

FYS Focus Group Report

September 1, 2006

Penny Harris, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair,
Department of Sociology
Chair, FYS Focus Group Committee

Paula J. Britton, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of
Education and Allied Studies

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the FYS Focus Group Committee members, Drs. Jerry Sabo, Peter Kvidera, Jackie Schmidt, and Denise Ben–Porath; and the two student assistants, Amanda Maggiotto and Katie Steinacker, all who gave generously of their time to assist in the planning and running the focus groups. We would also be remiss if we did not acknowledge and thank, Kim Balk, whose skillful transcribing of the focus group interviews made the analysis and writing of this report possible.

FYS Focus Group Report

In November 2006, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at John Carroll University, Linda Eisenmann, formed a committee of 20 faculty volunteers to evaluate the University's First Year Seminar (FYS). Paul Shick (MTCS) was appointed chair of this committee, and he divided the group into four task forces. This report will focus on the work of the task force charged with conducting focus groups with current students and faculty to assess their experiences with FYS. Penny Harris (SC) chaired this committee, and the other members were: Jerry Sabo (CMLC), Peter Kvidera (EN), Jackie Schmidt (CO), and Denise Ben-Porath (PS).

The FYS focus group committee had its first meeting in January and developed an action plan that included: formulating a study design, developing focus group questions, submitting an IRB application to the JCU University Institutional Review Board (which was approved in February, 2006), hiring two student research assistants to help coordinate the logistics of arranging the focus groups, and setting up a meeting for focus group leader training to be conducted by the task force chair.

Methodology

The use of focus groups is a common method of data collection in qualitative research. It is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a specific topic in a non-threatening environment led by a trained interviewer. The average size of a focus group is usually 7-10 participants (Krueger, 1994; Krueger & Casey, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Sample Selection

Given the time limitations (a report was due to the dean in September), the group decided to conduct 11 focus groups (8 with students and 3 with faculty). The groups were conducted in March and April, giving time in the summer for the analysis and writing of the report. Each member of the committee led two groups and the chair led three groups.

Student Sample

The students were selected to join the focus groups through three methods: a) stratified random sample by class, b) volunteers, and c) faculty recommendations. A) At the committee's request, the university provided the committee with a stratified random sample of 40 students per class. The research assistants contacted the sample through e-mail explaining the purpose of the study and requesting their participation. Thirty percent of the sample was obtained through this method. A high number of students did not respond to their e-mail invitations. B) Students volunteered through a number of ways: an ad in the JCU news, personal requests by the two student assistants, Amanda Maggiotto (sophomore –psychology major) and Katie Steinacker (senior-marketing major), and a request by Dean Eisenmann to the Student Union. C) Faculty, who sat on the larger FYS evaluation committee, were asked to submit 5-10 names of students (not necessarily ones who they had in their FYS courses) who they thought would be willing to actively participate in a focus group. This sample selection resulted in 55 students.

Eighteen majors were represented and two students who had not yet declared a major. The students were fairly evenly divided by class, and the gender break down was two-thirds female and one third male (See Table 1).

Faculty Sample

There were two faculty samples, one who had taught FYS and one who had not. The faculty were selected by two methods: a) stratified random sample by department, and b) volunteers. A) The majority of the sample (75%) was obtained by a stratified random sample. The chair received a list from the University of all faculty who had taught FYS and the number of times they taught the course. She arranged this by department and then by matching this list with a list of all JCU full-time tenured and tenure-line faculty, generated a list of faculty who had not taught FYS. All faculty members on the larger FYS study committee were excluded from both lists. The chair divided the list of faculty with FYS experience per department into two groups, those who had only taught FYS once, and those who taught it more than once. Then she randomly selected one person from each group (every second or third person) to be invited to join the faculty focus group. For the non-FYS faculty list, she divided the list into departments and invited every third person. B) Five faculty members volunteered to participate in the focus groups, responding to an open invitation from the Dean. Six faculty members declined to participate in the study for various reasons and a few cancelled the day of the meetings because of last minute scheduling conflicts. For those faculty in their refusal e-mails, who made recommendations, their data were included with the other qualitative data, but their numbers were not included in the sample. In addition, an individual interview was done with one faculty member and the information also included in the qualitative data, but not the sample numbers. The sample selection resulted in 25 participants, faculty from 13 departments and the library, and a member of the student affairs division. The gender break down was 56% male and 44 % female (See Table 2).

Data Collection

Once the sample was selected, e-mails were sent to faculty and students to request their participation in the study. The student research assistants coordinated the sending of the e-mails and the follow-up requests. The chair sent the initial e-mail requests to the faculty. The focus groups (except for one) were held in one of the Psychology Department's research rooms. Following IRB approved protocol, before the groups started, all participants were provided with an information sheet to read that: explained the purpose of the study again, guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, asked permission to tape the sessions, and explained by agreeing to stay, they were giving their consent to participate. No participants chose to leave a group session. Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes and was led by a member of the FYS focus group committee, with one of the two student assistants acting as an assistant moderator, taking field notes (in case of recording problems) and checking the recording equipment. All focus groups were later transcribed in full. The chair conducted two training sessions for focus group leaders in early March: one for faculty moderators, and one for the two student assistant moderators. All participants were given a book on running focus groups (Krueger & Casey, 2000) previous to the training sessions.

Questionnaire Construction

The FYS focus group committee developed three sets of questions: for students, FYS faculty, and non-FYS faculty. The questions focused on: expectations, achievement of FYS goals, evaluation of the experience, and recommendations (See Appendices A, B, & C). The committee prioritized in what order the questions would be asked, given the 90-minute time limitation. Before a final draft was agreed upon, the questions were sent to the larger FYS committee for comments and suggestions. No changes were suggested. The chair also asked the two student assistants to review the student questions, and again no changes were suggested.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by two JCU faculty members, Penny Harris, committee chair, with extensive qualitative research experience; and Paula Britton (ED), who has qualitative research experience and because of teaching only graduate students, had no relationship with the FYS course. A content analysis of each of the 11 focus groups was conducted. Each researcher analyzed the data separately looking for common themes within and among the students groups, and within and among the faculty groups. It was decided to be considered a common theme, the theme had to occur in more than a third of the focus groups and occur multiple times within each of those focus groups. Each transcript was read 2-3 times in order to generate themes. The researchers met three times, each time after a group of sessions were analyzed to compare their findings. When there were disagreements, these were discussed and the data reviewed again together, until consensus was reached. From these meetings, two master lists of themes with supporting data was constructed, one for students and one for faculty.

