

Centenary College: First-Year Experience and Information Technology Studies

1. Title

“Centenary College, First-Year Experience and Information Technology Studies: Information Fluency Project”

2. Names of leaders and contact info

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3. Abstract of project

The Centenary Information Fluency Project will create a set of resources for providing students the First Year Experience (FYE) with information fluency (IF) skills. These resources, including digital tutorials, classroom exercises, informational texts, and IF workshop materials, will be developed by a student intern in the Information Technology Studies (ITS) program, in consultation with FYE faculty, the college writing lab, and Centenary’s library and computing staff. After initial tryouts with fall 2001 FYE classes of all resources, spring 2002 FYE classes will have access to the same throughout the term. After assessment, the ACS member colleges will then receive access to the digital resources, while Centenary remains open to IF collaboration.

4. Rationale

Appreciating the benefits of IF, while at the same time being concerned with instilling in students a combination of research and critical information technology skills, Centenary College considers a first-year IF program to be a good solution to achieving both of these goals.

Since all incoming students, first-year and transfer, must take FYE classes, this program will, in repetition, cover the entire student body within four years of its implementation.

Centenary faculty have expressed concerns that students be able to conduct research at a level both initial and critical. Each department considers itself sufficient at teaching its own discipline-specific methods and materials, but most argue that students lack more general research skills, including the ability to move critically among new information technologies. FYE classes cut across disciplines with rigor and attention to textual work; therefore they are well suited to integrate IF in all students, prior (or, in some cases, parallel with) work within specific disciplines. The creation of digital resources will enable easy replication of these tutorials and informational texts. This gives Centenary faculty ready access to the materials, at times and schedules of their choosing. Further, these materials can be easily accessed (and suited to their local needs) by other ACS schools.

The mobilization of Centenary’s burgeoning writing lab will have several positive effects. First, students will be able to learn IF in yet another venue: the personalized instruction setting of the lab. Second, the students working in the lab (mostly or entirely English and Communication senior seminar members) will learn how to teach IF. Aside from the powerful benefit resulting from teaching a studied subject, this learning situation also increases these seniors’ general teaching experience and skills. Third, an IF-ready writing lab will be better able to assist Centenary students’ research and information technology needs.

The collaboration between FYE faculty, a student intern, and writing lab students will empower the latter as researchers and teachers. This will serve as an unusual and applied student-faculty mentoring.

The collaboration between FYE faculty, students, and the college library will help build contacts, informational links, trust, and a spirit of joint work between these institutional sectors of the campus. Externally, a successful implementation of this project will serve as a useful model of such cross-institutional collaboration.

5. **Preliminary description:**

a) **number of days project lasts**

Four months, initial phase (fall 2001); four subsequent months of tutorials being tested and assessed (spring 2002).

b) **agenda**

Fall 2001

1. Selection of student intern (summer-August)
2. Initial consultations between intern, FYE faculty, library/IT staff, and writing lab students (August-September)
3. Student intern researches IF, using both print and on-line materials (August-September)
4. Development of digital tutorials, writing lab materials, and classroom materials; continual collaboration with IF group. Materials partially created and fully backed up on project laptop (September-October)
5. IF workshops conducted, materials made available to FYE faculty (the English department) (November-December)
6. Assessment meetings between selected FYE faculty, intern, writing lab volunteers, and project director (December)

Spring 2002

1. Distribution of IF materials to spring FYE faculty (January)
2. Consultations between intern and FYE faculty (January-April)
3. Creation of assessment instrument (March)
4. End of term assessment of materials (April)

c) **strategies for recruiting participants**

ITS advisors Alexander and Schlatter will recruit from existing (and burgeoning) group of Centenary ITS students. They will also recruit from seniors (who are generally too far along to take the ITS program, but who share its focus in their class and in independent work). Writing lab students will be recruited by appeals to their professional skills, as well as by the offer of a \$100/student stipend for their time and energy spent learning IF. Library staffer Grunes, English department chair Hendricks, FYE director Shelburne have already been recruited.

Fall and spring FYE faculty have informally expressed support for the IF project.

d) **target audience**

Centenary students and FYE faculty.

6. **Plans: follow-up, evaluation**

Fall 2002: a series of meetings between selected FYE faculty, writing lab students, intern, and project director. This will gauge immediate student responses to the introduction of IF.

Spring 2002: FYE faculty, the ITS intern, and project supervisor will compare notes on student use of IF. Assessment instrument will be used, and project director will collate data.

7. **Dissemination to ACS and beyond**

Digital learning materials created by intern will be available to ACS IF teams.

Assessment results will be reported to ACS leadership (Suzanne Bonefas, Barbara Halbert).

8. **Time of year**

Fall 2001-Spring 2002.