

**Proposal on the Future of the First Year Seminar**  
**Submitted to the Middlebury College Educational Affairs Committee**  
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Prepared at the request of the EAC by the Ad Hoc First Year Seminar Steering Committee:

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## Introduction

In 1987 the Middlebury College faculty voted to launch a First Year Seminar (FYS) Program. The program aimed to provide all new students the opportunity to take small classes with professors in various fields who had volunteered to teach them—classes that emphasized writing at the college level. These students were also to benefit from advising by their FYS instructors.

This arrangement—one of the most distinctive features of the Middlebury College education—has become central to our identity and mission. By combining writing instructor, scholar in a particular field, and pre-major advisor, the FYS program has not only provided training for students in writing; it has helped to introduce students to the ethos of the Liberal Arts. At its best it has come to stand for the principle that knowledge in particular fields is not sufficient; one must be prepared to use that knowledge in a civic way. Learning to speak and to write analytically and accessibly about what one learns, and learning to use what one knows in a way that is fulfilling for others is, as we all know, central to a Liberal Arts education. Accordingly, FYS instructors are also advisors who can help students thrive in their early semesters in College, and encourage them to take responsibility for doing so. With their enthusiasm for such service, FYS instructors—many of them the most senior professors at the College—can model that sense of responsibility by welcoming and helping the newest members of our academic community in their writing, speaking, and participation in our intellectual community.

The FYS has largely lived up to these ideals. Thousands of students have benefited from the close attention of their faculty advisors, from the intellectual camaraderie of small peer groups learning to write and speak about particular topics, and from the orientation to higher education that these topics provide. It is thus vital to the spirit of this College that the program continue, and that it improve on the good work it has accomplished in the past quarter of a century. This is all the more true in light of larger changes in higher education, and in the students who attend Middlebury. With students ever more concerned about the practical application of their educations to career and job prospects, and with the changes in teaching and research prompted by technological advances, the FYS can help the College to maintain its Liberal Arts identity even as it innovates and adapts to new circumstances. Arguably, in order to embrace change, one must also have a strong sense of identity and continuity. The FYS is crucial to providing the College and its students with a meaningful and flexible connection to our roots in the Liberal Arts tradition.

Despite the good work the program has done, however, it now faces major obstacles, which this proposal seeks to address. For many today, the FYS serves too many masters. It has become the repository for many college-wide initiatives that compete with the course content, and there is confusion about the program's goals and the faculty's responsibilities for achieving them. As a result, opinions about the program among faculty are mixed. While many see the FYS as crucial to the purposes we have described, some find it a burdensome distraction from scholarly aspirations. Some let junior colleagues to cover the required departmental quota; others help junior faculty avoid the course to shield them from extra work. Some ignore either the writing-intensive guidelines, or do not give advisees individual attention during orientation. Some claim that the course should not be taken seriously because it "does not teach content." Administrators struggle every academic year to staff all the sections required with enthusiastic instructors. These

circumstances cause problems for students and leave the majority of instructors who dutifully contribute FYS courses feeling that they are struggling against the tide.

The mission of the seminars must therefore be clarified and explained. And the College must decisively support the many instructors who are committing time and energy to the program. We believe that the FYS can continue to serve the College's liberal arts mission while also building on the strengths of faculty members who are happy to take on this important responsibility, but we also believe that, to do so, the program will need the clarification in goals and the restructuring outlined in this report.

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In preparing this report, the ad hoc FYS steering committee, in consultation with the EAC, have considered the faculty's responses to a proposal on the FYS made by the EAC in the Spring of 2013. We have spoken one-on-one with numerous faculty members about their own experiences teaching First Year Seminars, and their views of the program. With Donna McDurfee's help, we have examined records pertinent to the history of the program from the College Archive (primarily the minutes of faculty meetings from 1987 – 1990). And we have considered what first year students might need academically, today and in the future, that other courses might not as readily provide. All of these considerations helped shape the committee's views of the FYS program and the recommendations offered here.

