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The Freshmen Interest Group (FIGs) Program Report: Fall, 2006

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**THE FRESHMEN INTEREST GROUP (FIGs)
PROGRAM REPORT: FALL, 2006**

Prepared by Gary McKinney, Chris Stark, and Pat Fabiano

Office of Institutional Assessment, Research, and Testing

February, 2007

REPORT ON THE 2006 FIGS PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

In the fall, 2006, the Freshman Interest Group (FIGs) Program entered its eighth interation. To use assessment terminology, the program has passed through its beginning and emergent stages and has entered maturity. Its mission has been crafted, student learning outcomes (SLO's) have been identified, and its identity has solidified. (Please see Appendix One to read the FIGs mission statement, course criteria, student learning outcomes, and other FIGs-related documents.) Yet while maturity has wrought a degree of self-confidence, it has not brought complacency. The program remains one of the most assessed academic programs on campus. Yearly, FIGs administrators and instructors pore over results of surveys and quantitative data, searching for ways to improve both the program and its assessment. Findings from the fall, 2006, program offerings will be analyzed no differently.

As is the case every year, in the spring preceding the fall course offerings, the FIGs seminar survey was retooled to more exacting standards. Most importantly, the survey included questions designed to explore the effectiveness of the seminars to attain goals based on a reconsidered set of revised student learning outcomes. In addition to the seminar survey, a new web-based survey was administered to three groups: FIGs students, Freshmen Year Experience (FYE) students, and a control group of freshmen who did not participate in either program. And, of course, quantitative data from the Data Warehouse was extracted and analyzed. Findings from all these sources are included in this report.

FIGS SEMINAR SURVEY FINDINGS

In every year the FIGs have been offered there has been an attendant pre/post seminar survey. The questions asked on the survey have been as many as forty, and as few as eighteen. Mostly this has been due to paring down the survey to its most important items, eliminating the questions that over time did not add insight or program value. Moreover, in 2005 many questions were absorbed by the WELS (Western Educational Longitudinal Study) survey; the idea being that more insight into the FIGs program would be generated by having a non-FIGs cohort for comparison purposes. Currently, the FIGs seminar survey concerns itself with two issues: satisfaction with the seminar, and the effectiveness of the seminar to reach its SLO goals. (Granted, a survey is only opinion, but when combined with quantitative data, these opinions do help create an overview of the programs's overall effectiveness.)

Pre-Post FIGs Survey Comparisons - Fall, 2005 and 2006

		Percents below are for responses "Strongly agree" or "Agree"		2006	Gap	2005	Gap
Pre	I expect that enrolling in a FIG will help with my transition to Western.	96%		98%			
			-12%				-26%
Post	Enrolling in a FIG helped my transition to Western	84%		72%			
Pre	Enrolling in a FIG is worthwhile because it has provided me with a partial fall term schedule.	92%		92%			
			-1%				-11%
Post	Enrolling in a FIG was worthwhile because it provided me with a partial fall term schedule	91%		81%			
		Percents below are for responses "A great deal" or "Somewhat"					
Pre	To what extent do you expect the FIGs seminar will help you create connections with peers?	99%		99%			
			-2%				-4%
Post	To what extent did the FIGs seminar help you create connections with peers?	97%		95%			
Pre	To what extent do you expect the FIGs seminar will assist your learning in your other courses this quarter?	96%		93%			
			-23%				-43%
Post	To what extent did the FIGs seminar assist your learning in your other courses this quarter?	73%		49%			
Pre	To what extent do you expect the FIGs seminar will provide you with some skills and strategies that will help you in future courses?	94%		96%			
			-15%				-31%
Post	To what extent did the FIGs seminar provide you with some skills and strategies that will help you in future courses?	79%		65%			
		Percents below are for responses "Very positive" or "Positive"		2006	Gap	2005	Gap
Pre	So far, based on your experiences in your FIG, are your feelings about it:	77%		72%			
			-11%				-32%
Post	Based on your experiences in your FIG, are your feelings about it:	66%		40%			

Pre-Post FIGs Survey Comparisons - Fall, 2005 and 2006

		Percents below are for "Completely" or "Somewhat" prepared		2006	Gap	2005	Gap
Pre	How well prepared do you feel to understand what your instructors expect of you academically?	96%		95%			
			+3%			-1%	
Post	How well prepared do you feel to: understand what your instructors expect of you academically?	99%		94%			
Pre	How well prepared do you feel to utilize effective study skills?	92%		93%			
			+4%			0%	
Post	How well prepared do you feel to: utilize effective study skills?	96%		93%			
Pre	How well prepared do you feel to adjust to the academic demands of college?	91%		95%			
			+6%			+2%	
Post	How well prepared do you feel to: adjust to the academic demands of college?	97%		97%			
Pre	How well prepared do you feel to manage your time effectively?	93%		93%			
			+1%			-1%	
Post	How well prepared do you feel to: manage your time effectively?	94%		92%			
Pre	How well prepared do you feel to get to know faculty?	89%		87%			
			+2%			0%	
Post	How well prepared do you feel to: get to know faculty?	91%		87%			
Pre	How well prepared do you feel to develop a plan of study to achieve your academic goals?	89%		92%			
			+4%			+1%	
Post	How well prepared do you feel to: develop a plan of study to achieve your academic goals?	93%		93%			
Pre	How well prepared do you feel to develop close friendships with other students?	96%		97%			
			+1%			-2%	
Post	How well prepared do you feel to: develop close friendships with other students?	97%		95%			
Pre	How well prepared do you feel to utilize campus services available to students?	95%		93%			
			+2%			-1%	
Post	How well prepared do you feel to: utilize campus services available to students?	97%		92%			

FIGs Seminar Survey: Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) Questions

Thinking about your GUR courses this quarter, rate your ability to: Use the vocabulary accurately.

	N	%
Above average	89	42.8
Average	116	55.8
Below average	3	1.4
Total	208	100

Thinking about your GUR courses this quarter, rate your ability to: Ask relevant questions

	N	%
Above average	84	40.4
Average	119	57.2
Below average	5	2.4
Total	208	100

Thinking about your GUR courses this quarter, rate your ability to: State a point of view I can support

	N	%
Above average	104	50.0
Average	101	48.6
Below average	3	1.4
Total	208	100

Thinking about your GUR courses this quarter, rate your ability to: Talk about the main ideas or themes of the course

	N	%
Above average	123	60.3
Average	79	38.7
Below average	2	1.0
Total	204	100

DISCUSSION OF THE SURVEY FINDINGS

As noted in previous reports, one of the issues facing the FIGs program (and, to be fair, facing most programs) is promoting the program enough to keep participation up, yet also explaining itself to interested students clearly enough to fulfill expectations.

