FYS Committee Report  
April 2011

Elisabeth Gruner, Committee Chair

Committee Members: Erik Craft, Joe Essid, Pat Fishe, Don Forsyth, Terry Price, Dan Roberts, Peter Smallwood, Tricia Stohr-Hunt, Dan Roberts, Mary Kelly Tate, Sydney Watts, Marcia Whitehead

“The committee shall solicit proposals for FYS courses, review them for compliance with the FYS Guidelines adopted by the faculty, provide guidance on FYS faculty training and course development workshops, and conduct periodic reviews of the FYS program to ensure quality and continued participation by faculty from all five schools. The committee, in consultation with the Registrar, also will deal with student petitions for exemption or substitution of FYS requirements. The actions of the committee will be reported at the University Faculty Meeting at the end of the year.”

In compliance with the above charge, the FYS committee approved 35 new FYS courses this year, all of which have subsequently been approved at university faculty meetings and many of which will be taught for the first time next year. (See appendix for full listing.) Faculty participated in over 20 workshops during the course of the year, and two additional summer institutes are being offered this May (in addition to one offered last August and another in October). The committee has been instrumental in helping to revise the format for the institutes to be offered this May. Over thirty faculty will participate in these institutes, one of which will already be complete by the time this report is delivered.

The committee has also paid attention to assessment of the program, reviewing grade distributions from the fall and suggesting some additions and revisions to the SEI forms used for evaluation. Because of the implementation of a new SEI system through the Office of Institutional Effectiveness no changes will be made until we can review the new system; once we have a year's worth of data from both our institutional assessment and SEI forms we can make more informed recommendations regarding any future changes.

The committee has been invaluable in this first year as a sounding board and source of advice on a variety of questions that we couldn't have anticipated—these ranged from the eligibility of certain non-traditional faculty to teach FYS courses, to a student-designed and implemented survey of FYS students, to planning for a celebration of excellent student work. Committee members are also contributing their time to the FYS summer institutes.

Two important tasks of the committee are not yet complete as I write this report: the committee will be judging the first annual FYS paper competition, with an eye to awarding cash prizes next fall to the students writing the best papers in this year’s FYS courses. A subcommittee will also be reviewing faculty applications for the first FYS Faculty Fellows, a group of up to five FYS faculty who will work together in a year-long faculty learning community, working to develop writing projects related to the FYS experience.
Appendix: FYS Courses approved during 2010-2011

America By The Decades, Mark McGarvie, History
Baseballs, Body Parts and Rosa Parks, David Epstein, Law
Borrowed Music: Quotation, Allusion and Sampling, Ben Broening, Music
Climate Change and the Media, Steve Nash, Journalism
Climate Change as a Business Challenge and National Security Threat, Porcher Taylor, SCS
Culture, Medicine and Illness in Global Perspective, Jennifer Nourse, Sociology/Anthropology
Entrepreneurship and Innovation as Drivers of Economic Growth and National Security, Porcher Taylor, SCS
Epidemics & Empires, Carol Summers, History
Ethics in International Relations, Stephen Long, Political Science
Faith and Difference in America: Learning to Live Together, Craig Kocher, Chaplaincy
Food for Thought, Julietta Singh, English
From the Grand Tour to the Lonely Planet: Tourism, Travel, and Culture, Catherine Simpson, LAIS
Guns in America. Laura Browder, English/American Studies
Hard To Be a God: Revolution and Human Nature in Soviet Science Fiction, Yvonne Howell, MLC
Hip Hop Performances, Patricia Herrera, Theatre & Dance
History and Politics of Richmond, VA, Thad Williamson, JSLS and Amy Howard, CCE
Human Rights & Civil Rights: Studies in Southern Africa and the U. S. South, Melissa Ooten, WGSS/WILL
Immigration, Labor Markets and Societies, Patricia Strait, SCS
Music in Culture: Introduction to World Music, Andy McGraw, Music
Not Just Food: The Politics of Hunger in the United States, Jennifer Erkulwater, Political Science
Personal Genomes, April Hill, Biology
Philosophical Backgrounds to American Democracy, Del McWhorter, Philosophy
Politics and Literature, Kevin Cherry, Political Science
Politics in Pictures: Messages, Morals, and Misinformation, Andrea Simpson, Political Science
Progress and its Critics Philosophy, Technology, and Environmentalism, Del McWhorter, Philosophy
Socialism, Jeffrey Hass, Sociology/Anthropology
Space is Big, Ted Bunn, Physics
St. Petersburg: The Myth and the City in Literature, Painting, and Music, Joe Troncale, MLC
States vs. Markets: Public Policy in the U.S. and Other Industrialized Nations, Tracy Roof, Political Science
Taking it to the Streets: Old and New Media in the Education of the Public, Dan Roberts & Lee Carleton, SCS
The Alphabet of Human Thought, David Landy, Psychology
The Criminal Brain, Cindy Bukach, Psychology
Waiting for God: Belief and Doubt in Literature, Terryl Givens, English
Water: Economics, Politics, and Policy, Andy Litteral, Management
Water: From Noah’s Flood to Katrina, Walid Harmameh, MLC