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# Staying Alive

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How To Keep A New Freshman  
Program Thriving Ten Years Out

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# What Motivated the Faculty and the College to Create the First Year Program?

- We wanted to recruit better students to the freshman class.
  - We wanted to improve the academic quality of our freshman courses.
  - We wanted to improve the intellectual culture of the upper class students.
  - We wanted improve our retention rate to improve the financial stability of the College.
  - We recognized that we needed to change the curriculum. We had some ideas of what we needed to do but not how to package them.
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# Lessons Ten Years Out

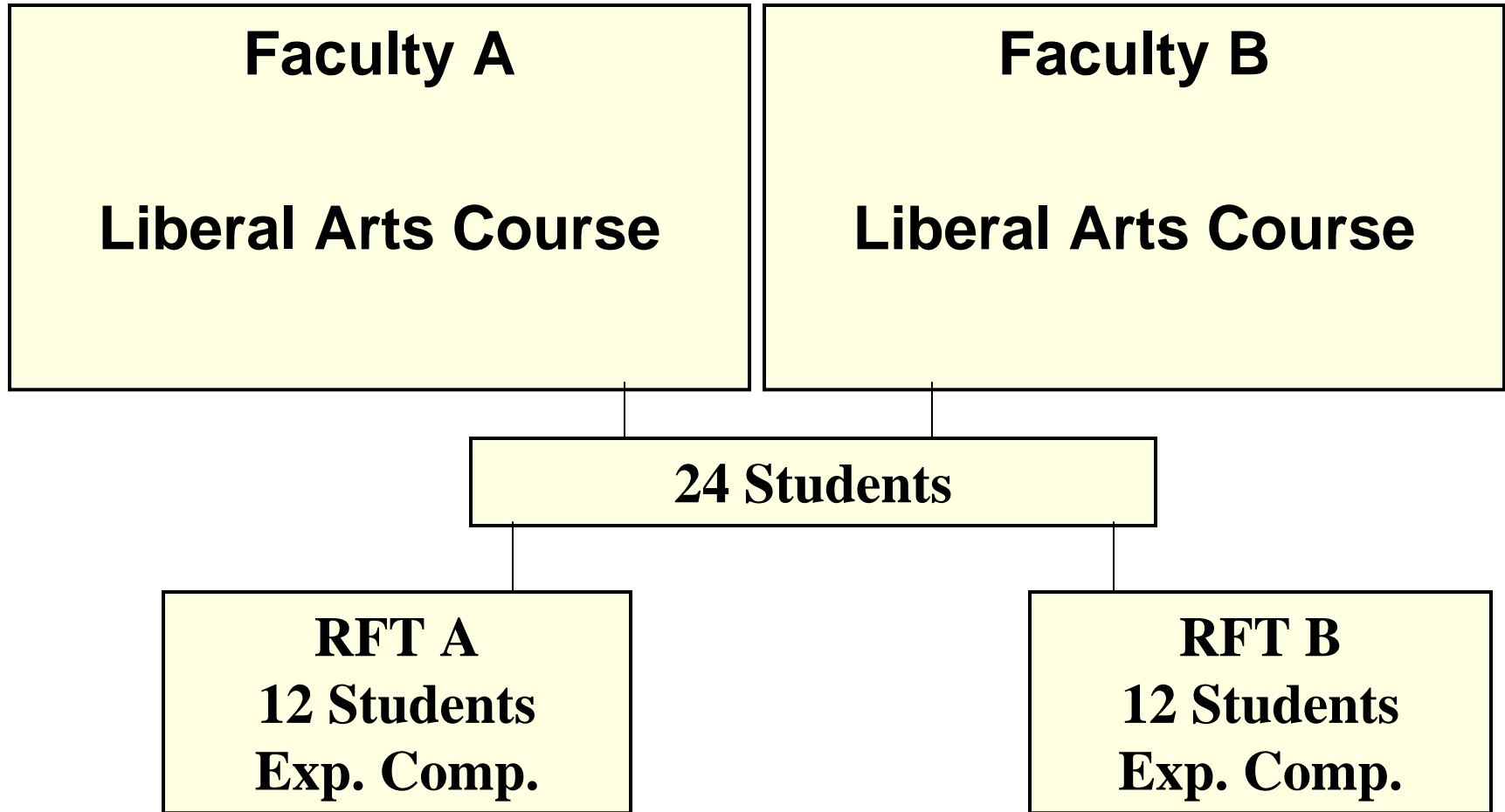
- Here Is How We Sustain Long Term Commitment of Full Time Faculty
  - Here Is How We Keep The First Year Program (FYP) From Becoming A Second Class Program
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# Some History

