

Freshman Interest Group Program 2010 Assessment Response

Beginning in summer 2009, First Year Programs and the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Dean's office staff began a collaborative effort with the Office of Educational Assessment to comprehensively assess the current Freshman Interest Group (FIG) program. These efforts included a review of program history and literature about First Year Experience programs, pre- and post-fall quarter surveys of FIG and non-FIG students, faculty and staff stakeholder interviews, FIG leader surveys, and General Studies 199 observations.

The FIG program assessment results revealed many key strengths of the FIG program. For example:

- The FIG program includes significant participation of under-represented minority students, equal opportunity program students, and first-generation college students, and these students were the demographic groups who generally reported the greatest satisfaction with their FIG and first-quarter UW experience. This result demonstrates that the FIG program is playing a key role in the UW's core mission.
- The FIG program links students' social growth with academic success. Students reported that being in shared classes in their first quarter at UW fostered both friendships and study groups.
- Students in the FIG program broadened and diversified their social groups more than did students who were not enrolled in the FIG program.
- Students in the FIG program reported higher levels of satisfaction with their decision to attend the UW and with their first-quarter experience than did most of their non-FIG peers.
- Students in the FIG program reported more familiarity with campus resources and services than did students who were not enrolled in the FIG program.
- Students in the FIG program reported a stronger sense of connection and engagement with the UW at the end of the first quarter than did most of their non-FIG peers.
- Students in the FIG program found their peer FIG leaders to be helpful, encouraging, and knowledgeable. FIG leaders received high evaluations and strong praise from FIG students.

The process also revealed areas where change is needed. Below is a summary of key changes that have already been made to address assessment findings, as well as areas where changes are planned.

Changes Already Made to General Studies 199 Curriculum

OEA provided a number of early assessment results to the FIG program, which allowed FIG program staff to make changes to the fall 2010 FIG program, as follows:

- Redesign the FIG program goals for 2010 in order to add a stronger academic orientation to the FIG program. FIG program staff began revising goals to reflect the program's efforts to link the academic and social experiences for first-quarter students. Program goals will be finalized in 2010-2011.
- Revised General Studies 199 curriculum for fall quarter 2010. The new curriculum directly addresses FIG assessment study findings about the program stakeholders' and students' expectations for a first-quarter UW experience that focuses on academic success, on helping students develop an academic

focus that leads to a future path, on orientation to co-curricular experiences, and on social growth and connection to the campus community. Changes for 2010 include the following:

- Inclusion of conversations about students' goals for their transition to college, and identification of key experiences for their first quarter and beyond.
- Discussion of the difference between high school and college academic learning practices.
- Discussion about courses within FIG clusters.
- Continued collaboration with undergraduate librarians, with special attention paid to the concept of "disciplinarity."
- Assignments prompting students to explore specific disciplines and majors in a directed, reflective, and purposeful way.

Intended Areas for Program Growth and Development

While responses to the FIG Program Assessment are still being evaluated, FIG program staff have identified areas for future growth and collaboration and have embarked on four initial priorities:

- *Connections to Faculty and Staff*
Entering students, as well as faculty and staff interviewed for this assessment, indicated a greater desire for FIG-faculty/staff interaction and collaboration. FIG staff are investigating opportunities to connect faculty, staff, and courses to FIG students and infuse these connections into the FIG curriculum.
- *Return to Themed or Interest-Driven FIG Options*
Since 2000, when the FIG program was rapidly expanded, the program course clusters have not reflected an intentional effort to create themes or "interest groups." One of the recommendations of this assessment is to return to this model, even for a subset of the larger FIG cluster choices. For autumn quarter 2011, FIG program staff plan to offer an increased number of themed FIG choices.
- *Collaborate with Academic Departments to Offer Greater Choice in FIG Clusters*
One of the key findings of the FIG assessment is that many non-FIG students enter the university with a greater number of Running Start, AP, or IB credits than do FIG students; non-FIG students, therefore, are typically more advanced in their academic coursework than are their FIG student counterparts. As a result, they are often unable to register for a FIG since most contain courses for which they already have credit. In an effort to bring more advanced students into the program, FIG program staff plans to work with departments to offer a greater range of upper-division coursework within the FIG program.
- *Increase International Student Participation in the FIG Program*
The FIG assessment demonstrated that few international students have the opportunity to participate in the FIG program, yet many of these students want to participate. FIG program staff plan to work to create more opportunities for international students to participate in FIGs.

This beginning list is indicative of the FIG program staff's current plans to grow and develop the program. We anticipate that we will identify future areas in which to make changes and improvements as we move forward. First Year Programs, along with the Dean and Vice Provost of Undergraduate Academic Affairs, will be coordinating opportunities to discuss these and future FIG program developments with campus stakeholders.

The full assessment report was provided to the FIG program and can be found [here](http://www.washington.edu/oea/pdfs/reports/OEAReport1005.pdf) or by visiting the following website: <http://www.washington.edu/oea/pdfs/reports/OEAReport1005.pdf>