Survey findings note that for logistical aspects of the FIGs, expectations and satisfaction both run high. For instance, when asked if the FIGs was worthwhile because of the schedule it provided, the percentage of students "strongly agreeing" or "agreeing" was 92% for the pre survey and 91% for the post survey. On the other hand, for less concrete aspects of the FIGs, expectations and satisfaction saw disparity. For instance, when asked if the FIGs seminar would assist students in their learning in other courses, the percentage "strongly agreeing" or "agreeing" was 96% in the pre survey and 73% in the post survey, a gap of 23%. That students would find some disappointment in this area should come as no surprise. With no previous college experience, it would be nearly impossible for them to know beforehand what kind of assistance would be appropriate. Indeed, in areas such of this marketers walk a thin line; they know program helps students overall, yet they also know that freshmen are usually disappointed with their first quarter college grades—which they might blame, rightly or wrongly, on the FIGs.

Yet however accurate the above argument may be, it is also to the program's credit that the gap between expectation and outcome fell for this question—from 43% in 2005 to 23% in 2006. Similarly, the gap between expectations and outcomes fell for two other important issues. When asked if the FIGs seminar would assist with learning skills and strategies, the gap fell from 31% to 15%. And when asked about their overall feelings about their FIG experience ("very positive" or "positive"), the gap fell from 32% to 11%.

Pre/post seminar survey findings also note other positive influences of the FIGs program. In a series of questions exploring students' preparedness for college academics—understanding what instructors expect, utilizing study skills, adjusting to academic demands, and managing time effectively—all post survey responses were higher than pre survey responses. And while both pre and post findings were high (all 90% or higher), the post survey still points out that students' perceived strengths were at minimum reassured, and possibly improved.

In a series of new FIGs seminar questions added in 2006 meant to explore how well the program's student learning outcomes were met, findings were again encouraging. Using a three-point scale ("above average", "average", and "below average"), and referring to their GUR courses (their large lecture courses), FIGs students were asked about their abilities to use the vocabulary of the discipline (43% above average), ask relevant questions (41%), state a supportable point of view (50%), and talk about the main themes or ideas (60%). Less than 3% of students rated themselves "below average". And while these findings alone are both interesting and inconclusive, when added into quantitative findings will help form a more complete understanding of the programs' overall effectiveness—a connection that will be made later in the report.

FIG SURVEY OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES - FALL, 2006

Along with multiple choice questions, the FIG seminar survey included open-ended questions. All FIGs survey respondents answered at least one of the open-ended questions; 89% responded to all four questions. The forms were randomized, then 100 were sampled. These 100 responses were read, categorized, and the numbers tallied. Students could have more than one response to each question.

“WHY DID YOU ENROLL IN A FIG?”

The three top responses to why students enrolled in a FIG were 1) to make transition to college easier (54%); 2) it was easy or convenient to register / get a schedule (39%); and 3) the GUR courses sounded interesting (23%). This ranking is different from rankings in previous years, especially the strong emphasis on transitioning to college. Convenience in scheduling, however, remains a strong reason for enrolling.

Students also enrolled to meet people / make friends (21%), because the FIGs concept sounded interesting (19%), and because they had heard that FIGs students did better in college (11%). It's of interest to note this is first year that students noted the FIGs' reputation for helping students academically. Also of note is that the percentage of students indicating they enrolled because their parents, friends or others fell to 11%.

Table 1: Why did you enroll in a FIG?

	2002 (n=110)		2003 (n=110)		2004 (n=233)		2005 (n=181)		2006 (n=100)	
Make transition to college easier	28	25%	28	26%	39	17%	39	22%	54	54%
Easy to register/convenient	31	28%	27	25%	25	11%	57	32%	39	39%
GUR courses sounded interesting	12	11%	15	14%	18	8%	15	8%	23	23%
To meet people/make friends	31	28%	38	35%	37	16%	51	28%	21	21%
Thought FIGs sounded interesting	5	5%	13	12%	16	7%	50	28%	19	19%
To do better in college (FIGs academic reputation)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	11%
Parents, friends, others suggested it	7	6%	11	10%	34	15%	28	16%	11	11%

“WHAT ASPECTS OF THE FIG SEMINAR DID YOU FIND THE MOST VALUABLE?”

When asked what aspects of the FIG seminar students found most valuable, the most common was response was the seminar’s academic content (35%), and that it allowed them to make connections with other students (35%). Students also found valuable the

Table 2: What aspects of the FIG seminar did you find the most valuable?

	2002 (n=200)		2003 (n=180)		2004 (n=231)		2005 (n=181)		2006 (n=100)	
Academic content	28	14%	40	48%	50	22%	28	16%	35	35%
Connections with other students	63	32%	84	47%	49	21%	77	43%	35	35%
Connection with large lecture course	36	18%	39	22%	3	1%	19	11%	19	19%
Small class	8	4%	8	4%	18	8%	21	12%	11	11%
Introduction to University resources	39	20%	22	12%	26	11%	21	11%	9	9%
Study groups, group projects, etc.	15	8%	14	8%	37	16%	35	19%	8	8%

“IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT YOUR FIG SEMINAR, WHAT WOULD IT BE?”

When students were asked what one thing about their FIG they would change, the most common response was various criticisms of the seminar pedagogy (22%), followed by various criticisms of the seminar design (18%). Far fewer students than in previous years noted they would have more connection to the large lecture courses (16%), and far more than in previous years noted they would change nothing (12%).

Table 3: If you could change one thing about your FIG seminar, what would it be?

	2002 (n=216)		2003 (n=175)		2004 (n=226)		2005 (n=181)		2006 (n=100)	
Criticism of pedagogy	-	-	-	-	-	-	41	23%	22	22%
Criticism of seminar design	-	-	-	-	-	-	31	17%	18	18%
More connection to large lecture courses	43	20%	29	17%	101	45%	56	31%	16	16%
No change (good the way it was)	15	7%	9	5%	15	7%	8	4%	12	12%
More or improved discussions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	8%
More activities for getting to know other FIGs students better	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5%

"HAS BEING WITH THE SAME GROUP OF STUDENTS (IN THE FIGS SEMINAR) HELPED YOU THIS YEAR? IS YES, PLEASE LIST TWO WAYS."

For most FIGs seminar students (84%), being with the same group of students was seen as helpful. Mostly, being with the same group of students made it easier to form study groups and/or find help with the large lecture courses (63%). Students also noted that it made it easier to meet people/make friends (46%), and that it made transitioning to college more comfortable (30%). The specific mention of transitioning was new to the survey, and supports the earlier theme that students signed up for a FIGs initially for this sort of support.

Table 4: Has being with the same group of students (in the FIGs seminar) helped you this term? If yes, please list two ways.

	2003 (n=100)		2004 (n=212)		2005 (n=181)		2006 (n=100)	
No	21	21%	49	23%	15	8%	6	6%
Yes	79	79%	163	77%	145	80%	84	84%
If Yes, list two ways:								
Meet people; make friends	62	79%	128	79%	125	69%	46	46%
More comfortable with transition to college, professors, people	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	30%
Study groups; help with classes	44	56%	102	63%	127	70%	63	63%
Other	7	9%	10	6%	20	11%	10	10%

Discussion of Open-Ended Findings

The responses to the open-ended FIGs seminar survey questions point out that the FIGs seminar accomplished its primary goal of helping students make a smoother, more comfortable transition to college. Indeed, responses in 2006 bear this out more than in previous years. The issues most important to the FIGs program were all higher than in previous years: students indicated they signed up for FIGs to help their transition (54%), then noted that being with the same group of students (in their seminar) actually did help that transition (30%).

