University of Minnesota

Teaching Freshman Seminars

Faculty Handbook
By Laura Coffin Koch and Judith Anderson.

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# Teaching Freshman Seminars

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Teaching Freshman Seminars

To: Faculty Teaching Freshman Seminars

From: Laura Coffin Koch,
Associate Vice Provost
First-Year Programs

Over the last few years, the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus has seen increases in first-year retention rates, student satisfaction, and academic success. We believe that much of this is due to the emphasis on the development of programs for first-year students. The most notable of these is the Freshman Seminar Program. We have offered Freshman Seminars for the past five years at the University of Minnesota and during that time have learned about the benefit and value of these classes to the academic success of our first-year students. We have also learned more about our students and how we might better calibrate our expectations in teaching Freshman Seminars to our students’ expectations of us and the seminar experience.

This handbook was developed to respond to comments and concerns that faculty members teaching Freshman Seminars on the Twin Cities campus have made in evaluations and discussions about this unique experience. This handbook provides an overview of the context in which Freshman Seminars were developed at the University of Minnesota, as well as a discussion of the goals and objectives of the program. If you are new to teaching Freshman Seminars, this handbook should help you develop your course and prepare you to teach first-year students.

Your work with students in Freshman Seminar courses goes beyond teaching the academic content of your courses. You are creating a learning community, helping first-year students adjust to college life, and providing a challenging academic experience. Students who take Freshman Seminars are more likely to return for their sophomore year and are more likely to graduate (even after controlling for factors such as a student’s high school rank or ACT test score) than are other students.

Hopefully, the information presented in this handbook will be useful as you help students in this most valuable experience. Overwhelmingly, faculty involved in teaching Freshman Seminars have enjoyed the experience. If you have any questions or concerns about teaching your seminar, please contact me at 612-624-1085 or koch@umn.edu. Thank you for your wonderful and unique contributions to our first-year students.
History of the University of Minnesota Freshman Seminar

In the early 1990s, the University of Minnesota, along with many other colleges and universities nationwide, addressed the need to strengthen the undergraduate experience and increase retention and graduation rates. Nationally, approximately 74 percent of institutions offer a special course for first-year students called a first-year seminar, colloquium, or student success course (Skipper, 2002). Vincent Tinto (1993), a noted retention scholar, writes that beyond the statistics on retention and grades, the primary focus of Freshmen Seminars should be to improve the educational experiences of first-year students. As Levitz and Noel (1989) point out, “If students make it through the first year successfully, the chances that they will persist improve considerably. When we examine data from individual institutions, we find that attrition generally decreases by almost 50 percent with each passing year of a student’s education. Clearly, then, the most effective way to boost the freshmen-to-graduation rate is to improve performance in the first year” (p.65).

Under the leadership of President Nils Hasselmo, the University initiated a series of faculty-led discussions that resulted in the creation of The Report of the Committee on Teaching and Learning. The discussions were aimed at adopting strategies to change the University’s institutional climate to give greater priority to high quality teaching. As part of the plan to improve the quality of teaching and learning, the University also embarked on a major plan to strengthen undergraduate education and to improve the University climate to make it more welcoming for undergraduate students. These efforts are paying off. Of freshmen who entered the Twin Cities campus in fall 1990, only 79.4 percent returned for their sophomore year; four years later only 12.2 percent of these students had graduated. This fall, the freshman to sophomore retention rate was 85.8 percent, and the most recent four year graduation rate is 31.3 percent.

In an effort to effectively contribute to the improvement of the undergraduate experience, and to create an educational culture that supports student learning both inside and outside the classroom, the First-Year Experience (FYE) Project was initiated in 1995. A First-Year Experience Project Team comprised of administrators, faculty, student development professionals, students, and other campus representatives formed to work on this project. The goals of the FYE Project Team were to:

- Impact retention and graduation rates,
- Increase student satisfaction with their college experience,
- Coordinate and expand on initiatives related to the first-year experience,
- Develop a sense of community and belonging for first-year students, and
- Enhance communication among students and between faculty and students.

The establishment of the Freshman Seminars in 1998 was a faculty led initiative aimed at improving the undergraduate learning experience on campus. In addition,
it addressed a number of concerns and desires revealed in faculty needs assessment surveys. These pertained to concerns about student preparedness and levels of motivation, as well as a desire on the part of faculty to understand the needs of students in their first year of college and to enhance their teaching strategies to include active learning and teaching techniques.

The growth of Freshman Seminars reflects faculty enthusiasm and a sustained commitment to improving the undergraduate experience. Funding for the program represents a collaborative effort and shared belief in improving undergraduate education. While the long-term goal was to provide a Freshman Seminar experience to every first-year student on the Twin Cities campus—approximately 5000 students—funds for only 35 new faculty positions were allocated by the legislature. Since 1998, more than 225 faculty members campus-wide have taught at least one Freshman Seminar. Only 20 Freshman Seminars were offered in the 1998-99 academic year, but by 2003-04 academic year the number of seminars had grown to more than 125. The number of students participating in Freshman Seminars has grown from 8 percent (400 students) in 1999 to 37 percent (1,912 students) in 2003.

