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A Study of the Trinity College First-Year Seminar Program

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Fall 2002**

Introduction

Founded in 1823, Trinity College of Hartford, Connecticut has a long and unique history. Over the years the college has developed into one of the leading small liberal arts institutions which offers more to its students than a basic, purely academic education. The four years most students spend at Trinity College can be thought of as an entire life experience with emphasis not only on developing a solid understanding of a particular field of study but also on interpersonal relations. This interest in creating a strong community of students, faculty and administrators has led to the creation of various programs and organizations which bring these different groups together. One such program which works to introduce students to life at Trinity College is the First-Year Seminar Program. It started out small in the fall of 1967 and has developed into a comprehensive program in which over 95% of first-year students participate. The program has unofficially taken on the enormous responsibility of being first-year students' introduction to almost every aspect of Trinity College. The question to be asked, however, is what are the actual goals of the First-Year Seminar Program and equally important, according to the students are these goals met. The scope of this study focuses on answering these questions while providing the history, development and current structure of the program.

The Development of the First-Year Seminar Program at Trinity College

Dr. Theodore Davidge Lockwood was unanimously voted the fifteenth president of Trinity College in 1967. In light of the changes occurring across the United States in the 1960's, he commissioned a special Curriculum Revision Committee in March of 1967 to evaluate every aspect of the curriculum. The report, which was issued for revision by

the faculty in November of 1968, practically overhauled the entire curriculum and gave rise to a number of new programs centered around the idea that the “student must be engaged in the material he thinks is of importance and interest to him and he must be made to express himself in writing...In this way, we can insist that a student express his thoughts with clarity, coherence and precision” (Report 1968, 38).

The September prior to the release of the report the first attempt at a freshmen seminar, Freshmen Honors Scholars, was launched. It was offered to only those with high board scores and left the seminar topic to be decided by the students. It attracted very few incoming students and did not accomplish what the faculty involved had hoped. The experience, however, did give rise to a number of suggestions for solidifying the concept of a Freshmen Seminar. Based on the idea that “students with high board scores are not usually the most daring...” and were not able to readily adjust to the ‘less structured’ course, it was decided to draw from the entire incoming class (Report 1968, 41). The faculty involved also learned that it is an enormous positive for a freshmen to have “close contact with an intelligent adult (ei.the seminar professor)” given the fact that a number of them have not had that high intellect exposure prior to coming to college. A few of the other suggestions for improvement were that the professor should employ a range of teaching methods, students should be allowed “to fail in a way which makes failure instructive, not debilitating” and most importantly all those involved must remember that “flexibility is indispensable” and “what works in one seminar may not for another” (Report 1968, 42). This concept for the Freshmen Seminar was intentionally vague in an effort to allow the faculty as much freedom as possible and to get the freshmen as involved as possible.

The general guidelines, in addition to the suggestions in the Report, centered around the idea of the faculty and the students sharing knowledge on the same level and therefore, the professor was not supposed to offer seminar topics in their area of expertise. These seminars were to have eight to ten students and “in step with the culture of the times, free-thinking students were asked to answer one question by the end of the first class, ‘what do we read?’ The answer to that question would then determine the materials of the course” (Lee, 12 November 2000). After a few years of trial and error development this approach proved ineffective due to the impracticality organizing materials after the semester has already started and also, “asking a diverse group of students to determine a seminar topic resulted in the lowest common denominator of interest, [meaning] the subject was usually a settlement” (Hyland, October 2002). It was decided that the faculty would choose a topic for the Freshmen Seminars outside of their expertise and hopefully an issue which “didn’t fall directly into an established discipline but more covered a range” (Lee). This approach continued to evolve away from unstructured to resembling a “more standard course, with a structured syllabus, but still off-the-wall topics” (Lee). By the mid-1980’s the Freshmen Seminar “lost its cutting edge [in terms of subject matter] as faculty receded into their area of expertise” (Hyland). This regression was in part due to the fact that the seminars had become increasingly popular among freshmen, thus required a greater number of faculty to participate in an effort to maintain a low student to faculty ratio.

Just prior to this lull in the topics for Freshmen Seminars a new, alternative freshmen program developed from a grant from the Mellon Symposium. With the money a group of faculty created the Guided Studies Program: European Civilization which

“afforded a select number of freshmen the opportunity to pursue an interdisciplinary sequence of study prior to declaring a major” (Knapp, 403). The program ran for the first time in the fall of 1979 and with a few adjustments became very successful. Guided Studies was used as the model for constructing the Interdisciplinary Science Program, 1987, the Cities Program, 1996 and the Interdisciplinary Arts Program, 1998 all of which are offered to students specifically interested in those areas.