Limitations

There are many limitations to a qualitative, focus group study. The sample is small and certainly does not comprise a representative sample of people being studied. Such a limited sample size constrains the generalizability of the findings. However, qualitative research makes no claim to be representative of the population it is examining. The purpose of this methodology is to present a more in-depth and diverse picture of a phenomenon that is being studied, and to identify possible variables that need to be tested and confirmed in larger representative studies. Thus the findings of this focus group study on the FYS experience together, with the findings of the other FYS task force charged with evaluating the quantitative data, should provide a good picture of the FYS experience at JCU.

Findings

The student and faculty data were analyzed separately. The analytical framework used was the common themes that emerged from each question on the questionnaires. Each common theme is presented below with examples of the supporting data. For qualitative research, the data are quotes that capture the essence of the focus group discussions. A range of quotes will be provided, particularly those that give the most depth and richness.

Common Themes from Faculty Focus Groups

1: What were your expectations of FYS?

- **Confused/ anxious about expectations**

“I can remember being quite frightened because the model of the scientist is one that is very fact oriented and it serves in it’s own little world and when I looked at what was being taught that semester, particularly what I read...I didn’t know that I was going to have the ability to help students and aid them especially because I couldn’t figure out what was going on in the books. And I guess the concept that the developers of this course wanted it to be academically rigorous gave me some concern about how I was going to be able to maintain the level of academic rigor that I thought that they expected.”

- **Goals were unrealistic**

“Well these goals seem to be making students critical thinkers, critical readers, wonderful speakers at public speaking, wonderful writers...at the same time helping them feel at home at the university and feeling at home...it’s just like this huge risk and you can’t do it all. Although I kept trying....even though I kept telling myself you know you can’t do it all, I kept trying...I just felt like I should be doing it all.”

- **Low expectations of students**

“I expected the students not to enjoy the class, because that’s the comment that I had heard from my counselees. They had told me that they wish they would not have had to have taken it, that it was a waste of time.”

- **Community building**

“I see FYS as community-building for new students, as a communications tool, and as an opportunity to immerse them in academic thinking and learning process at a deeper level.”

“I was excited about being a part of a campus-wide experience with faculty... cutting across disciplines and the potential for interaction around a common experience.”

- **Academic focus**

“To encourage students to take some initiative in critical thinking themselves and not to be afraid to open up and talk about it.”

“It would be a class providing students an opportunity to develop critical thinking skills through classroom discussions, work on writing, learn how to work in teams or in groups.”

- **Consistency across sections**

“The reality was that many of the people wanted to do other things which weren’t exactly on the list. The obvious thing lacking was coordination and consistency across the sections. There wasn’t one consistent approach.”

- **Incredible work load**

“My observations from faculty is that it’s an incredible amount of work and not playing to faculty strength, not just asking people to teach outside their discipline, every discipline has its own style of how they teach, and suddenly you’re putting people in a completely different environment with no background or communal experience. That’s why it’s an incredibly demanding course.”

Thus faculty expectations of FYS were for an academically rigorous course that would build community. However, they felt the goals would be overly ambitious, and there might be little consistency among the courses taught. There was also concern about a model that did not take into consideration various teaching styles, and which would be extremely demanding in terms of workload.

2. What did you think of the training for FYS instructors?

- **Concerns with book selection**

“The point is the committee should be selecting balance, multiple perspectives on a topic. In at least two cases they didn’t. In achieving the goals there’s something wrong with the process that picks the books.”

- **Inconsistency in training**

“I was surprised at the lack of organization, to be very candid. Honestly, I was stunned by the casualness. I had a totally different expectation of what was going to happen with 40 some faculty in a room together.”

“I thought the training was useful. There could be more training or something additional, but in different years it’s been more successful than others.”

- **Recommendations**

“It seems to me that there needs to be sustained, focused, practical conversations on pedagogy. It’s the concrete, practical stuff that embodies theoretical orientations and your views. It provides a firm basis on which people can both connect in an informed way and they can disagree. That was very helpful and I think that happened more in the first two. That’s very important. Maybe even ad hoc workshops around questions of pedagogy. There may be ways to organize that. That was the promise for me about working with colleagues and learning how they teach, feeling an esprit de corps. That was the promise and it was modestly fulfilled.”

Thus the faculty believed that the training could be very worthwhile, especially if it provided practical pedagogical techniques; however, the quality was very inconsistent.

3. What do you think of the current model? What would you change?

- **Change or eliminate Kulas lecture/speakers**

“Personally I think the Kulas speakers are a waste of time. I think the venue as a general rule doesn’t work. I mean they had a few that I think were good but over the course of ten years...if you sit up in the balcony and watch the kids you can watch all kinds of cell phones you can watch everything which says to me while it may be a great idea where we are coming from it, doesn’t work for them.”

- **Interdisciplinary nature is a positive**

“I like the idea of this interdisciplinary idea because many freshmen like to stay in their comfort zone. I like the idea of nudging them to think in a broader more global way. That would be valuable to keep in some format whatever the model.”

“One of the things FYS is supposed to do relating to the core is an interdisciplinary approach. Some other courses are interdisciplinary, some are not. FYS shows the integration to the core.”

- **Keep academic rigor**

“This should be a rigorous course and we shouldn’t orient them.”

- **Need to include adjustment to college/combine models**

“Taking the students where they are, a bunch of 18-year olds who’ve never lived away from home before; they’re not in the middle of The Odyssey. So to work with them on The Odyssey; you’ve got to work on this other stuff. If you’re going to form good relationships with them you’re not going to start out talking about [just academics].”

- **Difficulties with two year rotation & prep time**

“You invest so much time and only allowed to teach it twice.”

“I invested more time preparing for my FYS class than in all my other courses.”

- **Doesn’t play to strengths (expertise)**

“There is no comparison with what an expert can do. I don’t think it’s fair to the students.”

- **Concerns with inconsistencies**

“One of the big problems is that we do have common readings but in name only. With the topic I taught I found that a lot of faculty were not

assigning the whole book but picking chapters here and there. The topic of discussion among students was what those in different sections were doing and not the material. I am not opposed to having a common theme and common readings, but we need to get all the faculty together and agree on what is required.”

“But there are some people who are teaching it and want to teach it and they’re not doing a good job. That’s one of the problems. Teaching outside the discipline has its risks as well. I’m going to stick with science. Outrageous things are being taught about science that have nothing to do with science and we have to fix it later.”

