

**First Year Seminar Assessment Using the NSSE
Fall 2004**

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This report is a very brief overview of the results of one part of the assessment of the First Year Seminars for fall 2004. Additional details are available from the Office of Liberal Education.

Questionnaire – A subset of items from the *National Survey of Student Engagement* (NSSE) was administered to students enrolled in FYS courses at the end of the Fall 2004 semester. This nationally recognized instrument has been administered to over 175,000 first-year and senior college students at over 300 four-year colleges and universities, including Miami. Based on years of research on college student development, the instrument assesses the extent to which students engage in educationally purposeful activities predictive of their learning and personal development. The instrument was chosen because it is consistent with the overall goals of the First Year Seminars and provides us with the students' perceptions of their engagement with these activities.

Demographics -- Students from all 15 FYS sections responded to the questionnaire; response rate was 84.5% (N=202). Of those indicating gender, 45% were male and 55% were female.

Comparison Group and Statistical Analysis -- FYS student responses were compared to those of a national sample of students at schools with the same Carnegie designation as Miami (doctoral intensive; sample size about 4170, depending on item). Two sample *t*-tests were used to compare mean responses on each item ($p < 0.05$). Details of the statistical analysis can be provided.

Data for this Report – The attached tables include the FYS means and frequencies for each of the questionnaire items and the means for the comparison group. All FYS data re aggregate data, not individual section data.

Conclusions

1. Overall Conclusion: *In general, statistical comparisons between FYS student responses and the comparison group favored the FYS group.*

Statistical analyses comparing the mean responses between the two groups were completed separately for each of the 23 questionnaire items. The FYS group means were statistically different – in the appropriate “direction” - from the comparison group means for over half of the items (52%). For slightly more than one-fourth of the items (26%), statistical differences between the means favored the comparison group. For the remaining items (22%), there were no differences between means.

2. Specific Conclusions – Four Themes: Four specific themes emerged from the questionnaire analysis. The first two themes – critical thinking, and perceptions of other

class members and the instructor - favored the FYS group. Responses to the third theme – class activities - were mixed, and the final theme – knowledge, skill and personal development - favored the comparison group. Specifically:

a. Critical Thinking (see tables, items 11-16): *Responses to items related to critical thinking overwhelmingly favored the FYS group. Statistical analyses indicated that FYS students engaged more frequently in analysis, synthesis, making judgments, and in thinking critically and analytically, and less frequently in memorization, than did students in the comparison group. For only one item – applying theories or concepts to practical situations – was there no significant difference between the two groups.*

b. Perceptions of other class members and the instructor (see tables, items 23 and 24): *FYS students rated other students in their class as more friendly and supportive than did students in the comparison group and rated their professors as more available, helpful and sympathetic than did the comparison group students.*

c. Class activities (see tables, items 1-10): *Responses to these items were mixed. In contrast to the comparison group, FYS students more frequently asked questions in class, worked on a paper requiring integration of ideas, included diverse perspectives in class discussions and assignments, received prompt feedback from their instructor, and less frequently came to class unprepared.*

On the other hand, comparison group students more frequently prepared multiple drafts of papers and more frequently worked with other students both during class and outside of class.

Finally, the two groups did not differ in their responses to how hard they worked to meet the instructor's expectations for the course or on the frequency they discussed course ideas outside of class.

d. Knowledge, skills, and personal development (see tables, items 17-21): *Responses to these items tended to favor the comparison group, which was more likely to report that they spent significant amounts of time studying, that their courses provided the support they needed to succeed academically, and that their courses helped them work effectively with others. There were no significant differences between the groups on how the course contributed to their acquiring a broad general education or on writing clearly and effectively.*

3. Time spent preparing for class (see tables, item 22; FYS group only): *FYS students reported that they spent, on average, between 2 and 4 hours per week preparing for the seminar. One fourth of them spent less than 2 hours per week preparing, slightly less than one-half spent between 2 and 4 hours per week preparing, and slightly more than one-fourth spent more than 4 hours per week in preparation for the class.*

4. Interest in taking course again (see tables, item 25; FYS group only): Over three-fourths for the FYS students indicated that, if given the opportunity, they would “definitely” or “probably” take the course again. Only 5% of the students said they would “definitely not” take the course again.

