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11-11-2019

### First-Year Experience and Second-Year Experience

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#### SHORT TITLE

**(Please provide a short descriptive title that would be suitable for inclusion in the Senate Agenda.)**

First-Year Experience and Second-Year Experience (note - this is a revision to some of the language requested by SEC; this updated file is also shared with Carol Jamison)

#### SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION:

**(Please state the nature of your request as concisely as possible.)**


The First-Year Experience and Second-Year Experience programs are frequently heralded as central to student retention and inclusive excellence, yet faculty are hard-pressed to justify being part of these programs due to the fact that participation is no longer compensated. It is essential for the Senate to discuss the future of these programs and especially to address how the evidence collected by a task force of faculty in Spring 2019 will be used to ensure that we not only have these programs, but also that these programs positively impact student-faculty relationships and student retention.


#### RATIONALE(s):


**(Please explain why this issue is one of general concern for the Faculty Senate or for the University and not a matter concerning only an individual college or administrative area.)**

On several occasions, the Provost has mentioned wanting feedback on the current iteration of First-Year Experience. Second-Year Experience has also undergone some of the same revisions that changes First-Year Experience, with similar results--both programs are now involve fewer faculty. Many faculty expressed concerns over how FYE is currently being taught, as well as how faculty are compensated for participating in these discussions. A number of faculty have also asserted that the lack of compensation is a significant factor in their decision not to participate in the course. The incident related to Capó Cruet's visit makes clear that faculty concerns were warranted. Nevertheless, it appears that the university intends to continue in the current approach to FYE next semester even though it contends these courses are central to the Inclusive Excellence pillar of the University's values and mission as well as student retention. The faculty fellow for this, Tricia Brown, has spoken with some departments and distributed surveys, but the surveys don't address what we see as the essential problem: lack of funding and no compensation or incentive that fits meaningfully into a tenure and promotion plan for qualified faculty to participate in the courses. The survey does not provide a genuine opportunity to reflect on what is best for our students and the future of these programs. The Senate encourages conducting the programs effectively and reminds administrators of the importance of encouraging students to form relationships with faculty and staff that contribute to the retention piece of this puzzle. These tenets are undermined by the current 'course-in-a-can' model being taught largely by staff (as recorded in the GECC minutes from October 25, Chris Ludowise recently reported that this course is taught by approximately 15% faculty, 85% staff, but it is unclear how many of these are full-time faculty rather than administrative faculty). From those minutes: "Previously, the course was taught by 60% faculty and 40% staff, which then shifted to 85% faculty and 15% staff, but the latest design flipped that proportion so that the course is taught predominantly by staff."

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### Approval

Response:

Approved

11/9/2019

SEC Response:

SEC approved this Discussion Item to be added to the Faculty Senate agenda for 12.2.2019.

12/2/2019

Senate Response:

The First-Year Experience and Second-Year Experience programs are frequently heralded as central to student retention and inclusive excellence, yet faculty are hard-pressed to justify being part of these programs due to the fact that participation is no longer compensated. It is essential for the Senate to discuss the future of these programs and especially to address how the evidence collected by a task force of faculty in Spring 2019 will be used to ensure that we not only have these programs, but also that these programs positively impact student-faculty relationships and student retention. Rationale: On several occasions, the Provost has mentioned wanting feedback on the current iteration of First-Year Experience. Second-Year Experience has also undergone some of the same revisions that changes First-Year Experience, with similar results--both programs now involve fewer faculty. Many faculty expressed concerns over how FYE is currently being taught, as well as how faculty are compensated for participating in these discussions. A number of faculty have also asserted that the lack of compensation is a significant factor in their decision not to participate in the course. The incident related to Cruet's visit makes clear that faculty concerns were warranted. Nevertheless, it appears that the university intends to continue in the current approach to FYE next semester even though it contends these courses are central to the Inclusive Excellence pillar of the University's values and mission as well as student retention. The faculty fellow for this, Trisha Brown, has spoken with some departments and distributed surveys, but the surveys don't address what we see as the essential problem: lack of funding and no compensation or incentive that fits meaningfully into a tenure and promotion plan for qualified faculty to participate in the courses. The survey does not provide a genuine opportunity to reflect on what is best for our students and the future of these programs. The Senate encourages conducting the programs effectively and reminds administrators of the importance

