



**First Year Writing Program  
Rhode Island College  
Annual Report  
2015-2016**

1. *Continue to monitor and revise DSP pilot as needed.*

Beginning with Orientation 2015 and continuing through the 2016 sessions, the DSP pilot has moved into what we hope will be its final phase. As our 2014-2015 Annual Report articulated, students who attend Orientation are given information and asked to select the FYW course that best meets their needs. Exceptions to this process include students enrolled in the PEP and Honors Programs (the former sit for Writing Placement Exams; the latter usually enroll in the Honors-designated section or transfer in credit) or students who complete the College Writing Requirement through dual-enrollment, transfer, or test credit. While students with these exceptions may have already been advised to enroll in specific sections or courses, we still encourage them to participate in the DSP sessions at Orientation. Such exceptions create difficulties in determining an exact number of DSP participants, but we estimate somewhere between 70-85% of incoming first-year students participated in DSP in the 2015-2016 academic year.

In both fall 2015 and spring 2016, the FYW Program undertook an assessment to determine the following:

- a. How effective were DSP sessions during Orientation 2015? That is,
  1. How well-informed did students feel about their course choices?
  2. How satisfied were students with their choice?
  3. How satisfied, overall, were faculty with their students' placement choices (that is, were there discernible differences between the previous placement procedure of Writing Placement Exams and DSP, the current procedure?)

We received and reviewed the data from the fall 2015 surveys; a summary, previously distributed, is attached to this report. We will combine this information with results from the spring 2016 surveys in addition to feedback from Orientation leaders. At this point, the DSP pilot will likely end in one of the following ways:

- in full- or near-full implementation of DSP for all incoming students;
- in a return to the SAT/Writing Placement Exam placement system in effect through 2014;
- in a new pilot of another placement method

The FYW Program will make a recommendation in the coming months.

2. *Work closely with the English Department to consider improvements to labor conditions in the FYW Program.*

This long-term goal has two parts: one, we would like to see more full-time faculty teach in the FYW Program; two, we continue to advocate for more security and benefits for the adjunct faculty who compose between 80-90% of the FYW Program faculty (see attached statistics). At no point in this report are we calling into question the quality of instruction and commitment provided by adjunct instructors.

We were happy to participate in discussions of these two issues in the past academic year. First, we were pleased to see these issues on the agenda for the English Department retreat in September 2015. That conversation—which also included the role of writing in the English major—was productive in terms of awareness and recruitment; at least two full-time English faculty who have not yet taught FYW at RIC will do so in the coming academic year. This is in addition to several faculty who have taught FYW in the past. Then, too, the retreat also raised awareness of current working conditions of adjunct faculty and the need for RIC to consider more sustainable faculty models. Both the English Literature Gen-Ed offerings and the FYW Program rely heavily on the labor of adjunct faculty, and this creates difficulty in terms of programmatic planning and development.

Finally, we support the English Department’s request for a three-year full-time faculty position in Composition. We look forward to continued conversations regarding the staffing needs of the FYW Program.

3. *Collaborate with the Writing Board and the Writing Center to consider the ways in which the college can continue to offer quality writing instruction beyond the FYW Program.*

In addition to the professional development opportunities offered within the FYW Program (see #5, below), the FYW Program continues to work with the Writing Board and the Writing Center. The Director of Writing met with the Mike Michaud, Writing Board chair, and other stakeholders in the RIC community (including Claudine Griggs, the Writing Center Director) to discuss the WID requirement. We look forward to the listening sessions scheduled for fall 2016. In addition, our revision of the FYW Outcomes (in progress; see #4, below) will allow for better alignment with college-wide WID requirements.

In July 2016, Maureen Reddy, Assessment Coordinator, conducted a day-long assessment of the college’s Gen Ed Program. We were pleased to see FYW faculty well-represented among participating readers/scorers. This is a critical role for the FYW Program to play institutionally, of course, but such an opportunity to read artifacts from capstone classes allows FYW instructors to see the kinds of writing that students produce at or near the end of their RIC careers. This, we believe, also will allow for better alignment between FYW and WID courses.

