



**First Year Writing Program
Rhode Island College
Annual Report
2018-2019**

1. *Revise FYW 010: College Writing Strategies in light of declining enrollments*

Fall 2018 saw our FYW 010 enrollment at the lowest in programmatic history. The reasons are threefold. One, the creation of FYW 100Plus has likely attracted a sizable portion of students who might have previously enrolled in FYW 010. Successful completion of FYW 100Plus means that students can complete their College Writing Requirement (CRW) in one semester; enrollment in FYW 010 and then FYW 100 means that students will need two semesters to complete the CWR. Two, while FYW 010 carries four credits towards a student's full-time status, those four credits do not "count" towards a student's graduation totals, even as elective credit. Finally, the decision in 2017 to implement Directed Self-Placement (DSP) means that students decide which FYW course they want to take. For all of these reasons, FYW 010 seems to be in less demand than in previous semesters; in fall 2018, nine students were enrolled in FYW 010, and over three sections.

With the permission of the FAS Dean, and in conjunction with the English Department's Composition Committee, FYW will pilot a new version of FYW 010 in fall 2019. The proposal is included in the Appendix of this report, though a few adjustments will need to be made. As of this writing, the course may appear as a "150" catalog number during the pilot stage. The Composition Committee hopes to determine what, if any, course some students might need or want prior to enrolling in FYW 100, 100Plus, or 100Honors. We expect to report on the initial phase of the pilot in the 2020-2021 Annual Report.

2. *Review data from 2018 DSP Orientation sessions and revise DSP process as needed*

The FYW Program continues to revise and revisit the DSP process and students' experiences with it. While we were happy to move to a digital tool for Orientation 2018, we continue to seek a platform that allows us to make adjustments in real time and which the FYW Program can edit.

Orientation 2019 moved to a new format where all new students in attendance sat simultaneously for placement (first writing, then math), a departure from previous years where students would rotate in four groups in and out of DSP sessions. This format proved challenging for us; some placement locations did not have projectors, so it was difficult to walk students through the process. While past Orientations have allowed the Writing Center Director and the Director of Writing to divide Orientation sessions between the two, the new format necessitated the hiring of presenters so as to insure there was a FYW representative (usually an adjunct faculty member) in

each placement location. Compensation for presenters was an additional unplanned expense from the FYW Program budgets.

The FYW Program is seeking to move to a new digital tool and to innovate ways to reach students in and out of Orientation. Targeted emails do seem to help; prior to the spring 2019 semester, every student on every FYW roster was sent an email reminding them of the placement process in which they had engaged during Orientation. Dozens of students linked out to the online assessment process or reached out to the Director of Writing with questions. And FYW instructors continue to revisit the placement method in the first week of classes (of note here is that, given the premature cancellation of FYW courses in spring 2019, students did not have the opportunity to move among courses if they so chose—a cornerstone of our placement method—since nearly every seat was filled to capacity).

One benefit of the online tool is that we are able to gather some basic data from incoming students. While our assessment goals for 2018-2019 focused on one of our two major outcomes (“Process”—see #3), we hope to take time in the 2019-2020 year to review student placement responses. In the online tool, students spend a few moments reflecting on their writing; these submissions are a treasure trove of student perceptions and would allow us to have a better sense of student attitudes towards writing—before they begin college. Indeed, there’s potential here for an end-of-career assessment, too. The Director of Writing has also met with the Chair of RIC’s IRB to see what kind of permissions and consent are required to potentially share these perceptions with those outside the college.

In sum, as we knew when we adopted DSP, there are always new opportunities to innovate and improve the process. The FYW Program continues to identify ways to better serve students as they make their placement choices.

3. *Create plan for programmatic assessment*

In Spring 2019, the FYW Program undertook an assessment of Process, one of the two major outcomes of the FYW Program (the other is Rhetorical Knowledge; the full outcome document can be found on the FYW Program website).

