

**Proposal from FYS Study Group
Faculty Forum Committee on Academic Policies
March 14, 2007**

The Faculty Forum Committee on Academic Policies proposes that the Faculty Forum amend the John Carroll University Core Curriculum in the Liberal Arts (Fall 1996) document to replace the section on the First Year Seminar and Appendix A as follows. If this proposal passes, the Faculty Forum Executive Committee will direct the Faculty Service Committee to solicit nominations and hold elections for the position of Director of the First Year Seminar and for three faculty positions on the FYS Committee. The newly formed FYS Committee will

- discuss ideas for the theme for the 2008 First Year Seminar at the April 25, 2007 Faculty Forum Meeting
- issue an informal call for proposals for faculty learning communities for the 2008 First Year Seminar prior to the 2007 commencement
- issue a formal call for proposals for faculty learning communities for the 2008 First Year Seminar early in Fall 2007

**Proposed Text of First Year Seminar portion of Core Document
March 14, 2007**

Descriptions and Goals: The First Year Seminar offers an interdisciplinary introduction to academic investigation. This seminar focuses upon a common theme and common reading(s) and is taught by faculty from all areas of the University. A graded course characterized by disciplined investigation of topics and consistently rigorous academic standards, the seminar will feature the following:

- An environment that promotes the early development of academic skills in first year students and fosters a serious attitude toward academic activities and responsibilities
- A pedagogy that emphasizes active learning and develops students' skills in critical inquiry and problem solving
- A context that promotes collaboration and integrated learning
- A milieu in which students learn to question and clarify their values
- An emphasis on the development of written and oral skills

Curriculum: Coordination of curriculum and other issues relating to the First Year Seminar will be the responsibility of a First Year Seminar Committee (FYSC) comprised of the Director of the First Year Seminar (elected by the faculty to a three year term), the Director of the Core and three faculty members (elected by the faculty to staggered three year terms). The FYSC reports regularly to the University Core Committee, which is responsible for overseeing the budget for the First Year Seminar.

The FYSC will consult with the faculty in order to formulate a broad theme for all the sections of the course. The theme must be centered in the core values of JCU as expressed in the Mission Statement and be sufficiently broad so as to allow exploration from the perspectives of many disciplines from across the university. The FYSC will then announce the theme and send out a call for proposals for learning communities (and “mini-themes”) within that theme.

It is expected that each faculty member submitting a proposal will agree to act as coordinator for his/her group, if the proposal is accepted. The FYSC will review the proposals submitted and choose 5 faculty learning communities for the next three years of FYS. The FYSC will then send out a call for faculty to participate in the learning communities and teach the FYS. Instructors in the seminars must be full-time faculty. Faculty will apply for acceptance in a particular learning community/mini-theme, specifying a ranked set of three choices. The FYSC and Dean will then choose among the applicants to form the learning communities and staff the course, keeping in mind the need for appropriate disciplinary diversity in the composition of the learning communities. When appropriate, this selection process will involve interaction between the faculty member, his/her department and the Directors of the FYS and the Core, along with the Dean. Once the faculty learning communities are formed, the FYSC will be expanded by adding the coordinator from each learning community, to ensure adequate communication between the groups and the oversight body. In general, the learning communities are expected to continue for all three years of the theme, and the groups may choose to rotate the coordinator position.

The expanded FYSC will choose, with input from all faculty teaching the course, one common reading to be used in all sections. Each learning community will be assigned a liaison from Grasselli Library, the university writing programs and Student Affairs who will be available to support the faculty group in developing assignments as well as cocurricular activities.

The learning communities will begin to meet in the late Spring and early Fall of year before the FYS cycle is to start, to develop the content, academic requirements and assessment mechanisms for the course, eventually supplying more and more detailed course descriptions to the expanded FYSC. During this development process, the expanded FYSC will ensure that each mini-theme fits the common theme and the FYS course guidelines for student workload, interdisciplinarity and assessment, providing feedback as appropriate. Early in the Fall semester of the year before the FYS cycle commences, all the FYS faculty will meet in a workshop to learn more about the expectations for the course and students and to compare plans. Each learning community will continue to meet regularly in both the Fall and Spring semesters of the academic year immediately prior to the start of the course, with the goal of having each course well-planned by the beginning of the summer. During the course itself, each learning community will continue to meet so that the faculty may exchange ideas (in addition to any activities common those sections). The learning communities will meet at least once early in the semester immediately following the course, to assess what aspects of the

class did or did not work well. The learning communities will continue to meet appropriately over the subsequent years of the theme.

Logistics: The First Year Seminar, a three-credit course, will be taken by all first year students during the fall semester. (Although not required for transfer students, they may choose it as an optional elective.) When registering for first year courses, incoming students will select a particular learning community/mini-theme (presenting a ranked set of three choices) and will be randomly assigned to one of the sections in the appropriate area. The seminar will provide an opportunity for diverse learning opportunities, including exchanging professors, combining sections for special events or projects, and inviting guest speakers to address all the sections of a learning community.

Advisement: Teachers of the First Year Seminar may elect to have their advisees selected from the students assigned to their sections.

Evaluation: Every year, the expanded FYSC will work with the University Office of Planning and Assessment to evaluate the FYS. In the Spring of 2010, the FYSC will present a formal assessment of the FYS to the Faculty to help inform its decision on whether to continue the FYS in this format.

APPENDIX A

ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNIVERSITY CORE CURRICULUM

- 1.) The University Core Committee reports to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. It assists the Dean in administering the University Core Curriculum in the Liberal Arts.
- 2.) The University Core Committee consists of twelve members:
 - a.) The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, ex officio, non-voting.
 - b.) The Director of the University Core Curriculum in the Liberal Arts. The Director is appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences from the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences. S/he chairs the Committee and reports to the Dean.
 - c.) The Director of the First Year Seminar.
 - d.) Four faculty members are elected to the University Core Committee to serve staggered three year terms. One member is elected from the School of Business, by School of Business faculty only, to serve initially for three years, with subsequent elections every three years. The other three members are elected from the College of Arts and Sciences, by College of Arts and Sciences faculty only. Initially, there will be one two-year, one three-year, and one four-year term member. Subsequently, all terms will be for three years. The Faculty Service Committee will conduct these elections.
 - e.) The five elected Divisional Representatives of the Committee on Academic Policies of the Faculty Forum.
- 3.) No more than two members of the same department may sit on the University Core Committee, including the elected faculty, the Director of the Core, and the Dean, but excluding the Director of the First Year Seminar.
- 4.) The Director reports annually on the status of the Core to the Faculty (as well as reporting regularly to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences).

Rationale: A discussion of the reasoning behind the proposal is found in the Report of the First Year Seminar Study Group, available at <http://www.jcu.edu/forum/reports/FYS2007/>