We have tracked the success of Freshman Seminars by measuring the retention and academic success over the history of the program. Although students self select to participate in a Freshman Seminar, the data indicate that they are more likely to succeed at the University of Minnesota if they take a Freshman Seminar. Over a period of five years, students who took a Freshman Seminar have a higher retention rate, grade point averages, and are more likely to graduate than their peers who did not participate in a Freshman Seminar. This holds true regardless of whether the data is analyzed by gender, ethnicity, geographic location, ACT scores, or high school class rank.

### First-Year Retention and Graduation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total No.</th>
<th>Returned 2nd-year</th>
<th>Returned 3rd-year</th>
<th>Returned 4th-year*</th>
<th>Returned 5th-year*</th>
<th>Returned 2nd-year</th>
<th>Returned 3rd-year</th>
<th>Returned 4th-year</th>
<th>Graduated 4 year</th>
<th>Graduated 5 year</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>All Students</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>5,166</td>
<td>4,218</td>
<td>3,624</td>
<td>3,388</td>
<td>3,180</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>5,195</td>
<td>4,284</td>
<td>3,809</td>
<td>3,509</td>
<td>3,429</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>4,957</td>
<td>4,106</td>
<td>3,620</td>
<td>3,315</td>
<td></td>
<td>82.8%</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>66.9%</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>5,344</td>
<td>4,494</td>
<td>4,025</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>84.1%</td>
<td>75.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>5,188</td>
<td>4,453</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>85.8%</td>
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<td><strong>Students Who Did Not Take a Freshman Seminar</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>4,466</td>
<td>3,603</td>
<td>3,074</td>
<td>2,858</td>
<td>2,692</td>
<td>80.7%</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>3,931</td>
<td>3,221</td>
<td>2,846</td>
<td>2,629</td>
<td>2,579</td>
<td>81.9%</td>
<td>72.4%</td>
<td>66.9%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3,395</td>
<td>2,752</td>
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<td>81.1%</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>3,701</td>
<td>3,086</td>
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<td>82.9%</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>3,365</td>
<td>2,848</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>Students Who Took a Freshman Seminar</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>89.4%</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
<td>78.0%</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>952</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>661</td>
<td>84.5%</td>
<td>77.1%</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1,265</td>
<td>1,104</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>893</td>
<td></td>
<td>87.3%</td>
<td>79.1%</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1,399</td>
<td>1,215</td>
<td>1,105</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>86.8%</td>
<td>79.0%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1,667</td>
<td>1,474</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>88.4%</td>
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* Returned or graduated.
In addition to Freshman Seminars, the First-Year Experience initiatives included campus-wide a revised New Student Orientation, Student Excellence in Academics and Multiculturalism (SEAM), New Student Convocation, Living and Learning Communities in Housing and Residential Life, Take-a-Professor-to-Lunch Program, and the Leadership Minor Program. Furthermore, a variety of advisory committees have been established to continue addressing first-year student issues:

- Cross-disciplinary Commuter Student Advisory Group
- Cross Functional Team on Residential Life
- First-Year Programs Advisory Committee
- New Student Transition Group
- First-Year Research Advisory Group
- First-Year Communications Task Force

In addition, most colleges have developed special programming to help their students make a successful transition to the University.

“It was the highlight of my fall term. It reminded me of why I went into academia.”

Freshman Seminar faculty
Philosophy and Goals of the Freshman Seminar

The Freshman Seminar experience is intended to be a unique learning opportunity for first-year students entering the university. As much as it is an academic course designed to engage students in an academic discipline, it is also an opportunity for students to participate in dialogue, develop college level academic skills, and build community. The Freshman Seminar classroom is intended to be a place of community, shared learning, and intellectual growth.

The most successful Freshman Seminars have the following characteristics:

• They are taught by faculty who have a genuine interest in engaging with first-year students and who are willing to connect with students on issues not directly related to the course material.
• They are on a subject that is meaningful and accessible to first-year students.
• They are designed to encourage discussion and writing.
• They help students develop skills that will help them succeed at the University (analysis, research, speaking in class, contacting the professor, using the library, and writing).

The University of Minnesota designed the Freshman Seminars to meet specific goals for the undergraduate experience and linked the success of the program to institutional outcomes that are measurable.

University Goals for Freshman Seminars

• Provide enough Freshman Seminars offering a range of topics to meet the demand of first-year students.
• Help students become serious learners by providing exciting and intellectually challenging programs for Freshman Seminars.
• Provide students with a stronger sense of community in a small class environment.
• Facilitate faculty mentoring of students.
• Improve retention by increasing student satisfaction with their University experience.

Freshman Seminar Curricular Objectives for Increased Student Success

• Connect students to faculty and to one another to increase a sense of community for first-year students.
• Enhance students’ abilities to take risks in a new setting.
• Help students develop written and oral communication skills.
• Help students become more purposeful decision makers by encouraging them to define their own educational goals and objectives.
• Hone new students’ analytical and thinking skills.
• Increase students’ commitment to their educational goals.
• Introduce students to inquiry-based learning by helping students become actively involved in the classroom.
• Introduce students to the challenges of learning in a research university by linking seminars to undergraduate research opportunities (UROP).
• Increase faculty mentoring of new students.