“The obvious thing lacking was coordination and consistency across the sections. There wasn’t one consistent approach and I think the students were concerned about that.”

- **Major model change** (It was almost unanimous that some type of change was necessary- a wide variety of suggestions were given.)

“I would change the course so there are not common readings. This course, more than any other in the university, is heavily dependent on the investment of faculty teaching it. When we are teaching what we love we are invested. When we are asked to invest time in books that we may not have either enjoyed or understood is expecting that which can’t be attained. So, my only experience was a similar course my daughter took when she was a freshman in college. The way these were organized was that various professors in various departments offered courses they were interested in. I’m sure there were guidelines: They should not be lecture but emphasize discussion, must be a writing component and interdisciplinary component. They were free to develop a course as they thought it should be developed and pick a topic in which they were interested. You put one of us in a teaching situation that we really don’t want to be in, this is going to translate either consciously or subconsciously and we are not going to bring the attention and passion a good teacher brings to this course.”

“I’m pretty comfortable with the model. Obviously other people aren’t. So, I’m certainly open to change, but I wonder if we don’t want to totally start again. Let’s say here are our goals, here is where we want them to be at the end of their first semester and at the end of four years and how can we best accomplish each of these goals, split them up. I want my FYS students to have a sense of intellectual curiosity and how to go about expressing that and researching.”

“I think it could be a good course if it were done differently but the way we do it is a disappointment to the students, especially the better students.”

“I think it should be team-taught. To me that seems the ideal. One of the things I’ve heard said about FYS... we wanted faculty outside the area because we wanted models for ongoing learning throughout your life. One way to see that is the dialogue between faculty and the contributions of different faculty. I think that would be helpful to getting more people involved, like myself.”

“Senior seminar [senior capstone course]. I would think seriously about getting some physics majors with sociology and English majors and letting the fur fly. A freshman seminar seems like a contradiction in terms. They don’t know anything. They really don’t.”

“Faculty participation is an issue that has to be addressed. I don’t know how we want to do it, because I did the first two groups and there was an enthusiasm but we were the first and so we were a self-selecting group. We had an easier time collaborating because there was a central, common purpose. My sense in talking with subsequent faculty is that that has diminished and we have exhausted the faculty that really want to do this.”

“As for the model, we are missing a wonderful opportunity at a school that values contact between advisors and advisees, we are missing that opportunity to put that together through FYS.”

“I do not like the current model at all for reasons that have already been stated here. It seems to me we have a couple decisions here: if we have an FYS at all, a common experience---there’s some value in a common experience, but the way this course is structured students don’t get any more of that than they would in a philosophy 101 or English composition. You get a wonderful instructor in English composition and it’s great. You get someone who’s going through the motions, it’s excruciating. It’s a similar kind of thing in FYS. Yes, there can be common readings, but not necessarily common experience. So should we have one or not? If so, should it be an academic one or more of a university 101. If we stay with an academic one, I would like to see two faculty members team-teach an interdisciplinary course but by choice of topics---maybe 40 topics. But... What I would really prefer to see is some type of University 101. I am convinced that most of the students here, even sophomores, juniors and some seniors don’t know what a Jesuit is. Students know very little about the mission of the university. They don’t get the mission, so I would like to see some aspects relating to mission, core curriculum, social, student affairs type issues---sexual assaults, alcohol abuse, and involvement in a group service project. I know that would not be academically focused and a lot of people would be very unhappy about that, but I think that would be a lot more valuable. I think that would be far more valuable to the

students--- having a course that resembles no other course they will have here.”

Thus, the faculty overwhelmingly thought the FYS model needed to be changed, but academic rigor was important. There were also major concerns about consistency. Faculty liked the interdisciplinary focus of FYS, which they felt could be better exemplified by team teaching. Even the faculty who were very positive about FYS, believed some change needed to be made. A standardized course as the model for FYS was seriously questioned, and the possibility of including issues more relevant to college students’ lives and the Jesuit mission were suggested.

4. Should FYS in any form be continued?

There was a minority opinion that will be presented below; however, most of the faculty in the focus groups felt FYS should be kept in some form.

- **No**

“With the financial crunch we are having now, it is not cost-efficient.”

“It’s conscription. I went {the director} and asked why we were being forced to do this when we didn’t want to do this. He said we had no choice in the matter. You are a faculty member and you will teach what you are told to teach.”

“I think the core courses should deal with the things we are expected to do in FYS and the goals for it, like this inquisitiveness. Core courses could stimulate this inquisitiveness as much as FYS.”

“I don’t think this course sets us apart as a university from any other and I think they are paying for a three credit course that could be used better ways.”

- **Yes**

“I think we need to keep FYS going in some form.”

“To be honest with you, for me it’s dealing with the kids. Having an FYS doesn’t really bother me, because I enjoy getting together with a group of kids I wouldn’t otherwise see.”

“I would like to tweak the course, not get rid of it. I still feel it’s worth salvaging.”

“My ideal would be to re-think the whole thing and see how we can do it better.”

Thus, though there are problems with the current model, most FYS focus group members would support keeping the some type of FYS course. There is a vocal minority who disagree.

5. Did FYS influence your teaching?
(Overall, faculty could not articulate clearly how FYS influenced their teaching, rather they mentioned some positive outcomes.)

“I saw these kids grow over the course of the semester and I feel I made a positive contribution to this group of students.”

“I think I grew when I taught FYS. I read things I wouldn’t have read otherwise.”

This lack of clear articulation may be due to a number of reasons, one of which could be the wording of the question; or two, that FYS had a minimal carry over to other courses faculty taught. It is difficult to decipher.

6. What do you think of the FYS goals?

- **Not Unique**

“It certainly isn’t unique. There are many courses that do that.”

“Putting it differently, if other courses didn’t do these things, we would feel quite critical of it.”

- **Limited integrative learning**

“I expected the course to unify and gel and it never did.”

“I think the current model doesn’t really work. It doesn’t integrate the different topics.”

- **Promoted Critical thinking**

“I witnessed some critical thinking outcomes in my class depending on the topics of discussion.”

- **Measurement Issues**

“They’re hard goals to measure. All of us at the end of the semester wonder what we’ve really accomplished in some respects if even with glowing student evaluations. Ideally we would achieve those goals in every class we teach.”

- **Developmental Issues**

“Maybe FYS is offered at a time of their development when they are not ready to leap academically or intellectually or socially to achieve these kinds of things.”

