Vision for FYES 1000: First Year Experience

The vision of FYES 1000 is to have the course serve as our foundational preparedness course for our incoming students. The course will shift to a skill based course where we help prepare students for the academic rigor of college courses. This does not mean that we will ignore the social/activity based component of the course. It is critical to engage students in the course and in the college in the critical first semester. To that end, we will integrate the activity based components of the course with the academic rigor necessary to prepare students for the remainder of their college careers. It is important to note that FYES 1000 will be an academic based course with activity/engagement based activities integrated into the course with the purpose of complimenting or highlighting the main themes of the course. The learning outcomes of the course will coalesce around the four learning objectives of the course:

- Strategies for Academic Success
- Engagement & Participation
- Interpersonal & Life Skills
- Foundations for Global Learning

In order to accomplish these goals, First Year Programming (FYP) will do the following as it relates to FYES 1000

Create Measureable Learning Outcomes

FYP has programmatic goals that guide the creation of courses and programming for the overall First Year Experience. However, the course has struggled with creating measurable outcomes that relate to the overall programmatic goals of FYP. To that end, the course outcomes will coalesce around the major themes of the course.

Shift to a Three Credit Course (Three Hour Course)

This programmatic change is related to two major factors: the amount of work and material necessary for the course, and student evaluations. In terms of the amount of work necessary, I

---

1 The course will have a name change effective Spring 2013
think it is essential that this foundational course be viewed as equally important to the student’s core academic classes. In addition, the amount of material that needs to be covered lends itself more to the three hour format, than to a two hour course (which may be viewed as less important or less necessary). In addition, student evaluations have shown a student desire to increase the credit hours for the class. FYES evaluations during the 2010-2011 academic year showed that 82% of students (N=150) agreed with an increase in the credit hours to reflect the length of the course and the information covered.

**Place FYES Courses in Area F**

One of the biggest criticisms of the current program is that students take a course that essentially counts for very little (outside, of course, the experiential learning opportunities that arise). To this end, First Year Programs will work to get courses under First Year Programming to fall under Area F (Major related courses). This model emulates a nationally recognized and renowned program at Kennesaw State University. This will be a top priority of First Year Experience as the process for placing courses in the core curriculum is a time consuming and long one. All proposals must go before the Academic Council, the Board of Regents and the General Education Council. Therefore this must be a priority of the Leadership Team.

**Increase Access to the Course**

The concern, at this time, is that the students who need FYES the most (our most high risk students statistically speaking) are not getting the course. Right now the course is only for first time, full-time four year degree seeking students. However, we do a relatively good job of retaining those students from year one to year two.² However, we struggle to retain learning support students. As a remedy, First Year Programs would like to include all freshmen in the course. We acknowledge this is a long term goal, therefore we believe that including all learning support students in FYE enrollment would be beneficial to the students and to the college (in terms of retention and preparing more academically sound students).
**Adjustment of Major Course Events**

There are major events that have characterized FYES over the past several years. These activities need to be revamped and reworked.

- **The International Food Festival**
  - The International Food Festival is the largest activity that occurs on campus. Last year over 2000 students participated in the festival. While the size of the event eliminates the idea of scrapping the Food Festival, it does need to have learning outcomes attached to it. In addition, if the point of the food festival is to increase acknowledgement of diversity, then there needs to be collaboration with our International Student Populations and the Center for International Education. After talking to Dr. Baogang Guo, it seems like a natural fit to merge the International Education Club and FYE into a collaborative partnership for the food festival. Whether this manifests itself in a mentor/mentee relationship or the international students serve as advisors for the food festival remains to be seen. This increased collaboration can only strengthen the focus of the food festival. In addition, the food festival should be moved to collaborate with International Education Week (which in the Fall will run from November 12-November 16)

- **Diversity Movie**
  - The Diversity Movie is an interesting idea, which again fails to have any sort of academic outcomes associated with it. That is not to say that students can’t watch a movie simply for the sake of watching a movie. However, if the claim is that this movie acts to increase diversity, there needs to be outcomes and measures tied to the activity. We also need to address the prohibitive cost of these movies (licensing) and see if there are creative ways to get around these issues.
**Passport System**

Outside of mandatory events, First Year Experience has had trouble getting students engaged in the campus and making connections with other students and faculty. The passport system is a way to get students involved. This system is modeled after the University of West Georgia’s Passport system. There are many events that take place on campus at Dalton State College (especially in the first month of school). Working in conjunction with the Office of Student Life, FYP will create a passport system to encourage student engagement.

In order to encourage student participation, students who participate in at least X% of activities and events on campus, and secure the necessary signatures or stamps and return their completed passports to the Director of First Year Programs will be entered into a drawing for prizes. All FYE students will receive their passport booklet at Orientation/The First Day of Classes.