Expected Institutional Outcomes for Freshman Seminars
• Higher retention rates
• Higher average credit-loads taken by students
• Increased graduation rates over four and five years
• Increased student satisfaction with university life
• Increased levels of student-faculty contact
• Greater student commitment to education

Expected Student Outcomes for Freshman Seminars
In addition to the University goals and expectations, over the past five years students have expressed their expectations of a Freshman Seminar through the evaluation process. Students are saying that they expect to:
• Learn about their classmates who are sharing similar experiences and challenges at the University and to be directed to University resources;
• Get to know their professor professionally and personally, to feel like they have connected with at least one adult on campus;
• Be engaged through a variety of teaching techniques including small group discussions, student presentations, field trips, and guest speakers; and
• Experience a small class environment that allows them to become involved in their own learning experience.

“This was the best experience I’ve had, teaching a Freshman Seminar. I felt as if the individual voices of almost all the students started to emerge by the end.”

Freshman Seminar faculty
Selecting a Freshman Seminar Topic

Many faculty are interested in teaching a Freshman Seminar but are unsure of what to teach. The topic can be almost anything that the faculty member is excited about, as long as the level of the seminar is one that first-year students would find interesting. Students flock to seminars that are pertinent to real world events and relevant to them personally. Most of the seminars are not other courses that are taught in small classes to first-year students, but are unique courses designed specifically for the Freshman Seminar Program.

After deciding upon a topic, it is important for faculty to figure out a clever title for the seminar and an enticing 300-word description. These are two of the most important pieces of information first-year students will have when selecting whether or not to take a seminar and, if so, which seminar to take. Since titles are the first contact point for students, catchy titles are important, but students will make decisions about whether or not to take a seminar by reading the course description. Students are looking for something that will grab them, be funny, help them delve deeper into an area of interest, and hopefully meet a requirement—all in less than 300 words. Also, the person teaching the course is important to them, as is the course description.

The following are some examples of seminars previously offered. Additional descriptions may be found in the sidebars of the appendices.

**Cosmic Catastrophes**

As if freshmen didn't have enough to worry about, this course will explore catastrophes that have and will affect the Earth in a dramatic way. We will read about and discuss events such as giant meteor impacts, nearby supernova explosions and the eventual and inevitable death of the Sun and Earth. We will look at the evidence for such catastrophes and the kinds of impact they would have on life on our planet. The risks involved in these events will be discussed in context so that participants are still able to sleep at night. Taught by Lawrence Rudnick, Institute of Technology.

**Science in Comic Books**

How much energy is required to cause the planet Krypton to explode? If you were born on a more massive planet, would you be able to leap tall buildings in a single bound here on Earth? If you had wings on your back, would that be sufficient to enable you to fly? If light passes through the Invisible Woman, why isn’t she blind? Using the concepts and characters from comic books, this class will explore basic notions of physics, chemistry, and biology. In addition to analyzing scientific bloopers, we will discuss those cases where the comic creators got the science right. After you learn what would really happen if you were bitten by a radioactive spider, you’ll want to sleep with the lights on! Taught by James Kakalios, Institute of Technology.
Battle of the Sexes
What makes a person attractive? And does this have a biological basis? Why don't men breastfeed their babies? Why have two sexes? Why not three? How do you look up articles on reserve in the library? We will address the former five questions in our discussions centered on the evolution of human sexuality, which we'll call “The Battle of the Sexes.” We'll also answer the latter question, along with many others centered on navigating your first year at the University. Class sessions will include discussions, presentations, debates (battles), and visits to select University facilities. Taught by Sehoya Cotner, College of Biological Sciences.

What's Inside That Cool Gadget?
We are increasingly enjoying the benefits of all the cool gadgets in daily life, be it an MP3 player that holds 10,000 songs, a PDA with phone/digital camera/Internet functions, or that latest pair of sneakers that make you feel like Michael Jordan. Have you ever wondered what makes a cool gadget work? This seminar will introduce you to the wonderful world of advanced materials that actually make these gadgets cool. We will talk about how we design, produce, and process these materials and how we learn from Mother Nature in making the most desirable gadget. Taught by Xionyang Zhu, Institute of Technology.

The Color Red
This is a course that touches on science, art, and the humanities. It is organized to give students a broad view of the University and intellectual work in various subjects. Students will learn about such things as how the eye perceives red, emotional responses to red, how artists use red, red pigments, spectrometers, Communists, and Little Red Riding Hood. There will be papers on red topics, an art project, and a science report. There will be visiting experts (artists, Commies) and visits around campus. Taught by Larry Miller, Institute of Technology.

Death by Hamburger
In 1997, Stanley Pruisner was the single recipient of the Nobel Prize in medicine for his work on diseases related to Mad Cow disease. Awarding of this prize occurred at about the same time that the British government acknowledged that humans could and, in fact, had caught a fatal neurological disease called variant CJD by eating meat from cattle affected with Mad Cow disease. About 125 deaths from variant CJD have been reported, including a man who died in Canada last year. In this class, we will explore the molecular biology of these types of neurodegenerative diseases and the tortuous pathway that lead to the Nobel-winning work. How can something without DNA “reproduce” and infect others? What is the relationship between genes and disease? Why is Pruisner’s work still controversial? How does science reflect the strengths and weaknesses of individuals? Just how dangerous IS that hamburger you had for lunch? Taught by Robin Wright, College of Biological Sciences.