In terms of the FYS goals, the consensus was that the goals are not unique to FYS. In addition, such goals are difficult to measure, yet many of the participants thought critical thinking was achieved. Some questioned if the student’s as freshmen developmentally had the intellectual ability yet to achieve the goals.

7. Was FYS a positive teaching experience for you?

- **Yes**

“The surprising answer is yes for me, even though I was against it and voted against it. I thought it would be a horrible experience. The first time I had a very, very good group of students. It was a very positive experience. I enjoyed the personal aspect of it. Normally, teaching science we talk about physical stuff, we don’t talk about human interactions. For me, the ability to relate to students on a different level was very enjoyable.”

“It was positive watching students emerge over the course in discussing and getting engaged.”

- **Sometimes**

“It depends on the semester. It varied a lot. If you had a good group that would discuss, but when you had a class that would just sit there, it was really hard.”

- **No**

“For me at the personal level it wasn’t very satisfying because I’m very goal-oriented and I do this, this and this and it’s going to all tie together and I’m going to get from A to B, and I don’t feel that I did that. I look back on that Galileo, Rwanda and the anthology, and it’s all over the place. At the end of the course we had great discussions, great talks, but I don’t feel I taught them anything. I don’t feel I accomplished anything.”

“It was not positive, and I really enjoy teaching. The first year I was absolutely dreading it. I had such low expectations. The first year was above my low expectations and so I thought it was just OK. Then I gingerly read the end-of-semester evaluations and they were positive, surprisingly positive, I thought, but they were a fairly attractive class. The second year was the absolute worst of my teaching career. It was the low point of my professional career.”

The faculty responses were very mixed; no clear pattern emerged from the data. Some had very positive experiences and some very negative ones.

8. (For non-FYS Faculty) – Why haven’t you taught FYS?

- **Does not play to strengths (expertise)**

“It doesn’t play to my strengths. It’s not that I am not willing to do some of these things. I was asked to lecture to one of the large seminar groups and I was happy to do it.”

- **Prep time, two year rotation, and lack of incentives**

“If I prep a class in my field it’s probable I’ll teach it again. You do all this work for FYS and in two years you’re done. If you teach it again

it's an all new prep. It's a tremendous amount of work and the compensation of \$250 is not enough financial reward...I also advise freshmen-sophomores and majors and talk to them. Eighty percent say they don't like the class. So, I don't see any value in teaching a class that doesn't play to my strengths, that is a tremendous amount of prep time, that I get no reward for, and that nobody seems to like."

"We invest so much time in putting this course together and we're allowed to teach it twice. What kinds of incentives are there for faculty?"

- **Expertise needed in the department**

"I think there is value to FYS, but logistically, it takes me out of vital courses, and puts a burden on my department, because somehow they've got to cover these courses."

Some faculty are resistant to teach FYS because it is out of their disciplines, the enormous time it takes for preparation, and the burden it places on their department. Some also question the value of the experience.

9. Is there any other topic about FYS you would like to discuss?

- **Tie to University Mission**

- Social Justice

"One thing I've thought about as far as goals go, it's clear there's an underlying theme in social justice that seems to be what people want us to teach about, but that's not an official goal but if that's part of the mission of the university and this is the logical place to do it."

- Holistic View of Student

"If you look at the holistic view of Jesuit education, you can't have the academic side operating in a vacuum separate from the other side of the campus. There's expertise over there that we should be drawing from."

- Service

"Is there a community service portion? ... Given the men and women for others, it would be nice to hit them with that at the beginning."

Overall Summary of Faculty Responses

There is much dissatisfaction among the faculty with the current model that varies from: being forced to teach FYS, the co-learning/non-expertise model, the lack of standardization, and a questioning of the uniqueness and achievability of the extensive goals. However, even with this said, the majority of the faculty focus group participants would support continuing some type of

changed FYS model. The new model should keep the interdisciplinary approach and the academic rigor, though some relevance to university life could be incorporated. Numerous types of models were suggested.

Common Themes from Student Focus Groups

1. What were your expectations of FYS?

- **Introduction to college experience**

“As for its purpose, I came into it thinking that it was just an introduction to college, becoming more comfortable with your writing, discussing within groups and just meeting people.”

“I thought during orientation it was marketed as an orientation to campus. ‘It’s a freshman thing. Everyone has to do it together.’ When I got to class I had no expectations. Some students when finding all they’d have to do, began freaking out. I thought then that it would be read a book, discuss it, learn about using the library, organizations on campus. It was a rude awakening for a lot of people.”

- **Gain Competency Skills**

“I thought it was going to be a preparatory thing. I thought it would get us ready for college. We had summer reading, so I thought that we would have writing also. I thought it would prepare us for college writing.”

- **Expected Academic Rigor?**

“I didn’t think it would be academic at all—writing papers and reading books, more adjusting to college.”

“I thought it was a class that you had to take in order to get used to the rigor of college curriculum and I know that it was important to write. ”

- **Confused expectations**

“The first book I got at the bookstore was Fast Food Nation, and I thought, is this what the class is going to be about?” I didn’t know what to expect. It turned out to be nothing about Fast Food Nation. I knew it was a preparation class, but I didn’t know what it was going to prepare me for.”

“It wasn’t until about two weeks in that I saw there was a theme.”

- **Expectations around Jesuit missions and goals**

“I was expecting it to be more an introduction to college, Jesuit mission and goals. I didn’t know it would focus on academics.”

Thus, the students felt FYS would be more of an introduction to student life as well as the Jesuit mission. Some felt it was going to improve their competency skills and be academically rigorous, while others expected it to be less rigorous. Many were confused and didn't know what to expect of FYS.

2. What did you gain from the experience? (Not competency based)

- **Interacting with people from different majors and viewpoints**

"It helped me to be more comfortable with the college classroom because in high school every year you're with the same people. In college, in the beginning you don't know anyone. Just being able to converse with different types of people helped me in other classes with group work or group projects."

"You're interacting with people with different viewpoints and potential majors."

- **Friendships**

"I made really good friends with six of the students in my class. The discussions enabled us to express ourselves in an active-learning way."

Thus, the students seemed to like the opportunity of interacting with students who had different majors and viewpoints from their own. They also developed relationships in the class.

3. What did you not get from the experience that you wished you had?

- **Didn't get an introduction to college life**

"I also would like to see an introduction to services available for students--- counseling center, health center, Center for Community Service. I think FYS is a good venue for helping take advantage of those things."

"Answers to questions like how to drop a class, how to get a transcript, how do you get downtown, what activities are there."