We believe that the FYS should remain a fundamental part of the College curriculum, providing a small-class experience for every incoming student; it should continue to serve as the hub for pre-major academic advising; it should maintain its emphasis on teaching college-level writing and speaking. However, we do recommend that the College make several important changes:

- The mission of the FYS, especially with respect to its relationship to the Liberal Arts mission of the College, needs to be clearer and more compelling so that the program has cohesion and direction.
- Because the program is multi-dimensional, and because the entire faculty may teach in it, and not the staff of any single program, it should function autonomously from other departments and programs, including the Writing Program, while cooperating with all departments and programs, and enjoying—as all departments, programs, and courses should—support and cooperation from the Writing Center.
- In conjunction with other improvements in the program, the College should take steps in hiring, general support, and compensation that would eventually allow participation to become completely voluntary for tenure-line and long-term faculty whose contracts do not specify the seminar as a teaching duty.

We discuss the mission of the FYS in the first three sections of this report (on learning goals, writing, and advising). A fourth section then concerns College support for the program and its governance, and a fifth explores the issue of compensation. We have also prepared a summary of this report for quick reference, but we hope that, to understand the reasoning behind our suggestions, all faculty members will carefully read the entire report and appendix.

## Learning Goals for the First Year Seminar

Uncertainty as to the FYS's mission has complicated the task of helping faculty to teach the course. Moreover, the sheer multiplicity of goals, which may appear random, or at least not parallel in their levels of specificity, has tended to make the FYS look like a testing-ground for a hodge-podge of initiatives.<sup>1</sup> The FYS must have learning goals that clarify the program's purpose and accommodate its reach throughout the curriculum. Without such goals the program would lack the direction to give new students the basic skills and the sense of intellectual community that they need. The goals must be clear, consistent, challenging, cohesive, and few, so as to convey the broadest aims of the course. They must allow for different topics and points of view. They must leave individual instructors leeway for more specific goals and pedagogical methods pertaining to particular seminar topics.

Accordingly, we propose the following four goals, representing what we believe is the essential work that First Year Seminars, at their best, already do:

1. to learn what is expected intellectually and ethically for college-level work in the liberal arts;
2. to develop skills in scholarly communication, written and oral, that is widely accessible, involving observation, analysis, argumentation, research, and the use of sources;
3. to engage seriously with a scholarly topic (the topic to which one's seminar is devoted);
4. to become (with the help of advising) active in exploring academic and professional interests, and to find rewarding ways to participate in intellectual life in the liberal arts.

These are goals that we believe all First-Year Seminars should give students opportunities to achieve; *they are not prescriptions to instructors on how to teach*. We believe they are broad enough for students to fulfill while studying any of a variety of individual seminar topics. They are designed to benefit students, as opposed to offices, programs, or initiatives, which should be there to serve, not overwhelm, students and instructors as they do their work. They do not necessarily represent what is most convenient for all faculty members to teach; rather they represent what is necessary for first-year students to learn. Yet we believe that many faculty

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<sup>1</sup> In the past, the program has listed, as goals, "Critical skills"; "cross-disciplinary thinking"; "intellectual curiosity"; "information literacy"; "responsibility"; "diversity," "community membership" as well as such rhetorical "goals" as "following and contributing to in-class discussion; effectively leading a discussion; presenting work orally"; "assessing what is at stake in an assignment and planning a successful piece of writing, including a compelling thesis or research question (to this end encourage students to use such reflective techniques as journaling, outlining, note-taking in the field, and posting online)"; "Recognizing, summarizing, and analyzing the arguments of others; summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting those arguments as appropriate"; "organizing and structuring ideas into logically-connected paragraphs"; "Writing a coherent analytical essay of at least 5 pages using more than one source"; "Revising work by seeking out and responding to constructive criticism (for example from an instructor or from peer review)"; "selecting, and using effectively, technology appropriate to the communications task at hand."

members from across the College can enjoy teaching them and teach them well.<sup>2</sup>

We have ordered the goals to emphasize their cohesiveness. Goal 1 justifies our requirement that students take the course and thus learn Middlebury's standards for college-level work in the first semester. But it would lack substance if not for Goals 2, 3, and 4. With regard to Goal 2, the process of preparing a widely accessible paper or talk on a topic is an excellent way for students to grasp what it means to have a liberal arts education: to become a well-rounded citizen who is able to contribute to and be understood by a wider community of learners.