In years past, one of the hardest concepts about the FIGs seminar to get across to in-coming frosh was that it was something other than a rolling study group for the two large lecture courses. Therefore, it was encouraging to note that fewer students than in previous years criticized the connection (or lack thereof) between the large lecture courses. Connectedly, it was especially encouraging that few students noted they thought the FIGs seminar was a study group for the large lecture courses. This misinterpretation of the design of the FIGs program, and the FIGs seminar in particular, has been the one of the more common complaints over the years, and one administrators have worked diligently to correct. That the FIGs seminar is beginning to be more correctly identified by students as an free-standing academic course is very positive news for the program.

Also as in years past, students noted many various criticism of the pedagogies used by seminar instructors, as well as many various criticism of the seminar design. Most of these were too idiosyncratic to be helpful to the design of the program, but rather reflect individual disgruntledness; if at all, these issues might be addressed to the seminar instructors at which they were directed. Indeed, FIGs seminar instructors are the first to view the open-ended responses; and although there are no statistics kept in this regard, anecdotally it appears clear that most Western instructors—FIGs or otherwise—pore over these responses studiously.

An interesting, never-before-seen critique of the FIGs seminar was that more activities for getting to know other FIGs students should have been provided (6%). In previous years the complaint had been that too *many* such activities had been provided and that they were "high school-ish". But such is the changing zeitgeist of in-coming classes: what is too little for one group may be too much for another. Yet as in years past with all critiques of the program, this one, too, will become part of the conversation regarding the design of next year's FIGs' offerings.

FIGs 2006 – QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

WESTERN GRADE POINT AVERAGE

The fall quarter, 2006, saw the eighth iteration of the FIGs program. The FIGs offered eleven seminars connected to two large lecture courses. To set the groundwork for some of the findings presented in this section of the report, please take note of the following Admissions Index (AI)¹ scores:

Fall, 2006	Admissions Index (AI)
All new frosh	56.9
FIGs frosh	54.3

The AI's importance that when using Western grade point average as an indicator, the AI is the strongest predictor of academic success. Please note that FIGs students have an AI lower than the average. Therefore, based on AI scores, predicted WWU gpa's for FIGs students as a group should be lower than the average. Here are the actual WWU gpa's earned by freshmen in the fall quarter, 2006:

Fall, 2006	Western GPA
All new frosh	2.77
FIGs frosh	2.94

The findings indicate that the group expected to receive WWU gpa's lower than the average, FIGs students, actually received gpa's higher than the average. Yet one more finding needs presenting. One criticism of the FIGs program is that the seminar grades are "inflated" and thus raise the overall average WWU gpa of FIGs students "unnaturally". To test this hypothesis, the overall WWU gpa earned has been recomputed, eliminating the grade earned by FIGs students in their seminars.

Fall, 2006	Western GPA without FIG seminar grade
All new frosh	2.77
FIGs frosh	2.83

Here it is interesting to note that elimination of the seminar grade from the overall WWU gpa of FIGs students lowers their overall WWU gpa almost exactly one-tenth of a point: from 2.94 to 2.83, yet the overall gpa remains approximately one-tenth of a point higher than the average.

¹The Admissions Index is a number between 0-100 that is derived by a formula combining high school grade point average and SAT score. The AI is used in assisting state universities and colleges in their admissions processes.

RETENTION

Fall-to-fall retention findings of in-coming cohorts of Western freshmen indicate that beginning with the fall, 2001, cohort, FIGs students have been slightly more likely than non-FIGs students to be retained to the following fall quarter. The percentage difference has run from marginal (0.3% for the fall, 2003 cohort), to remarkable (7.9% for the fall, 2005 cohort).

**FIG/not FIG Freshman Fall-to-Fall
Retention - 1999 to 2006**

	Started	Returned	%
Fall 1999 to Fall 2000			
FIG	172	129	75.0%
Not FIG	2021	1596	79.0%
Fall 2000 to Fall 2001			
FIG	206	161	78.3%
Not FIG	2287	1821	79.6%
Fall 2001 to Fall 2002			
FIG	245	210	85.7%
Not FIG	1999	1608	80.4%
Fall 2002 to Fall 2003			
FIG	269	228	84.8%
Not FIG	1963	1640	83.5%
Fall 2003 to Fall 2004			
FIG	203	169	83.3%
Not FIG	2014	1671	83.0%
Fall 2004 to Fall 2005			
FIG	260	227	87.3%
Not FIG	2197	1839	83.7%
Fall 2005 to Fall 2006			
FIG	204	190	93.1%
Not FIG	2177	1855	85.2%

DISCUSSION OF THE QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

As with the survey findings, the quantitative findings portray a program entering successful maturity. FIGs freshmen enter Western expected to earn lower gpa's, yet earn higher gpa's. In the last five years, they are also more likely to be retained to their sophomore year.

GRADUATION RATES

The FIGs program has existed long enough that graduation rate statistics for its students can be generated. Graduation rates for three cohorts—1999, 2000, and 2001—were compared to non-FIGs students.

Graduation Rates for FIGs and not-FIGs Cohorts

		4-Yr Graduation Rates	5-Yr Graduation Rates
1999 Cohort	Not FIG	28.5%	55.4%
	FIG	27.3%	52.7%
2000 Cohort	Not FIG	27.9%	55.6%
	FIG	27.7%	51.5%
2001 Cohort	Not FIG	28.5%	58.7%
	FIG	29.4%	64.3%

DISCUSSION ABOUT FIGS/NOT-FIGS GRADUATION RATES

Findings were promising. Graduation rates found FIGs students slightly less likely to graduate within four years (1999 cohort), then about equally likely to graduate within four years (2000 cohort), and finally slightly more likely to graduate within four years (2001 cohort). This upward trend follows the similarly upward trend noted in other FIGs assessment findings, including increased overall satisfaction, and increasingly above average first quarter Western gpas among FIGs program participants. Another promising finding was the trend in five-year graduation rates, where within the 2001 cohort it was noted that FIGs students were more likely to graduate than non-FIGs students (+5.6%). These findings overall are especially encouraging when keeping in mind that FIGs students, with their lower AI scores, were expected to succeed academically at lower than average rates, not higher, (including their ability to graduate from Western), and when considering that the FIGs program is a one-off, one quarter opportunity only. Yet it may also be a little early to judge the effect of the FIGs program on graduation rates. The 2001 cohort might be an anomaly—just a particularly “good” bunch of students. Nevertheless, with a solid track record already, the success of the FIGs program might beg the question: what might happen if a first-year program, FIGs or other, were offered as a two-quarter first-year program, or even a full-year first-year program?