"One of the main ideas when you go away to college is you've got to take care of yourself. Taking a class on how to get there yourself. You have to interact with people, on how to write papers, or keep a daily log. Rather, it is 'You're 18 years old. Figure it out yourself. Get a life.'"

- **Didn't get field trips to cultural institutions/service (lack of connection between classroom and world)**

"... Getting involved in the John Carroll community. It would have been better if we had a service-learning component. Even if we didn't do it as a class, at least giving us more information on how and where to go about it would have been so helpful."

"Provide a list of places every FYS class should go to like: the CMA, Historical Society, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame...every class, every year...trips like this built into FYS. Something JCU doesn't do much of, real world experience."

- **Didn't get information on Jesuit values**

"I don't think the last time you should hear about Jesuit education is on the admissions tour. I think if you're told you're going to be given a strong Jesuit education, the qualities should be clearly stated in the classroom."

"I expected to learn more about what a Jesuit school is. Actually, this is kind of funny that we're doing this focus group right now because last week in my Politics of Education we were talking about higher education, and we got into groups and talked about FYS and what we thought the experience would be like and how it relates to the Jesuit mission. So many people complained that the students didn't have anything to do with the mission and wished we had learned more about this. I was surprised to hear that at first, because I wouldn't expect students to say that, but a lot of them supported changing FYS to learn more about that. Not that you have to teach Catholic theology but the social justice aspects and the mission and the goals and what a Jesuit education is all about. In high school we did all this service then come here. The school is supposed to be about serving men and women for others and we don't do any of that. None of us had an FYS service experience. I would change it to incorporate more of those ideas of the university and the mission and service should be enforced."

Thus, students stated that they did not get the introduction to college life, the city or the University/Jesuit mission that they would like. They commented that they would have liked the opportunity of getting out, doing service and connecting their academics with real world experiences.

4. Has the FYS experience helped you as a college student?

Positive responses

- **Exposure to seminar/discussion based classes** (occurred with the most frequency)

"My discussion skills improved, too. You had to learn to think on your feet, be prepared to talk. It helped open the mind to other people's points of view – a positive thing about it."

"My FYS was discussion-based and I love that. We read on our own and used class time to get together and discuss. He would lead the discussion but allow some leeway but keep the topic at hand on track. I didn't get too much writing, but the discussion format got me familiar with what's needed to have meaningful discussion and feeling comfortable with talking to others."

"It made me really excited for college, because we were debating and talking about what we were learning. I was a little disappointed to find out it was unique and almost one-of-a-kind and it isn't really college."

- **Building relationships with students/teachers**

“I would say that it helped us as freshmen just getting to know people. Within the class we all kind of bonded with our dislike for our teacher. So I became more comfortable speaking out in the group and participating in class.”

“Mine was definitely positive. I think everyone in the class feels the same. My roommate and I were in the class together and we still stop by the professor’s office and chat. I learned a lot about my classmates; we discussed things a lot outside of class, which doesn’t happen in my other classes. We bonded through the discussion atmosphere. It has be my favorite class since I’ve been here.”

- **Assert and express opinions different than others based on facts**

“I think one of the most important things for me was that it prompted me to form opinions and take sides and support them and acknowledge different sides in an argument.”

- **Learned critical thinking**

“I would say that in my FYS we did achieve that (critical thinking) just because of discussion and we had a chance to challenge each other and everything.”

“So I think practically FYS has taught me actual things that I have used later on in college and things that I can use later in life. Not that you’re necessarily doing logic while you’re waiting for the bus but that you can use the principles you know to form cogent, better arguments.”

- **Exposure to new ideas**

“I think it did. A lot of the books looked at the big picture of the world—poverty, evolution, etc. My professor always asked question about issues all controversial. Your answers are your clarification of some sort of value. As long as professors ask controversial questions, it will force you to take a stand and help you to clarify your values.”

- **Better writing skills**

“I think if anything it helped my writing. Because I had to write some papers during the semester and the prof. graded them very critically.”

“Basically, it was painful at the time but looking back at it, yes it did help me learn how to write and focus my ideas. The more writing you do the better you get at it. Overall, it was a positive experience in that it did prepare. Papers in college is how you express your ideas to your professor in all classes. Although at the time I didn’t like writing all those papers it really helped me to focus my ideas and be able to show the professor I ‘m actually learning something.”

- **Other Competencies**

“I enjoyed my FYS class, even as I moaned and groaned the whole semester about how much I had to do. It helped me develop a work ethic, organize myself, write papers weekly. Once it was done I thought, well, I survived FYS. It can’t get much worse than this. As far as work goes, even now my standard is FYS. It gave me confidence that I could achieve. Yes, it was a lot of papers, a lot of writing, but that’s a good thing. It’s like those teachers you moaned and groaned about the most and you look back and see that you learned a lot. I feel that way about FYS.”

Negative Responses

- **Faculty disengaged/digressed**

“Professors have to want to teach it. There is a sense that a lot don’t want to. You have to have a course that faculty want to teach or have to have a way of exciting faculty. A lot of students said their teacher clearly did not want to be there, cancelled class often, was not crazy about discussing—just read and write a paper on it, or asked un motivating questions to start discussion. I’ve heard this from a lot of students and a lot of faculty, too. I don’t know if it’s them or the course.”

“My professor geared the class more on what his specialty is than the books. He threw out stuff that had nothing to do with the subject. We came prepared and gave us something completely off the wall and we had to analyze it without the background. We learned about his travels and his brother. It greatly depends on the professor. We did occasionally discuss the books but he would take it back to his specialty so we didn’t do much active learning and thinking.”

- **No competency skills gained**

“I got next to nothing from it. Yeah, we had some discussions, we had some writing and that did help me to improve somewhat, but I don’t consider that something dedicated to FYS. We can get the same thing out of a History or English class. Looking back at my college career I can’t pinpoint anything that it helped me improve on.”

- **No active learning**

“It depends on the teacher. Doing all the readings could promote critical thinking, because the choices were very different. I like the variety of books we had. We did the readings, but we didn’t promote active learning because we didn’t talk about the books at all. My teacher talked about her life experiences and how things related to her life, so no active learning.”

- **Stress**

“I think FYS caused more stress in my first semester than it was worth in terms of learning and applying it to second semester. I had so much writing first semester.”

The students that reported the FYS experience as helpful pointed to discussion based nature of the class as well as their relationships with fellow students and faculty as being beneficial. They seemed to appreciate being stretched in their

thinking about controversial topics and being given the opportunity to assert and express their opinions openly with each other and to faculty. They also commented on how FYS helped improve their skills, e.g. critical thinking, writing, etc.

