

FYE Interdisciplinary Course

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Thank you, President Thompson. Along with Sandy Feldman and Deirdre Frontczak, I am part of the current GP workgroup focusing on a First Year Experience course.

In December of 2020, the Senate approved the then FYE's group's recommendation to create an interdisciplinary intro to college course for first year students. This course should include academic discovery, college skills, and community engagement.

Focusing on these topics is crucial for our students. SRJC faculty regularly promote these issues. I have seen these front and center while watching Professor Nikki Slovak show her knowledge and love of Anthropology during the Tauzer, while listening to Professor Raymundo celebrate the collaboration amongst Ethnic Studies professors at our last Senate meeting, and when reading the email announcing that Professor Mas limura will be one of the faculty advisors for the new STEM grant, that states: "It was in first-semester general chemistry class at Pasadena City College that he fell in love with chemistry and learning." Passion for our disciplines, collaboration and a love of learning are so central to what we do and what we want to model for our students. This is what we hope to achieve in a FYE course.

In the Fall of 2021—our workgroup was given the following tasks: Survey the faculty to determine what topics should be covered in these courses, draft a template Course Outline that could be used by other faculty members, get Academic Senate support for the COR, and bring it through the Curriculum process.

Last semester, 90 colleagues responded to our survey. Faculty recommended that we strengthen skills like:

- Time Management
- Critical Reading of Texts
- Note Taking
- Using Campus Resources
- Writing Skills
- Studying for Exams

We also asked what discipline content or themes should be covered in these courses. The top results were:

- Race, Ethnicity, and Gender
- Social Justice
- Sustainability and Climate Change
- Democracy and Citizenship
- Ethics

Science and Tech

We also received suggestions of other topics that could be covered. You can see some of them here. We appreciate this feedback since it shows great energy that could support this program.

Some respondents stated that Counseling has FYE courses. Yes, some COUN classes help our students develop foundational skills, but what the Senate voted on in 2020 was an interdisciplinary course. Having counseling faculty partner with other faculty is definitely a vibrant option here.

Next Step: Our next step is to create a COR. The Description of the course could have language like, “This course will introduce first year students to the skills needed for success in college and will inspire academic exploration and civic engagement. Students will be engaged in a particular disciplinary pathway that will ignite intellectual curiosity.

That last line will allow any faculty member from any discipline to be part of this course.

Prototype #1: Northern CA Dreamin’

Where a Historian, an English Professor, Humanities Professor, or a Professor from the Arts, work with a Biologist to look at the history, culture, and environment that is unique to N. CA.

Prototype #2: American Ideals, American Contradictions

Here a Political Scientist, Historian, Sociologist, or a Philosopher could look at our founding documents and examine why some of us were left out of the rights that they supported. Professors could then illustrate how marginalized groups questioned and ultimately used American ideals and institutions to gain some civil rights.

The ultimate goal is to have a number of these FYE courses from across our vast disciplines. In all of these courses, faculty will collaborate, promote a love a learning and academic discovery, while helping our students develop the skills needed to succeed.

