

Appendix i: Data from 52 comparison institutions

We looked at the websites for colleges that were already part of the research basis for the residential commons committee. Jenny Andrews looked at the bottom half of the top 50 schools from US NEWS 2000-2001 top tier Liberal Arts; Jamie McBride updated it to include the top half of the 2003-2004 list, adding in any additional bottom half institutions which weren't on the earlier list. Italicized schools are those with whom we did follow-up phone interviews.

Barnard (both first-year seminar and first-year comp)

Bates (topical first-year seminar; some may also fulfill a gen ed requirement)

Beloit (first-year seminar fall, follows week-long orientation; spring has various structured activities; the seminars focus on non-disciplinary topics “revolving around a common theme”)

Bowdoin (topical first-year seminars)

Bucknell (topical “foundation” seminar, small project to move some into res halls by themes)

Bryn Mawr (topical first-year seminars)

Carleton (various options for completing a writing-intensive first-year requirement, including a topical first-year seminar, freshmen-only intro courses, and a first-year composition course)

Centre C (a 12-hour January term topical first-year seminar)

Claremont McKenna (one semester of “Questions of Civilization”—roughly half the books in common)

Colby (no first-year program)

Colgate (core program with multiple courses)

Colorado (topical First Course and program of first-year peer advisors)

Connecticut C (two small programs: 25-student Freshman Focus of paired courses both semesters, and some Learning & Living seminars)

Davidson (students may satisfy composition requirement in a course from English or other departments or by completing first year of the Humanities Program)

Denison (two semesters, but the first one is just fyc, then a topical seminar which also satisfies a gen ed group)

DePauw (topical first-year seminars)

Dickinson (topical first-year seminars)

Franklin & Marshall (topical first-year seminar is one way to satisfy the writing requirement)

Fuhrman (no first-year program)

Gettysburg (topical first-year seminar is one way to satisfy the writing requirement)

Grinnell (topical first-year “Tutorial”)

Hamilton (no first-year program)

Harvey Mudd (no first-year program)

Haverford (topical first-year writing seminars which follow a fall-semester writing seminar—sounds like freshman comp)

Hobart and William Smith (topical first-year seminars, trying to develop residential components)

Holy Cross (two semesters of seminars loosely related to a capacious annual theme, common readings set for specific dates in the year)

Illinois-Wesleyan (topical “Gateway Colloquium” seminars)

Kenyon (no first-year program)

Lawrence (two semesters of a common text western civ type course)

Macalester (topical first-year seminar)

Middlebury (topical first-year seminars)

Mount Holyoke (topical first-year seminars)

Oberlin (no first-year program)

Occidental (elaborated program of required seminars and colloquia—12 hours total—as Cultural Studies)
Reed (humanities/western civ)
Rhodes (core program with multiple courses)
St. Olaf (no first-year program)
Sarah Lawrence (no first-year program)
Scripps (core program, multiple courses)
Sewanee (Uof the South; pilot project of topical first-year seminar is optional as is accompanying first-year co-curricular program)
Skidmore (Liberal Studies 1 “Human Dilemmas” is a common-texts-and-lectures course)
Southwestern (topical first-year seminars)
Swarthmore (no first-year program)
Trinity (topical first-year seminar)
Union (topical first-year seminar)
Vassar (topical Freshman Course)
Washington and Lee (no first-year program)
Wellesley (has an orientation and res-life mentoring program, no seminar program, FYC)
Wheaton (freshman block is 2 hours of theology of Culture, 1 hour freshman experience, 2 hours wellness)
Whitman (two-semester humanities core)
Williams (no specific first-year courses)
Wooster (topical first-year seminars, small program of Living and Learning Project)

Or, in categories:

No first-year program of note (11)

Colby
Fuhrman
Hamilton
Harvey Mudd
Kenyon
St Olaf
Sarah Lawrence
Swarthmore
Washington and Lee
Wellesley
Williams

Western Civ/Humanities (5)

Claremont McKenna (two courses: civ & lit)
Lawrence (common texts; two semesters)
Reed (common texts; two semesters)
Skidmore (common texts; 2nd semester variety)
Whitman (common texts; two semesters)

Core curriculum w. multiple courses (4)

Colgate
Rhodes
Scripps
Wheaton

Topical seminar (not required) (3)

Connecticut C (small program)
Sewanee (70% + waiting list)
Trinity (all but 3 fy students)

Options for satisfying writing, including a seminar (3)

Carleton
Davidson
Gettysburg (75-80% take this option)

First-Year Composition, then FYS (2)

Denison
Haverford

Topical First-Year Seminars (required of all first-year students) (24)

Barnard (and FYC)	Holy Cross (2 semesters)
Bates	Illinois Wesleyan
Beloit	Macalester
Bowdoin	Middlebury
Bucknell	Mount Holyoke
<i>Bryn Mawr</i>	Oberlin
Centre	Occidental (2 semesters, 12 hours)
<i>Colorado</i> (2 “blocks”)	Southwestern
DePauw	<i>Trinity(Hartford)</i>
Dickinson	Union
<i>Grinnell</i>	Vassar
<i>Hobart & Wm Smith</i>	<i>Wooster</i>

Explanation of the categories

Colleges with “no first-year program of note” require no first-year seminar, set of core courses, or first-year humanities/western civilization sequence. Some require first-year composition of all students and several have a distributive general education requirement. One interesting variation here is Colby College, where all students must take four “proseminars” and three writing-intensive courses before graduating.

The most highly structured programs are the core curricular, with at least four common courses taken within the first two years. We did not pursue these further because they are incompatible with Willamette’s general education program.

A kind of bridge between a core curriculum and Willamette's current common syllabus first-year seminar is the required humanities/western civilization course. At Reed, this is a one-semester course and is the only course required of all first-year students; at Claremont-McKenna both Western Civilization and Composition-Literature are required of all first-year students. Whitman has a two-semester humanities/western civ requirement of all students taught with a common syllabus, as does Lawrence University (where the emphasis is humanities but not really taught as western civilization). The Skidmore requirement is a common course called The Human Experience (topic is "What it means to be human") with a second semester required seminar that is related to The Human Experience but varies from section to section.

The remaining 32 colleges have topical first-year seminars. At three institutions, they are not required; however, at Trinity only 3 first-year students did not take the seminar last year, which suggests that students don't understand it to be unrequired! At Sewanee, 70% of students enroll and more on the waiting list for this pilot program. The Connecticut program is a small pilot program. At three other institutions, the first-year seminar is not required, but it is one of two or three options for completing the first-year writing requirement. Denison and Haverford require a topical first-year seminar in the second semester, following a semester of first-year composition.

Thus, 26 (arguably 27 including Trinity) of 52 of the colleges we studied require a one-semester first-year seminar of their students.