DISCUSSION OF THE FIGS FINDINGS OVERALL

In the fall, 2006, the FIGs program entered its eighth iteration. Offered were eleven groupings of two large lecture courses with an attendant seminar. About 90% of the available seats were taken. Findings from the seminar survey (qualitative), and the Data Warehouse (quantitative) pointed to a program entering maturity and confidence, to a program achieving its goals yet still aware of the importance of continuing to search for areas of improvement. Some bullet points of interest include:

- Based on their Admissions Index scores (created by combining high school grade point average and SAT scores), FIGs students continue to enter Western expected to earn Western gpa's under the average, yet continue to earn Western gpa's above the average. (Note: in tests of prediction, when using Western gpa as the benchmark, the AI is consistently the strongest predictor of academic success.)
- In the last five years, FIGs students are more likely to be retained to their sophomore year than non-FIGs students. This percentage difference has been as marginal as 0.3% (2001 cohort) to as remarkable as 7.9% (2005 cohort).
- Graduation rates for FIGs students have risen from under the average to above average for both four and five years to graduate. (2001 cohort: 4-yr rates = 28.5% non-FIG vs. 29.4% FIG; 5-yr rates = 58.7% non-FIG vs. 64.3% FIG.)
- Seminar survey findings portray a program increasingly able to honestly self-assess and make the changes needed to improve the program. To use just one example, the percentage gap between expectations and outcomes for FIGs students' overall feelings about the program have been reduced from -32% to -11%. (Note: as with any program, meeting students' high expectations are difficult. In the case of FIGs, marketing strategies have had to content with not just very high, but often misunderstood, expectations. For instance, an on-going FIGs marketing issue has been the perception on the part of students that the FIGs seminar is an extension of the large lecture courses, not a stand-alone academic experience. So having the gap between expectations and outcomes fall 21% is, indeed, a strong indicator of the program's ability to learn from its self assessments.)

The FIGs self assessment and planning processes begins in the spring with a thorough review of the survey and quantitative data gathered from the most recent course offerings, as well as a review of data gathered from previous years. Planned, too, are the workshops for FIGs instructors and administrators, which usually occur early in summer, and also sometimes in the fall, before classes begin. At these workshops collaboration strategies for large lecture and seminar instructors are encouraged in particular. Then in the fall, the assessments themselves begin with the pre seminar survey, administered on the first seminar class day, and the cycle begins anew.

It is this continual attention to self assessment that has allowed the program to grow and change, to get better at its mission, and to deliver its promise to students and the University to provide a first-year program of integrity that not only fulfills a need, but fulfills it well.

FINDINGS FROM THE SUPPLEMENTAL SURVEY OF FIRST-YEAR PROGRAMS

A supplemental survey of first-year academic programs—which to date include the Freshmen Interest Group (FIGs) program, and the First Year Experience (FYE) program—was developed in the fall, 2006. This 50-item survey consisted of four sets of questions tapping students' experiences and intermediate learning outcomes in first year academic courses. The assessment of experiences and intermediate outcomes was conducted in order to investigate the conditions under which long-term learning outcomes associated with effective first-year programs are being achieved (Barefoot, 2000; Kuh, 2001; Pascarella, 2005; Swing, 2004).

Items for the survey were developed by combing themes derived from analyses of two focus groups with first-year experience instructors and faculty and factors suggested by the literature review as central to effective first-year student learning experiences. The survey was administered to FIGs and FYE students, of course, but also to a control cohort of freshmen enrolled in neither program. The final survey consisted of the following sections:

- *GUR Experiences: Set 1.* This section addressed the extent to which students found that the instructors in their FIGs, FYE, or other GUR courses structured their courses in such a way that encouraged the development of conditions that lead to first year learning.
- *GUR Outcomes.* This section addressed the extent to which students would say that their instructors, seminar leaders, or TAs helped them in a variety of ways that contribute to key learning outcomes.
- *GUR Experiences: Set 2.* This section asked students whether they had experienced a second set of conditions that contribute to learning.
- *Personal Outcomes.* This section addressed students' personal feelings and behaviors during the Fall Quarter, 2006.

The Supplemental Survey was web-based and administered by the Office of Survey Research during the final week of the fall quarter, 2006. Response rates are presented below.

First-Year Supplemental Survey - Response Rates

	Total in group	Completed surveys	Response rate
FIGs	221	142	64.3%
FYE	153	85	55.6%
Control	602	269	44.7%

GUR EXPERIENCES: SET 1

"Thinking back over this past quarter and the experiences you had in your GUR courses (including any FIGs or First Year Experience Seminars you may have been enrolled in), to what extent did the instructor in any of these courses, or the course structure itself, encourage or help you in each of the following ways?"

This question had a five-point Lickert scale: 1=Not at all; 2=Very little; 3=Somewhat; 4=Quite a bit; and 5=A lot.

First-Year Supplemental Survey - GUR Experiences: Set 1

Question number	Wording	FIGS	FYE	Control
2	Knowing how to find information from the library, internet, or other sources to answer questions.	3.49	2.64	2.79
3	Determining whether or not information or sources are credible.	3.25	2.91	2.76
5	Using multiple methods (e.g., written, oral, visual, etc.) for expressing your ideas.	3.47	3.34	3.16
6	Expressing yourself in a way sensitive to the feelings and culture of others.	3.56	3.46	3.21
10	Exploring your potential academic interests (e.g., potential major field of study).	3.35	3.46	3.02
11	Working effectively in a group.	3.72	3.12	2.79

In all the cases above, FIGs participants demonstrated significantly higher scores than the control group. That is, they tended to report that the course structure and/or instructor provided greater encouragement in the described areas than those in the control group. Additionally, FYE participants showed significantly higher scores than the control group for question #10. Finally, FIGs participants demonstrated significantly higher scores than the FYE students for questions #2 and #11. There were no other differences.

GUR OUTCOMES

"To what extent would you say your instructors, seminar leaders or TAs during Fall quarter helped you in each of the following ways?"

This question had a five-point Lickert scale: 1=Not at all; 2=Very little; 3=Somewhat; 4=Quite a bit; and 5=A lot.

First-Year Supplemental Survey - GUR Outcomes

Question number	Wording	FIGS	FYE	Control
2	Ability to understand the difference between college and high school	3.63	3.73	3.39
3	Ability to adjust to the academic demands of college	3.56	3.42	3.11
4	Ability to manage my time effectively	3.31	3.21	2.95
5	Development of the skills and strategies that will help me succeed in other courses	3.51	3.48	3.20
7	Development of a plan of study to achieve my academic goals	3.23	3.27	2.88
8	Development of close friendships with students	3.41	3.06	2.71
9	Connections with other students	3.60	3.26	2.99
12	Awareness of campus services available to students for academic success	3.80	3.29	3.43
13	Awareness of campus events and learning opportunities	3.52	3.21	3.16

With the exception of question #2, in all the cases above, FIGs participants demonstrated significantly higher scores than the control group. That is, they tended to report that their instructors, seminar leaders or TA's helped them in the described ways to a greater extent than those in the control group. Additionally, FYE participants showed significantly higher scores than the control group for questions #2 and #7. Finally, FIGs participants demonstrated significantly higher scores than the FYE students for questions #11 and #12. There were no other differences.

GUR EXPERIENCE: SET 2

"During your first quarter at Western, to what extent did you experience each of the following types of learning experiences in your courses?"