While a separate assessment report is forthcoming, we can provide a brief synopsis here. Given that this assessment was entirely generated by and for the program, we asked each instructor to collect artifacts from two students in each section they were teaching; we also asked them to share any and all of their own teaching documents that might illustrate how process is enacted in the classroom (in this, as with all things, we were careful to remind faculty that ours was a programmatic and not an individual assessment). The initial letter to faculty is included in the appendix.

We were fortunate to receive artifacts from nearly every section, and I met with interested FYW instructors on Friday June 7th to read and “score” the artifacts (template for scoring is also in the appendix). Those instructors were compensated given that this work was done outside the contract hours.

Preliminary results show that process is very explicitly addressed in FYW sections; references to process appear in overarching course documents (syllabus, course schedule) and in specific project

documents (i.e., assignment prompts). We look forward to the opportunity to dig a bit more deeply into the scoring sheets and comments. Special thanks to Gregory Williams, Work/Study student, for helping to compile the data.

4. *Complete CRCA grant-based initiative, a collaboration between Reference Library faculty and the FYW Program*

For the 2018-2019 academic year, Patricia (Tish) Brennan and Becky Caouette worked closely with a group of adjunct faculty to consider more carefully the role of research in the FYW Program. Several FYW faculty and Reference Library faculty had piloted this approach in previous semesters, and Tish and I applied for, and received, a CRCA Integration Grant in order to compensate FYW Faculty who participated in this new initiative.

Our grant-based initiative (GBI) required participating faculty to attend a June 2018 meeting, a pre-semester meeting August of 2018, midterm meetings in fall 2018, and focus groups at semester's end (this was laid out in our initial letter, dated May 2018, and reinforced in subsequent communications through fall 2018; see initial letter in appendix). During these meetings, we discussed ACRL's threshold concepts and our programmatic effort to concentrate our research fluency pedagogy on specific thresholds. We are happy to report that eight faculty participated with three more assuming roles as liaisons.

As of this writing, Tish and Becky have collected relevant artifacts and are working to share their findings—within their respective academic fields as well as with COGE. We expect to report additional information in the 2019-2020 Annual Report.

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

The FYW Program continued to offer professional development opportunities for faculty who teach in the program. These include:

- FYW Program Annual August Summit (23 August 2018)
- FYW Program Annual Mini-Summit (17 January 2019)
- Instructor Invitationals
 - Laura Faria-Tancinco (15 October 2018)
 - Ellen Polansky (9 April 2019)
- Faculty Presentation: Clarissa Walker “‘There is No Racism in Cuba’: A Field Study of the ‘Post-Race’ Rhetoric of Modern Cuba” (2 April 2019)
- CRCA grant-based initiative (see #4, above—June 2018, August 2018, midterm 2018, December 2018)

Future Goals (2019-2020 and beyond)

1. **Pilot online courses (hybrid, distance) for FYW 100 sections**
2. **Implement plans to pilot FYW 010 revision (FYW 150: Boost)**
3. **Continue to revise and improve DSP materials and process**
4. **Grow and expand research fluency initiatives at programmatic and college level**
5. **Continue to offer professional development opportunities for FYW faculty**

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First-Year Writing Statistics Fall 2018
Reflects totals from October 2018

Sections 010.....	03
Sections 100.....	28
Sections 100H.....	02
Sections 100Plus.....	05
Total Sections First Year Writing.....	38

Adjunct Faculty/Emeriti.....	20
TT/FT Faculty.....	03
Part-time faculty.....	01
Total Instructors.....	24

Sections

1. **8%** of all sections are taught by full-time/tenure-track faculty (3)
2. **03%** of all sections are taught by part-time faculty (Writing Center Director) (1)
3. **89%** of all sections are taught by adjunct faculty/Emeriti (34)

Staffing

1. **~13%** of total instructors are tenure-track/full-time faculty (3)
2. **~83%** of total instructors are adjunct faculty/Emeriti (20)
3. **~4%** of total instructors are part-time faculty (Writing Center Director) (1)

FYW 010

Capacity is 10 students

of sections below cap: 3 (total of 21 open seats)
 # of sections at cap: 0
 # of sections over: 0

- FYW 010 is at **30% capacity**.