of encouraging students to form relationships with faculty and staff that contribute to the retention piece of this puzzle. These tenets are undermined by the current 'course-in-a-can' model being taught largely by staff (as recorded in the GECC minutes from October 25, Chris Ludowise recently reported that this course is taught by approximately 15% faculty, 85% staff, but it is unclear how many of these are full-time faculty rather than administrative faculty). From those minutes: "Previously, the course was taught by 60% faculty and 40% staff, which then shifted to 85% faculty and 15% staff, but the latest design flipped that proportion so that the course is taught predominantly by staff." Discussion: Amanda Konkle (CAH) prefaced the discussion by saying that she hopes we can address it in the positive spirit of problem solving. She would like the Senate to discuss these courses in order to consider what is best for the multiple stakeholders involved, including faculty, staff, students, and the reputation of the university. Her intention is not to create an 'us / them' tension between faculty and staff, but to take expertise of both staff and faculty to make the most of the class. FYE-affiliated faculty recommended some changes based on best practices of peer and aspirational institutions but these recommendations were not implemented in the new version of FYE. Trisha Brown, the faculty fellow in the provost's office working on this initiative suggested that we will not roll back to the old model either in the format of the course or in terms of compensation. She seeks workable solutions as to how this program might move forward in the future. Jack Simmons (CAH) questioned whether, with core curriculum revision coming, it makes sense to commit 10% of our core education hours to these two courses. Michele Haberland (CAH) responded that we should shift the percentage back to the faculty and have them teach it in load. Chris Cartright (CAH) emphasized the significance of the course. He was on the task force that worked on revisions and was disappointed to see the work sidelined and the program streamlined. The programs are very effective at helping students find direction and succeed, he argued. Because it is so important and because it takes up 10% of our load, we need to invest our resources to be sure students have the correct expertise. Modules and asynchronous activities might help us engage more thoughtfully with these issues. He sees the book burning as a result of the defunding of these programs. Melissa Gayan (CAH) noted that if it comes back to faculty teaching loads, we could incorporate learning communities, attaching FYE to other classes. Lisa Abbott (CAH) asked why the program that did exist was streamlined as it was successful. Jack Simmons (CAH) expressed his concern that we may have to choose between FYE and other important core courses. Lisa Abbott (CAH) asked again why the program was redesigned. Chris Ludowise (Provost's Office) responded that we had gone through a cyclical process of redesign. She claimed that FYE was new to the Armstrong campus. It was redesigned to add in inclusion and diversity. Robert Costomiris (CAH) assumed that FYE is to help students succeed. It is a one-size fits all course and possibly shouldn't be. Chris Ludowise noted that this had been part of the conversation but it is an ongoing conversation. Carol Jamison (CAH) asked as a point of clarification if Chris Ludowise had stated that FYE was new to the Armstrong campus. In fact, she pointed out, the program had been at Armstrong for over seven years. Lisa Abbott (CAH) asked about training for faculty and staff. Michele Haberland (CAH) asked about the role of budget in redesign of FYE course. Chris Ludowise noted that these issues were discussed before the current budget crisis. Changes were made to ensure staff equity. Carl Reiber (Provost) noted that Chris Ludowise headed up the redesign. The central pool of money used for faculty stipends was available. That pool of money would have to be cut, or the administration would have to identify colleagues to find other jobs. We chose to protect the integrity of faculty, he explained. Stephanie Sipe (COB) noted that revisions to programs should improve the program. Had there been more transparency about the circumstances related to budget, maybe more faculty would have been willing to take this on as part of an overload. Many of us on the faculty side felt that this was done as an ambush at the last minute, she stated. Revisions need to improve the curriculum and not paste together a half version of the course that we can afford. Chris Ludowise responded that evaluations of the FYE class and in discussions with students revealed that learning outcomes were not being met. The redirection was intended to address this. In the future, she will try to make sure faculty are aware of FYE decisions. Wayne Johnson (PEEC) asked Chris Ludowise if we have statistics to show impact of FYE on retention. Melissa Gayan (CAH) asked about tracking students in the future. Barbara King (CBSS) asked about data to compare Learning Communities with other FYE courses. Chris Ludowise responded that the LC were small numbers but could be tracked. Leticia McGrath (CAH) noted that the number of students in FYE classes had increased dramatically, making it difficult to discuss controversial issues. It was originally designed to be a seminar. The removal of themes from the course takes away the significance of the course as a seminar. We are trying to engage students on difficult topics and need to include faculty, she maintained. Chris Ludowise replied that we

difficult topics and need to include faculty, she maintained. Chris Ludowise replied that we experimented with class size this year but hope to work with all of us to develop curriculum and make class size smaller. She would welcome team teaching. Amanda Konkle (CAH) concluded this discussion by thanking everyone for their thoughtful comments. It is an ongoing conversation, she noted. She hopes Chris Ludowise will ensure that this conversation moves forward, especially as to whether it is the best place to teach diversity.



President's Response:

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