Lions and Eagles and Bears, Oh My! The Visual Identities of Nations
Throughout history nations have used symbols to represent their ideals and their political ideologies. Flags, representations such as the U.S. eagle, and personifications such as Liberty or Uncle Sam, become part of the national fabric of a country. Our current national crisis is an example of how the U.S. flag has become an active symbol of a nation united against terrorism. Taught by Barbara Martinson, College of Human Ecology.
Preparing to Teach a Freshman Seminar

Preparing to teach a Freshman Seminar is an exciting opportunity to think about how first-year students in 2004 are different from first-year students in earlier years. First-year students in the fall semester are also different from university juniors and seniors who have adapted to the campus and the academic expectations and rigors. Generally, faculty believe that developing a Freshman Seminar course is rewarding and exciting because it’s different from teaching other courses.

Today’s Students

Students entering college today are different than those entering in the 1970s, 80s or 90s. The diversity of the student body has continually changed as more female students and culturally diverse students have entered higher education. Furthermore, students’ academic preparation in K-12 programs has shifted dramatically as educational reforms have changed how our country educates youth. Along with the changes in students’ backgrounds, there is evidence that the impact popular culture has on students is constantly changing. Entering students have different worldviews then generations before them. The implications for educating such a diverse group is considerable. It is one of the reasons that small classes, such as Freshman Seminars, are an important part of a student’s first year at the University of Minnesota.

Who Are U of M First-Year Students?

How first-year students are viewed varies among faculty. Whether they are viewed as adults or adolescents probably depends on personal experiences and may even depend on the individual situation with a particular student. We know the following about the 5,186 first-year students at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus in the fall of 2003:

- 77.67 percent lived in the Residence Halls.
- ACT and high school class ranks are at a new all time high for the Twin Cities campus. The average ACT Score was 24.8.
- 33 percent were in the top 10 percent of their high school class.
- 71 percent were in the top 25 percent of their high school class.
- The average high school class rank was 79.8 percent.
- The average credit load for their first semester was 15.4 credits.

The First-Year Experience Survey (2003) asked questions of students after they completed their first year. The First-Year Experience Survey is an in-depth survey of a random sample of approximately 800 first-year students on issues related to advising, academic life, social life, living in the residence halls, etc. In response to the most recent survey in Spring 2003, first-year students said the following about their experience at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus.
First-Year Experience Survey Findings

• 38 percent studied 0 to 10 hours per week.
• 40 percent studied 10 to 20 hours per week.
• 30 percent worked on campus.
• 30 percent worked off campus.
• 49.2 percent encountered one or more courses for which their previous education did not adequately prepare them.
• 49.32 percent were disappointed with their academic achievement given their high school grades and their perception of their abilities.
• 64 percent reported that the amount of study time needed to do well in one or more courses was considerably more than they expected. But they also responded that there were faculty and staff concerned about their academic success and available to help.

These results indicate that students may not have been prepared for collegiate work, both in their expectations of what it takes to be successful in college and in the amount of time necessary for that success. It also appears that students’ work life could impact their academic life.

Students clearly indicate that their motivation to do well is strongly influenced by how engaged their instructors are. Other surveys show that student satisfaction and success is positively affected by faculty who take a personal interest in them.

Every other year, the University of Minnesota asks incoming first-year students to participate in a national survey, Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), the largest and longest running national longitudinal study of higher education in America. The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA administers the CIRP under the sponsorship of the American Council on Education. (Appendix I)

National Research Related to First-Year Students Says:

• High involvement with faculty increases retention rates (Astin, 1993)
• “The freshman’s most critical transition period occurs during the first two to six weeks. Of the students who drop during the terms of the freshman year (not between terms), half drop out in the first six weeks (Myers, 1981)” (Levitz and Noel, 1989, p.66)
• A caring attitude of faculty and staff is the most potent retention force on campus. (Levitz and Noel, 1989, p.66)
• Students are developing their identity, maturing emotionally, psychologically, and socially. Attending college plays a critical role in the process of developing cognitive, ethical, and moral skills. (Upcraft and Crissman, 1999).
• “The focal point of the first year should be a small seminar taught by experienced faculty. The seminar should deal with topics that stimulate and open intellectual horizons and allow opportunities for learning by inquiry in a collaborative environment. Working in small groups will give students not only direct intellectual contact with faculty and with one another but also give those new to their situations opportunities to find friends and to learn how to be students. Most of all, it should enable a professor to imbue new students with a sense of excitement of discovery and the opportunities for intellectual growth inherent in the university experience.” (The Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University, 1998).
What Does This Mean for a Freshman Seminar?

Teaching a Freshman Seminar is different than teaching other courses. Faculty teaching Freshman Seminars have the opportunity to be an agent of change for students starting at the University of Minnesota. As Ernest Boyer (1987) states in *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America*, “The curriculum does not carry the full burden of collegiate education. Teachers, of course, are critically important. Through their professional priorities and in their relationships with students, professors sustain or weaken the intellectual and social environment of the college” (p.119).

Repeatedly, students express an interest in getting to know their professors personally. “In interviews with undergraduate students across the country, we have observed that students consistently use the same three words in describing their “best ever” teachers: like, learn, help” (Levitz and Noel, 1989, p.78).