On the other hand, students who reported that FYS was not helpful commented that faculty were often disengaged or digressed from the topic at hand. They did not experience active learning or improvement in their competency skills. They also felt that the course was overly stressful. The quality of the course depended on an engaged faculty member.

5. The following are two stated goals of FYS. What do you think of these goals?

(Unique? Achieved?)

- a. Promoting active learning and critical thinking
- b. Establishment of a setting where students should learn different world views and clarify their values

Unique?

- **No**

“As for unique, I owe a lot to my professor and his passion for the course. I have since taken two courses from him. I’ve seen other professors integrate these kinds of goals, but I think it’s a personal commitment and not a course commitment.”

- **Goal a: Critical thinking**

- **Yes, achieved** (occurred with most frequency)

“The greatest thing the first semester did is to help me to think and warmed me up to how a lot of classes teach you to think in the gray areas, learn how to ask questions instead of just giving answers in black and white. My FYS teacher would ask tough questions that you didn’t have the answers to just to put you on the spot. It was hard at first because you had to get over the idea that he was putting you on the spot and that he was trying to show everyone that there are some questions that can’t be answered. So you need to get used to being uncomfortable with that and realize it’s not just in classes, but in everyday life.”

“I had two professors in my class with different opinions and views but they were open-minded and let us discuss our opinions before they told us theirs. I felt I got a lot out of it, especially since it was student-based. The critical thinking definitely came into play and the active learning with us being involved every minute of the class was more than I ever had in high school. We would read a section the night before and in class tie in with different aspects like how it relates to the world. I got a lot out of it and I felt bad for my friends in sections that didn’t do that. I think it really depends on the professors—their teaching styles, how they treat students. I feel lucky that I had that class and got so much out of it while others didn’t.”

- **No, not achieved**

“I didn’t have an extremely positive experience. I can’t say I took anything concrete out of it that I could use later on. I wasn’t challenged. The papers I wrote were not on a higher level than what I wrote in high school I did the work and got fine grades. I don’t feel I was pushed. As far as active learning, our class was mostly lecture. No one participated, so if you did, you were the one person that did. Everyone was very quiet in my class, so there wasn’t much discussion and if there was, everyone had the same viewpoint, so we didn’t get into the issues.”

- **Goal b: World view/values**

- **Yes, achieved**

“I Think especially in response to the second part about different world views, I definitely think that our class covered it because we read “We wish to inform you that tomorrow you’ll be killed with your families” and I don’t think that stuff crossed my mind before. And it’s bad but it’s interesting to learn about even though it’s devastating.”

- **No, not achieved** (occurred with more frequency)

“As for the second one, my class did not achieve that because of clarifying values, with my teacher, I got in heated debates, but my teacher was always right, period. With regards to clarifying values, I was not allowed to expand upon them and think things through because he set them down most of the time. So I would say in that sense that the class probably did not help me. And I had other classes where teachers allow me have thoughts and come up with new ideas, and FYS wasn’t one of them.”

Overall, many students felt that the goal of critical thinking was achieved and commented that FYS was an opportunity to improve this skill. Some discussed the goal of world views as being met; however, many did not feel they learned different world views or that FYS helped them clarify their values. Also, they overall did not see FYS as a unique course in terms of the stated goals.

6. What would you have done differently?

Structure/Assignments (Inconsistency and need for standardization occurred with the most frequency)

- **Make it more consistent**

“In terms of a common experience that is an oxymoron because it all depended on the professor you had. I once heard a professor say that the purpose of FYS was so that the freshmen would all be talking about something when they go back to heir rooms, having a common subject and the books. ‘I hate that class’ is what went on. Common cannot be further from the truth. Coming out of it, I’d say I had a fine experience overall, but day-to-day, week-to-week, it drove me nuts. Common does not apply.”

“Its important for professors to have freedom in what they desire for their students, but there should be some way to insure that all students experience similar things. Why have the class at all if we can't get all the students interested. There should be better guidelines along the line of options in number and length of writing assignments, mandatory and optional lectures, etc.”

“FYS for some kids was like a free-for-all. They could go to class if they wanted to. Sometimes they had to go to the speakers, sometimes not. My teacher was very strict. He took attendance. We had a paper due every week. It was a very rigorous section of FYS. Here is my roommate who didn't have to do anything, basically just go to class, maybe one assignment and a final.”

- **Needs more standardization**

“If I could change FYS, I would make each class have the same criteria. A lot of the classes because of the different teachers were done differently. Some had a lot of discussion, some a lot of papers, some a lot of work, others with nothing. There should be a balance. Some slid by while others worked hard for the credits.”

“If you keep it the way it is now, there will be kids who get lucky and FYS will be a breeze and fun and exciting. There will be those that get stuck with that one professor and they'll hate it and loathe it. You need the exact same structure for every class, the same topics, and same assignments. Your teacher may be different, but at least there should be a thesis for the class and why you spend time on certain things. There's got to be some sort of standard structure.”

- **Make it less demanding**

“I don't think FYS should be an academic boot camp...students writing papers every week or for every class. They got slammed from the beginning. The professor said they'd be writing a lot, for its own sake and to keep us busy. I don't think this is right.”

- **Eliminate Kulas presentations**

“No. There was one where the guy who wrote Evolution came in, the author, what his name? Zimmer..he presented. And I can't believe I just sat through this for an hour, because it wasn't a good presentation. And the other one, was they had a movie where we all went to see the movie Election for FYS class. And I wanted to be a responsible FYS student so I went to see it and it was the worst movie I've ever seen. It was highly offensive. I was mad. I couldn't believe that this has some sort of academic basis because it didn't. We didn't talk about it in the class.”

“I think having all students go to hear a speaker in Kulas doesn’t work. Some are sleeping; others are talking. It’s hard to hear over them. People looked at it as a free day. Maybe split up more.”

- **Different Model**

“I wouldn’t abolish it completely. Maybe split into first seven weeks with one professor, last seven weeks with another for differences of experiences. There’s so much more we’ve said we’d like to see incorporated into FY:, intro. to college life, the mission, Jesuits, service, so professors more eloquent in one area will handle certain things. Some students will be taking one thing, others another.”

In terms of structure, the students strongly felt that there was a need for more consistency among sections of the course and more standardization. They complained about some having a rigorous academic course and others a fairly “easy” course. They questioned the purpose of the Kulas presentations and were open to exploring other models.