Goal 3 is vital because it emphasizes that the First Year Seminar is intended as a serious "content" course in which real learning occurs, and not just a skills course or a way of introducing students to campus facilities and programs. Nor need the FYS be a course divided in attention between "content" and "writing." Rather, it can allow students to engage seriously with content *through* writing, thus experiencing writing and learning as interdependent. Finally, Goal 4 can be seen as a natural extension of the first three, since the advising relationship can encourage students to own their careers, as they own their writing and speaking—to approach their broader intellectual and practical goals in college with the honesty and ambition we encourage them to demonstrate in their writing and speaking, and vice-versa.

All four goals are designed to accommodate changes that may occur in the future. Goals 1 and 2 may involve new kinds of discourse (e.g. digital essays and presentations). Smart advising that encourages assertiveness and curiosity among students is an excellent way for both students and professors to stay up to date with respect to changes in opportunities and challenges that new students may encounter in a changing world.

In our opinion, these broad goals are what all First Year Seminars should help students to pursue. If instructors wished to add to them in particular seminars (e.g. with "cross-disciplinary thinking," "diversity," "quantitative skills"), they would be free to do so, but neither the College Administration nor the Program itself should casually add to or expand the four basic goals as a matter of policy, or pressure instructors into participating in particular activities—even activities that might seem consistent with these goals. The individual faculty member is best positioned to see what activities help to fulfill the FYS's basic learning goals—in the context of her or his particular seminar—and what further goals should supplement them.

Accordingly, we need to break the habit of adding obligations to what is already a full plate for instructors, and of using precious time at meetings and training sessions to urge instructors to include in their courses a confusing list of initiatives. It is true that most such activities are technically optional for First Year Seminars now, but many instructors feel pressure to execute all of them, sensing the enthusiasm of College officials, or worrying that students will never participate in them if the FYS neglects them. In some cases, addressing this problem may just require representing the services offered to First Year Seminars in different ways. In others, it may require directing initiatives to other venues and contexts, such as the Commons, which have already successfully provided support for FYS advising.

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<sup>2</sup> As we will see in Section 5, we therefore propose that teaching in the First Year Seminar Program gradually become voluntary: we believe that this can happen without undermining the breadth of courses offered.

## Writing and Speaking in the First Year Seminar

We think that all First Year Seminars should continue to emphasize writing and speaking, in accordance with the second of our proposed learning goals for the course. Emphasizing this goal can help students acquire the skills in communication that all of them need in order to succeed in many college courses and in order to be understood and respected as educated people throughout their careers. We hope in this section mainly to address doubts as to whether writing and speaking should be taught in the context of the FYS—as to whether Learning Goal 2 is right for this course. We believe that a revitalized FYS program can address such doubts by clearly articulating, and organizing itself according to three basic principles:

### **1. The FYS should emphasize scholarly, analytical writing and speaking that any college-educated person would find compelling.**

In specifying widely accessible scholarly writing in the learning goals, we do not mean not to say that First Year Seminars must teach *only* such writing. Various other kinds of writing, including letters, emails, blog-entries, personal essays, fiction, lab reports, and journal entries, can work well in particular seminars. But these would not be appropriate for the broadest learning goals of the course. We must consider the fact that most first-year students are not committed enough to a major or knowledgeable enough about it to be immersed in highly discipline-specific kinds of writing.<sup>3</sup> And while creative writing or poetry can be productive in an FYS, students also need training in explicitly interpreting evidence in a widely accessible and compelling way.

It is especially beneficial—for both students and instructors—that scholars from a variety of fields should teach this kind of writing. Such an arrangement allows both professors and students to see themselves as citizens in a larger liberal arts community, and to see the various academic fields as ways of contributing to and even beyond our community. Moreover, the process of learning to write in this way enhances habits and hones skills that both students and professors require in college and beyond. The ability to explain something clearly, even to non-specialists, to find what is worthwhile to discuss, to use and interpret evidence and sources, and to arrange such interpretation in an efficient and lucid way, is invaluable for all whose careers depend on their intellects. Many aspects of this ability are of course also translatable to more specialized forms of academic writing.