The FYW Program continues to enjoy a productive, collaborative relationship with the Writing Center. In addition to Writing Week events (which included, for a second year, a “Write-In”), the continued evolution of the DSP pilot (see #1) requires constant revision and communication and is a true partnership between the WC and the FYW Program. Thoughtful, well-researched placement methods that allow individual students to enroll in

the appropriate FYW course have long-term effects for students' academic careers. We are fortunate to have such partnerships across the college.

4. *Continue the work begun by the FYW Program Assessment Task Force (ATF).*

For several years, the FYW Program has been instrumental in establishing and revising the Written Communication Outcome assessment for COGE. This year, we hoped to return to FYW Program-specific assessments (the ATF made recommendations in 2014). However, it became clear early on that our first step should be revising the outcomes for the FYW Program. Heretofore, the RIC's FYW Program has adopted the Council of Writing Program Administrators' ["Outcome Statement for First-Year Composition"](#) (recently updated). We have not done the difficult work of adopting them/revising them to better serve the local context and demands of RIC; thus, they have been more of a placeholder than a guiding principle. Now that we have created a curriculum that we believe best serves RIC's population at this time (revising FYW 100 and 010; implementing FYW 100P), piloted a new placement method (DSP), and participated fully in college-wide assessment, the time seems right to turn our attention to our own programmatic Outcomes.

This activity has occupied much of the Composition Committee's time. In addition to conversations about what we value as instructors and what the college needs in a FYW Program, we have experimented with Dynamic Criteria Mapping (DCM) to gather qualitative data from volunteering FYW instructors. By the close of the 2016-2017 academic year, we hope to have a new Outcome statement in place. From there, we hope to work more completely on an assessment plan for the 2017-2018 year and forward.

5. *Continue to offer professional development opportunities for instructors of FYW.*

We have created reliable, consistent professional development opportunities for instructors in the FYW Program. As in the past, we offered twice-yearly Summits: 27 August 2015 (which focused, in part, on Research Fluency) and 14 January 2016 (which focused, in part, on the SAILS system—an early-alert system, piloted by OASIS in the FYW Program). We also sponsored six "Instructor Invitationals" featuring eight FYW Program faculty.

As in the past, we have offered to reimburse any faculty who attend the UConn Conference for the Teaching of Writing. We also celebrated our annual "Writing Week" with another "Write-In," a collaboration with the Writing Center.

We were pleased to partner with the Research Library Faculty in their efforts to improve the way instructors and students think about research in the first-year classroom. Several FYW faculty worked throughout the academic year to target specific behaviors on the Gen Ed Research Fluency rubric.

A small committee has been working to revise the FYW Program *Tips for Teachers* handbook, and, as I write this, it is in my inbox awaiting review. Finally, our experiments with DCM (see #4, above) allowed several instructors to meet for an hour and talk about student writing. I hope to find opportunities to create such community-building in the future.

**Future Goals (2016-2017 and beyond)**

1. **Complete the DSP Pilot**
2. **Revise Outcomes for FYW Program**
3. **Begin to articulate relationship between FYW and WID courses**
4. **Continue to offer professional development opportunities for instructors of FYW**

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## DSP Pilot Student Survey, Fall 2015

### *Preliminary Results*

#### Demographics:

242 respondents (~37% of population enrolled in FYW courses at close of add/drop)  
19 sections approximately (~50% of sections)

FYW 010	5 students
FYW 100	190
FYW 100P	26
FYW 100H	21

#### Influence of Orientation:

~87% attended New Student Orientation 2015

*Did you attend the session during Orientation?*

- 51 marked no answer or “I don’t know.” Of those, several indicated by other responses that they had been to sessions during Orientation
  - Of these, 18 (~35%) mentioned “Directed Self-Placement Presentation at Orientation” or “Informational handout at Orientation (includes Self-Efficacy Questionnaire)” as factors which helped them choose their FYW course.
  - 12 marked “Assistance of Orientation, OASIS, or major advisor” as at least one of the factors. (~24%).