**First Year Seminar – Fall 2004
End of Course Questionnaire**

Part I: For each of the following items and using the scale at the right, circle the response that best indicates how often you did each of the following in this class.

(1=very often; 2=often; 3=sometimes; 4=never)

	<u>Percent</u>				<u>FYS</u>	<u>Means</u>	
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>		<u>Comparison Grp</u>	<u>Statistical Favors:</u>
1. Asked questions in this class or contributed to class discussions.	34.7	31.2	31.2	3.0	2.02	2.28	FYS
2. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in for this class.	7.4	26.2	41.6	24.8	2.84	2.34	comparison
3. For this class, worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources.	37.3	43.8	17.4	1.5	1.83	1.95	FYS
4. Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments for this class.	40.0	38.5	18.0	3.5	1.85	2.31	FYS
5. Came to this class without completing readings or assignments.	4.0	11.4	56.9	27.7	3.08	2.96	FYS
6. Worked with other students on projects during this class .	10.9	24.3	41.6	23.3	2.77	2.63	comparison
7. Worked with classmates outside of this class to prepare class assignments.	10.9	23.3	51.0	14.9	2.70	2.59	comparison
8. Received prompt feedback from the instructor of this class on your academic performance (written or oral).	24.3	35.6	36.6	3.5	2.19	2.45	FYS
9. Worked harder than you thought you could to meet the instructor's standards or expectations for this class.	11.1	43.2	35.7	10.1	2.45	2.44	no diffs
10. Discussed ideas from your readings or from this class with others outside of class (students, family members, coworkers, etc.).	24.9	31.3	35.3	8.5	2.27	2.34	no diffs

Part II: To what extent has your work in this course emphasized the following mental activities? Use the scale at the right.

1=very much; 2=quite a bit; 3=some; 4=very little)

	Percent				FYS	Means	
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>		<u>Comparison Grp</u>	<u>Statistical Favors:</u>
11. Memorizing facts, ideas, or methods from this course and readings so you can repeat them in pretty much the same form.	5.0	14.9	43.2	46.0	3.21	2.06	FYS
12. Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components.	56.4	32.7	9.4	1.5	1.56	1.85	FYS
13. Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships.	45.0	39.1	14.4	1.5	1.72	2.11	FYS
14. Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions.	38.1	38.1	20.8	3.0	1.89	2.16	FYS
15. Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations.	29.7	39.1	25.7	5.4	2.07	1.99	no diffs
16. Thinking critically and analytically.	58.7	29.9	10.0	1.5	1.54	1.84	FYS

Part III: To what extent has your experience in this course contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas:

1=very much; 2=quite a bit; 3=some; 4=very little)

					FYS	Comparison	Statistical Favors:
17. Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work.	8.4	37.1	41.1	13.4	2.83	1.87	comparison
18. Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically.	9.4	38.6	42.6	9.4	2.52	2.04	comparison
19. Acquiring a broad general education.	28.2	46.5	22.3	3.0	2.00	1.94	no diffs
20. Writing clearly and effectively	26.7	44.1	22.8	6.4	2.09	2.16	no diffs
21. Working effectively with others.	20.3	32.7	36.1	10.9	2.38	2.16	comparison

	<u>PCT</u>	<u>FYS</u>	<u>Comparison</u>	<u>Statistical Favors:</u>
22. About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week preparing for this class? Do not include time spent in class.		3.06	----	----
1=0 hrs/week	0.5			
2=more than 0 but less than 2 hrs/week	25.2			
3=2 or more hours but less than 4 hrs/week	47.0			
4=4 or more hours but less than 6 hrs/week	22.3			
5=6 or more hours per week	5.0			
23. Other students in this course:	<u>PCT</u>			
7=friendly, supportive, sense of belonging	31.2	5.80	5.63	FYS
6	36.1			
5	19.8			
4	8.9			
3	2.5			
2	1.0			
1=unfriendly, unsupportive, sense of alienation	0.5			
24. Faculty member(s) teaching this class:	<u>PCT</u>			
7=available, helpful, sympathetic	39.1	5.89	5.36	FYS
6	32.7			
5	13.4			
4	9.9			
3	3.5			
2	0.5			
1=unavailable, unhelpful, unsympathetic	1.0			
25. If you could start over again, would you enroll for this course again?	<u>PCT</u>			
1=definitely yes	41.3			
2=Probably yes	37.3			
3=Probably no	15.9			