This question had a five-point Lickert scale: 1=Not at all; 2=Very little; 3=Somewhat; 4=Quite a bit; and 5=A lot.

First-Year Supplemental Survey - GUR Experiences: Set 2

Question number	Wording	FIGS	FYE	Control
1	One-on-one meetings with your instructors in their office	2.23	2.62	2.36
2	Informal meetings with your instructors other than during class time or office hours	2.13	2.22	1.78
3	One-on-one meetings with TAs or seminar leaders other than your instructors.	1.82	1.62	1.55
4	Informal meetings with TAs or seminar leaders other than your instructors outside of class time or office hours.	1.87	1.60	1.48
5	Structured exchanges (e-mail, blackboard, electronic bulletin boards, etc.) with other students in the class about course content.	3.68	2.84	2.77
6	Participation in group projects.	3.63	2.56	2.35
7	Production of papers or writing assignments of more than 2 pages	3.30	3.59	2.98
8	Participation in class discussions.	3.51	3.79	3.34
9	Class attendance at a campus learning event like the Distinguished Lecture Series, etc.	2.77	2.28	1.91
10	Class attendance at a campus arts event.	2.05	1.89	1.70

With the exception of questions #1, #7, and #8, in all the cases above, FIGs participants demonstrated significantly higher scores than the control group. That is, they tended to report more of the described learning experiences than those in the control group. Additionally, FYE participants showed significantly higher scores than the control group for items #2, #7, #8, and #9. Finally, FIGs participants demonstrated significantly higher scores than the FYE students for items #5, #6, and #9. In one case, question #1, FYE students reported higher scores than FIGs students. There were no other differences.

PERSONAL OUTCOMES

“Finally, what about your own personal feelings and behaviors. During the past quarter, to what extent did you experience each of the following?”

This question had a five-point Lickert scale: 1=Not at all; 2=Very little; 3=Somewhat; 4=Quite a bit; and 5=A lot

First-Year Supplemental Survey - Personal Experiences

Question number	Wording	FIGS	FYE	Control
7	A change in the way I look at the world.	3.23	3.35	3.01

FYE participants showed significantly higher scores than the control group for the above item. That is, FYE participants felt a change in the way they look at the world to a greater extent than those in the control group. There were no other differences.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST-YEAR SUPPLEMENTAL SURVEY

Findings from the First-Year Supplemental Survey demonstrate clearly the ability of first-year programs to positively effect students' experiences in a variety of ways—academic, social, and logistical. From the ability to find resources in the library to making connections to peers, from working effectively in a group to managing their time effectively, survey responses from students taking first-year programs were higher than that for students not enrolled in a first-year program. Responses from FIGs students, especially, were higher than those for students not enrolled in a first-year program.

SEMINAR SURVEY FINDINGS - FIGs/FYE COMPARISON

Because the FIGs and FYE programs share a common set of student learning outcomes (SLOs), and an ostensibly similar seminar configuration, and since both programs target first-time, in-coming freshmen, the same pre/post survey form was administered in both FIGs seminars and FYE courses. Technically, however, FYE offerings are not considered seminars, but rather lower-division, capped-enrollment courses that instructors in the various departments might routinely teach as large lecture courses. The big differences being 1) the class size was limited to around 25, and 2) the class was limited to freshmen only. Moverover, FYE course instructors volunteer to teach FYE courses, and have committed to the idea of a freshmen-level transition course, and all the pedagogy implied by such an endeavor. Thus while technically not a seminar per se, FYE courses have both a seminar feel, and the intentionality on the instructors part to teach in a more seminar-like manner, including a strong emphasis on discussion. This design definitely sets FYE courses apart from regular department course offerings for freshmen; an FYE course offered in the usual configuration might have as many as a 100 or more students, and often is lecture- not discussion-based.

Yet even as both programs share SLOs and appear to outsiders as seminars, it still may not be fair to compare FIGs seminars to FYE courses. For one, FYE courses are taught by tenured faculty, while FIGs courses are taught by qualified Western staff. (Qualified, in this case, means that FIGs seminar instructors all have at least a Master's degree. Over the years, there have been concerns noted by Western administrators and faculty committees that FIGs courses have been taught by Western students, even lower-division students. Such has never been the case, and never would be. Indeed, FIGs seminar instructors are better qualified to teach at the university level than most of the graduate students that teach English and mathematics courses. They have, after all, already earned their degrees, plus have acquired years of practical experience.)

Another reason that it may be unfair to compare FIGs seminars to FYE courses is that the FIGs has had eight years to learn from its mistakes, make changes, and develop into a mature program, both solid and effective. The FYE program, on the other hand, is in its first full year of existence, and has not had the same chance to grow, learn, and change. (In the fall, 2005, three FYE's were offered, but those courses were even less than a pilot and more a testing of the waters.)

Yet interest runs high to compare the programs, and while all the reasons listed above are valid, it is also potentially to the advantage of both programs that they learn from each other. As the popular song writer Kris Kristofferson noted, one of the best ways to learn the craft of songwriting is to sit around with other songwriters and steal their ideas. So, too, might first-year instructors from either the FIGs or FYE program sit around and steal pedagogical, strategic, and practical ideas from one another—especially as the end result might very well be improvement for all. So with many reasons not to conduct a comparison, but with one compelling reason to continue with the comparison, it will continue—at least this year and in this report.

Seminar Survey Findings - FIGs/FYE Comparison, 2006

(Note that lower scores indicate more positive responses.)

		N	Mean
Enrolling in a FIG helped my transition to Western*	FYE	143	2.13
	FIG	208	1.90
	Total	351	1.99
Enrolling in a FIG was worthwhile because it provided me with a partial fall term schedule*	FYE	142	2.29
	FIG	208	1.67
	Total	350	1.92
To what extent did the FIGs seminar help you create connections with peers?*	FYE	139	1.97
	FIG	208	1.59
	Total	347	1.74
To what extent did the FIGs seminar assist your learning in your other courses this quarter?	FYE	141	2.23
	FIG	208	2.13
	Total	349	2.17
To what extent did the FIGs seminar provide you with some skills and strategies that will help you in future courses?*	FYE	141	1.77
	FIG	208	2.00
	Total	349	1.91
Based on your experiences in your FIG, are your feelings about it:	FYE	140	1.98
	FIG	208	2.17
	Total	348	2.09
How well prepared you feel to: understand what your instructors expect of you academically?	FYE	143	1.59
	FIG	209	1.53
	Total	352	1.56
How well prepared you feel to: utilize effective study skills?	FYE	143	1.75
	FIG	208	1.68
	Total	351	1.71
How well prepared you feel to: adjust to the academic demands of college?	FYE	143	1.63
	FIG	209	1.58
	Total	352	1.60

Seminar Survey Findings - FIGs/FYE Comparison, 2006

(Note that lower scores indicate more positive responses.)

