

**To:** University Park 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.

## **THREE COMPONENTS OF A UNIVERSITY PARK FYE PLAN**

### **1. First-Year Seminars and, Where Applicable, Supporting Activities**

The Senate legislation requires all University Park colleges to retain at least one credit of First-Year Seminar as a requirement for graduation. To qualify as First-Year Seminars, courses must directly address the goals and objectives above, and also be:

- Taught by tenure-line or other regular, full-time faculty members (not staff or graduate students)
- Taught in the student's college of enrollment
- Taught in sections of not more than 25 students
- Academic in content, exemplifying the full weightiness and expectations of University-level coursework

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

If your college's First-Year Seminars carry less than a three-credit weight, then the college'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 are provided on the FYE website (see <http://senate.psu.edu/FYE/fye.htm>).

If the departments and programs within your college 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, etc.

### **2. Accommodation of DUS Students**

In addition to providing First-Year Seminars for students entering your college upon Penn State enrollment, the legislation requires University Park colleges to accommodate, in their First-Year Seminar and Engagement plans, DUS students who plan on entering the college. Your plan should briefly explain how your college will accommodate these students. The Office of Undergraduate Education will provide each college with an annual number of First-Year Seminar spaces that must be made available to DUS students. This target will be based on data showing a rolling average number of students who have moved from DUS into your college in the past three years.

If your First-Year Seminars carry fewer than 3 credits, DUS students must also be accommodated in the supporting programming that will accompany your 1- or 2-credit seminars.

### 3. Assessment of FYE Outcomes

The Senate legislation requires assessment. All colleges 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 college plans;

March 15, 2009: committee's review of plan returned to college; and,

Summer 2009 (second session): implementation of plans

The committee encourages units to submit their FYE plan as soon as it is ready. This will expedite the review process and allow colleges more time to implement their plans.

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

Information on the submission of your unit'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 college'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 [yng100@psu.edu](mailto:yng100@psu.edu).