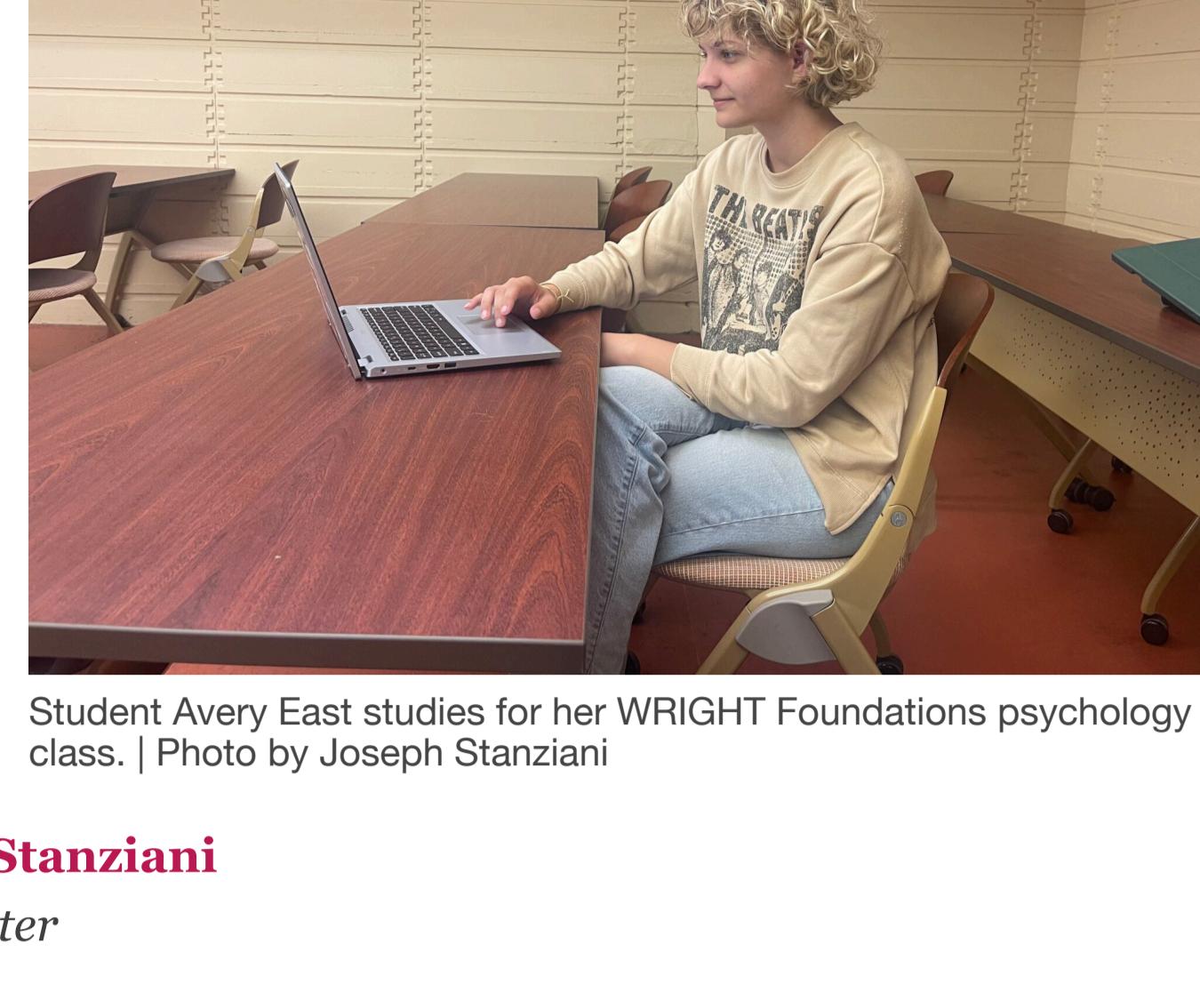


WRIGHT Foundations general education curriculum impacts students & faculty

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Student Avery East studies for her WRIGHT Foundations psychology class. | Photo by Joseph Stanziani

Joseph Stanziani

Staff Writer

FSC has implemented a new General Education curriculum called the WRIGHT Foundations. Named after architect Frank Lloyd Wright, the program focuses on the cornerstone philosophies of academic integrity, dignity and respect which the college is founded on.

Students pursuing the WRIGHT Foundations curriculum take 34 hours or nine classes within a set of six categories: Written and Oral Communication, Resilience in Mind, Body and Spirit, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Global Perspectives, Humanities and Fine Arts and Technology, Math and Natural Sciences. This is a change from the previous general education system, which only had three learning outcome categories: knowledge of the cultural and natural world, intellectual and practical skills and personal and social responsibility. The previous program also required a maximum of 46 hours of Gen-ed classes.

The WRIGHT Foundations curriculum was a response to the growing need for FSC to implement a new General Education system to help both students and faculty.

Education professor and former chair of the gen-ed Committee Dr. Hope Holley explains that the Registrar's office gave feedback and sparked conversations regarding the curriculum changes.

"[The Registrar] attends our meetings but is not a voting member, so especially having [them] heard during our meetings there was a lot of awareness that people, students and faculty, struggled with the double-dipping [of courses]."

This issue of "double-dipping" that Holley describes was one of the main problems with the original gen-ed program. Students were left confused with what classes could count in more than one category. Holley says that with WRIGHT Foundations eliminating double-dipping of courses, students are able to explore minors due to having more room in their schedules.

Dr. Patrick Smith, professor of psychology at FSC, described what he saw when researching and looking at general education programs outside of FSC. Smith's job on the gen-ed committee was to look at other colleges and universities to see how they structured their general education systems and how FSC could reform their own.

"Most institutions are tweaking or completely reformulating their general education and they've been doing so within the past five years or so," Smith said. "My job on the task force was to kind of see what other institutions our size, other regions of the country, what are they doing if you will, as a sort of benchmark."

These changes in how the college handles and views general education has created a ripple effect throughout both the student and teacher body, with reactions to the changes felt on both sides. With the switch from the old general education system to the new one, decisions needed to be made by students about class modifications.

"Departments had to think quickly about classes that were going to be removed from the new general education that were in the old general education," Smith said. "Students also had to make decisions ... but the idea of students deciding whether they want to stay on an old system or jump to a new system, there again were a lot of quick decisions that people had to start making."

While it is still too soon to really gauge the full effect of this new general education system, it is clear that after its first year in effect this program has definitely made its mark on Florida Southern College's education system.



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