In March of 1986 the Curriculum Committee approved “Goals and Responsibilities of Teaching First-Year Seminars” as the loosely defined mission statement of the seminars. Accordingly, a First-Year Seminar was to be small with a focus on writing and with opportunities for discussion and debate. It was suggested that the subject matter be more thematic in nature, in an effort to make broader connections and not just to teach content. Finally, the faculty member was to serve as the formal academic advisor until the student declared a major. These remained the general guidelines until a committee was formed for review.

In the fall of 1993, David Reuman, professor of psychology, was asked to serve on the ad hoc committee to recommend changes to the Freshmen Seminar and possibly to create a more broadly defined program for first-year students. The result was the First-Year Seminar Program which called for the integration of academic and residential life, the creation of the Mentor Program, and an increase in the development of first-year faculty (Reuman, November 2002). Reuman was then asked to serve as the Director of the First-Year Program for three years to put the suggestions into practice.

In the fall of 1995 the First-Year Program teamed up with Residential Life to assign First-Year Seminars to specific first-year halls. The theory behind the integration

of academic and residential life was two fold. First, it was part of the effort to ease the transition from high school to college in terms of establishing oneself in a new community. Administrators figured that a familiar face in class coupled with seeing that face in the residencies would carry over to ‘let’s get dinner together’, ‘I’m going to check out the gym, you want to come’ etc. Secondly, faculty hoped to increase the intellect of the community by creating situations such as living with members of your seminar to foster academic conversations outside the classroom.

The Mentor Program calls upon “academically accomplished upper-class students [to] support First-Year Seminars and Programs both inside and outside the classroom. Mentors live with their seminar participants in first-year residency halls and provide general academic assistance, including writing, computing, and advising support” (Handbook 1996-1997, 8). They are also expected to serve as a potential bridge between the first-year students and the seminar professor. Many Mentors assist not only the students in their specific seminars but also the other first-year students in their hall.

In terms of the faculty, Reuman established a few precedents to help support the switch to a full academic program. There is no permanent FSYM faculty and as with most programs at Trinity this means ‘borrowing’ professors from other departments. As the scope of the First-Year Seminar expanded there was a need for more professors, so it was decided that “6% of FTE (Faculty Teaching Equivalent – a way department budgets are set up) needs to be reserved for FYSP” (Lindsay, October 2002). Reuman also established the structure for workshops to help both the professors and the mentors prepare for running a FYSM by creating awareness of all the various resources at Trinity.

In the fall of 1998, Reuman returned to the psychology department having laid the ground work for the FYSP as it is known today. The “Goals and Responsibilities of Teaching First-Year Seminars” from 1986 were expanded upon in 1998 to incorporate the creation of the entire Program. Faculty were now encouraged to extend learning beyond the classroom to include the rest of Trinity and the city of Hartford, to integrate information technology into their seminar and to participate in seminar clusters (Goals, 1998).

Significance

Trinity College prides itself on the ability of its students to write and discuss effectively across the board. According to the administration one of the main venues for perfecting the art of communication in any discipline is the First-Year Seminar Program. The seminars run in a wide range of topics but with the common theme of being writing and reading intensive with emphasis on discussion and debate. The general perception is that these goals are met but as I became more directly involved with the program through my position as a Mentor, as a Senior Admissions Associate and as a senior member of the community I began to question this.

Through training to be a Mentor I learned for the first time that there are actual goals for a First-Year Seminar (see below). What caught my attention was the fact that my FYSM did not really address any of the goals. I started asking the other Mentors if their FYSM had catered to these goals and the majority responded with “no, not really”. Granted, I was speaking to a select group of seniors, but it did peak my interest to finding out what the rest of the student body thinks about their FYSM.

As a Senior Admissions Associate I am one of the first aspects of Trinity College prospective students interact with. Through leading Group Information Sessions and conducting interviews it became apparent to me how much the FYSP is emphasized as a “unique and very positive experience for Trinity students which concentrates on developing communication skills” (SAA). This portrayal of the FYSP fueled my questions even more.

Seeing that the FYSP is responsible for so much of a First-Year Students’ experience a study of what the students who participate think would benefit those who want the FYSP to have the greatest positive impact. As an Educational Studies major the FYSP is relevant because it tries to accomplish much of what it means to be an effective teacher. Not only is there an emphasis on communication skills but it also serves to ease the transition academically and socially. Part of what I have learned as an Educational Studies major is that there are a lot of wonderful programs which set out to accomplish a lot of wonderful goals, but some where along the way the connection is lost, the question remains, according to the students at Trinity College does this loss occur in the FYSP?

