FYS Committee Report, April 2013
Elisabeth Gruner, Committee Chair

Committee Members: Ted Bunn, Paul Clikeman, Erik Craft, Joanna Drell, Al Goethals, Ray Hilliard, Gary McDowell, Erik Nielson, Tricia Stohr-Hunt, Mary Kelly Tate, Sydney Watts

“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 24 new FYS courses this year, half of which are on today’s agenda for university faculty approval and many of which will be taught for the first time next year. (See appendix for full listing.) Faculty and prospective faculty participated in 24 workshops during the course of the year, and 15 prospective faculty will have completed a summer training institute by the time this report is made public at the UFM, May 13 2013.

The committee has also continued to focus on assessment of the FYS program. As with last year, there was considerable discussion amongst the FYS faculty and the FYS committee regarding grade distributions in FYS courses; we continue to pay attention to this issue as well as to overall program assessment. In 2012-2013, the assessment format changed slightly to allow for review of all four program goals every semester; this will allow us to make some comparative analyses of our achievement of goals throughout the year. While last year at this time we projected a comprehensive review of the program for 2012-2013, that review will actually take place during the summer and fall of 2013, to take advantage of the full three years’ worth of data that will be available by the end of spring semester 2013. The new assessment format, reviews of grade distribution, and a comprehensive syllabus review are all projected to be part of this three-year assessment of the program.

During the course of reviewing proposals, the committee also recommended minor changes in the proposal form which have now been implemented. The FYS website continues to undergo constant revision, and we welcome suggestions from faculty as to how to increase its usefulness.

This past fall the committee sponsored the first-ever FYS mini-conference, held during Family weekend, 2012. Student submissions of creative projects, research papers, and a variety of other work were presented at the conference, Friday, September 28. Sydney Watts took the lead on planning this new event, which we
now expect will become an annual occurrence. The committee reviewed and judged student submissions last May, allowing accepted students time to revise their work for presentation in the fall. Ten students presented their work, including the two Rilling award winners for first-year writing, Mattias Treu and Diego Leal. In addition, digital stories by another four students played on a continuous loop during the conference. John Rilling, professor emeritus of History, in whose name the award for first-year writing was endowed, opened the conference with welcoming remarks, and the provost was on hand to address award-winners, presenters, families, and attendees later in the conference. The committee’s work continues this May with a review of submissions for the 2013 conference and Rilling award.

Last year’s committee ended their year’s work by reviewing applications for the second class of FYS Faculty Fellows. Those fellows—Andy Litteral, Mavis Brown, and Andy McGraw—have now completed their work for the year, and the 2012-2013 committee’s final task of the year will be to select the new class of Faculty Fellows for 2013-2014.

The committee has been invaluable, as it was last year, as a sounding board and source of advice to the FYS coordinator. As I prepare to leave this position after three years with the program, I want to convey my deepest thanks to everyone who has served on the committee for their hard work, their sound advice, and their steadfast commitment to student learning.

Appendix: Courses submitted for approval during 2012-2013.