We concede that, for some topics, a good deal of imagination and planning is required to integrate the kind of writing we are talking about into a course. Yet we believe that there is no discipline at Middlebury that cannot be central to such writing.<sup>4</sup> Nor must seminars be interdisciplinary in order to teach a kind of writing that is extra-disciplinary—though this may

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<sup>3</sup>To see how little sense it might make to insist on discipline-specific writing for First Year seminars, consider item 3 in our appendix, Khristo N. Boyadzhiev's "Close Encounters with the Stirling Numbers of the Second Kind," supplied to support this point by the mathematician on our committee, Bill Peterson. The piece is well written in terms of style, but it would probably be incomprehensible to a First Year student—even a student considering a major in mathematics.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, Stephen Hawking, Oliver Sacks, Paul Davies, G.H. Hardy, and Charles Seife all serve as inspirational examples of writers on science and mathematics (for instance) whose work is both deeply informed by disciplinary training and widely accessible by a thoughtful readership.

often be desirable. Many courses can explore a body of knowledge firmly in a single discipline and still produce analytical writing with wide appeal.

Most instructors—including many in math and science—already teach such extra-disciplinary analytical writing in their First Year Seminars. As one of our mathematicians says, such writing “forces students to understand more deeply what they are doing and discussing. The reason is that it moves them beyond the jargon and requires them to think carefully and deeply about what it all really means.”<sup>5</sup> An assignment for a First Year Seminar taught by another mathematician asks students to write an essay critiquing data graphics found in the popular press—a project that students remember every time they look at such graphics, years after they have graduated from college.<sup>6</sup> A First Year Seminar taught by an economist assigns scholarly essays on historic economic theorists, as well as a research paper on some aspect of the history of economics. A First Year Seminar led by a biologist, “Making Babies in a Brave New World,” elicited a prize-winning, informative, clear, and passionate research essay on the effect of cancer treatment on human fertility.<sup>7</sup> Though the instructors of these First Year Seminars could have stuck to the specifics of their discipline, crafting assignments that taught students how to write lab reports or mathematical formalisms, they thought more expansively about how their discipline could be interesting to the wider world, and they encouraged their students to do the same, through creative assignments. Part of our task, as we see it, is to affirm the importance of what such seminars already do, while providing support for this difficult task.

## **2. The FYS should emphasize elements of good writing and speaking with the greatest capacity to combine “writing” with “content.”**

The rationale for having scholars in diverse fields teach First Year Seminars is the importance of combining writing with content, so that students see the *sine qua non* of lasting persuasiveness in scholarly-communication as the production of real and useful knowledge. The faculty whom we ask to teach First Year Seminars must be able to use intriguing, discipline-specific content to teach students what it means both to communicate knowledge effectively and to assess the validity of a scholar’s argument, the clarity and importance of the author’s purpose, the completeness of the author’s evidence. To accomplish this, instructors need not be specialists in rhetoric and composition. In fact, it is fundamental to Middlebury’s liberal arts education for scholars in a wide variety of fields to be able to make their disciplinary expertise accessible to all students and to use their field as a place where even beginning college students can learn basic tools that are useful everywhere.

If we encourage this way of thinking about writing, we may be able to address anxieties of faculty about having sufficient expertise in rhetoric and composition to teach First Year Seminars as courses that emphasize writing. Many are frustrated that, even after continual individual correction and class discussion, students continue to make stylistic, syntactical, and mechanical errors. Editing for grammar and mechanics is an important but gradually acquired skill. Even when it comes to structure, teaching writing and speaking in the FYS need not necessarily amount primarily to the teaching of abstract rhetorical formulas (e.g. “the five

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<sup>5</sup> John Emerson

<sup>6</sup>See Appendix, item 1.

<sup>7</sup>See Appendix, item 2, which features the course description and the essay itself.

paragraph essay”); indeed, writing pedagogy at the college level is now often devoted to weaning students from such formulas and getting them to structure their writing flexibly according to content. The discussion of content and the process of revision constitute the most vital focus of FYS skill development. Scholars who can write well, and who know their fields are already positioned to achieve this focus, especially if they have the support of a well-trained FYS staff.

### **3. The College should support the extensive planning, hard work, training, and allocation of resources necessary to teach scholarly communication in the FYS.**

While it is true that the secret to good writing is practice, it is also true that this practice can be rendered more or less efficient. To enhance their writing skills over the course of a semester, students need assignment prompts that specify clear writing tasks and that are capacious enough to inspire real intellectual achievement. They need the knowledge to address a topic. They may benefit from models of effective communication and broad rubrics that are largely rubrics of *thought* as well as style, enabling them to see writing as thinking, and encouraging them to challenge themselves to write.<sup>8</sup> Some, who face ESL challenges, or other problems with standard English, may need remedial help. All students need instructors who can respond with knowledge and alacrity to the content, as well as the style, of their writing and speaking. A well-staffed, revitalized FYS program—as proposed in section 4 of this report—will be vital for supplying the resources and training that can fulfill these needs.