Methodology

To answer the question “Are the goals of the Trinity College First-Year Seminar Program as stated by the administrators met according to the students” a two-fold approach was required with the collection of both quantitative and qualitative responses. First, it was necessary to determine the goals of the FYSP through semi-structured interviews with the administrators, Dean Frank Kirkpatrick and Director Margaret Lindsay. There is no formal mission statement or written list of goals for the program

which is why interviews had to be conducted. There was a prepared list of questions to ensure that each administrator was given the same prompts in terms of sharing information regarding the program. The interviews were also taped to ensure accuracy. The two interviews were transcribed, compared and then combined using the most precise language from each. At about this time in the research process, the assistant of the FYSP found an old copy of the “Goals and Responsibilities of Teaching First-Year Seminars” which had been developed in 1986. This new information was combined with the information from the interviews and for the second stage.

Part two involved translating the goals into questions for a survey to be distributed to members of the classes of 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006 (see attachment 3). This survey was distributed randomly to 50 members of each grade. Students were first asked to participate as a way to ensure their consent; the only students approached who declined were ones who had not taken a FYSM. The survey consists of two spaces for writing, one with a specific questions pertaining to the goals of the FYSM and a second space at the end reserved for additional comments. The majority of the survey is questions based on the goals of the FYSP followed by numbers 1 thru 5 with instructions to circle the one which best applies; 1-‘not at all’, 2-‘a little’, 3-‘somewhat’, 4-‘moderately’, 5-‘very much’. Every survey was fully completed and handed back immediately.

Microsoft Excel was used to tabulate the quantitative responses from the surveys. A spreadsheet was created for each grade with the number of the question running down the left side and the type of response, 1 thru 5, running across the top. A fifth spreadsheet was created combining all 200 responses which proved the most useful in terms of

analysis. Each response was calculated into a percent. Although tried, it was not possible to create effective graphs and charts to provide visual representations of the data.

Every question in the survey corresponds with a certain goal of the FYSP or specifically the FYSM. Questions 13, 14 and 15 which relate to integrating academic and residential life stem from the goals of the FYSP as a whole. The emphasis on writing in the FYSM is indicated in questions 1 and 2. Questions 3, 4 and 5 deal with developing oral communication skills as explained in the second goal. Questions 6, 7 and 8 relate to the goals of high academic standards and advising. Questions 9 and 12 ask about use of the Library and Information Technology, goal number four. Finally, questions 10 and 11 ask about FYSM use of the other resources at Trinity College. Responses were also grouped according to the questions which related to a specific goal.

The qualitative responses on the surveys were transcribed into Microsoft Word exactly how they were worded on the sheet (see attachment 2). These responses were also divided by grade as well. The number of students who were not able to list the goals of the FYSP were counted and noted. The additional comments at the end of the survey were divided into the categories of Positive or Negative and written as they were worded on the sheet.

To gather information about the history and development of the FYSP a number of sources were used. First, Peter J. Knapp's, *Trinity College in the Twentieth Century*, was referred to get a sense of the history and what sources he used in his in-depth research of Trinity College. Secondly, interviews with the key developers of the Freshmen Honors Scholars, the Freshmen Seminars, and then the First-Year Seminar Program were conducted. These interviews provided an oral-history of the creation and

development of the program from 1967 to present. It is virtually impossible to maintain confidentiality of those who participated in the oral-history given their in-depth involvement, but through informed consent forms all interview participants were made fully aware of this.

The Goals of the First-Year Seminar Program

The goals of the FYSP are not written precisely so it was necessary to conduct semi-structured interviews with the administrators of the program to determine them. The goals of the program as a whole are “to introduce First-Year Students to academic life at Trinity College and in a broader sense introduce them to higher education at a liberal arts institution. Since Trinity is a residential institution the other overall goal is to introduce FYS to life in a residential liberal arts college hence we have the two pieces - the residential life component with the mentors living in the dorm and the academic seminar” (Kirkpatrick & Lindsay, 2002).

The academic goals which apply more specifically to the seminar are as follows:

The first academic goal of the FYSM is to focus upon the writing of the First Year Students. Seminars are expected to have a lot of intensely written papers with a lot of feedback.

A second goal is to help the students increase their ability to be fluent in both speaking and writing. They are expected to learn to present orally, to participate in class, to lead discussions, to understand a variety of materials in an in-depth manner and to discuss intelligently what they have encountered in the texts.

Another goal is to introduce students to the work load, acclimate them to a small class with high rigorous academic standards which should be a model for the courses they take later on and what it means to work like a college student in general. Professor is to serve as academic advisor.

Recent additions to the goals are the more clear articulation of students getting experience in library through the Library Program and increasingly trying to emphasize the importance of technology for research purposes.

Finally, FYSM faculty are expected to introduce students to the resources of Trinity College and of Hartford.

These goals are shared with the faculty and mentors through their respective workshops. They are also printed in the handout form and distributed at the workshops in binders containing general information regarding FYSM. There is, however, no stipulation requiring the goals to be met in a given FYSM. They are thought of as general guidelines.

