floor dinners, infuse faculty into what’s happening in the halls
    - Students liked this idea, make sure they have nametags or something that identifies them as faculty

- Will help students learn that professors want to help, don't want them to fail! They are happy to help students but students don't know how to approach them
  - "humanizing" a professor through these efforts
  - Cool to meet professors so students won't be afraid of them
- FYE Kick-Off
  - If were trying to make it as dissimilar to convocation as possible, needs more interaction and fun
  - Sometimes boring videos – DC Cupcake video a few years ago was boring
    - It doesn't necessarily need a speaker because students just sat through a speaker in Convocation
    - Students are feeling "when can I go to Walmart?" during this time
  - Peer Mentors could come to Kick-Off, introduce themselves and then break off into groups and do a huge scavenger hunt across campus
    - 'the great urban race"
    - Students get a riddle and have to find that place
    - Come back at the end and have dinner or something
    - Students get a planner or t-shirt if they complete the race (something they can use rather than the common reading)
    - Maybe only 5 places on campus, not 50
    - Ex. Go to the library and find out why we have plants in there, how many windows does Sallee have? (0), etc.
    - Actively engaged!
    - Collect puzzle pieces maybe
- When did you first hear about FYE?
  - First classes, don't remember SOAR program overview
  - FYE class didn't necessarily explain FYE very well
  - Kick-Off was more fun but didn't really explain FYE
  - Seminar should be utilized more to explain the program and guidelines
  - Need to help reduce the uncertainty about FYE as the semester goes on
- How many of you go to the WIU page? Or FYE website?
  - Students use the search bar to find everything
  - Have something on WesternOnline that all FYE students get it before school start – explain the kick-off, events on campus, contact information, etc.
  - Students in the room use their Zimbra, but say they know others who do not
- Overall questions students have, or what will make FYE better?
  - Consolidate resources on campus!
  - Application process for the Peer Mentors
  - If we're going to have a seminar course, make sure the issues are things that students can actually benefit from
  - Include students in the planning process
  - SOAR – give the students something that outlines exactly what they will get from FYE and what it means, how they do it, who to talk to, help them understand it and who will help them
- Last minute comment from a faculty member in the room for next meeting:
  - Tying FYE together with content courses is probably not effective.

Adjourned at 2:55pm