		N	Mean
How well prepared you feel to: manage your time effectively?	FYE	143	1.82
	FIG	208	1.76
	Total	351	1.78
How well prepared you feel to: get to know faculty?	FYE	143	1.77
	FIG	208	1.79
	Total	351	1.78
How well prepared you feel to: develop a plan of study to achieve your academic goals?	FYE	143	1.73
	FIG	208	1.69
	Total	351	1.71
How well prepared you feel to: develop close friendships with other students?*	FYE	143	1.64
	FIG	208	1.38
	Total	351	1.49
How well prepared you feel to: utilize campus services available to students?*	FYE	142	1.77
	FIG	208	1.57
	Total	350	1.65
Thinking about your GUR courses this quarter, rate your ability to: Use the vocabulary accurately.	FYE	143	1.59
	FIG	208	1.59
	Total	351	1.59
Thinking about your GUR courses this quarter, rate your ability to: Ask relevant questions.	FYE	143	1.61
	FIG	208	1.62
	Total	351	1.62
Thinking about your GUR courses this quarter, rate your ability to: State a point of view I can support.	FYE	143	1.58
	FIG	208	1.51
	Total	351	1.54
Thinking about your GUR courses this quarter, rate your ability to: Talk about the main ideas or themes of the course.*	FYE	142	1.55
	FIG	204	1.41
	Total	346	1.47

*The difference tested for statistical significance.

DISCUSSION OF THE FIGS/FYE SEMINAR POST SURVEY FINDINGS

First, it's important to take careful note of the fact that the lower the number in the FIGs/FYE seminar survey findings the higher the satisfaction. In other words, if the overall mean score on a question was 2.00, and the mean score for a program was 1.50, then the program received higher positive ratings than the overall mean. Please also note that the survey is an opinion poll, not quantitative data, and is open to all the limitations that surveys entail. Most especially, this means that it is important to use both qualitative (survey) and quantitative (hard) findings to come to an overall conclusion about a program's effectiveness.

There were eighteen questions on the FIGs/FYE post survey. When the means for each question were separated by program, in seven of the questions FIGs students gave higher positive ratings than did FYE students. These included the following questions:

- Enrolling in a FIG helped my transition to Western.
- Enrolling in a FIG was worthwhile because it provided me with a partial fall term schedule.
- To what extent did the FIGs seminar help you create connections with peers?
- To what extent did the FIGs seminar provide you with some skills and strategies that will help you in future courses?
- How well prepared you feel to: develop close friendships with other students?
- How well prepared you feel to: utilize campus services available to students?
- Thinking about your GUR courses this quarter, rate your ability to: Talk about the main ideas or themes of the course.

For the post seminar survey, there were no other statistical differences between the responses to the eighteen questions. Of the seven differences, one ("Enrolling in a FIG was worthwhile because it provided me with a partial fall term schedule") is explained by the logistical make-up of the FIGs program, which is to offer two large lecture courses and a seminar as a package worth from 9-12 credits. The FYE offerings, on the other hand, while worth more credits individually, were stand alone courses, no packaging with other courses. Thus the higher ratings for FIGs on this question make complete sense.

Four of the differences (transition to Western, create peer connections, prepared to develop close friendships, prepared to utilize campus services) might also be explained by the overarching philosophical differences between the FIGs and FYE programs. From its inception, the FIGs has placed a major emphasis on transitioning students from high school to college. Academics have always been equally important, yet no more or less

important than transition issues. And while the FYE program definitely gives a strong nod to transition issues, at this point in its development, the program probably does not place as strong an emphasis on transition pedagogy as does the FIGs, but rather places more emphasis on academic issues and content.

Two of the differences are less easily explained, as they directly address academic concerns. FIGs students more than FYE students noted that the seminar had provided some skills and strategies that would help in future courses. Also, FIGs students rated themselves more competent to talk about the main ideas or themes of their large lecture courses.

One curious finding was that no difference existed between FIGs and FYE students when asked how well they felt prepared to get to know faculty. This finding is curious in that Western faculty taught FYE students and had them in a small course setting four hours a week, while FIGs students met their large lecture course faculty in a seminar setting only two or three times throughout the quarter.

It is also interesting to note that for the other three questions concerned with the programs' shared student learning outcomes (use accurate vocabulary, ask relevant questions, and state a supportable point of view), FIGs and FYE student responses were equal. It should be pointed out again, however, that a survey is an opinion poll, not hard data, and therein some answer to the lack of difference may exist.

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS REVISITED - FIGs/FYE COMPARED

WESTERN GRADE POINT AVERAGE

To set the groundwork for some of the findings presented in this section of the report, please take note of the following Admissions Index (AI)* scores:

Fall, 2006	Admissions Index (AI)
All new frosh	56.9
FYE frosh	57.6
FIGs frosh	54.3

The AI's importance to the rest of this memo is that when using Western grade point average as an indicator, the AI is the strongest predictor of academic success. Please note that FIGs students have an AI lower than the average, while FYE students have an AI higher than the average. Therefore, based on AI scores, predicted WWU gpa's for FIGs students as a group should be lower than the average, while predicted WWU gpa's for FYE students as a group should be higher than the average. Here are the actual WWU gpa's earned by freshmen in the fall quarter, 2006:

Fall, 2006	WWU gpa
All new frosh	2.77
FYE frosh	2.85
FIGs frosh	2.94

The findings indicate that the group expected to receive WWU gpa's lower than the average, FIGs students, actually received gpa's higher than the average. On the other hand, FYE students performed as expected: they, too, received WWU gpa's higher than the average, though not as high as the gpa's earned by FIG's students.

Yet one more finding needs presenting. One criticism of the FIGs program is that the seminar grades are "inflated" and thus raise the overall average WWU gpa of FIGs students "unnaturally". To test this hypothesis, the overall WWU gpa earned has been recomputed, eliminating the grade earned by FIGs students in their seminars. Similarly, to play fair, the overall WWU gpa earned by FYE students has also been recomputed, again eliminating the grade earned by FYE students in their seminars.

*The Admissions Index is a number between 0-100 that is derived by a formula combining high school grade point average and SAT score. The AI is used in assisting state universities and colleges in their admissions processes.

Fall, 2006	WWU gpa with seminar grades eliminated
All new frosh	2.77
FYE frosh	2.77
FIGs frosh	2.83

Here it is interesting to note that elimination of the seminar grade from the overall WWU gpa of both FIGs and FYE students lowers their overall WWU gpa almost exactly one-tenth of a point: in the case of FIGs students from 2.94 to 2.83, and for FYE students from 2.85 to 2.77. The inference is that students participating in either the FIGs or FYE program earn grades in their seminars that raise their overall WWU gpa at an equal ratio. In other words, taking a FIGs or FYE seminar in the fall quarter, 2006, increased a student's overall WWU gpa by about one-tenth of a point.

It is further interesting to note that without their FYE seminar grade, FYE students, expected to earn gpa's above the average, don't. On the other hand, without their seminar grade FIGs students, expected to earn gpa's lower than average, still earn gpa's higher than the average.