Quantitative Responses (attachment 1)

The quantitative responses for the class of 2003 are shown in the following spreadsheet. The classes of 2004, 2005 and 2006 can be found in the attachment 1. An example on how to read the following spreadsheet is: In response to the question 1 “To what extent did your FYSM emphasize the development of your writing skills?” 10% said “Not at all”. The rest of the chart can be interpreted in the same manner; match the number of the question and the percentage with the specific response running horizontally along the top.

Class of 2003		50				
Question	Response					
	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	Moderately	Very Much	
1	10.0%	22.0%	22.0%	30.0%	16.0%	
2	12.0%	34.0%	24.0%	22.0%	8.0%	
3	6.0%	6.0%	22.0%	24.0%	42.0%	
4	16.0%	16.0%	22.0%	34.0%	12.0%	
5	6.0%	12.0%	36.0%	30.0%	16.0%	
6	10.0%	16.0%	22.0%	20.0%	32.0%	
7	12.0%	18.0%	20.0%	30.0%	20.0%	
8	6.0%	14.0%	22.0%	40.0%	18.0%	
9	20.0%	18.0%	28.0%	32.0%	2.0%	
10	52.0%	16.0%	14.0%	6.0%	12.0%	
11	52.0%	20.0%	22.0%	6.0%		
12	26.0%	30.0%	16.0%	24.0%	4.0%	
13	14.0%	14.0%	12.0%	36.0%	24.0%	
14	20.0%	18.0%	24.0%	28.0%	10.0%	
15	16.0%	22.0%	30.0%	20.0%	12.0%	

As can be seen above there is a wide range of percentages per possible response.

In response to questions 10 and 11 which both dealt with introducing FYSM to the resources of Hartford and Trinity College 52% of those surveyed from the class of 2003 said “not at all” which indicates that this goal is not being met. Conversely, 42% of those surveyed responded “very much” and 24% responded “moderately” to the question “to what extent were you able to speak/discuss in your FYSM” which leads one to conclude that this goal is being met.

Many conclusions can be drawn based on the responses from the individual classes, but the following chart which combines all 200 surveys proved to be much more interesting. The following chart also lends itself to being analyzed by combining similar questions which relate to a specific goal (see Methodology).

Question	Total Response				
	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	Moderately	Very Much
1	17.0%	17.5%	27.5%	26.5%	11.5%
2	21.0%	25.5%	27.5%	19.0%	7.0%
3	8.0%	9.5%	18.5%	25.5%	38.5%
4	14.5%	17.0%	26.5%	30.0%	12.0%
5	11.5%	15.0%	31.0%	30.0%	12.5%
6	15.5%	21.0%	22.0%	21.5%	20.0%
7	15.5%	18.5%	26.0%	26.0%	14.0%
8	11.5%	13.5%	29.0%	30.5%	15.5%
9	15.5%	19.0%	26.5%	27.5%	11.5%
10	44.0%	25.5%	14.0%	8.5%	8.0%
11	38.5%	26.0%	22.5%	8.5%	4.5%
12	22.5%	28.0%	23.5%	20.0%	6.0%
13	16.0%	15.0%	20.0%	33.0%	16.0%
14	18.0%	24.0%	29.0%	20.0%	9.0%
15	14.0%	26.0%	31.5%	19.5%	9.0%

The questions which asked specifically about writing in FYSM were 1 and 2. Combining the responses for these questions resulted in 55% choosing “somewhat” 45.5% choosing “moderately” to describe the extent to which their FYSM developed their writing skills. These indicate that the FYSM goal of the seminars emphasizing writing seems to occur for the most part. 38%, however, did chose ‘not at all’ in response to these two questions which shows that this is still an objective which needs attention.

The next three questions on the survey relate to the second goal of the FYSM which focuses on “students presenting orally, participating in class, and understanding a variety of materials in an in-depth manner and to discuss intelligently what they have encountered in the texts” (Goals). The third goal of the FYSM which focuses on introducing students to college academics, the workload and their advisor was addressed in questions 6, 7 and 8. The majority of students responded with ‘somewhat’ and ‘moderately’. Once again, it appears as if these goals are being met for the most part but probably not to the fullest extent to truly be effective.

The remaining questions relating specifically to the seminar dealt with introducing FYS to the library, information technology and the various resource centers around campus to support students academically and with personal interests. The majority of responses were 'somewhat' or 'a little'. An overwhelming majority indicated that their FYSM did not introduce them to the city of Hartford or Trinity resources such as the Writing and Math Centers. Given the fact that seminars should greatly encourage FYS to take advantage of the Writing Center to help them improve their writing this is an area which apparently needs attention.

Finally, the last three questions pertained more to the program as a whole. Many indicated that the seminar did not really help integrate academics and non-academics. 33%, however, indicated that living with their seminar did help them acclimate to Trinity. Once again the majority of the combined responses chose 'somewhat' which shows that the program is effective but not to the fullest extent that it could be.