First Year Writing 100

Capacity is 20 students

of sections below cap: 14 (total of 60 open seats)
 # of sections at capacity: 13
 # of sections over capacity: (@21): 1

- FYW 100 is at **89% capacity**

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First Year Writing 100H*Capacity is 15*

of sections below cap: 0
of sections at capacity: 1
of sections over capacity: 1 (@17)

- FYW 100H is at **107% capacity**

First Year Writing 100Plus*Capacity is 15 students*

of sections below cap: 2
of sections at capacity: 3 (@13)
of sections over capacity: 0

- FYW 100P is at **95% capacity**

First Year Writing Statistics Spring 2019

Sections 010.....	0
Sections 100.....	17
Sections 100P.....	02
Sections 100H.....	01

Total Sections First-Year Writing..... 20

Adjunct Faculty/Emeritus.....	15
TT/FT Faculty.....	04

Total Instructors.....19

Sections

4. **25%** of all sections are taught by tenure-track faculty (5)
5. **75%** of all sections are taught by adjunct faculty/Emeritus (15)

Staffing

4. **21%** of total instructors are tenure-track/full-time faculty (4)
5. **79%** of total instructors are adjunct faculty/Emeritus (15)

FYW 010

No sections of FYW 010 spring 2019

First Year Writing 100

Capacity is 20 students

of sections below cap: 4 (total of 9 open seats)
 # of sections at capacity: 11
 # of sections over capacity: (@21): 2

- FYW 100 is at **97.9% capacity**
- Seven (7) more sections of FYW 100 were offered in spring 2018; ten (10) more in spring 2017

First Year Writing 100PLUS

Capacity is 15 students

of sections below cap: 0
 # of sections at capacity: 2
 # of sections over capacity: 0

- FYW 100Plus is at **100% capacity**

(Continued on next page)

First Year Writing 100Honors*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**

To: Dean E. Simson and Assoc. Dean J. Dagle
 From: English Department Composition Committee
 (J. Benson, B. Caouette, C. Griggs, Z. Jalalzai, P. Mazzuchelli, S. Reilly)
 Date: 27 March 2019
 Re: FYW 100Boost: A Proposal to Replace FYW 010

Background

Enrollment in FYW 010 has been steadily declining; possible reasons might include the option of FYW 100Plus, student's ability to place themselves, the absence of graduation credit for the course or, more recently, RI Promise at CCRI. Nine (9) students enrolled in three sections of the course in fall 2018; we no longer offer sections in the spring.

However, it seems clear that a course that offers maximum individualized instruction in a low-stakes, responsive environment is still needed; after all, nine students (or about 1.5% of those enrolled in FYW in the fall) chose the pre-credit option despite the option for self-placement in a credit-bearing course.

Proposed New Course

The English Department Composition Committee proposes “FYW 100Boost,” a supplemental instruction model similar to [the Writing Studio at Miami University \(OH\)](#). This course would be an elective course open to any student who

1. has not yet completed the College Writing Requirement (the course would fulfill neither the College Writing Requirement nor the FYW Core General Education category);
2. does not have an academic hold for writing; and
3. is not currently enrolled in FYW 100/H/P.

The assumption, then, would be that FYW 100Boost would be offered in the fall only and mostly to FY students—a similar population to FYW 010. The course would carry two (2) elective credits.

Course Details

Some possible ways of imagining the course are as follows:

- Class capacity would be set at 8-10 students per section.
- One instructor would be assigned to each section.
- Sections would not list a day or time for meeting—instead, instructors would contact students prior to the start of classes to determine meeting times for groups of 2-4 students at once for one hour at a time. This way, sections could be responsive to student schedules.
- Students would participate in a small online component (for example, discussions or blog postings on Bb) outside of meeting times.
- Students would be expected to make Writing Center appointments throughout the semester (for example, eight appointments total for a fourteen-week semester).
- Content would be determined by students and instructors—possibilities include assisting students with assignments in other courses, providing instruction on specific concerns students may have, or providing opportunities for reflection with an eye towards knowledge transfer.