DISCUSSION OF THE FIGs/FYE PROGRAMS COMPARISON OVERALL

By any standards currently available to researchers, whether survey or quantitative findings, the FIGs appears to present a strong case for the ability of time, persistence and effort to craft and deliver a strong program. From quantitative data it is apparent that the FIGs delivers on its promise of an academically-engaging experience. FIGs student, who upon entering Western are expected to perform under the average of all entering Western freshmen, perform above the average. From survey data, it is equally apparent that the FIGs program delivers on its promise to help freshmen make a smoother transition from high school to college. Overall, there is a solid body of data, both current and historical, quantitative as well as qualitative, that points to a strong program.

On the other hand, the FYE is just entering the waters of first-year programs. Whether quantitative or qualitative, findings in some areas were promising, in a few areas fairly strong, and in other areas inconsistent. (For what it's worth, this was equally true for the FIGs program in its first two years of existence.) It has to be disappointing to the FYE program that many students didn't recognize that anything special was being offered them, yet on the other hand, students overall appeared to appreciate the courses. It was a bit perplexing that without their seminar grades FYE students achieved at only an average level when they were expected to achieve at an above average level. That finding might make for an interesting discussion in and of itself. Yet inconsistencies are part and parcel of the nature of a new program. Findings are bound to cross the spectrum. Yet inconsistencies notwithstanding, the data on the FYE program overall paints a picture of a solid young program that should just keep getting better, if it is nurtured and can find leadership and continued administrative support.

APPENDIX A:

**FIGs PROGRAM MISSION, COURSE CRITERIA,
AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

MISSION STATEMENT

The FIG program is a learning community for first-year students providing opportunities to practice the habits of mind needed for a successful academic career.

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE COURSE CRITERIA

Scope

As part of the first-year experience of entering students, the First-year Interest Groups Program at WWU intends to:

- Give first-year students a small group experience to help them integrate into university life.
- Give first-year students the opportunity for more interaction with instructors.
- Communicate high academic expectations to students.
- Help students recognize and take advantage of the roles that various campus resources play in their academic lives.

Intentions

A proposal for a First Year Experience course should identify an existing course or propose a new course with the following features:

- First-year courses will have academic content and be offered for academic credit (either as GUR or elective credits)
- First-year courses will be taught in small sections, with an expected maximum enrollment 30
- First-year courses will restrict enrollment to first-year students
- The course may be a stand alone course or offered as part of a link or sequence of courses
- The course may be letter-graded or pass/fail if it is not offered as a GUR course

Learning Outcomes

First-year courses should be designed to meet at least two of the following learning outcomes:

- Demonstrate an understanding of inquiry and creative processes from disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary perspective(s)
- Articulate individual learning goals in the context of a liberal arts education and identify means for achieving these goals.
- Enhance competency in academic skills including: framing questions/posing problems, critical literacy, evaluating information sources, writing, oral communication, and collaboration

Proposal Development

Courses in this group can be altogether new courses or special offerings of existing courses.

Additional learning outcomes are strongly encouraged in the first-year courses, and a comprehensive listing of the most common first-year learning outcomes and appropriate assessment methods will be available online to faculty as they design their first-year course.

APPENDIX B:

FIGs SEMINAR SURVEYS: PRE AND POST

FIGS SURVEY – FALL, 2006

This survey is designed to elicit information from you that will assist in structuring assignments/ projects and providing the highest quality instruction. Please try to answer all questions. This survey is confidential; you **do not** have to enter your name or other identifiers.

1. What was the most important source of information about the FIG cluster you are taking?

- Mailer / pamphlet
- SummerStart staff, peer advisors, or faculty advisor
- Information sent via email
- Web site
- Family or friends

2. What is the primary reason why you decided to enroll in a FIG?

- The idea / courses interested me
- No other courses to take / other courses full
- Recommendation of SummerStart faculty advisor
- Family or friends encouraged me
- The ability to register in advance for popular classes

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the statements below.

3. I expect that enrolling in a FIG will help with my transition to Western.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

4. Enrolling in a FIG is worthwhile because it has provided me with a partial fall term schedule.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The following are some questions about your FIGs seminar.

5. To what extent do you expect the FIGs seminar will help you create connections with peers?

- A great deal
- Somewhat
- Not at all

6. To what extent do you expect the FIGs seminar will assist your learning in your other courses this quarter?

- A great deal
- Somewhat
- Not at all

7. To what extent do you expect the FIGs seminar will provide you with some skills and strategies that will help you in future courses?

- A great deal
- Somewhat
- Not at all

8. So far, based on your experiences in your FIG, are your feelings about it:

- Very positive
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Very Negative

How well prepared you feel to:

9. understand what your instructors expect of you academically

- Completely prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Not prepared

10. utilize effective study skills

- Completely prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Not prepared

11. adjust to the academic demands of college

- Completely prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Not prepared

12. manage your time effectively

- a. Completely prepared
- b. Somewhat prepared
- c. Not prepared

13. get to know faculty

- a. Completely prepared
- b. Somewhat prepared
- c. Not prepared

14. develop a plan of study to achieve your academic goals

- a. Completely prepared
- b. Somewhat prepared
- c. Not prepared

15. develop close friendships with other students

- a. Completely prepared
- b. Somewhat prepared
- c. Not prepared

16. utilize campus services available to students

- a. Completely prepared
- b. Somewhat prepared
- c. Not prepared

And finally:

17. Compared to your GUR courses this quarter, how challenging do you expect the FIGs seminar to be?

- a. More challenging
- b. Less challenging
- c. Equally challenging

18. I expect my investment of _____ (a=minimal, b=average, c=maximal) effort...

19. ...will earn me a grade of _____ (a=A, b=B, c=C, d=D, e=F) in this class.

For question 23, simply circle yes or no.

20. There are specific circumstances that might affect my learning in this class.

YES / NO

If yes, briefly describe these circumstances:

(A note about Question 20: Because this survey is anonymous, you are encouraged to meet with your instructor to discuss these circumstances.)

FIGS SURVEY – FALL, 2006

- ❖ Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the statements below. (This survey is confidential; no identifiers are needed.)

1. Enrolling in a FIG helped my transition to Western.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree

2. Enrolling in a FIG was worthwhile because it provided me with a partial fall term schedule.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree

- ❖ The following are some questions about your FIGs seminar.

3. To what extent did the FIGs seminar help you create connections with peers?

- a. A great deal
- b. Somewhat
- c. Not at all

4. To what extent did the FIGs seminar assist your learning in your other courses this quarter?

- a. A great deal
- b. Somewhat
- c. Not at all

5. To what extent did the FIGs seminar provide you with some skills and strategies that will help you in future courses?

- a. A great deal
- b. Somewhat
- c. Not at all

6. Based on your experiences in your FIG, are your feelings about it:

- a. Very positive
- b. Positive
- c. Neutral
- d. Negative
- e. Very Negative

- ❖ How well prepared you feel to:

7. understand what your instructors expect of you academically;

- a. Completely prepared
- b. Somewhat prepared
- c. Not prepared

8. utilize effective study skills;

- a. Completely prepared
- b. Somewhat prepared
- c. Not prepared

9. adjust to the academic demands of college;

- a. Completely prepared
- b. Somewhat prepared
- c. Not prepared

10. manage your time effectively;

- a. Completely prepared
- b. Somewhat prepared
- c. Not prepared

11. get to know faculty;

- a. Completely prepared
- b. Somewhat prepared
- c. Not prepared

12. develop a plan of study to achieve your academic goals;

- a. Completely prepared
- b. Somewhat prepared
- c. Not prepared

13. develop close friendships with other students;

- a. Completely prepared
- b. Somewhat prepared
- c. Not prepared

14. utilize campus services available to students;

- a. Completely prepared
- b. Somewhat prepared
- c. Not prepared

- ❖ Thinking about your GUR courses this quarter, rate your ability to:

15. Use the vocabulary accurately.

- a. Above average
- b. Average
- c. Below average

16. Ask relevant questions.

- a. Above average
- b. Average
- c. Below average

17. State a point of view I can support.

- a. Above average
- b. Average
- c. Below average

18. Talk about the main ideas or themes of the course

- a. Above average
- b. Average
- c. Below average

Don't forget the open-ended questions on the other side!