Qualitative Responses (attachment 2)

The most telling part of the survey was the space where students could actually write in responses to what they thought the goals of the FYSP are and general comments about their experience. Almost half of every fifty students surveyed per grade indicated that they did not know what the specific goals of the FYSP are. Those, however, who did respond, were fairly accurate. There was little to no correlation between qualitative and quantitative responses. Those who circled mostly ones and twos were not necessarily the students who knew the goals. All responses can be read in the attachment 2.

A number of responses highlighted the improvement of writing as one of the goals of the FYSM. Quiet a few also noted discussion and analytical reading as goals of the FYSM. Some students went beyond the classroom and wrote about FYSM as a way to get used to college life in general and to integrate academics and residential lives. One student explained it best with “to provide close contact with freshmen, a mentor, your advisor and others in your form”. The responses to the goals were similar across the grades with at least one student mentioning every aspect of the main goals of the FYSP.

In the space provided at the end of the survey for additional comments there were a number of very positive responses but there were quiet a few, fairly alarming negative responses as well. Interestingly enough the most responses by far came from members of the class of 2003. Those whom were randomly asked to participate had a lot of interesting information to share. For the positives a number of students highlighted specific professors or mentors as why they liked their FYSM. A few responses directly correlated with some of the goals namely writing and preparation for college life and the academic workload. There were quiet a few “I loved it” and “it was helpful”. Perhaps the greatest compliment to the FYSP was written by a freshman, “It was helpful to see familiar faces in class from my dorm and the professor was very helpful with the transition process”.

The negative responses ranged as well between relating to a specific professor and mentor to commenting on the program as a whole. Responses such as “my professor knew nothing about academics at Trinity or how to direct me!” and “My professor would get mad when we questioned him” raise many questions but specifically why was this professor in the FYSP in the first place. The simple answer is the program needed more

professors and this one was available. Granted the FYSP has to 'borrow' its faculty from other departments but responses like this indicate that a more careful selection process or more intense training needs to be implemented. There were also a number of bold statements such as "my seminar almost made me want to leave school" and "I thought it was a complete waste of time and hated the advising and subject" which cause great alarm. These comments show that in the case of these students and/or specific seminars there was something fundamentally wrong. There were also a few constructive criticisms such as "my professor was the head of the department and far too busy to be available for us". This situation indicates another criterion the FYSP administrators should consider when selecting faculty to participate. As a number of FYSM faculty have said at the Hamlin Hall lunches, running a FYSM takes more time and energy than the average course.

Conclusions

Overall the FYSM and the FYSP appear to be a positive experience for most First-Year Students. In terms of the actual goals of the program both the quantitative and the qualitative indicate on a whole that they are being met. Some attention should be given to the fact that the majority of the responses for most questions and/or groups of related questions was 'somewhat'. The FYSM and the FYSP are meeting their objectives just not to the fullest extent. As with most programs of this nature there is room for improvement.

In terms of really not meeting the goals it is seen with high percentages of students who indicated that their FYSM did not introduce them to the numerous

resources on campus namely the Writing Center. A possible suggestion is that seminars, although they have a topic and academic focus of their own, may consider reserving some class time to introduce the FYS not only to the Writing Center, but the Math Center, Study Aboard Office, Career Services etc.

In a program such as this it is not necessary for the first-year students to be made explicitly aware of the goals. It should be considered, however, that professors of FYSM do need to be held to greater accountability in upholding the objectives of the program, especially in terms of developing communication skills. It is also the responsibility of the mentor to assist the professor in meshing the goals of the specific seminar with the general goals of the program.

Attachment 1:

Tables of the Quantitative Responses

Class of 2003		50				
Question	Response					
	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	Moderately	Very Much	
1	10.0%	22.0%	22.0%	30.0%	16.0%	
2	12.0%	34.0%	24.0%	22.0%	8.0%	
3	6.0%	6.0%	22.0%	24.0%	42.0%	
4	16.0%	16.0%	22.0%	34.0%	12.0%	
5	6.0%	12.0%	36.0%	30.0%	16.0%	
6	10.0%	16.0%	22.0%	20.0%	32.0%	
7	12.0%	18.0%	20.0%	30.0%	20.0%	
8	6.0%	14.0%	22.0%	40.0%	18.0%	
9	20.0%	18.0%	28.0%	32.0%	2.0%	
10	52.0%	16.0%	14.0%	6.0%	12.0%	
11	52.0%	20.0%	22.0%	6.0%		
12	26.0%	30.0%	16.0%	24.0%	4.0%	
13	14.0%	14.0%	12.0%	36.0%	24.0%	
14	20.0%	18.0%	24.0%	28.0%	10.0%	
15	16.0%	22.0%	30.0%	20.0%	12.0%	

