

# First-Year Seminar (FYS) Proposal

**Motion:** To require all incoming first time in college (FTIC) students to enroll in a First Year Seminar (FYS) during their first or second semester at WSU starting AY 2021-22, with the course to count toward a general education requirement in the arts, humanities, social sciences or natural sciences (as determined by the general education committee).

**Rationale:** FYS courses are designed to help new students make a successful transition to campus, both academically and personally. The courses aim to foster a sense of belonging and promote engagement in the curricular and co-curricular life of the university. They provide a required common experience that engages students 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. The pilot has yielded some successes: Fall to Fall persistence rates for students in the 2016 FYS cohort were 5% higher than non-FYS students and were 7% higher in comparison from their 2nd to 3rd year at the university. (See Appendix for full documentation.)

The opportunity to pilot the FYS courses for three years has resulted in some proposed revisions to the original proposal, suggested by the instructors who have led this effort. These revisions include: a sharper focus on the overarching goals, more clearly articulated learning outcomes, as well as a revised syllabus that clarifies the required content/structure and the optional parameters to help faculty effectively design their courses. It should be noted, however, that some “pilot fatigue” is setting in. A large number of faculty have expressed interest, but until the university makes a commitment to FYS, they do not want to work on developing new courses. A survey of faculty conducted in October 2015 indicated that 61% of faculty would be willing to teach a FYS course (134 of 217 respondents). Of those willing to offer a course, 88% indicated they would attend a workshop on course design and incorporation of student success content, and 92% would attend a workshop to link gen ed content to the course design. A half time faculty FYS Coordinator would strongly support faculty. By requiring a First Year Seminar and linking it with the general education curriculum, WSU will be providing a solid foundation for success for freshmen and supporting the strategic enrollment retention goals.

With 1600 FTIC students in sections of 25, we would need 64 sections per year. The goal would be for 45 unique sections and 19 repeated sections. At \$2500 per course, the cost would be approximately \$160,000. Retaining just 30 additional students would result in sufficient tuition revenue to cover this cost.

## Overarching Goals

- Exploration of engaging academic content
- Exposure to and development of student success and professional skills
- Development of positive relationships with peers, faculty and staff members.

## Course Components

Course content will be roughly divided as follows: 70% on disciplinary content, 25% on Student Success content, and 5% on the Common Read. Student success content can often and should be thematically presented to align with academic content. Student Success content **must** include information literacy (for example face-to-face sessions, online tutorials, videos, and/or resource guides) and **at least three** of the following components: financial literacy, goal setting, degree planning, career planning, time management, stress management/mental health tips, study skills, test taking tips, note taking tips.<sup>1</sup> As part of WSU’s commitment to applied and experiential learning, all courses should require attendance at (or viewing of) Convocation, as well as including a beyond-the-classroom learning opportunity.<sup>2</sup>

## **Endorsed unanimously by the General Education Committee with support from the First Year Seminar instructors:**

Shirlene Small, Chair  
Aaron Rife  
Steve Oare

Becky Nordyke  
Roy Myose  
Kathy Delker

Chris Broberg  
Rannfried Thelle  
Mathew Muether

Additional information can be found in FYS supporting material

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<sup>1</sup> Instructors can readily draw on expert resources across campus to provide content in these student success topics. Resources include: Library personnel, the Office of Student Success, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the Counseling Center, the Career Development Center, and the Office of Student Money Management.

<sup>2</sup> Examples of beyond-the-class opportunities include but are not limited to campus lecture/speaker’s series, cultural performances, service learning, community service, leadership programs or workshops, a diversity event, a campus club/organization event, a residence hall program, an Outdoor Recreation program. Inviting students to write a reflection paper or journal entry on their experience(s) or engage in small group discussion can further develop their writing and speaking skills.