Why did you enroll in a FIG?

What aspect of the FIG Seminar did you find the most valuable?

If you could tell your instructor one thing that would improve the content or instruction of this course, what would it be?

Has being with the same group of students in the FIGs Seminar helped you this term? If yes, please list two ways

Thanks!

APPENDIX C:

**THE FRESHMEN INTEREST GROUP (FIGS) PROGRAM,
A SUMMARY: 1999 THROUGH 2006**

The Freshmen Interest Group (FIGs) Program as an Assessment Model: 1999 through 2006

Year	Design	Seminar Instructors	Assessments	Results	Impact of Results
1999	<u>Cluster Model</u> 1 seminar thematically connected to 2 large lecture courses	4 library faculty and 4 WWU faculty	1) Pre/ post survey of seminars; 2) pre/ post survey of large lecture courses; 3) analysis of quantitative data (WWU gpas, retention, etc.); 4) focus groups, one with Figs students, one with large lecture course faculty.	Data analysis indicated moderate but encouraging satisfaction with program.	Figs model tweaked. For 2000, seminars to include both instructor and TA.
2000	<u>Cluster Model</u> 1 seminar thematically connected to 2 large lecture courses	4 library faculty, 2 WWU faculty, 2 qualified WWU staff (MA degree or higher), and 8 TA's from Woodring	1) Pre/ post survey of seminars; 2) pre/ post survey of large lecture courses; 3) analysis of quantitative data (WWU gpas, retention, etc.); 4) focus groups, one with Figs students, one with large lecture course faculty.	Data analysis indicated no findings of value were generated by the pre/ post survey of large lecture courses. Overall satisfaction was up slightly, but the seminar model of two instructors was deemed too unwieldy.	Pre/ post large lecture course survey dropped. TA's dropped from seminars. For 2001, only one instructor per seminar, but assisted by peer advisors (WWU students with at least sophomore standing; often these were former FIG students).
2001	<u>Cluster Model</u> 1 seminar thematically connected to 2 large lecture courses	1 library faculty, 1 WWU faculty, and 8 qualified WWU staff (MA degree or higher), plus peer advisors	1) Pre/ post survey of seminars; 2) analysis of quantitative data (WWU gpas, retention, etc.); 3) analysis of open-ended survey responses.	Data analysis indicated improved satisfaction with FIGs program. The one troubling issue is students perceive the seminar as a "study group" for the large lecture courses, rather than a stand-alone academic course.	Marketing strategies begin to play down the idea of connecting themes from the large lecture courses, but rather focus on the seminar's academic mission and successes, especially the fact that FIGs students earn better WWU gpas and are more likely to be retained.
2002	<u>Cluster Model</u> 1 seminar thematically connected to 2 large lecture courses	1 library faculty, 1 WWU faculty, and 8 qualified WWU staff (MA degree or higher), plus peer advisors	1) Pre/ post survey of seminars; 2) analysis of quantitative data (WWU gpas, retention, etc.); 3) analysis of open-ended survey responses.	Overall satisfaction steadily improving. Themes from data analysis indicated the particular popularity of large lecture course instructor visits and seminar guests.	Marketing strategies continue to play down the idea of connecting large lecture course themes. Large lecture course professors' visits become required (2-3 per quarter).

The Freshmen Interest Group (FIGs) Program as an Assessment Model: 1999 through 2006

Year	Design	Seminar Instructors	Assessments	Results	Impact of Results
2003	<u>Cluster Model</u> 1 seminar thematically connected to 2 large lecture courses	1 library faculty, 1 WWU faculty, and 8 qualified WWU staff (MA degree or higher), plus peer advisors	1) Pre/post survey of seminars; 2) analysis of quantitative data (WWU gpas, retention, etc.); 3) analysis of open-ended survey responses.	Data analysis indicated continued improvement in satisfaction with FIGs program. The issue of the seminar as a "study group" for the large lecture courses also continues.	Change to a Links Model for the seminar.
2004	<u>Links Model</u> 1 seminar thematically connected to 1 large lecture course and 2 other seminars	1 library faculty, 1 WWU faculty, and 8 qualified WWU staff (MA degree or higher), plus peer advisors	1) Pre/post survey of seminars; 2) analysis of quantitative data (WWU gpas, retention, etc.); 3) analysis of open-ended survey responses.	Data analysis indicated less satisfaction with the Links Model than the Cluster Model. Students even more likely to consider the seminar a "study group" for the large lecture course.	Return to Cluster Model for 2005
2005	<u>Cluster Model</u> 1 seminar thematically connected to 2 large lecture courses	8 qualified WWU staff (MA degree or higher). Peer advisors optional.	1) Pre/post survey of seminars; 2) analysis of quantitative data (WWU gpas, retention, etc.); 3) analysis of open-ended survey responses; 4) integration with Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS). See NOTE below.)	Data analysis indicated a return to high satisfaction with FIGs program. The issue of the seminar as a "study group" also continues.	With data indicating FIGs students consistently receiving better WWU gpas and are more likely to be retained, the program is exceeding expectations. The "study group" issue might remain, but is not seen as a major problem. More seminars than ever planned for fall, 2006.
2006	<u>Cluster Model</u> 1 seminar thematically connected to 2 large lecture courses	1 library faculty, 1 WWU faculty, and 9 qualified WWU staff (MA degree or higher). Peer advisors optional.	1) Pre/post survey of seminars; 2) analysis of quantitative data (WWU gpas, retention, etc.); 3) analysis of open-ended survey responses.	In Process	Pending

NOTE: In the spring of 2005 Western's ACC (Academic Coordinating Committee) conducted a study of the FIGs and produced a subsequent report. The report raised important questions about the FIGs program—for instance, that it might be better to have regular faculty teaching the seminars—but misrepresented much of the data about FIGS. In the fall of 2005, a rebuttal report was produced that corrected these issues. Most importantly, however, these reports spurred renewed interest in the importance of first-year programs to the University's mission. In the fall of 2005 a pilot program of First Year Experience (FYE) seminars was initiated. These small group seminars were taught by Western faculty and, interestingly, their assessment design mirrors that of the FIGs program.