

ENGL 1010/1011 Large Course Redesign

Focus Group Results Summary

1. What do you believe the role of FYW should be in the English Department? And too, in the University?

Overall Thoughts/Themes:

- **Connect Across the Disciplines**—writing across the curriculum (e.g., History, Business and Technical Writing, etc.)
- **Course Identity**—FYW course is not an English course—more of a writing course (disconnect with FYW and English, FYW instructors do not know the relationship with FYW course and English).
- **General Disconnect**—FYW is disconnected to not only the department but the University as a whole.

2. What do you value in our current FYW courses?

Overall Thoughts/Themes:

- **Flexibility of Curriculum**—flexible choice of curriculum (e.g., templates, etc.). Instructors can be creative and design their own instruction.
- **The Challenge of Flexibility**—flexibility is good but challenging. Templates are good and provide some structure.
- **Class size**—conferencing (one-on-one), students connectedness, group work, and peer review.
- **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving**—critical thinking skills and writing argumentation. Writing to problem solve.
- **Revise, Revise, Revise**—value the revision process but a 30 Page count requirement is too much which causes strain in workload for both teachers and students.

“FYW is a living breathing course”—anonymous participant

3. What do you think works with students who are taking, or have taken, ENGL 1010/1011? What do you think students take away from this course?

Overall Thoughts/Themes:

- **Trust the Process**—writing is process-driven that will help students (e.g., writing strategies, drafting, revisions, peer reviewer, collaboration, one-on-one conferencing, reflection on student writing). The revision process in writing should be a **broader habit of the mind**. Hands-on experience (learning by doing).
- **Writing Confidence**—students learn rhetoric and critical thinking and are more confident in those skills applied to writing.
- **Make it Measurable**—how do instructors measure what students take away from this course? This is hard to measure and difficult to track.
- **Under Pressure**—students should be able to focus on the revision process and focus less on the page count requirements. More revision with less pressure on page count.
- **Open Educational Resources**—would like for students not have to pay for course materials.

4. What do you think works about teaching in ENGL 1010/1011?

Overall Thoughts/Themes:

- **Flexibility of Teaching**—rigor creates community, personal relationships, FYW office is progressive and helpful. Baseline course materials (e.g., textbook, syllabus templates) that provides a common ground.
- **Community/Small Class Size**—small class size allows students to work together to learn more efficiently, grad student and mentorship in teaching. However, new or current faculty may not have the same support/mentor opportunities as grad students (new or current faculty may feel marginalized)
- **Faculty Development**—grad students, new faculty need training and support
- **Learn by Doing**—active learning, this course is a seminar and not lecture based which allows for more hands-on learning experiences

5. What do you see or have you experienced as challenges in teaching the course currently?

Overall Thoughts/Themes:

- **Flexibility with Structure**—Multi-Modal approach: Translate page count requirement to length of podcast. Varying abilities of teachers and students in using a multi-modal approach to writing—how to manage everyone's writing process because it's diverse. Fairness in grading—maybe having a Rubric as a baseline. No 2 sections are alike—students don't know what they are signing up for, perhaps provide that information up front.
- **Need Help**—difficult to realistically apply writing across the disciplines. Tech support for multimodal approach to writing.
- **Meeting Needs of Diverse Audiences** (e.g., teachers, students, staff)—dynamic between multilingual and non-native English speakers, as a result FYW instructors need more training. Some struggle with balancing student's abilities/skills—non-native English speaking, developmental, social dynamic training is needed.
- **Less Is More**—finding ways to grade effectively with limited time they have. Lots of jargon in the templates, the prompts can be confusing. There is a **false sense** of rigor in the FYW course—because the page count requirement seems it is rigorous when it is not.
- **In the Loop**—communication about program updates to a wider audience so everyone (all interested parties) is in the loop.
- **Negative Attitudes**—FYW instructors need to find ways to change the negative attitudes students might have when taking the FYW course.

6. What would be the best way for you to offer input about or contribute to the design of the new course?

Overall Thoughts/Themes:

- **Training and Support**—during training FYW instructors can provide the best input. Possible issue: Summer hiring and issues of payment for training during the summer. Provide resources early before the semester begins for all FYW faculty and grad students.
- **Communication and Connectedness**—find ways for FYW instructors to stay more connected by providing more focus group-type sessions (e.g., focused brainstorming, sub-committee's)—big question: How are people being selected on committees and subcommittees? **Get input from ECE instructors.**
- **Just the Facts**—new GA's and new faculty need more information about the FYW program and course.
- **Align Grad Teaching Course to FYW Course**—tailor the assignments from the Grad Teaching Course to what students are teaching in the FYW course. Example: Have students design a podcast assignment from the new FYW course in their Grad Teaching Course.

7. What kinds of support (e.g., curriculum development, summer institute for instructors) would you need to make your FYW course successful?

Overall Thoughts/Themes:

- **Training/Support and Alternative Options**—really liked the recent Winter Orientation in January 2018—had a guest speaker (author of the textbook presented). Mentorship—have more experienced FYW instructor mentor grad students and new faculty. Training and support for new faculty.
- **Technology Access**—consider access to technologies such as Hardware (e.g., smartphones, computers, laptops). Logistics of technology access across UConn campuses—Storrs vs. Regional campuses.

8. Would you want to have and participate in another program- or department-wide discussion of the FYW redesign? And if so, what would you most want to see discussed in such a meeting?

Overall Thoughts/Themes:

- **Be Present**—faculty/staff in the English department should be more present so it shows that everyone is on the same team.

- **Regular Reporting**—provide reports/updates on the design of the new FYW course
- **Peer Discussions**—regarding the development of the course structure and process.
- **The Ripple Effect**—be aware of the ripple effect of curriculum changes to FYW course—it seems that someone gets left out.