 Office of General Education A-218C

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Fall 2021 FIQWS Course and Teacher Survey Findings – Draft report, April 2022

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# Purpose

The goal of this activity was to assess the Fall 21 FIQWS program by examining student opinions on what they learned, appreciated, and recommended for improvement. This indirect measure of student learning complements other assessments in General Education classes.

**Methodology**

Course and Teacher Surveys for all CLAS classes were sent to students via email by the Testing Office at the end of the Fall 21 semester; results made available in early April 2022. For 43 topic and 43 composition section reports, the Director of General Education examined responses to the following questions:

(1) What were the three (3) most important things you learned from the course?

(2) What, if anything, did you appreciate most about the course?

(3) Please provide any suggestions you may have to improve the course

The average response rate was 27% for the topic sections (ranging from 4% to 73% per section) and 30% for the composition sections (ranging from 8% to 73%). Individual sections were not assessed, only the program overall.

# Assessment Findings

Q1. : What were the three (3) most important things you learned from the course?

Answers to this question provide indirect assessment of student learning – what they believe they learned. Many students highlighted the following:

**Topic Sections**

* Fundamental concepts of the subject of study
* Broader ideas of the discipline of study
* Improved writing skills
* Practice in research skills and citations
* Ability to think critically, analyze, connect information
* Reading with purpose
* How to work in a group
* Time management skills
* Organizational skills

**Composition sections**

* How to structure an essay
* The importance of drafting
* How to conduct research in the library
* Concepts related to the subject of topic section
* The importance of communication
* Finding sources, citations, bibliography
* Time management
* Improved writing skills/ drafting/ revision/ thesis/ MLA style/research paper
* Peer review/feedback

Q2: What, if anything, did you appreciate most about the course?

**Topic sections**

Typical responses to this question included:

* Dedicated faculty
* Faculty being understanding
* Passionate faculty
* Faculty setting positive energy in the class
* Learning course material
* Getting clear guidelines for assignments
* Open minded faculty and class discussions; non-judgmental class atmosphere
* Engaging with other students and learning from them, working in groups
* Meeting new people, making friends

Additional responses included:

* Gaining skills for the future
* Writing in a context of a discipline
* Improving writing
* Good feedback on essays which led to improvement
* Sufficient time to work on assignments and time to relax between them

**Composition sections**

Typical responses to this question included:

* Faculty always being available
* Faculty being patient with students
* Caring faculty
* Dedicated faculty
* Faculty being flexible
* Engaging class environment

Additional responses included:

* Improving writing
* Open-minded teacher
* Discussions allowed freedom to express opinions
* Reading assignments with different perspectives
* Interesting reading materials
* Open, safe place
* Encouragement
* Getting to know classmates

Q3: Please provide any suggestions you may have to improve the course.

The great majority of students suggested keeping the course as is. Others offered the following suggestions:

**Topic sections**

* Lighter workload, less reading
* Faster grading/feedback on work
* Providing written instructions for assignments
* Enforcing reading assignments for more effective class discussions
* Allowing more interactions between students
* Providing grading rubric at the same time as giving the assignment
* More graded work (not heavily based on one assignment)

**Composition sections**

* Be structured, with lesson plans prepared
* Provide clear syllabus and instructions
* Provide better feedback

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* Be structured, with lesson plans prepared
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**Conclusion/Discussion**

Student comments on the Course and Teacher Survey indicate that the FIQWS program succeeds in its goals to:

* Provide a first major step in developing the reading and writing skills necessary for college study
* Provide an environment to further students’ analytic writing and critical thinking
* Provide experiences writing research (source-driven) essays
* Create a learning community
* Provide an understanding of college readiness skills (time management, attendance, handing in work on time, and academic integrity)
* Provide close contact with faculty

In reflecting on what they learned, students highlight items which line up with learning outcomes in both topic and composition sections: the ability to communicate, to critically analyze information and to conduct research along with the knowledge of fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline. In some instances, students highlight learning about the subject area concepts in the composition section as well as acquiring writing related skills in the topic section, suggesting a meaningful, well-integrated learning experience.

The comments to the second question are a testament to faculty who participate in the program; the majority of students highlight faculty dedication, passion, and understanding/care for students as the best aspect of the course. Students also appreciate the opportunity to have a place for open discussion with peers and teachers and to learn from it.

Finally, comments to the third question indicate that, in some instances, improvements can be made in terms of a more timely and better feedback on assignments, clearer (written) assignment prompts, and more organization on the side of the instructor.

Different response rates among sections suggest some instructors likely encouraged students to complete the online survey while others might not have. To improve response rates and obtain meaningful data per section, all instructors should encourage and remind students to respond.

Closing the Loop activities:

* Share these results with instructors; encourage them to consider how they can strengthen their course and pedagogy
* Encourage faculty to review results from their own section(s) and utilize student feedback toward improvement of their course and pedagogy
* Continue to communicate to faculty the goals of the program: introduction to a discipline and college level thinking and writing; learning community creation; and first year experience during orientation and throughout semester when appropriate