



**First Year Writing Program
Rhode Island College
Annual Report
2019-2020**

With the arrival of COVID-19 and subsequent quarantine in spring 2020, several of the FYW Program's spring plans were curtailed, readjusted, or postponed. This annual report, then, should be read in the context of such an unprecedented event. And yet, even so, the FYW at RIC did what it has a long history of doing: providing quality writing instruction to first-year students.

1. Pilot online courses (hybrid, distance) for FYW 100 sections

Well. The FYW Program began the spring 2020 semester with two online courses: one, a distance (completely online) course taught by Zubeda Jalalzai; the other, a hybrid course taught by Michael Michaud with graduate assistance from Danielle Lund. This decision followed conversations with the FCTL, and assessment processes were in place to determine the future of the pilot.

After the college's decision to move classes online in March 2020, all FYW courses went online and employed a variety of pedagogical methods. And yet, the program was able to learn several things during the first half of the semester: the importance of planning and preparing an online course long before classes begin; the critical role of signaling to students, often and early, the instructional delivery method of said course (the Director of Writing emailed students on these two rosters several times before classes began with the sole purpose of communicating this information; the courses were also marked as such on MyRIC); the strength of our outcomes, which center student writing and encourage significant class time dedicated to conferences, tutorials, and in-person feedback. Such lessons served as well as we switched, rapidly, to online learning in spring 2020 and as we prepared for that reality in the fall 2020 semester.

2. Implement plans to pilot FYW 010 revision (FYW 150: Boost)

FYW 150Boost is running one section in fall 2020. While we will report out on this in the 2020-2021 Annual Report, we did have some concerns as to the presentation of this new course during Orientation sessions that were completely online. Usually, during placement sessions at Orientation, one or more FYW instructor is present to help contextualize the course and answer student questions.

The FYW Program temporarily suspended FYW 010 for the fall 2020 semester. For information on that course, the reasons for its suspension, and the expectations for the piloted FYW 150 Boost course, please see the 2018-2019 Annual Report.

3. Continue to revise and improve DSP materials and process

With the assistance of student worker Gregory Williams and the English Department's Composition Committee, the [FYW Program's Directed Self-Placement tool moved from JotForm to the college-licensed Qualtrics platform](#). DSP is an ongoing project and requires constant reassessment and revision as circumstances warrant.

In the past, and even when we shifted from paper to online surveys, DSP was primarily conducted at in-person Orientation sessions where a faculty member in the FYW Program paced students through the survey and answered questions as they surfaced. Given the pandemic, Orientation was entirely remote, and we cannot say enough about the collaborative efforts of Alie Hallam and the New Student Programs staff. However, as is the case elsewhere at the college, we are concerned that the remote delivery of DSP may have repressed student participation. We will continue to monitor this for summer 2021.

Second, DSP only works when student placement choices are open and available to all students. That is, the continued reduction in FYW courses, which reflects decreased enrollment and our current austerity measures, also limits the opportunities for students to move among sections. The final step in our placement method is for faculty to assign, collect, and read a writing sample the first week of a semester; follow-up conversations with students allow the student to reflect on their placement choice, reconsider that choice, and elect a different FYW course. If there are no seats available in sections of that course, anecdotal evidence suggests students often stay in the section where they have a seat, even if the course does not best meet their needs.

4. Grow and expand research fluency initiatives at programmatic and college level

The FYW Program continues to refocus our Research Fluency commitment on two of the six frames outlined in the ACRL's "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education." In spring 2020, the Director of Writing and Tish Brennan, Associate Professor, Adams Library, received Reassigned Time from the Committee on Faculty Scholarship to further our agenda. As with all things in spring 2020, our work was interrupted temporarily; even in our constrained time, we managed to create a foundation on which to build.

Our goal was twofold: to share our work at RIC with the larger reference library and/or writing program administration population *and* to be well-positioned to speak knowingly to the Committee on General Education and other relevant institutional bodies about the need to scaffold research instruction. The article is in progress, and discussions in spring 2020 about possible assessment of and revision to the General Education Program based on outcomes suggests that our findings will be timely.

Professional development and messaging have been key to onboarding FYW faculty to this initiative; in the past, these included a pilot stage and a months-long series of meetings and workshops funded by the Center for Research and Creative Activity (CRCA) at RIC (see Annual Report 2018-2019). Our next step will be to institute clear guidelines (which might include revisions to our SLOs) and meaningful assessments (which will allow us to identify opportunities for continued professional development).

5. *Continue to offer professional development opportunities for FYW faculty*

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

- FYW Program Annual August Summit (22 August 2019)
- FYW Program Annual Mini-Summit: this event was not held, as the program was working to save funds from the budget for a longer, more robust professional development in June 2020 on the issue of “transfer.” Due to the pandemic and subsequent decisions to limit events on campus, this professional development opportunity, like so many, has been postponed indefinitely.

Future Goals (2020-2021 and beyond)

1. Support FYW faculty in their efforts to deliver quality writing instruction remotely
2. Optimize FYW course offerings
3. Continue to revise FYW 010 course (current pilot: FYW 150Boost)
4. Consider small, targeted professional development opportunities for FYW faculty

Appendix

1. [Fall 2019 Statistics](#)
2. [Spring 2020 Statistics](#)