

On Thursday, January 26th, members of the FYS/EL committee received an informational all-faculty email from Jennifer Nyland on behalf of the GEOC. As members of the committee who helped design the core description and criteria for FYS over the past year, we discussed this email, and were formally invited to provide input on the issues raised on Friday, February 10th.

1. We support the recommendation of the GEOC that FYS does not count towards program requirements. This is in line with the Faculty Senate-approved documentation for the FYS program.
2. The second part of the January 26th email states that FYS are considered “a true ‘First Year’ student requirement” and the “students who transfer in (with a full year completed elsewhere) will not be required to take it.” This was presented as a *fait accompli*, worded “as a reminder,” when it is in fact a departure from numerous previous conversations regarding FYS since the inception of the General Education reform. In fact, the standing definition of FYS as approved by the Faculty Senate and currently posted in the official documentation in MyClasses, contains the following language in its first sentence:

“Salisbury University, as a center of learning, research, culture, and community, requires a First Year Seminar for all students in their first year (including transfer students).”

Having since then received more information (from Provost Olmstead and others) about how and why new legislation makes it difficult to require FYS from transfer students, we have a better understanding of the issue. However, this decision would alter the Senate-approved definition of FYS and would therefore need to be put to a vote if modified. We welcome further discussion with our subcommittee and other stakeholders.

3. Our subcommittee agrees with the GEOC that further clarification is needed in terms of defining “first year students” and how transfer students fit within this definition. Residency (living on campus), credits (AP, dual enrollment, and Associates degree, transfers from other 4-year institutions), and “first year at SU” are all meaningful ways to define “first year” status. The standing definition of FYS states that: “In FYS courses, students will acquire foundational skills and expectations for educational and professional success, as well as an increased awareness of SU and its resources.” This would be very valuable to transfer students. In the understanding of our committee the “first year” refers to the first two semesters as an SU student, not the first year as regarded from earned credits.
4. This program at its heart has always been contemplated as a seminar that introduces our students to Salisbury University itself, a unique component of the SU experience, and a foundational requirement for any SU degree. It could provide a meaningful entry point for pre/post assessment data. It is an important point to set a baseline for skills in intellectual and personal growth, and awareness of the breadth of knowledge available through a university education. It allows students in each of our schools and college exposure to the broad faculty and encourages all faculty to think of themselves as part of a greater whole by emphasizing the interconnection between their disciplines and those of their colleagues. Finally, departments across campus have made tremendous alterations to their relationship to General Education, and FYS were always presented to faculty (even before the all-campus vote) as a universal requirement to SU students. This will require significant

planning and modification, especially for remote or online students, students who are anchored at satellite campuses, and others. It may require some modification to allow for Sophomore seminars, or to have alternate pathways (including waivers) or modalities of FYS offered. We would like for all of these aspects of FYS to be carefully considered before a final motion is put forward.

5. Finally, GEOC has requested our input on enrollment caps. Small class sizes are a central part of the pedagogy for seminar-based learning. Based on our review of FYS proposals and our engagement with faculty's approaches to this category, our subcommittee recommends that the FYS courses should have a hard cap of 18. We note that with 6 SLOs, this would be the optimal number to achieve key aspects of the program such as constant and individual feedback, developing mentoring relationships with students, hands-on research opportunities, use of library and campus resources, intensive writing requirements, etc. We support having no minimum enrollment at this time.

We welcome further discussion of these important issues with the GEOC. Moving forward, we ask that any major discussions and changes to FYS and the spirit in which they were originally designed be made in collaboration with our subcommittee.

Due to our being left in the dark about these ongoing discussions prior to the January 26th all-faculty communication, we unwittingly provided information that was directly contradicted by this email during our January 6th and January 20th "Gen-eduary" workshop sessions. It is critical that we keep communication flowing between the GEOC and the subcommittees to avoid such discrepancies and misalignments, which have the potential to confuse and frustrate our campus community. In general, each of the committees is putting in significant service hours, has regular contact with faculty and chairs designing FYS course, and should be the starting point for policy discussions. We appreciate the latest efforts by the GEOC to include us in their discussions. Thank you.