



First Year Program

College of the Holy Cross

Program Description:

The Holy Cross First-Year Program (FYP) targets 1st year students interested in exploring the connections between what happens inside the classroom and the world outside the classroom. The program brings together first-year students and a group of distinguished faculty from a variety of disciplines.

Each year a new faculty group designs the year's seminars and activities around the theme of the program. By tradition, that theme incorporates 19th-century Russian author Leo Tolstoy's question: "How, Then, Shall We Live?"

Program History:

Holy Cross' First Year Program was created in 1990 following a student life report and curriculum report generated as the university prepared for reaccreditation. FYP was originally offered to 20 to 25 percent of each incoming class. Since 1990, the program has received national attention and achieved enormous success including, improved, classroom performance, more campus leadership, more community service, and higher retention and graduation rates.

Program Goals:

Tolstoy's question, How, Then, Shall We Live? is the heart and soul of the FYP and it is a question central to the educational mission of Holy Cross as a Jesuit, liberal arts college. Whether one is a student making college-course and life choices, or a faculty member grappling with the demands of family and professional life, this is the question everyone in the FYP asks and works to answer.

The goal of the program is to make it easier for first-year students to discover they can believe in what they learn, how they think, and the way they live and how they are interconnected.

Program Layout:

There are typically eight year-long seminars offered per year, each taught on a semester schedule. Even though each seminar covers different academic areas, all FYP students read six common readings, three in the winter semester and three in the spring. All FYP members live within the same residence hall. The program also features many lectures, trips, and social activities incorporated with the year's theme.

Effectiveness/Evaluation/Assessment:

Evaluation in 1998 of Holy Cross' First Year program shows positive results for student participants. Students have been accessed after their first year by questionnaire, focus groups, and interviews during their fourth year of college. Additionally, faculty involved in FYP are interviewed and other sources of student/institutional data were analyzed.

The complete evaluation of the FYP program was featured in the May/June 1998 issue of *Change: The Magazine*