Class of 2004		50				
Question	Response					
	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	Moderately	Very Much	
1	20.0%	20.0%	30.0%	20.0%	10.0%	
2	22.0%	32.0%	26.0%	12.0%	8.0%	
3	16.0%	14.0%	16.0%	28.0%	26.0%	
4	16.0%	20.0%	28.0%	16.0%	20.0%	
5	16.0%	18.0%	30.0%	26.0%	10.0%	
6	22.0%	24.0%	24.0%	18.0%	12.0%	
7	14.0%	20.0%	30.0%	22.0%	14.0%	
8	14.0%	14.0%	38.0%	18.0%	16.0%	
9	20.0%	34.0%	22.0%	18.0%	6.0%	
10	38.0%	26.0%	16.0%	10.0%	10.0%	
11	34.0%	28.0%	20.0%	12.0%	6.0%	
12	28.0%	20.0%	30.0%	14.0%	8.0%	
13	20.0%	16.0%	24.0%	24.0%	16.0%	
14	20.0%	26.0%	32.0%	12.0%	10.0%	
15	22.0%	30.0%	26.0%	18.0%	4.0%	

Class of 2005

50

Question	Response				
	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	Moderately	Very Much
1	26.0%	12.0%	22.0%	30.0%	10.0%
2	24.0%	16.0%	32.0%	22.0%	6.0%
3	6.0%	8.0%	16.0%	28.0%	42.0%
4	10.0%	22.0%	26.0%	34.0%	8.0%
5	12.0%	16.0%	28.0%	32.0%	12.0%
6	20.0%	20.0%	16.0%	24.0%	20.0%
7	20.0%	18.0%	18.0%	34.0%	10.0%
8	16.0%	12.0%	30.0%	32.0%	10.0%
9	18.0%	18.0%	24.0%	26.0%	14.0%
10	34.0%	34.0%	16.0%	10.0%	6.0%
11	36.0%	24.0%	30.0%	6.0%	4.0%
12	28.0%	22.0%	22.0%	20.0%	8.0%
13	18.0%	16.0%	28.0%	30.0%	8.0%
14	22.0%	22.0%	30.0%	18.0%	8.0%
15	12.0%	32.0%	28.0%	18.0%	10.0%

Class of 2006

50

Question	Response				
	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	Moderately	Very Much
1	12.0%	16.0%	36.0%	26.0%	10.0%
2	26.0%	20.0%	28.0%	20.0%	6.0%
3	4.0%	10.0%	20.0%	22.0%	44.0%
4	16.0%	10.0%	30.0%	36.0%	8.0%
5	12.0%	14.0%	30.0%	32.0%	12.0%
6	10.0%	24.0%	26.0%	24.0%	16.0%
7	16.0%	18.0%	36.0%	18.0%	12.0%
8	10.0%	14.0%	26.0%	32.0%	18.0%
9	4.0%	6.0%	32.0%	34.0%	24.0%
10	52.0%	26.0%	10.0%	8.0%	4.0%
11	32.0%	32.0%	18.0%	10.0%	8.0%
12	8.0%	40.0%	26.0%	22.0%	4.0%
13	12.0%	14.0%	16.0%	42.0%	16.0%
14	10.0%	30.0%	30.0%	22.0%	8.0%
15	6.0%	20.0%	42.0%	22.0%	10.0%

Total	200				
	Response				
Question	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	Moderately	Very Much
1	17.0%	17.5%	27.5%	26.5%	11.5%
2	21.0%	25.5%	27.5%	19.0%	7.0%
3	8.0%	9.5%	18.5%	25.5%	38.5%
4	14.5%	17.0%	26.5%	30.0%	12.0%
5	11.5%	15.0%	31.0%	30.0%	12.5%
6	15.5%	21.0%	22.0%	21.5%	20.0%
7	15.5%	18.5%	26.0%	26.0%	14.0%
8	11.5%	13.5%	29.0%	30.5%	15.5%
9	15.5%	19.0%	26.5%	27.5%	11.5%
10	44.0%	25.5%	14.0%	8.5%	8.0%
11	38.5%	26.0%	22.5%	8.5%	4.5%
12	22.5%	28.0%	23.5%	20.0%	6.0%
13	16.0%	15.0%	20.0%	33.0%	16.0%
14	18.0%	24.0%	29.0%	20.0%	9.0%
15	14.0%	26.0%	31.5%	19.5%	9.0%

Attachment 2 :

Responses by year to the question: Do you know what the goals are of the FYSM? If yes, please list them. Following those responses are the Additional Comments separated into Positive and Negative.