- Spring 1997: Richard Guarasci Arrives as Provost & Meets With Curriculum Committee to Draft Wagner Plan
  - October 1997: Faculty Adopts The Wagner Plan for the Liberal Arts
  - May 1998 First Year Program Faculty hold their first retreat.
  - Fall 1998: First Freshman Learning Communities
  - August 1999: First FYP Faculty Guide
  - Fall 2007: Tenth Year for Freshman LCs
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# Freshman Learning Community



# Society & The City

**History Professor**

**HI 225: History of NYC**

**Sociology Professor**

**SOC 103: American  
Social Problems**

**24 Students**

**RFT A**

**12 Students**

**Oral History Project  
& 4 NYC Fieldtrips**

**RFT B**

**12 Students**

**Oral History Project  
& 4 NYC Fieldtrips**

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# Features of the FYP

- Only Full Time Faculty Teach In The Program
  - Faculty Commit To A Variety of Meetings
    - Half Day Meeting Prior To Freshman Orientation
    - Three 90 Minute FYP Meetings Per Semester
    - Two Day Retreat Between Submission Of Spring Semester Grades And Commencement.
  - A Freshman LC Is Required of All Freshmen In The First Semester
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# Main Insight:

- We Have Kept The Program Alive By Continually Developing The Program Through Formal And Informal Reflection On What Is Working And What Is Not Working
  - This Creates A Sense Of Ownership And Commitment Among The Participants.
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## An Example:

### The FYP Faculty Guide (August 1999)

#### Table of Contents (7 pages)

- General Description
  - The Reflective Tutorial
  - Goals for Student Writing
  - Guidelines for Writing
  - Experiential Learning
  - The Diversity Program
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# An Example:

## FYP Faculty Guide Spring 2007 (23 pages)

### **Table of Contents (23 pages)**

[Note: Includes Learning Goals For Each Topic]

- **The First-Year Learning Community.....3**
- **FYP Governance.....6**
- **Writing.....8**
- **Reading.....14**
- **Information Literacy.....16**
- **Experiential Learning.....18**
- **Diversity Program.....20**
- **Academic Honesty Policy.....21**

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# Points of Comparison for Lessons

- Writing
  - Information Literacy (Research)
  - Academic Honesty
  - Experiential Learning
  - Diversity Program
  - Assessment
  - Faculty Incentives
  - Faculty Governance
  - Shared Governance
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# Writing

## ■ Fall 1998

- Director of Writing
- Director of Writing Center
- Writing Intensive Tutors (WITS) introduced
- Goals for Student Writing, Categories of Writing, Formal Writing Guidelines (Requirements)
- Optional Workshops On Teaching Writing Offered To Faculty

## ■ Fall 2007

- Required Workshops for New FYP Faculty
  - More Specific Writing Guidelines
  - More effective use of WITS and Writing Center
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# Writing - Lessons

- It Is A Continuing Challenge.
  - Many Faculty Fear Teaching Writing
  - 1998: “You should have learned this freshman year”  
2007: “I know you learned this freshman year.”
  - Assessment of Writing Creates Various Feedback Loop
  - Faculty Workshops On Teaching Writing Need To Be Mandatory
  - Faculty Teaching Of Writing Has To Be Faculty Monitored
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# Information Literacy (Research)

- Fall 1998
    - “All freshmen should be introduced to the library through an orientation to its resources. Part of this familiarity includes developing the skill to sort through the varying levels of authority and validity of sources.”
  - Fall 2007
    - Research Intensive Tutor (RIT) Program
    - The FYP will adhere to the guidelines established by the Association of College and Research Libraries
    - Required Research Paper In All RFTs
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# Information Literacy - Lessons

- The Dean Of The Library Should Participate In The FYP.
- The Dean Of The Library Uses Fyp Meetings To Discover And Respond To Faculty Needs From The Library (Not Just To Disseminate Information)



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# Academic Honesty

- Fall 1998
    - The FYP Faculty is charged with familiarizing the students with plagiarism and dishonesty.
  - Fall 2007
    - Creation of Academic Honesty Committee (2000)
    - Academic Honesty & Integrity Handbook
    - All Freshmen Sign Forms Attesting That They Have Received Instruction in Academic Honesty
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# Academic Honesty - Lessons

- Use the FYP to improve socialization of students into academic honesty expectations.
  - This Can Change The Academic Culture of The College
    - eg. This Year The Students Took The Initiative To Draft and Implement Their Own Honor Code
    - The Students Presented This To The Faculty And Asked Them To Include It In Their Syllabi
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# Experiential Learning

- Fall 1998:

- “Students are expected to participate in at least three (3) hours of fieldwork per week. The Experiential Learning Component utilizes a wide variety of agencies and organizations to provide the opportunities for field based learning. The Office of Experiential Learning coordinates all experiential learning placements.”

