

Academic Issues update (report from meeting re: FYS, sent 10/31/24)

Just wanted to give you an update about the FYS committee meeting I was in today.

A small group of people on the General Education Council (AVP Schroeder, the Registrar, our Student Success Director, a chair representative, and myself) met to discuss the President's directive to change FYS.

The admin is still pushing for a change that is finalized by December so it can be taught by faculty in the Fall.

The chair rep (Jim Masterson) and I pushed for co-curricular units, not academic credit. No one was opposed. The only issue here was where the co-curricular model might be attached. So many students enter with college credit, there's no way to capture them all in one "required" place.

The meeting was congenial, but I remain perplexed that, yet again, we're scrambling to take care of an internal crisis someone in the upper administration created. To get a viable solution, we need to cut through the cant to address issues as they stand:

- There's no way the existing chairs absorb the FYS load. In the meeting, AVP Schroeder admitted to Jim that chairs wouldn't be fully on the line—faculty would be.
- There is no official plan as to what to do with the reading component (FYS-E addresses reading remediation). The only "proposal" I heard was AVP Schroeder's hope to decouple all "e" components from all existing classes and handle it some other way.
 - Of note: there was no official plan on this, he and Director Barber discussed the fact that the proposal would be a change from official understandings, and no faculty or chairs who currently teach e courses have been consulted.
- The stated reason for the rushed change was that the people who currently teach FYS won't have the capacity to do so in Fall of 2025. That, of course, is an administrative decision. Also an administrative decision? Waiting until August to tell any faculty and not having any real plan (other than "chairs and faculty take care of it") to make change.
 - Of note: both Director Barber and the Registrar noted it would be helpful to have a longer transition period wherein we built a bridge to whatever our new format would be.
- The "senior faculty who can guide new students in their program" is also not viable. As I noted in the meeting, many incoming students are undecided. Either we'd be forcing undecideds into certain majors or we'd be forcing instructors to cover majors/areas that are not their own.

- So far, the “some programs welcome this FYS change to meet student credit hour demands” has been ‘Music asked and Education probably needs numbers.’ As I noted during the meeting, this is not evidence of faculty will or desire. Programs were told they were found wanting, and one program that’s gotten lots and lots of pressure tried to make the best of things.
 - My main concern is with distribution of workload. Programs deemed “lower” or “less productive” will be used to “serve” other areas. We don’t need English, Spanish, or Education instructors teaching 12 one hour FYS classes so that we can meet all the new students enrolling in Nursing or Business.
- The “flexibility” discussed is still a nebulous concept. I still don’t have an overview of which programs would benefit from reduced hours, which programs have intros to the discipline, and there has apparently been no consideration of alternate scheduling. (I asked about 8-week offerings or, if the course is 1 hour, having the same instructor teach 3 distinct 5-week versions to get 3 hours of “regular” load.)