Topics

- **More current events**

“I think the idea of current events would be really good cause for me it’s because I was kind of sheltered from the outside world a little bit because I didn’t really watch TV that much normally because I would be doing homework or sleeping or something.”

- **More related to University Life**

“We have so many issues on our own campus, gender, sexuality, race. We could probably talk about those the whole semester and then maybe we could get something done. It should be a good introduction to school and something that affects us.”

“In going back to the stated goals, I’d like to seem more of a mix of both the academics and student life. Maybe stating that going in that these topics are meant to help you in both areas, maybe switching off where two classes a week are academic and one is student life issues, like getting to know Cleveland or organizations on campus, with service issues relating to the topics, business and cultural organization, getting them to come in and speak with classes would be useful.”

- **Include Jesuit education and mission**

“A majority doesn’t know [about Jesuit education]. I took it upon myself--- that was the theme of my bathrooms the first month of school (evidently an RA). I had quotes from Loyola and John Carroll on the mirror and I put up the university mission statement. On the stalls, I put the story of Saint Ignatius and the history of the Jesuits, because never in my first year was anything mentioned. So I said, ‘Welcome to John Carroll. Here’s what the school is.’ But they shouldn’t have to go to a bathroom to learn that.”

“It doesn’t have to be lighter topics, but I think the topic of Jesuit history should be there. I’m not the only one who chose to come to a Jesuit college, but I think we’re being cheated if it’s not mentioned.”

- **More integration among topics and readings, change books**

“I’m not sure the books gave me a comprehensive look at academic life in terms of integrating subjects into it. There needs to be some overarching synthesis.”

“As far as topics go, I had a hard time trying to figure out the connection between the books we were reading---Galileo’s Daughter and Rwanda. We didn’t have to read the third. We were assigned different chapters to present and then you were off the hook. It didn’t force us to get into it and because the topics were so different, it was hard to stay into it.”

- **More community service activity/field trips**

“A good idea is to get students involved in community and cultural awareness activities, intros to organizations on campus.”

“Have them visit a soup kitchen, take the rapid downtown. Our theme is ‘engaging the world’ but we do none of that.”

“I think service learning would be a valuable addition.”

In terms of topics, students suggested that the focus include current events and topics more relevant to university life. Many felt that FYS should include content around the Jesuit education and the University mission. Overall, they felt there should be more integration among the topics and readings and include more service activities and field trips.

7. Overall, was FYS a positive experience for you or not?
(The students’ responses were fairly equally divided.)

NO

- **Disappointed**

“I didn’t get anything out of that class. My experience was absolutely horrible. I didn’t meet a lot of my friends out of that class. The teacher would never talk about the books or anything like that. It really didn’t make sense to me why we took the class.”

- **Discouraged**

“I left my class feeling more discouraged than inspired. And I feel that first semester freshman year you should want to inspire them to think they can do this....Yes, college is hard, but you can get through it, especially when you work

together and you get to know your classmates in FYS, professors pushing us forward rather than down. Some had professors like that. Unfortunately, I didn't."

- **Negative experience with professor**

"Teacher made it miserable for us. I think he wanted to try to get it across to us as incoming freshmen that it's harder to get an A in college than in high school and don't expect an A. I think he only gave one A. Things like that set me up for a different view of college than I had anticipated and I think it was an inaccurate one, because since then I have found I can get A's. I've had some really nice teachers, just not him. He made it really difficult for us. I think he went out to show us college is tough. Its kinda pathetic looking back. I wish someone could, have come to our freshman class saying college is going to be awesome and lets work on these things so you know what you'll be doing for the next four years."

"My experience was really bad. My teacher came in and showed he didn't really care about the class. He talked about other things that had nothing to do with the class. It gave us a bad attitude so that we didn't care about the class either. I kept thinking what a waste of my time. I could be doing other things, taking another class—just a waste of my time."

Yes

- **Positive experience with professor**

"My FYS class was a very positive experience because of my professor. He was dynamic, enthusiastic, and controversial. He really challenged us and pushed us, but not to the point we were ready to break. He never discouraged us. I always felt encouraged and excited because the class was challenging and rewarding. I think a lot depends on the professors and their understanding about what goals of FYS are and how to structure the class to meet those goals."

"Mine was definitely positive. I think everyone in the class feels the same. My roommate and I were in the class together and we still stop by the professor's office and chat. I learned a lot about my classmates; we discussed things a lot outside of class, which doesn't happen in my other classes. We bonded through the discussion atmosphere. It has been my favorite class since I've been here."

- **Discussion based**

"I had a positive experience in the class. I was one of the few conservatives in the class and when we had politically based discussions, our professor hardly ever agreed with me, but we got along very well. She encouraged me to speak my points and defend my position even though I was outnumbered. I consider her a good friend today. She encouraged me to go into politics even though she wouldn't vote for me."

"I had a positive experience. It was mostly a part of how my class was structured. I had a professor who held basically to an open forum. We kept to

the syllabus pretty well. It allowed for a lot of flexibility to be able to talk about a lot of the topics and interact with each other, which as incoming freshmen you might feel a little hesitant to talk that way with people you don't know, but this class allowed us to converse and get to know each other better."

Not sure, neutral

"I'm maybe neutral, because I hated going but I can see how it affected me in ways I perceived in my own head, like putting myself in other people's shoes. Only two semesters after looking back I wonder if that the point of FYS, to not appreciate it until after it's gone and then see how it was positive."

The students' overall experience with FYS was mixed, and the critical factor appears to be the professor who taught the class, and her/his commitment to the course and goals of FYS, as well as her/his understanding of the anxieties which often accompany freshmen year.

8. Is there any other topic about FYS you would like to discuss?

- **Faculty bias**

"Sometimes I think we were only getting exposed to one idea or one side of the issue and that was the side that the professor agreed with."

- **Co-learning model vs. experts**

"My teacher wasn't an expert in the subjects. He just read the books with us, but he also did outside research, looked in the newspapers, found things that correlated with our work. Even though he wasn't an expert, we learned a lot. It's as if we were learning together, and so at first, I didn't think you should have science teachers grading papers but as long as the teachers are open-minded and try to learn with the class, I don't think they need to be experts if they make the effort."

"If you get to choose an area you're interested in, it takes a lot of pressure off the students and the professor and it makes you put more into it and get more out of it. As far as the teachers goes, if he's dealing with something he's at least mildly familiar with, we get more out of it."

Some students felt that faculty were somewhat biased in presenting viewpoints. Also, the students were mixed regarding the concept of co-learning.

