

Proposal for a First-Year Seminar at WSU

Rationale

Missing from the WSU first-year experience is a required common experience that engages student in meaningful relationships with their peers, faculty, and the campus community. Seminars of this type are meant to engage students in intellectual discourse in small classes taught by faculty, who have a deep subject matter knowledge and a passion for a topic.

First-year seminars:

- Connect students to a subject matter that is academically engaging and challenging.
- Feature topics that often take an interdisciplinary approach to subject material.
- Provide an opportunity for faculty members to engage with a small group of students (limited to no more than 20 students) in the context of a subject that is personally and professionally meaningful.
- Expose students to a supportive campus environment and building community
- Fulfill a general education curriculum requirement
- Meet the general education goals and outcomes

Component of the General Education Program

All freshmen (i.e., native freshmen or students who have completed less than 24 hours) will be required to take one first-year seminar as a part of Tier 2 (introductory courses in the discipline) of the general education program. Therefore, one of the 7 courses will be a first-year seminar and should be taken in the first 30 hours. First-year seminar courses offered in all colleges will be designated in either the fine arts/humanities, social/behavioral sciences, or mathematics and natural sciences division.

The First-Year Seminar Course

One objective of the first-year seminar is to introduce first-year students to our faculty members from all colleges and the various majors they represent. Thus, tenured and tenure-track faculty from all colleges are strongly encouraged to offer a section. However, fulltime instructors and professors emeriti are also eligible to participate. Seminar design should emphasize themes not covered in current General Education courses, and should prioritize student contributions and peer-to peer interactions. These could include, but are not limited to, topics with contemporary societal relevance.

- The majority of the course will be topic specific (as identified by the instructor – see attached syllabus template)
- Items addressing information literacy, time management, note taking, test taking, personal finance, learning styles, campus resources, campus traditions and culture, and the value of student involvement will be infused as appropriate (see attached syllabus template)
- Peer mentoring will be available as an option

Upon completion of a first-year seminar, a student will have achieved the following learning outcomes:

- Acquired knowledge in the arts, humanities, and/or natural and social sciences
- Demonstrated the ability to think critically and independently
- Effectively write and speak
- Employed analytical reasoning and problem solving techniques
- Developed fundamentals of information literacy and library research
- Developed an appreciation for diversity

First-year seminars will be assessed through the AAC&U writing rubric; National Survey of Student Engagement

Course Development

Faculty will propose seminar courses and route it through the regular curriculum change process. Each seminar will receive:

- The first time the course is offered:
 - \$1,500 in development funding
 - \$2,500 to teach the course (or the minimum rate established in each college)
- Subsequent offerings
 - \$2,500 to teach the course (or the minimum rate established in each college)
- Departments may use these funds to replace lost teaching (due to a faculty member offering the seminar as part of her/his regular teaching load). Or, the faculty member may receive the \$2,500 if s/he is teaching the course as an overload. The stipend would be prorated in the event of team-taught courses.

Monitoring

In an effort to assure that the original intent of the first-year seminar remains in place, the General Education Committee will annually review the following and make recommendations on its continuance:

- Number of sections each semester
- Enrollment of each section
- Faculty category distribution assigned to teach the course
- Financial resources to support the first-year seminar program

Approved by the General Education Committee on October 26, 2015 and the Faculty Senate on December 7, 2015