#### Making the Decision:

What factors helped you choose? (*Values are approximate; respondents could choose more than one answer.*)

44%	Directed Self-Placement Presentation at Orientation
42%	Informational handout at Orientation (includes Self-Efficacy Questionnaire
[22%]	[selected both of the above]
29%	Assistance of Orientation, OASIS, or major advisor
5%	Discussion with selected FYW instructor during the first week of classes
18%	Number of credits associated with each FYW course, including the number of credits that “count” towards graduation totals
0%	Email correspondence with Director of Writing or Writing Center Director
11%	Writing Placement Exam (via the Writing Center)
20%	Availability of FYW sections that fit with schedule (day of week/time of day)
3%	Information in FYW Program website
5%	Influence of family
7%	Influence of friends
3%	I did not choose my FYW course

### Student Perceptions of Preparedness:

Questions 6, 7 and 8: Did you receive the information and guidance necessary to choose the FYW course that best meets your needs? / If “No,” what additional information would have helped you in your decision-making process? / If “No,” which course do you believe would have been a better choice?

Only 6 “No” answers. Student write-ins for what “additional information” was needed:

- “More information on how difficult the course actually is versus what my friends told me about the course”
- “What exactly was going to happen in the class and what was expected”
- “If i [sic] had been informed about the difficulty of the course”

Enrolled in....	Should have enrolled in...	# of responses
010	100	1
100	010	1
100	100P	4
100	100H	1
100P	100H	2

And finally....

75 (~31%)	anticipated an “A”-range grade
135 (~56%)	anticipated a “B”-range grade
19 (~8%)	anticipated a “C”-range grade
2 (~1%)	anticipated a “D”-range grade
3 (~1%)	students anticipated a “Satisfactory” (for 010)
3 (~1%)	students did not know what grade to expect
5 (~2%)	did not respond

## DSP Pilot Faculty Survey, Fall 2015

### *Preliminary Results*

#### Respondents:

19 respondents (~79% of FYW instructors\*)

~66% of 010 classes represented

100% of 100P classes represented

50% of 100H classes represented (*Director of Writing did not include her students in the final survey, but instead asked them to complete the draft version in order to receive feedback*)

\*1 instructor assumed instructorship of class 2/3 of the way through the semester

#### “Checking” on DSP:

1. During the first week of the semester, did you spend class time on any of the following?  
(*Values are approximate; respondents could choose more than one answer.*)

47%	Directed Self-Placement Presentation at Orientation
68%	Discuss the DSP handout and self-efficacy questionnaire in class
21%	Ask them to review the DSP handout and self-efficacy questionnaire at home
95%	Assign and read a writing sample from each student
26%	Discuss placement choices with individual students [see below]

#### Other responses:

- “I cross checked student placement with the first day's writing sample and found that all were reasonably placed.”
  - “I was not the instructor for the first 8-9 weeks.”
2. If you did discuss placement choices with individual students, please specify what you discussed. If you counseled them to consider a different course, please indicate which course you recommended:
    - *From a 010 instructor:* “After reviewing first day writing samples, I talked with two students who appeared ready for FYW100 but assuring them that the selection decision remained with them.”
    - *From a 010 instructor:* “Whether or not FYW 010 was challenging enough for them or if they chose the wrong course because of confusion.”
    - *From a 100 instructor:* “We discussed my concerns that FYW 100 present difficulties for the student that would be mitigated if FYW 010 was taken first.”
    - *From a 100 instructor:* “I spoke with one student about possibly switching to another class. She did not switch, but later dropped the course.”
    - *From a 100 instructor:* “I reviewed the descriptions of the different FYW courses with 1 student, who recalled that her DSP suggested she take FYW 100.”