Next Steps

The Composition Committee would like to see the course proceed through an assessed pilot phase first. While fall 2019 implementation would be ideal, we understand that fall 2020 might be more practical.

FYW Program Spring 2019 Assessment: Process

Background

In spring of 2017, the FYW Program approved [new student-learning outcomes](#); all instructors of FYW were asked to insure their sections met these outcomes by spring 2018. Now, a year later, the Composition Committee would like to assess one of these outcomes; we're interested in the *variety of ways* in which the program works to meet its outcomes, and we anticipate that this assessment will inform us as to the strengths of the program and the areas in which we need continued professional development.

In years past, assessments in FYW have been driven by external stakeholders (like the Committee on General Education [COGE] here at RIC). This assessment is entirely homegrown and program-centered. However, just as in the past, the purpose of this undertaking is to conduct *program assessment*; **we are not assessing individual instructors**.

Our goal is to find ways to build on the strengths of the FYW Program even as we work to determine methods that will better serve our students.

The Task

The English Department's Composition Committee is assessing the FYW Program in Spring 2019. Specifically, of the two primary outcomes articulated in the FYW Program Outcomes, the focus of this assessment project is **Process**. We anticipate assessing the second outcome, awareness of Rhetorical Situation, in the coming semesters.

Our goal, with faculty participation, is to collect material from each section of FYW (two packets of student material, outlined below, from each section; this will yield approximately forty-two packets of artifacts). After the semester ends and we have collected materials, some members of the Composition Committee, along with interested members of the FYW community, will meet to examine the collected artifacts and conduct a holistic assessment. The results will be shared at the 2019 FYW Program Annual August Summit as well as with relevant stakeholders; future professional development sessions ideally will build on what we learn in this assessment.

Assessment Timeline

The deadline for collection of all materials is **Monday, May 13th**. We have provided a series of orange folders (attached to this handout in mailboxes) for easy collection of your materials. If your materials are located digitally or are not paper-based—or if you just anticipate a problem making them available to the Composition Committee via the orange folder—please see Becky.

We realize that this is a lot of work, and we thank you for your willingness to participate.

PLEASE SEE FOLLOWING PAGE FOR DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS

Questions? Concerns? Comments? Contact Becky in Craig-Lee 145 or at bcaouette@ric.edu

Faculty Participation

Faculty participation in this project, particularly in the collection and sharing of materials, is critical to its success. Assessing process is a difficult endeavor, and the greater the participation, the more accurately our findings will reflect the current state of the program.

The following instructions apply to all spring courses (FYW 100, 100H, and 100P) and sections of FYW:

A. Collecting student artifacts

- i. **Identify** one major project/paper/essay from your section(s) of FYW where you make space and time, and deliver instruction, that enables students to participate in one or more element of the writing process (invention, research, drafting, revision, proofreading, editing, responding to feedback, etc.) We recognize that, for many of you, the teaching of process happens for every significant project; for this assessment, we're asking you to focus on just *one* project of your choosing
- ii. **Identify** the first and last students on your roster. These are the students from whom you will be collecting materials (if a student does not submit materials, simply make a note of it).
- iii. **Collect** material from these two students; these materials should be from the major project identified above (i) and should illustrate any student engagement with the writing process, broadly defined. This may include but is not limited to:

∞pre-writing	∞freewriting	∞brainstorming activities
∞rough drafts	∞intermediate drafts	∞final drafts
∞notes	∞reflection pieces	∞peer review worksheets
- iv. **Redact** student names and any identifying information from the artifacts

B. Collecting course and section artifacts

- i. **Collect** any and all instructor- or classroom-generated materials that guide students through their writing process for the assignment or project you have chosen (section [A], subsection [i], above). These include but are not limited to:
 - a. Syllabus and course schedule/calendar (Becky should already have these on file)
 - b. Assignment prompt(s) (including any smaller prompts that scaffold the writing process prior to the large project)
 - c. Worksheets for revision
 - d. Peer review, conferencing, or small group tutorial materials
 - i. sign-up sheets
 - ii. handouts
 - iii. instructions
 - iv. completed forms

You'll notice from this list that we are less concerned with the finished project than with any and all steps along the way to that project. It is not possible to give us too much pertinent material.