Since the teaching of writing and speaking does require a serious commitment of time and energy, it would be best if everyone teaching in the program were happy doing so. We hope that, with the restructuring of the program, more faculty members come to see participation as a privilege. We also hope that every department, as well as the College administration, will continue to keep the FYS in mind when vetting candidates for tenure-track and multi-year hires. But we believe that it would be best if faculty members were not forced to teach First Year Seminars. The College should be on the lookout for scholars—excellent teachers with research agendas—whom it might hire on long-term special status to teach in the program where regular faculty are unable or unwilling to do so. The application and review processes for such FYS positions should be rigorous, as should the training of everyone hired to teach in the program, so that such new hires can become established as integral members of our college community.

Guidance for those entering the program should also be enhanced. While the annual retreat on Teaching and Writing offers some help in this regard, it is not intensive enough, focused enough, or soon enough to give new FYS instructors what they need. A two-day, on-campus orientation session or two should be required earlier in the year, either during J-term or in early July, or both, for instructors teaching the course for the first time. During such sessions, faculty designated for the first time to teach an FYS could work with the FYS director and staff to explore the kinds of courses in their fields that might successfully combine effective communication and content; they could design major writing assignments; they could figure out how to write accurate and appealing course descriptions; and they could create exercises that both prompt effective discussion and equip students to write effectively on a given topic. These sessions could also be open to veterans of the FYS who wanted to participate in them—especially those designing new courses. While the sessions would require an investment of time

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<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Gordon Harvey’s *Elements of the Academic Essay*, item 4 in appendix.



for new FYS faculty at first, they would save time in the long run, insofar as they would allow faculty members to design courses that could be used for years and give them the knowledge and skills to design new courses on their own.

Another important way to support the FYS would be public forums that might help model successful examples of excellent and widely accessible analytical essays by students. For instance, an annual FYS magazine, similar to Harvard's *Exposé*, would go a long way towards achieving this goal, modeling, for both students and instructors, the writing we have been discussing here and would advertise what can be accomplished in the program.<sup>9</sup>

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### **Advising within the First Year Seminar**

We believe that every student benefits from a reliable academic advisor. This is especially important for first-year students who grapple with numerous concerns as they make transitions to college-level learning. Because it accords with all of the learning goals we have set out for the FYS, and because it provides students and advisors with regular access to each other, allowing advisors to become intimately acquainted with the academic interests, skills, and aspirations of their advisees, we endorse the current method of designating the FYS instructor as the student's pre-major academic advisor. We acknowledge that the work of advising fifteen new students is considerable. Still, we hope that faculty members will come to see that advising need not be an undue burden, particularly as we enact a few important changes in the process—some of which are already falling into place.

The new advising initiatives planned by the Commons should continue to occur in close cooperation with the FYS program. We are gratified that the Commons teams are fostering stronger academic connections with first- and second-year students and are planning to sponsor events throughout the academic year that will enhance students' understanding of college programs, academic options, and career paths. We anticipate that the information students gain from such programming will alleviate some of the advising burden that FYS instructors usually shoulder and will also set our students up for greater success as they design their own path through Middlebury and beyond.

The College should be sure to involve the leaders of the FYS program in the Orientation planning process. Over the years, the changes in scheduling have tended to occur without sufficient FYS involvement. That situation needs to be corrected; the FYS director must participate in any Orientation planning that has an impact on advising, or on classes or class assignments during Orientation week. We would also recommend that the Orientation schedule be planned so that students can adequately attend the academic forum before their individual sessions with their advisors.

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<sup>9</sup>See examples (item 5 in our appendix). Such a magazine would choose seven to ten of the most interesting essays in any given year. The primary criterion for *selection* would be content, rather than style, though grammar and style would need to be honed before publication. This would give students whose work was promising in terms of argument, logic, evidence, and analysis the chance to perfect style for publication, working with editors with rhetorical expertise. And it would supply future seminars with examples of effective scholarly essays on a variety of topics.