2006 31/50 said “no”

- to get used to college level work
- to get freshmen acquainted with life and academics at Trinity
- to acclimate students to college
- to improve writing skills (7)
- improve skills of speaking in group (3)
- to meet others through residential living and academics
- unity and community
- to help student become adjusted to what Trinity professors and life expect of him/her
- to help freshmen get used to college life
- to prove an advisor who they can get to know through class (2)
- to ease students into the hell that is college
- to show resources
- to get to know a group of students well right away who also live near you
- to help you feel more comfortable with your new surroundings
- to get to know each other (2)
- to help us to know campus
- analytical reading
- integrate freshmen into school under some guidance
- to get to know the library and how to write a research paper

Positives:

- guided studies is the workload at Trinity
- it was helpful to see familiar faces in class and my professor was very helpful with the transition process
- I really liked my seminar because it was more a discussion than an actual class
- having a mentor who was open to more than just academics was key during the first semester
- it helped socially
- it's great
- it was good we got to know people better
- I like being in a class with all freshmen and more personal attention
- I liked the small class size as well as the discussion oriented focus
- I had a good time; it helped my interpretive writing and thinking
- Mike Powell is a great mentor
- mentor Mike is awesome

Negatives:

- academically it didn't help
- I wish we worked on our writing skills more

- I feel that some of the goals of the program were not fulfilled in the end
- we only met once a week so we weren't together all that much...the class seems a little abrupt each week
- I felt as if my professor was not interested in the comments each student made in class
- didn't have enough class participation
- it sucked
- it was pretty awful

2005 32/50 said "no"

- to get you used to college classes with a small intimate group and personal guidance
- to get us oriented and familiar with the college
- to meet a group of people with similar interest
- to meet a professor and an older student
- to improve writing 5
- not sure but maybe to create an atmosphere were you live and have a class with the same people
- to integrate you into college life and meet other freshmen
- to prepare students for future class experience in term of work load and curriculum
- to create a group of people that one can feel comfortable with
- to acquaint students with each other and faculty
- to provide a group one can use for support etc.
- to get to know the people in your dorm in a classroom setting
- to form a cohesive group of student that encourages learning, expression of opinions, getting acclimated to the college atmosphere
- to learn to express your ideas in group discussion
- to encourage good relationships
- to introduce students to people so they can get help and ease into college life
- advising
- to help FYS get adjusted to college level work
- to help them get to know each other in a smaller environment

Positives:

- I loved my FYSM but...
- I loved mine
- I enjoyed it, it was helpful
- I like it
- Learning: The Human Experience is the best FYSM possible
- the mentors were probably the best part, they were the most supportive and helpful

Negatives:

- ..my mentor was rude. She didn't help and I don't talk to her to this day.
- I found my seminar to be so demanding that it took the focus from my other classes

2004 34/50 said “no”

- to establish an understanding of life and world issues-outside the walls of Trinity
- to orient you with the working of the city
- to provide first-year students with a supportive, interesting(since the students choose) seminar that they become highly involved with. To set up a circle of students interested in the same area
- to provide close contact with freshmen, a mentor, your advisor and others in your dorm, to orientate you to the college class format
- to help students meet other students with common interests, to introduce students to Trinity college, to get students affiliated with a professor in their field of interest
- to get the students to become active science students
- integrate/introduce freshmen to college life
- to teach freshmen what college classes are like, to teach them writing skills and help develop relations with professors
- introduce students to college

Positives:

- I enjoyed my seminar as far as subject matter...
- Material was great,...
- I loved it.
- met additional people
- had some fun
- my freshmen seminar put me in a dorm where I met my best friends. My mentor was fantastic and I'm still in contact with her today.

Negatives:

- ...but I felt it demanded more than should be expected from a First-Year Seminar.
- ...advisor was terrible
- I dropped out of mine after 1st semester
- My seminar almost made me want to leave school.
- I feel as though the seminar professor determines a lot of what goes on in and out of the classroom. If the professor is involved and enthusiastic about giving out information the students are willing to actively participate. My seminar professor was not, unfortunately, a good First-Year Seminar. Half of the students dropped out of the program.
- I think that the Cities Program is a good idea, but the follow through needs a little work.
- My FYSM was the worst class I ever took. My professor would get mad when we questioned him. I switched advisors after my first semester. Also the topic of my seminar was pointless.
- it was interesting subject matter but I feel as though the workload was a bit heavy and overwhelming right when I got here.
- my professor was the head of the department and far too busy to be available for us

2003 20/50 said “no”