First-Year Students May Not Know How to:

- Transition into college-level academics,
- Study in college,
- Manage their time,
- Write a paper in a required style,
- Ask for help from faculty or other campus resources,
- Ask the right question when they don’t understand the material,
- Make the right decisions all of the time,
- Balance freedom with responsibility, and
- Function effectively on a large and complicated campus.

Faculty Can Assume Students Want to:

- Do well in their classes,
- Get to know faculty as people,
- Get to know other students in their classes,
- Care about the world and their immediate environment, and
- Learn and have fun at the University of Minnesota.

Faculty should take time to design the course with a first-year audience in mind and critically assess whether or not the course is meeting the expectations of a Freshman Seminar at the University of Minnesota. As much thought should be put into “how” the course will be taught as is put into the material that will be covered. The process is as important as the content because what happens in the seminar makes the students feel a part of the University’s academic community.
Applying “Fink’s Five Principles of Good Course Design”

“Fink’s Five Principles of Good Course Design” (Fink, 1999) provides a set of criteria that can help guide faculty design their Freshman Seminar. The following are ideas that have been used in Freshman Seminars. Faculty are not expected to use all techniques in a single class, but may pick one or two approaches to use consistently.

Examples of Higher-Level Learning

• Require students to design a “mini-lecture” and take responsibility to teach or facilitate a discussion about a designated topic.

• Use the “Minute Paper” at the end of class to help students reflect on the content of the class session and synthesize the contents. (Appendix C)

• Use “Divergent Questions” that have a diverse set of acceptable answers and avoid questions where there is only one acceptable response.

• Use “Higher Order Questions” that require students to apply or evaluate information and not just recall factual information.

• Use “Quick Thinks” that require all students to write a short (quick) response to a question that is intended to use a higher-level thinking skill. Suggested phrases that can be used: use or apply, similarity/difference, cause, implications of, connect or relate to, argument against, evidence that supports, and strengths/weaknesses of.

• “Scripted Cooperation” requires students to work in pairs in which one member summarizes the information presented in a lecture without looking at his or her notes, while the other provides feedback about its accuracy and completeness.

Examples of Active Forms of Learning

• Design small group activities that encourage student to solve problems as a group.

• Use the “Shared Lecture” technique whereby students first share what they know (or think they know) about a topic. This technique draws on their prior knowledge of the course topic, but allows them to actively use their knowledge instead of passively listening to a lecture.

• Case studies, critical incidents, and role-plays are all learning tasks that are conducive to active involvement and provide some degree of ambiguity allowing for divergent thinking.

• Assign course assignments that require “experiential learning” or hands-on experiences. For example, students may be required to interview someone or participate in a service learning project.

• Use games with competitive rules and are comparable to actual games such as Jeopardy or Trivial Pursuit. (Students can design these as a class assignment).

• Bring in guest speakers or panels to provide interaction with other “experts.”

• Students can take turns saying the first thing that comes to mind about a topic in rapid succession using the “Whips” technique.

• Students write down questions or things they would like to know about an upcoming topic in a technique called “Background Interest Probe.” (Appendix C)

• “Active Knowledge Sharing” provides a list of questions about a topic, then students work in pairs to answer the questions and discuss with another pair.

• In “Flashbacks” students are asked how they think an upcoming topic relates to or builds upon a previous topic.
Teaching Freshman Seminars

3. Gives Frequent and Immediate Feedback to Students on the Quality of Their Learning

Higher level learning and active learning require frequent and immediate feedback for students to know whether they are “doing it” correctly. “Frequent” means weekly or daily; feedback consisting of two mid-terms and a final is not sufficient. “Immediate” means during the same class if possible, or at the next class session.

Examples of Frequent and Immediate Feedback to Students on the Quality of Their Learning

- Assignments should be planned early so students receive feedback in the first few weeks of the semester.
- Grade small-group assignments and give students credit for work done in class.
- Use multiple methods of student evaluation and grading: writing assignments, presentations, in class exercises, out of class assignments, quizzes, and exams.*
- Note-taking and reading teams allow students to compare their interpretation of the major points presented in class and in assigned readings. These techniques provide immediate peer feedback.
- Peer review of paper.
- “Word Journals” require students to choose a word that summarizes their reading and then write a paragraph that explains why the word was chosen. This technique allows faculty to quickly assess comprehension and provide a quick response to students.
- Unlike regular courses, Freshman Seminars do not generally have exams and/or quizzes.

4. Uses Structured Sequence of Different Learning Activities

Any course needs a variety of forms of learning to support different learning goals and different learning styles. But, these learning activities also need to be structured in a sequence such that earlier classes lay the foundation for complex and higher level learning in later classes.

Examples of Structured Sequences of Different Learning Activities

- Use reflective journals as a method for tracking a student’s progression of ideas.
- Use “Note-Taking Teams” at the end of the first few classes so that students can compare notes before they leave class in order to identify what they may have missed and develop stronger note taking skills.
- The technique “Collaborative Learning: Reaching Consensus in Small Groups” requires small groups to move beyond compiling a list and requires them to reach group consensus on how best to organize, classify, and prioritize their individual ideas.
- Assign group projects towards the end of the semester.

5. Has a Fair System for Assessing and Grading Students

Even when students feel they are learning something significant, they are unhappy if their grade does not reflect this. The grading system should be objective, reliable, based on learning, flexible, and communicated in writing.