Finally, we need to make sure that advisors are free to focus on those aspects of their roles that are most important. Faculty advisors are rightly expected to help advisees reflect carefully on choices they are making, given their particular interests, skills, and aspirations; to test to make sure their advisees have done enough research to make informed choices; to serve as mentors, providing encouragement and a safe forum in which to discuss academic challenges; and to stay in touch with appropriate deans and instructors where problems—personal or academic—come to their attention. But they should not feel compelled do their students’ course selection, research, or networking for them. They should not feel responsible for supplying every piece of information that their advisees may not know but can and should find out for themselves (e.g. information about majors, course requirements, prerequisites, and placement exams). From their very first communication with incoming students – which we think should happen before Orientation – advisors can set high expectations for students, so that before first-year students arrive on campus, they learn the basics of the curriculum, and make thoughtful lists of course preferences. The goal is to help advisees develop a sense of themselves as adult architects of their own college experience.<sup>10</sup> Of course, it is incumbent upon advisors to devote the time and energy necessary, through individual meetings and adequate attention, to encourage such growth.

We know from experience that our students will rise to meet the standard that we set for advising. If we can remind each other, repeatedly, that as advisors we are not primarily suppliers of information, but mentors who encourage students to take the initiative, then the result will be liberating for everyone. The enhanced role of the commons in pre-advising, as well as a stronger voice for the FYS in Orientation planning should help make this goal easier to achieve.

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### **Structure and Staffing of the Program**

With regard to the structure of the FYS program, we endorse its separation from the Writing Program, which occurred in the Spring of 2013. True, there will be some awkwardness and confusion during the period of decentralization, but once this transition is complete, we expect the result will be positive, as we believe the different staff and institutions that focus on writing will eventually cooperate well with each other. We believe in the principle that, in the FYS, “writing,” “content,” and “advising” are inseparable, and therefore that the FYS should not be in any way contained within the Writing Program. In light of its size and importance, the FYS should have autonomy as a faculty-wide program, with its own administration. The Writing Program or the Writing Center or both should provide support for the FYS—as they do for other courses and programs, upon request. Like all such programs, the FYS should be subject to periodic external reviews assessing and maintaining its effectiveness over time.

The administration of the FYS might consist of a Director and a faculty Steering Committee (chaired by the Director).<sup>11</sup> Committee members would be appointed by the Dean of Faculty, in

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<sup>10</sup> Please see Appendix, item 6, for examples of useful communications from First Year Seminar instructors to incoming students before they arrive on campus.

<sup>11</sup>It is possible that the program might need an Associate Director, but we would recommend trying to administer the program with the director only for a few years.

consultation with the Director, to staggered, three-year terms.<sup>12</sup> The Director and Committee would provide the following: (i) oversight of all components of the program and FYS courses; (ii) orienting of new FYS instructors, particularly involving writing instruction, the structuring of syllabi and assignments, and advising; (iii) FYS proposal review (iv); adequate staffing by faculty members, with a gradual shift from mandatory staffing to voluntary staffing.

We also propose increased opportunities within departments and programs for interested faculty to teach FYS courses more frequently. Upon consultation with Chairs, some faculty members might voluntarily choose to teach a FYS in consecutive years for a few years (or with increased frequency over a few years). If the College made these circumstances possible, faculty teaching FYS courses more frequently would have the chance to improve their seminars. They would be able to take advantage of the new program's resources, including enrichment funds for curricular development to make their FYS a model for other faculty to emulate. Our vision for a revitalized FYS program also involves incorporating veteran FYS instructors in program events and outreach. We see seasoned FYS teachers as a special and valuable resource to help show others the way to more effective teaching and advising of first-year students.

Having a physical space on campus dedicated to the FYS Program is critical. We envision a FYS Center that would comprise offices for the Director, Coordinator and any staff, and perhaps offices for faculty hired into the program, as well as a gathering space in which to hold workshops and meetings. There should be a bona fide physical presence for the FYS Program on campus, so that people will know where to go to seek advice and converse with colleagues. The space should be central on campus—easily accessible to all faculty members.