**Freshman Forum**

As an assessment tool, and as a course improvement tool, twice during the semester we will hold a Freshman Forum. This forum will serve as an opportunity to give Feedback to the Director of First Year Programs or another member of the First Year Experience Curriculum Team (participants will not be teaching a current section of FYES 1000). Students will be asked what they think about the direction of the course, suggestions for improvement and suggestions for improving engagement. This can be used by administration as an assessment tool, and a transcript will be given to faculty to gain ideas for potential improvements to their FYES sections.

**Peer Mentoring Program**

Faculty and Staff involvement can only go so far in helping to prepare our students for the rigors of collegiate academics. While we can present them with ideas for success, their peers can provide invaluable modeling for student success. Peer mentors will serve as role models, advisors, a contact person for students, and will work in conjunction with the FYES instructors to help the courses run smoothly.
**Faculty Application to Teach Course**

In order to increase accountability, starting in the Fall of 2013, FYP will have instructors and faculty apply to teach FYES courses. Requirements and application procedures will be established and selected by members of the FYES Curriculum Team.

**Team Teaching Approach**

To encourage collaboration (and to lessen the individual teaching load) FYP believes that there is a prime opportunity to “team teach” FYP Courses. Team teaching would pair a faculty member with a professional staff member who would share the responsibilities of teaching a FYES course. FYP would hold a collaborative training session to prepare team teachers and individual teachers to teach the FYES class.

**School Specific Focus**

One of the most pressing concerns of faculty is that students are unprepared to take the core courses (and thus unprepared for the upper level courses) within their specific disciplines. As Dalton State College moves forward with requiring incoming freshman to declare a major, FYP has the unique opportunity to provide skills that will help students not only in the general academic community, but within their specific majors.

To that end FYP will incorporate school specific material into the FYP courses. Faculty from each school will be asked to provide material (and in some cases be the guest lecturer) for special sessions that will prepare students for specific assignments and topics that will arise within their chosen major. **Note: This does not replace the existing content; it simply supplements the existing material.**

FYP will talk to the deans of the following questions to gauge their interest in having school specific components to their FYE courses. If interested, the school representative on the FYE Curriculum Team will be responsible for creating the course content and getting it back to the Director of First Year Programs for implementation in Fall 2013.
- Business → Donna Mayo
- Education → Calvin Meyer
- Liberal Arts → Mary Neilson
  - Humanities → Barbara Tucker
  - Social Sciences → Judy Cornett
- Science & Math → Randall Griffus
- Nursing → Cordia Starling
- Social Work → Spencer Zeiger

**Student Specific Sections**

To address our diverse and different (from a “traditional” college) population, FYES would like to offer sections that are directed towards specific types of learners. FYES would like to have sections dedicated to military personnel, non-traditional aged students, and working parents. These would be designated as such in BANNER, and students would need to obtain permission to register for the course from First Year Programs.

**Consistency of Programming**

In order to have a successful program, there must be consistency among the various sections of First Year Programs. To that end, FYP is recommending a consistent grading scale for all of the First Year Experience courses. While we will not dictate specific assignments that must be done, there will be a list of activities that instructors teaching the course have agreed meet the programmatic goals of FYP. There will be consistent point totals and consistent grade ranges. In addition, all sections will use the same textbook to increase consistency amongst FYES sections.

**Textbook Change**

I have taught the First Year Experience Foundations course and I (along with many faculty members that I have talked to) agree that the current iteration of the textbook is far too comprehensive and theory-based for an introductory course on the foundations of academic success. Though the textbook is comprehensive, academically rigorous, it transcends what a college freshman needs to know about basic preparation for success in college. It is important
for faculty to understand the pedagogical reasoning behind the theories that our students are learning. In a basic fundamentals course students need to know the practical application of what we are teaching them and how to apply it to success in the classroom.

To this end, I have contacted Kennesaw State University and their First Year Experience Department for advice regarding the textbook. Their nationally renowned textbook has been an example for other first year departments around the country. Their chapters are methodologically sound, and are written by professionals in their field. This is not a textbook that is written by someone who generally studies retention and first year students. This textbook is written by professionals who research the skill sets that they are writing about.

We will be adopting a new textbook for the FYES 1000 that is student centered and focuses on the opportunities and skills that are important to success at Dalton State College. These skills will be relevant, applied and transferable. FYP will work to integrate existing material from Kennesaw with Chapters written by Dalton State faculty and staff that are relevant to our students and the larger Dalton State Community. The ultimate hope is that this textbook can be used throughout the full first year experience.