Examples of a Fair System for Assessing and Grading Students

- Communicate the grading system in the course syllabus. Give specific percentages or points for each assignment or exam.
- Develop clear rubrics for grading assignments and provide them to students.
Course Preparation Checklist

Designing a Freshman Seminar takes a significant amount of thought, effort, and time. To assist faculty in this process the following checklist has been prepared to make the process easier and consistent across all Freshman Seminars. The number of small decisions that are made during the process of course development can be daunting. Each component of a course—from the readings that are chosen to the sequence of topics discussed—is important to the process of teaching a Freshman Seminar.

☐ Determine the course topic and general content area
  - Consider how to make the topic accessible for first-year students.

☐ Establish learning objectives for the course
  - Try to be as specific as possible so that a student’s learning can be assessed.

☐ Select appropriate readings
  - Consider whether the amount of reading work and level is appropriate for the number of credits the course is offered for and whether the content is appropriate for the first-year student level.
  - Vary the types of readings to keep students interested.

☐ Organize the sequence of content areas that will be covered each week
  - Assign readings and activities to prepare students for class discussion.
  - Determine assignments.

☐ Determine how each week’s seminar experience will be designed
  - Refer to “Fink’s Five Principles of Course Design” to help with this process.
  - What kind of activities should happen each week? Are the activities appropriate for the size of the class? Do they give students positive experiences working together? Do they build academic skills? Is there a way for a student’s growth to be evaluated throughout the semester?
  - How can students involve themselves and be a part of the teaching process? Can students take responsibility for teaching each other? If yes, what kind of structure needs to be provided?
  - Should guest speakers be scheduled? How many? How often? What should guest speakers know about this course?
  - When is it appropriate to lecture as part of a seminar?

“They found their voices and were able to think more critically. They were able to justify their opinions with data and history.”

Freshman Seminar faculty
• When will a discussion format be used?
• What outside resources should the students be exposed to during the course? For example, is use of the library required or visits to academic resource or tutoring centers introduced?
• Is a field trip an appropriate choice for this course?
• Should students be required to attend office hours at least once during the semester?

☐ Determine how student learning will be assessed in the course

Teaching a Freshman Seminar requires ongoing classroom evaluation to continually assess the progress of the students’ learning. Students should be assessed in the areas of content knowledge, writing, oral presentation, participation, analytical and thinking skills, and reading comprehension. Below are ideas and timeframes during the semester that faculty can use to assess students in their Freshman Seminar.

First Day of Class

The first day of class provides an opportunity to formally or informally assess the amount of knowledge students have about a seminar topic using exercises such as the “Background Knowledge Probe” (Appendix C). This reference point allows faculty to tailor specific activities for the students in the class.

Prior to Sixth Week of Class

Faculty should also plan an opportunity before the sixth week of class to evaluate student work including their writing. Students should have an assignment due early in the semester so instructors have the opportunity to provide early feedback and direct them to University resources (Appendix D) if necessary. This will be particularly useful as faculty are asked to complete midsemester alerts for students who are not successful by the sixth week.

Weekly Assessment

Ongoing classroom learning techniques can also be used to assess the progress of individual students. “Teachers need a continuous flow of accurate information on student learning. For example, if a teacher’s goal is to help students learn points A-Z during the course, then that teacher needs to know whether all students are really starting at point A and, as the course proceeds, whether they have reached intermediate points B, G, L, R, W, and so on. To ensure high quality learning, it is not enough to test students when the syllabus has reached points M and Z” (Angelo and Cross, 1993, p.3). These are techniques that are simple and provide a quick snapshot of a student’s comprehension of the course material. (Appendix C)

End of the Semester

Finally, students will be assessed at the end of the semester with a grade. Determining the grading procedures for all exams, papers, projects, and student participation in advance is an important component to this stage.
Course Preparation Checklist

Resources

The following resources outline specific assessment tools and strategies. These tools and strategies allow faculty to “test” students on their comprehension of course content in a multitude of ways while incorporating them into their teaching pedagogy. These tools allow students to express their knowledge and understanding in a variety of ways and reinforce the principal ideas of the course in the process.


Honolulu Community College: Assessment Techniques by Angelo and Cross http://www.hcc.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/assess-1.htm

Honolulu Community College: Assessment Examples by Angelo and Cross http://www.hcc.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/assess-2.htm

☐ Determine methods of course assessment

Assessing the success of the Freshman Seminar begins on the first day of class because faculty are evaluating the competence level of the students in the course and anticipating various resources that they need to be provided to ensure that students succeed in the course. For example, a short writing assignment such as a one-page autobiography can help to assess students’ writing abilities and can also help to get to know the students. Another technique is to develop a short pre-test on the seminar topic or an area in which students would need some background knowledge.

Around the sixth week of the semester, faculty should take time to survey students on their classroom experience and find out how the seminar is working for them.

• How is the class format working?
• What changes would the students like to see?
• Do they feel they are being challenged enough?
• Do they feel like they are getting to know each other?