- Fall 2007

- “The experiential learning component of the LC may take any of an array of possible forms: service learning, participatory learning/mentorships, independent study, field trips, and community research. With rare exception, these experiences take place off campus.”
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# Experiential Learning: Lessons

- Faculty Skepticism Won't Go Away
  - Flexibility
  - Financial Support
  - Constantly return to faculty-driven discussions
  - Administrative Support
    - Community Links
    - Faculty Pairings
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# Diversity Program

- First Model: Community Groups Present To Students In Night-time Meetings.
  - Second Model: A Team Of Faculty Puts Together A Common Set Of Readings And Visit Freshman Rfts For Discussion Sections
  - Third Model: A Theatre Production Followed By Discussion Attended By Freshman Rfts.
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# Diversity Program: Lessons

- Don't Be Afraid To Abandon Models That Don't Work
  - Stay Committed To Discussing Diversity
  - Most Faculty Are Not Comfortable With Addressing Issues of Diversity
  - This Was Originally Imposed From Above; It Can't Be
  - It Finally Worked Because The Faculty Developed A More Effective Model Hence More Faculty Bought Into The Goal.
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# Assessment

- Fall 1998
    - Learning Community Evaluation  
(Given to students end of fall semester)
    - Experiential Component Evaluation  
(Given to students end of fall semester)
    - First Year Evaluation  
(Given to students end of spring semester)
    - FYP Retreat Evaluation  
(Given to FYP faculty at end of retreat)
    - Site Supervisor Evaluation
    - Student Focus Groups
  - Fall 2007
    - Writing Assessment Project
    - National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
    - Collegiate Learning Assessment Tool (CLA)
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# Assessment: Lessons

- You Need An Administrator Who From The Beginning Is Charged With Creating Assessment Tools.
  - Assessment Provides Justification For Continuation And Correction Of The Program.
  - Faculty Have Eagerly Responded To Assessment Results
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# Faculty Incentives

- Fall 1998
    - First Faculty to Experience Course Reduction from 4-4 to 4-3
  - Fall 2000
    - \$1000 Stipend
  - Fall 2005
    - Faculty Sign Contract Committing To 3 Years In Exchange For Either:
      - First Faculty To Experience Course Reduction From 4-3 To 3-3 Or
      - Professional Development Semester  
(Faculty Teach 4-3 For Three Years To Earn One Semester Off)
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# Faculty Incentives: Lessons

- You Must Have Faculty Incentives
  - Faculty Support Each Other Outside Their Individual Disciplines
  - Required Meetings Created A Safe Environment For Discussion Of Best And Worst Practices.
  - Faculty Feel A Personal Responsibility For The Problem Of Freshman Retention.
  - Recruitment Of Majors
  - Faculty Enjoy Working With A Colleague In Another Field.
  - You Can't Force Faculty To Participate
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# Faculty Governance

- Fall 1998
    - FYP Coordinator elected by the FYP Faculty from the FYP Faculty for a two year term.
    - Director of Writing and Director of Writing Center
    - Three meetings per semester, one retreat before Commencement, one meeting prior to freshman orientation.
    - FYP Guide
    - Dean of Experiential Learning
  - Fall 2007
    - Dean of Learning Communities & Experiential Learning oversees LC Coordinators and Community Based Learning
    - FYP Review Committee With Five FYP Faculty and Two Administrators
    - Criteria for Reviewing FYP Faculty
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# Faculty Governance: Lessons

- A First Year Program Requires Additional Commitment Above and Beyond Usual Faculty Duties (e.g. adherence to FYP Learning Goals)
  - It Takes Time To Get Faculty To Agree To Assessment, Evaluation, And Oversight
  - However, Over Time, Committed Faculty Want All FYP Faculty To Adhere to FYP Learning Goals
  - This Provides FYP Faculty With A Motivation To Establish Criteria And Procedure For Faculty Review
  - You Need An Administrator, A Faculty Coordinator and Review Committee With Integrity To Provide Continuity
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# Shared Governance

## ■ Fall 1998

- First Year Faculty
- Administrators and Staff: Provost, Dean of Experiential Learning, The Librarian, Assistant Athletic Director for Academic Affairs, Director of Writing Center, Director of Academic Advising, Dean of Students

## ■ Fall 2007

- New Position: Dean of the College
  - New Position: Dean of Learning Communities & Experiential Learning
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# Shared Governance: Lessons

- Provost Must Continue To Spotlight The Program As A Showcase Of The Institution
  - Continuity Of Administrators: New Academic Leaders Must Be Committed To Continuing The Program.
  - The Faculty Must Consciously Educate The New Academic Leader Into The Culture Of The Program.
  - There Must Be Shared Governance For The Program To Succeed.
  - There Must Be Campus Wide Commitment And Engagement
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