- to improve writing, ability to speak in class
- writing skills tested/developed, small setting to get to know dormsmates, professor, mentor, also easy access/introduction to college-life, resources, activities, exposure, advising access from professor and mentor
- I think the FYSM program is supposed to help the freshmen to smoothly adapt to their new surroundings by placing all of the students in the same dorm, it helps them meet individuals of the same age
- to assimilate into college life, lower expectations (academically) of the faculty via writing, studying, etc.
- to build an intellectual community around a specific item of interest to both the professors and the students
- to help integrate freshmen into the Trinity community, help freshmen learn the skills needed to handle the academic workload
- writing intensive
- to ease the transition from high school to college writing, to help promote reading skills and feeling comfortable analyzing literature
- writing, goals of students
- to allow first year students to have an opportunity to make the transition to college level work
- to prepare you for classes and bring cohesiveness to first year students
- to help students adjust to a college class, studying, writing, reading and time management
- to help first year students adjust to college life
- to develop discussion skills
- to develop critical thinking skills, writing skills (2)
- to start off college career with people who are in your year and develop academic and social community within your dorm, to develop writing skills, make jump from high school to college academic life
- writing skills(2)
- to improve writing and discussion skills
- to integrate the academic and residential lives of the students, hopefully setting a precedent so that they may get more from their college careers
- in general the seminar is a way to introduce you to a certain group of people you live and work with
- to prepare students for college courses and college writing, to ease college assimilation
- to get to know other freshmen(2)
- to unite all of us under one common bond
- adjusting to college life
- establish a relationship with a professor
- to introduce freshmen to the Trinity College curriculum and to provide a basis for their future studies
- to integrate academic and social life at Trinity

Positives:

- It was a great class, I'm glad I took it.
- Prof. Letz is great.
- I learned everything about engineering in that one class, most useful engineering class I have taken here.
- Gave me confidence.
- Very good, excellent professor; I worked harder in this class than any other, it motivated me.
- Randy Lee is awesome-totally made my freshmen year-the subject was mind/body, health and the self-interesting, academic but unlike anything else offered to First-Year students- lots of class discussion/readings, only 4/5 papers, 4/5 pages-variety of subjects covered-never got boring.
- My professor was excellent in helping me focus my writing. She was a great advisor. The topic was interesting but the students were not engaged as a whole.
- It's nice to be in a class where there are only freshmen and the class lives in your dorm. However, the classes could be more interesting and could allow for a little time during class to discuss college in general.
- My FYSM was an incredible experience and I have kept my advisor for all 4 years. I would highly recommend my advisor to incoming freshmen.
- I have kept my first year seminar advisor for all 4 years and my seminar led to helping me choose my major.
- Great subject, great teacher. The class wasn't taken seriously by the students and was a joke (due in part to the apathy, and in part to the fact that it was altogether too easy) I am strongly in favor of the FYSM concept but it didn't help me at all.
- I think it is a great idea that all of the people in seminar live together.
- my advisor and the advising program was the most important and beneficial part that came out of my FYSM
- it helped me get used to college life and life at Trinity

Negatives:

- My professor knew nothing about academics at Trinity or how to direct me! He left Trinity second semester of my freshmen year.
- My FYSM was the worst course I have taken at Trinity College. My professor (and advisor) never learned the names of the majority of the students in the class, and had his secretary sign out advising forms. The assignments were worthless and graded arbitrarily. I learned nothing, was not motivated and was not interested. The material had the potential to be very engaging and was just not taken advantage of.
- I am now friends with not one person in my FYSM and I dropped Interarts program the next year.
- I thought it was a complete waste of time and hated the advising and subject
- My freshmen seminar was pretty much useless

Attachment 3:

Trinity College First-Year Seminar Program Survey
Conducted by Pia Bunton, fall 2002
For Students

Class:

Do you know what the goals are of the FYSM? If yes, please list them.

Please CIRCLE the number which best fits: 1-not at all, 3-somewhat, 5-very much.

1 To what extent did your FYSM emphasize the development of your writing skills?
1 2 3 4 5

2 To what extent did your FYSM help to improve your writing?
1 2 3 4 5

3 To what extent were you able to speak/discuss in your FYSM?
1 2 3 4 5

4 To what extent did your FYSM improve your ability to speak in the presence of others?
1 2 3 4 5

5 To what extent did your FYSM help you to understand a variety of materials in an in-depth manner?
1 2 3 4 5

6 To what extent did your FYSM serve as a mechanism for academic advising?
1 2 3 4 5

7 To what extent did your FYSM introduce you to the workload at Trinity College?
1 2 3 4 5

8 To what extent did your FYSM hold you to the highest academic standards?

1 2 3 4 5

9 To what extent did your FYSM introduce you to the resources of the Trinity Library?

1 2 3 4 5

10 To what extent did your FYSM introduce you to the city of Hartford as a resource?

1 2 3 4 5

11 To what extent did your FYSM introduce you to the other resources of Trinity College? i.e. Writing Center, Math Center, Study Abroad, Career Services

1 2 3 4 5

12 To what extent did your FYSM promote the use of information technology?

1 2 3 4 5

13 To what extent do you feel that living with your seminar helped acclimate you to Trinity?

1 2 3 4 5

14 To what extent did you FYSM integrate your academic and nonacademic life?

1 2 3 4 5

15 To what extent did your FYSM help you become a better college student?

1 2 3 4 5

Please write additional comments regarding your FYSM or your experience as a freshman.

For more information on this study please contact Pia Bunton '03 or Ricardo Dobles in Educational Studies.