Faculty should also plan to take a few minutes to review the results of the survey with the class and identify any changes to the syllabus or course expectations. This is an opportunity for faculty to change direction in the course if necessary or to stay with their plan if students are succeeding. “Through class observation of students in the process of learning, the collection of frequent feedback on students’ learning, and the design of the modest classroom experiments, classroom teachers can learn much about how students learn and, more specifically, how students respond to particular teaching approaches. Classroom Assessment helps individual college teachers obtain useful feedback on what, how much, and how well their students are learning. Faculty can then use this information to refocus their teaching to help students make their learning more efficient and more effective” (Angelo and Cross, 1993, p.3).

Finally, students will be completing official course evaluations that will provide faculty with anonymous feedback about the course. Students will fill out the University of Minnesota Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) as well as the Freshman Seminar Evaluation Form, which will be sent to faculty before the end of the semester. These formal evaluations will provide feedback that can be used for future Freshman Seminar courses. (Appendix G)
☐ **Determine if the course should be designated as a Council on Liberal Education (CLE) theme category**

- Cultural Diversity
- International Perspectives
- Citizenship and Public Ethics
- Environment

*All courses with CLE designation must be approved by CLE.*

A theme should be approximately a third of the course. The syllabus should document, both in the stated course objectives and the course activities, that the theme is an integral part of the course. (Appendix A)

☐ **Determine if the course should be designated as a Writing Intensive (WI) course**

*All courses with a Writing Intensive designation must be approved by CLE.*

Writing Intensive courses, as understood by the Council on Liberal Education, are defined as courses at either the upper or lower division level in which the course grade is directly tied to the quality of the student’s writing as well as to knowledge of the subject matter, so that students who do not meet minimal standards of writing competence cannot pass the class. In Writing Intensive courses, a significant amount of writing is required—minimally 10 to 15 finished pages beyond informal writing and in-class examinations, (if any). Students in WI courses are given instruction on the writing aspect of the assignments, and these assignments include at least one that students are required to revise and resubmit a draft after receiving feedback. Otherwise, writing assignments may be of various kinds and have various purposes, as appropriate to the discipline. Faculty may also contact Laurel Carroll at l-carr@umn.edu for further information or questions. (Appendix A)

☐ **Determine the correct course number using the Freshman Seminar Numbering System**

Freshman Seminars follow a standard numbering system where the number denotes the approved Liberal Education requirements.

- 1901 are approved for the Environmental requirement
- 1902 for the Cultural Diversity requirement
- 1903 for the Citizenship and Public Ethics requirement
- 1904 for the International Perspectives requirement
- 1906 for both Environment and Writing Intensive requirements
- 1907 for both Cultural Diversity and Writing Intensive requirements
- 1908 for both Citizenship and Public Ethics and Writing Intensive requirements
- 1909 for both International Perspectives and Writing Intensive requirements
- 1910 for the Writing Intensive requirement only

Freshman Seminars numbered 1905 are not approved for a Liberal Education requirement.
Review the course syllabus for content that should be included in each Freshman Seminar syllabus

The course syllabus for a Freshman Seminar not only outlines the students’ responsibilities, but it sets the tone for the class environment and the expectations for students participating in a class. The Center for Teaching and Learning Services has developed a syllabus tutorial to help faculty develop new courses. The CTLS website has additional resources designed to assist faculty with each step of the syllabus development process.

In addition, University policies have been provided to make the process of developing a Freshman Seminar syllabus relatively simple. Faculty may copy the University policy statements directly. For more information, visit the University Senate Policies Web site. For samples of Freshman Seminar syllabi, visit the Freshman Seminars Web site. (Appendix B)

Create a Syllabus

The following list is based upon the University of Minnesota Faculty Senate Classroom Expectations Guidelines.

A Freshman Seminar syllabus should contain the following:

Instructor Information
- Instructor’s name, degree, and appropriate background information
- Office location
- Office hours
- Contact information including phone, e-mail, and fax

Practical Course Details
- Course title (try to make it interesting to first-year students)
- Course designator
- Course number (remember to use the Freshman Seminar numbering system)
- Number of credits
- Day, time, and place of class meetings (make sure location is conducive to seminar meetings whenever possible)
- Course prerequisites (Freshman Seminars should not have prerequisites)
- Degree requirements fulfilled by the course

Course Description
- A brief description of the course (this can also be used to market the course)
- Course goals, objectives, and expectations

Instructional Methods and Materials
- Description of classroom teaching techniques and a rationale for why they are being used
- Set expectations for class participation
- Required and recommended materials and the location of the materials

“It was a rewarding teaching experience. I especially like the one-on-one interaction I had and the opportunity to help them both as students and as individuals.”

Freshman Seminar faculty
Methods for Evaluating Student Performance

- Schedule of assignments, papers, projects, etc.
  Appropriate distribution of assignments can help you assess the progress of each student throughout the semester. Also, remember to be clear about due dates.
- Criteria for grading and grading standards, including the University of Minnesota definition of grades (Appendix B)
- Make-up exam policy
  Students should be advised of how faculty will handle missed examination circumstances. Such circumstances include, but are not limited to, verified illness, participation in intercollegiate athletic events or other group activities sponsored by the University, subpoenas, jury duty, military service, and religious observances. Students are responsible for providing documentation to the instructor to verify the reason for the absence. (Appendix B)
- Senate student academic workload policy (Appendix B)
- Statement on penalties for late work
  Each faculty member should state explicitly how late work will be handled.