### Faculty Perceptions:

~26%	Felt as if <b>all</b> students were in the FYW course that <b>best</b> met their instructional needs
~63%	Felt as if <b>most</b> students were in the FYW course that <b>best</b> met their instructional needs
~5%	<p>Felt as if <b>many</b> of the students in my FYW course chose the <b>wrong</b> course for their instructional needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In a follow-up comment, the instructor wrote that “In the FYW100P course, there seemed to be a number of students who were to [sic] advanced for the course design and pace. One counselor told me that this is often strategy for students who believe that at least in this class an easy A will boost their GPA. They select this course as padding. I recommended other courses up until the drop/add close. Students also chose the course because of the time it was offered.”</li> </ul>
~5%	I’m not certain how I feel on this topic. [Likely this was the instructor who was not the instructor at the beginning of the semester.]

### Comments:

- “I had two students drop my FYW010 and transfer into FYW100 or 100P, but I ultimately ended up with students who responsibly selected 010.”
- “It took 2-3 weeks before my FYW010 section roster was set.”
- “I found no clearly misplaced students.”
- “Some will always be misplaced, DSP or no -- out of forty students, I only had three this term whom I felt were misplaced.”
- “My concern regards the reliability of an early writing sample as a tool for deterring unwise self-placement. It is realistically possible that one writing sample indicates a student's incapability of passing FYW 100. However, it is not very realistic that one writing sample indicates a student will only be capable of earning a C range grade or B- in FYW 100. I have two students who put in solid effort but lack the skill to earn more than a B- as a final grade. My first-week writing samples from each of them did not suffice for me to realize this.”

**First-Year Writing Statistics Fall 2015**  
**Reflects totals from the close of the add/drop period**

Sections 010.....	03*
Sections 100.....	28
Sections 100H.....	02
Sections 100Plus.....	03
<b>Total Sections First Year Writing.....</b>	<b>36</b>

Adjunct Faculty/Emeriti.....	22
TT/FT Faculty.....	03
<b>Total Instructors.....</b>	<b>25</b>

**Sections**

1. **8.3%** of all sections are taught by tenure-track faculty (3)
2. **91.6%** of all sections are taught by adjunct faculty/Emeriti (33)

**Staffing**

1. **12%** of total instructors are tenure-track/full-time faculty (3)
2. **88%** of total instructors are adjunct faculty/Emeriti (22)

<b>FYW 010</b>
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*Capacity is 10 students*

# of sections below cap:        2 (2 section @ 9 students)  
# of sections at cap:            1  
# of sections over:                0

- FYW 010 is at **93.33% capacity**.

\*Please note that FYW 010C-80 is a FYW 010 course offered in the School of Social Work for "Social and Human Service Assistance" Certificate of Undergraduate Study (C.U.S.)

<b>First Year Writing 100</b>
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*Capacity is 20 students*

# of sections below cap:        4 (total of 6 open seats)  
# of sections at capacity:        13  
# of sections over capacity:    (@21): 10  
    (@22): 1

- FYW 100 is at **101.1% capacity**  
➤ One (full) section of FYW 100 was cancelled due to staffing shortage

*(continued on next page)*

**First Year Writing 100H***Capacity is 15*

# of sections below cap: 2 (total of 7 open seats)  
# of sections at capacity: 0  
# of sections over capacity: 0

- FYW 100H is at **76.67% capacity**

**First Year Writing 100Plus***Capacity is 15 students*

# of sections below cap: 2 (total of 2 open seats)  
# of sections at capacity: 1  
# of sections over capacity: 0

- FYW 100P is at **95.56% capacity**
- One (full) section of FYW 100P was cancelled due to staffing shortage



<b>First Year Writing 100Honors</b>
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*Capacity is 15 students*

# of sections below cap: 1 (total of 6 open seats)

# of sections at capacity: 0

# of sections over capacity: 0

➤ FYW 100Honors is at **60% capacity**