Minutes of the Revised Undergraduate First-Year Experience (FYE) Committee
2/23/09

Present: Erik Craft, Joanna Drell, Joe Essid, Al Goethals, Libby Gruner (chair), April Hill, Dan Palazzolo, Carol Wittig, Steve Allred (ex officio)

The meeting began with introductions and brief statements of interest in or familiarity with the current FYE (first-year experience). The committee comprises a broad cross-section of the campus, and several committee members have experience both with our own FYE (both Core and English 103) and with FYE at other institutions.

We then briefly reviewed both the UR mission statement and the broad goals that Derek Bok outlines for the undergraduate experience in *Our Underachieving Colleges*.

The UR mission statement is as follows:
The mission of the University of Richmond is to sustain a collaborative learning and research community that supports the personal development of its members and the creation of new knowledge. A Richmond education prepares students to live lives of purpose, thoughtful inquiry, and responsible leadership in a global and pluralistic society.

Bok outlines eight broad goals for undergraduate education, as follows:

1. communication—oral and written
2. critical thinking
3. moral reasoning
4. preparing citizens
5. living with diversity
6. living in global society
7. breadth of interests
8. preparing for work

We agreed that Bok’s goals are implicit in the language of the UR mission statement.

We then began to discuss what our goals for our students’ first year were. We seemed to have a broad general consensus that the first two or three of Bok’s goals were the ones most likely to be addressed in our students’ FYE, though we also agreed that none would be met exclusively in the first year. Perhaps more germane to the FYE are the following:

- students should get to know at least one professor well
- students should be excited about learning
- a broad cross-section of the faculty should be involved
- students should have the opportunity to confront and challenge their preconceptions
- students should engage in the critical reading of texts
- students should develop skills in analytical and persuasive writing that incorporates research
We also discussed our plans for the committee itself. With a goal of producing a recommendation on a revised FYE by the end of the semester, we will plan to meet once a week, at least initially. We will coordinate with the rest of the task force as the opportunity arises, and we will attempt to involve the campus community through posting our minutes and soliciting input.

Joe Essid made some comments about the Stanford program he just visited, and shared some materials from them. Other working documents we have at the moment include:

- Troutman proposal for University Writing & Research at UR (Dec. 2008)
- Faculty Survey on Core and Alternative First-Year Course Models (Fall 2008)
- Annual Core Survey Results (2007-2008)
- 2008-2009 Core Course Syllabus
- Joe Essid & Lee Carleton Observations on Writing at Stanford

We also began to make a list of materials that would be helpful in our deliberations. So far these include:

- The TFUGE recommendations
- any data we might already have on how students assess their writing skills
- retention data

The meeting adjourned at about 4:10 pm.