Overall Summary of Student Responses

From the data, there is no doubt the critical factor in a student's experience with FYS depends upon a committed and engaged faculty member, who embraces the FYS philosophy. Such a faculty member creates the environment that allows questioning and critical thinking to

take place along with a discussion –based format, and relationships to develop with the faculty member and among the students. Students other major concerns centered around: the lack of consistency and standardization of the sections; and the failure of the FYS curriculum to include aspects of: the Jesuit/University mission, a service-learning component, and relevance to their lives as new students to JCU, and the greater Cleveland cultural community.

Synthesis and Conclusions

- Both a majority of the faculty and students who participated in the 11 focus groups saw value in a FYS, but agreed that the current model was not working well.
- Both groups were interested in discussing new possible FYS models.
- Both groups were very concerned about some aspects of faculty involvement, be it disengagement (student perspective) or concription, lack of passion for subject, and co–learning model (faculty perspective).
- The key to a successful FYS experience is an engaged excited teacher.
- Both groups expressed the importance of keeping an interdisciplinary approach to teaching the seminar.
- Students appreciated the discussion-based course and saw it as an important strength of the class.
- Faculty agreed on the importance of academic rigor, and though students had some concerns about realistic expectations of freshmen, they also agreed.
- Both groups agreed that FYS should more strongly tie to the Jesuit/ Social Justice mission of the University
- Both groups questioned the uniqueness of the FYS goals.
- Students believed that they were learning to become critical thinkers, but the exposure to different values/ world views was questioned.
- More positive student learning outcomes were attained than faculty realized.
- Major concerns for both groups centered on the lack of consistency and standardization among all the FYS sections. This led to a lack of a common experience.
- Students did not see value in common readings; they were not discussed outside of the classroom.
- Both students and faculty both did not believe the topics were well integrated, and questioned the book selection, which needed more balance.
- Neither group believed the larger lectures in Kulas were effective.
- FYS training for faculty was inconsistent, and would benefit from a more practical pedagogical approach.
- Students’ expected that FYS would include information on orientation to college life and the Cleveland area, and some faculty thought this should be included.

Methodological References

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2005). Handbook of qualitative research. Sage Publications, Inc: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Krueger, R.A. (1994). Focus groups. Sage Publications, Inc: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Krueger, R.A., & Casey, M. (2000). Focus groups. Sage Publications, Inc: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of First Year Seminar
Focus Group Participants (Students)

| Participants | N | Percentage |
|---------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Student | Total 55 | |
| Freshman | 12 | 21.8% |
| Sophomore | 15 | 27.2% |
| Junior | 17 | 30.9% |
| Senior | 11 | 20% |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 19 | 34.5% |
| Female | 36 | 65.4% |
| Ethnicity | | |
| White | 53 | 96.3% |
| Black | 1 | 1.8% |
| Puerto Rican | 1 | 1.8% |
| Major | | |
| Accounting | 5 | 8.47% |
| Art History | 1 | 1.69% |
| Biology | 5 | 8.47% |
| Business | 1 | 1.69% |
| Communications | 1 | 1.69% |
| Chemistry | 1 | 1.69% |
| Economics | 1 | 1.69% |
| Education | 3 | 5.08% |
| English | 6 | 10.16% |
| History | 3 | 5.08% |
| Italian | 1 | 1.69% |
| Marketing | 4 | 6.77% |
| Philosophy | 3 | 5.08% |
| Political Science | 6 | 10.16% |
| Psychology | 6 | 10.16% |
| Sociology | 6 | 10.16% |
| Spanish | 2 | 3.38% |
| Religious Studies | 2 | 3.38% |
| Undecided | 2 | 3.38% |

* Several students had double majors, therefore there are more majors marked here than participants in the group.

Table 2
Demographic Characteristics of First Year Seminar
Focus Group Participants (Faculty)

| Participants | N | |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----|
| Faculty | Total 25 | |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 14 | 56% |
| Female | 11 | 44% |
| Departments | | |
| Art History | 1 | 4% |
| Biology | 4 | 16% |
| Chemistry | 2 | 8% |
| Economics | 3 | 12% |
| Education | 2 | 8% |
| Finance | 1 | 4% |
| History | 1 | 4% |
| Library | 2 | 8% |
| Marketing | 1 | 4% |
| Mathematics | 1 | 4% |
| Philosophy | 1 | 4% |
| Physics | 2 | 8% |
| Sociology | 2 | 8% |
| Communications | 1 | 4% |
| Student Affairs | 1 | 4% |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Appendix A
Questions for Student FYS Focus Group

1. What were your expectations regarding FYS?
 - a. What did you think you would study?
 - b. What did you think was the purpose?
2. What did you gain most from the experience?
3. What did you not get from the experience and wished you had?
4. Has the FYS experience helped you as a college student? If so, how? If not, why?
5. The following are two stated goals of FYS – What do you think of these goals?
(Achieved? Unique?)
 - a. promoting active learning & critical thinking
 - b. establishment of a setting where students could learn different world views & clarify their values
6. What would you have done differently?
 - a. Structure?
 - b. Topics?
 - c. Assignments?
 - d. Other?
7. Overall, was FYS a positive experience for you or not? Why?
8. Is there any other topic about FYS you would like to discuss?

Appendix B
Questions for FYS Faculty Focus Group

1. What were your expectations of FYS?
2. What did you think of the training for FYS instructors?
 - a. Suggestions for modification?
3. What do you think of the current model? What would you change?
4. Should FYS in any form be continued at JCU? Please explain
5. Did FYS influence your teaching? If so, how? If not, why?
6. The following are stated goals of FYS – What do you think of these goals? (Achieved? Unique?)
 - a. Promotes the early development of academic skills
 - b. Promotes collaborative and integrated learning
 - c. Development of a milieu where students learn to question
 - d. Emphasizes critical thinking
7. Overall, was FYS a positive teaching experience for you or not? Why?
8. Is there any other topic about FYS you would like to discuss?

Appendix C
Questions for Non-FYS Faculty Focus Group

9. What are your expectations of FYS?
10. Why haven't you taught FYS?
11. What do you think of the current model? What would you change?
12. Should FYS in any form be continued at JCU? Please explain
13. The following are stated goals of FYS – What do you think of these goals?
(Achieved? Unique?)
 - a. Promotes the early development of academic skills
 - b. Promotes collaborative and integrated learning
 - c. Development of a milieu where students learn to question
 - d. Emphasizes critical thinking
6. Is there any other topic about FYS you would like to discuss?