

**To:** Commonwealth Campus FYE contacts

**From:** Caroline D. Eckhardt and Yvonne Gaudelius, Co-chairs, Joint Senate/Administrative Review Committee of the First-Year Engagement Plans

**Date:** October 21, 2008

**Subject:** First-Year Engagement Resources, Review Process, and Timetable

In April 2008 the Faculty Senate approved legislation to reshape the first-year experience of our Penn State students. According to this legislation, First-Year Engagement (FYE) plans must be approved during the current academic year and be ready for implementation by all campuses, colleges, and the Division of Undergraduate Studies by Summer 2009. A Joint Senate/Administrative Review Committee of the First-Year Engagement plans has been formed and charged with reviewing the First-Year Engagement plans that all colleges, campuses, and DUS are required to prepare and submit. As the co-chairs of this committee, we hope to make the FYE implementation process as streamlined and efficient as possible.

## **BACKGROUND**

Our starting point is that all First-Year Engagement plans must fulfill the goals and objectives of the Senate legislation. The criteria that the committee will use to review the First-Year Engagement plans are taken directly from the Senate legislation (see full legislation attached.) These goals and objectives are as follows:

### Goals

- To engage students in learning and orient them to the scholarly community from the outset of their undergraduate studies in a way that will bridge to later experiences in their chosen majors, and
- To facilitate students' adjustment to the high expectations, demanding workload, increased liberties, and other aspects of the transition to college life.

### Objectives

- To introduce students to University study,
- To introduce students to Penn State as an academic community, including fields of study and areas of interest available to students,
- To acquaint students with the learning tools and resources available at Penn State,
- To provide an opportunity for students to develop relationships with full-time faculty and other students in an academic area of interest to them, and
- To introduce students to their responsibilities as part of the University community.

## **TWO COMPONENTS OF A COMMONWEALTH CAMPUS FYE PLAN**

### **1. First-Year Seminars and/or First-Year Engagement Activities**

Each campus must develop a First-Year Engagement plan that directly addresses the goals and objectives above. Commonwealth Campuses are no longer required to offer First-Year Seminars, however, campuses may offer First-Year Seminars if they wish.

If your campus chooses to continue offering First-Year Seminars that are all three-credit seminars and meet the above conditions then your campus's First-Year Engagement plan can simply certify this in your submission. Campuses are encouraged to develop additional engagement activities that will support the three-credit seminar, but this is not required.

If your campus chooses to offer First-Year Seminars that carry less than a three-credit weight, then the campus's First-Year Engagement plan must include additional engagement activities that will support the seminar. These additional experiences could be other courses, special advising programs, intensive orientation experiences, special programs offered by Student Affairs, etc. Examples will be provided on the FYE website.

(see <http://senate.psu.edu/FYE/fye.htm>)

If the departments and programs at your campus will offer a mix of seminars that carry different weights, your plan should explain each of these separately. You would submit the three-credit seminars as one group, the two-credit seminars and the engagement plan that supports them as another group, the stand-alone Engagement Plans as another group, etc.

If you choose not to offer First-Year Seminars, your campus FYE plan must describe how small-classroom experiences taught by full-time faculty members will be achieved for all students at your campus.

### **2. Assessment of FYE Outcomes**

The Senate legislation requires assessment. All campuses must submit an assessment plan as part of their First-Year Engagement plans, indicating how you will assess the extent to which the desired goals and objectives are being met.

## **TIMETABLE**

The timeline for the process of FYE planning and implementation is as follows:

February 1, 2009: electronic submission deadline for campus plans;  
March 15, 2009: committee's review of plan returned to campus; and,  
Summer 2009 (second session): implementation of plans

The committee encourages you to submit your campus's FYE plan as soon as it is ready. This will expedite the review process and allow campuses more time to implement their plans.

## **SUBMISSION PROCESS FOR CAMPUS PLANS AND FYE WEBSITE**

Information on the submission of your campus's FYE plan will be forthcoming. We anticipate that an electronic submission form will soon be available at the FYE website:

<http://senate.psu.edu/FYE/fye.htm>.

To assist in the preparation of your campus's First-Year Engagement plan, this website also provides a list of college and campus FYE contacts, in case you wish to be in touch with each other. Examples of good practices for components such as First-Year Engagement activities; a list of possible learning outcomes that are measurable for use in assessment plans; a list of Frequently Asked Questions; the Senate legislation governing FYE; and additional resources that you and your colleagues may find helpful appear on the website.

When plans have been approved, they will be posted on the FYE website. We hope to have a few plans submitted, and approved, early in order to serve as examples.

Please note that this website is still under development and additional materials will be added within the next couple of weeks. We encourage you to refer to it frequently.

If you have any questions about the content of your FYE plan or the submission and review process, please contact Yvonne Gaudelius at [ymg100@psu.edu](mailto:ymg100@psu.edu).