Readers' Initials: _____

Assessment Packet Form

FYW Program Assessment / 7 June 2019

Part One.....

What references to **process** are visible in the **overarching course documents** (syllabus, course schedule or calendar, etc.)? These references are not to individual projects but are made explicit in the overall framing of the course.

Reference in course or section description? _____

Where?

What does it say?

Reference in course calendar or schedule? _____

What reference(s) made?

Other course documents? _____

Please specify:

Part Two.....

What references to **process** are visible **in individual assignments, unit lessons, and student work**? Here we are less concerned with how *well* individual papers or projects are invested in process and more concerned with how process manifests in the apparatus of the course.

Do you see the following documents pertaining to writing process?

_____ Schedule for conferences/peer review/small group tutorials

_____ Checklist/guided directions for peer review/conferences/small group tutorials

_____ Freewriting/prewriting/brainstorming

_____ Drafting

_____ Revising

_____ Reflecting (before, during, or after assignment)

_____ Proofreading and editing

_____ Other (please specify):

_____ Other (please specify):

_____ Other (please specify):

_____ Other (please specify):

Part Three.....

Please use this third sheet to provide **other observations** about the role of **process** in this packet, as needed. It's worth stating again—we are not assessing individual instructors, students, or sections, so please adjust your comments accordingly.

1 May 2018

Dear FYW Instructors,

We invite you to participate in a new phase of our Research Fluency pilot. As you may recall, several FYW instructors have been working closely with RIC's Reference Library faculty to consider carefully the role of research in the FYW classroom. Building on that experience, we applied for and were awarded a grant through RIC's Center for Research and Creative Activity (CRCA) and now have the opportunity to expand that pilot into a grant-based curricular initiative.

History of Initiative: Just as with the teaching of writing, the teaching of research is an iterative, developmental pedagogical task that requires a great deal of scaffolding throughout students' academic careers (and beyond). When RIC's General Education Program underwent significant changes in 2012, the FYW requirement was tasked with meeting four Gen Ed outcomes, including Research Fluency (RF). But the expectations, manifested in rubric form, seemed too herculean for a first-year course, particularly since, one, the FYW Program has several outcomes to meet and, two, the RF outcome appeared in more than one Gen Ed distribution or core category. We won't detail the many conversations and debates that ensued, but the Reference Librarians and the FYW Program decided to think carefully about which research behaviors seemed appropriate to introduce, practice, and develop in the FYW classroom. Our conclusion: in the FYW Program, students should begin to learn how **to evaluate all information critically, including its sources and authority; to recognize quality of material or point of view; and to respond to quality of material or point of view**

Initiative Goals: Several FYW instructors have worked closely over the course of several semesters to help develop the pilot; their work allowed us to write the grant proposal and articulate our plan, our needs, and our goals. Towards that end, we hope this initiative will:

- Enable the FYW Program and the Reference Librarians to focus on key critical research behaviors in the FYW classroom
- Assess the effectiveness of apparatus (assignments sheets, etc.) and methods developed during the pilot
- Curtail the untenable sprawl that an unspecified or all-encompassing RF outcome might yield or even seemingly encourage
- Encourage campus-wide conversations about the iterative process of research in all relevant courses and particularly in those Gen Ed courses which claim a RF outcome (FYS, Connections, History)
- Encourage other Gen Ed courses to consider which RF behaviors they wish to introduce and/or practice and/or develop
- Continue the FYW Program objective to build community and create parity among all FYW sections and instructors

(see next page)