Success of the program would also depend on its having a full-time Coordinator to work closely with the Director, Committee, and FYS faculty. The Coordinator could organize workshops, help with FYS publications of student writing, maintain and update a new website, manage a repository of teaching and advising resources (such as model assignments and syllabi), and coordinate consultations between FYS instructors seeking support and those best suited and available to provide such support.

In our proposed model, all of the aforementioned elements (with respect to leadership, a FYS Committee, a Center, workshops, faculty support, etc.) are essential to strengthening the structure and staffing of a sustainable FYS Program.

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<sup>12</sup> We could not come to a decision as to whether the directorship should be rotating or permanent, as there are potential advantages and disadvantages to each arrangement. We recommend continued discussion by the EAC, the Administration, and the faculty on this question. If the positions were rotating, an Associate Directorship might be advisable for the sake of the program's continuity; the Director's term could then end every three to four years (although a renewable term should be possible)—with the presumption that the Associate Director would succeed the Director. If the Directorship were permanent, the Director would be reviewed for renewal every three to five years. Compensation for the directorship would depend in part on whether it was rotating or permanent and whether an Associate Directorship existed, and so should also be a subject for discussion with the EAC and the Administration. For example, if the Directorship were a rotating position, compensation could include committee service along with a yearly teaching reduction; if a permanent position, it might resemble a deanship or salaried position involving the teaching of at least one course a year, including a first-year seminar every other year.

## Compensation for FYS Teaching and Advising

Survey data collected by the EAC last year indicated that there was not yet sufficient faculty support to allow for voluntary staffing of the FYS Program. Nevertheless, we continue to believe that this is a desirable goal.

How far are we from that goal? We have heard that only the last half-dozen teaching slots each year are hard to fill. But we suspect that there is not a simple cut-off where enthusiasm suddenly ends, but rather a range of varying degrees of commitment to the FYS program. This is not a recipe for mounting courses of the uniformly high quality that we seek.

An appropriate compensation structure should help to increase or at least maintain the pool of faculty willing to teach such a course. We recognize that this will not completely solve the staffing problem. We also understand that the goal is to draw faculty members who enjoy the First Year Seminar for its own sake. Teaching the FYS should be a way to lessen one's overall workload. But teaching in the FYS program should not require undue sacrifice, either.

In addition, we hope that the efforts of term faculty who contribute substantially to the program can be recognized and rewarded, so that they can pursue their scholarship. Those who teach in the program should be true scholars. If we are going to make positions involving the FYS available to faculty who are not tenure track, and require a rigorous application process for such positions, as well as rigorous review, we need to provide them with the resources and leave time that they need in order to thrive in our community.

**Teaching Load Guidelines.** The new Teaching Load Guidelines establish three measures of faculty effort: contact hours, preparations, and enrollments. Currently, teaching an FYS only counts as one contact hour above the scheduled meeting times for a class. We think this minimal adjustment is not sufficient to recognize the hard work of our most committed seminar instructors. We have heard arguments against artificial adjustments to enrollment figures, but we believe that preparations can and should be adjusted along with hours. As this decision cannot be made by the faculty, we are reluctant to make more specific recommendations, but we hope to have further discussions of the matter with the EAC and the administration.

**Faculty Accomplishment Form.** *Teaching a FYS course should be recognized on the Annual Information for Faculty Salaries form.*

The current form includes the following language in the Teaching Accomplishments category

*Please comment on significant achievements in your teaching in 20XX:*

- new or substantially revised courses you offered
- noteworthy pedagogical innovations or contributions (including participation in teaching/learning professional development sessions)
- the number of theses, senior projects, or other independent study opportunities you advised
- teaching opportunities outside the classroom

- noteworthy or particularly demanding aspects of your teaching responsibilities in the past year

While it is certainly possible for a faculty member to list the FYS here, the explicit inclusion of a bullet item will serve to elevate the significance of this achievement both in the eyes of the faculty at large, and for the VPAA in setting salaries.

We emphasize that this is separate from the Teaching Load adjustment. Faculty Reviews and salaries are based on teaching, scholarship and service to the institution. The FYS is a time-consuming commitment that stretches over several semesters. This will necessarily involve tradeoffs of time that could otherwise be applied to activities that are explicitly recognized for tenure, promotion, and salary increases. It is unrealistic to expect faculty happily to forfeit these other opportunities.