University Policies Related to Teaching

- Statement on accommodations for students with disabilities (Appendix B)
- Statement on classroom conduct (Appendix B)
- Statement on academic misconduct (Appendix B)
  Freshman Seminars provide an opportunity to discuss plagiarism in detail.
- Statement on complaints with teaching or grading (Appendix B)
- Statement regarding harassment (Appendix B)

Syllabus Enhancements

Students enrolled in a Freshman Seminar would benefit from statements on any of the following topics:

- Encouraging students to see instructors outside of class
- What the class will be like, including a description of and rationale for teaching methods
- Clear guidelines detailing how students are to prepare for and behave during a class session (e.g., read the assignments before class, come on time, participate in discussion, etc.)
- What students can expect from the instructor
- Special procedures or rules for this class (e.g., laboratory rules and procedures)
- Advice on how to read/approach the materials for this class
- Advice on how to study for quizzes and exams
- Specific criteria for each graded assignment
- Incomplete coursework
- How to dispute a grade for an assignment or exam
- Extra credit
- Exam re-takes and/or coursework resubmission
- Special services or resources that might be helpful to the students
- Other information that would help students to be successful in this class
Teaching Tips and Techniques

Frequently Asked Questions About Teaching a Freshman Seminar

Teaching a Freshman Seminar is different from teaching other courses because how it is taught is equally important to the content of the course. The following are commonly asked questions that may help faculty teaching Freshman Seminars think differently about their course.

Should I contact students prior to the first day of class?

Freshman Seminars are intended to connect students with faculty and with each other to build a sense of community. First-year students would appreciate a brief e-mail from faculty and it may help to relieve some of their anxiety about the size of the University of Minnesota. Students sometimes say they feel like they are just a number. In addition, you may consider pulling up each of their pictures and reviewing names and faces so that it is easier to remember their names on the first day of class. It is powerful when students walk into a class and are greeted by name. Connecting faculty with students is a stated goal of a Freshman Seminar.

How do we access class lists to send a class e-mail and view pictures?

Faculty listed as the instructor of record may view their class enrollment including contact information and pictures through the faculty One Stop site at http://www.onestop.umn.edu/Faculty/index.html.

- Choose “Management Reports” to logon to the system.
- Choose “Class Lists.”
- Choose “My Classes” to access the course list. A link at the bottom of the class list page allows faculty to e-mail all students automatically. Student photos can be viewed by clicking on the camera icon on the far left side of the list.
- Photos can be printed out and attached to information sheets collected in class on the first day.

How can I better relate to first-year students?

- Try to arrange your schedule so that you are available to students immediately after class.
- Learn students’ names and refer to them by name.
- Learn personal information about each student and incorporate it into your conversations.
- Use humor and don’t be afraid to share personal experiences relevant to your course.
- Consider sharing your office phone number and an e-mail that you check regularly.

2003 Faculty Comments: Pitfalls

- Assigning too much reading
- Not assigning enough reading
- Not matching the workload to the credit for the course
- Not realizing the amount of prep work required to teach a Freshman Seminar
- Course content that was either too simplistic or too complicated for the students
- Class activities that were too repetitive
- Not using practical and realistic examples that the students could relate to
• Use assigned journals as a means to carry on a dialogue with students.
• Early in the semester, schedule students for a personal office visit.
• Emphasize your availability outside of class and invite them to office hours.
  Communicate personally with students via e-mail or phone. This may provide an
  additional outlet for those who do not like to speak up in class.

What do other faculty teaching Freshman Seminars do on the first day of class?

The first day of class sets the tone for the rest of the semester and modeling a
typical class is important. However, students need to have a sense of the course
content, syllabus, and expectations. They also need to feel a sense of belonging and
icebreakers are an easy way to get to know one another. Here are a few suggestions:

• Have students prepare name cards out of cardstock. They might draw designated
  symbols in each corner. For example, a hobby, favorite summer activity, what they
  hope to learn from the class, or dream vacation.
• The “paired interview” requires two students to interview one another and then
  introduce their partner to the rest of the class.
• The scavenger hunt requires the instructor to design a card with a statement or
  fact about each student. The students then need to mingle and find the student
  who appropriately “matches” each square.
• Go around the room and have each student share three pieces of information
  about themselves. For example, their name, major and where they are from.
• Make sure you tell the students a little about yourself.

What types of assessment should I do on the first day of class?

Get an idea of how well students in a Freshman Seminar write. On the first day
of class, ask students to write a few paragraphs on the topic related to the course
content or about themselves or a past experience. After reading the writing exercises,
return them to the students with comments and your assessment of their writing.
This will give both the faculty member and the students a good idea of what
assistance students might need for the seminar and other University courses. The
earlier students receive help for writing problems, the better the chance for academic
success. Faculty can also do short assessments about what knowledge the class
and individual students have about the topics covered in the class or any relevant
information necessary for success in the course. This can be done as ungraded
individual or group quizzes.

I am used to using a lecture style format when I teach. What can I do
to make the class more discussion based?

Freshman Seminars should be designed so that most of the class time is devoted
to active learning. That is, students should be actively engaged in the classroom
experience. There are numerous possibilities for doing this. The list provided in
“Fink’s Five Principles of Good Course Design” will also be helpful. Here are a few
other ideas:

• Each week delegate one or two students to lead a discussion on the readings.
• Develop short discussion questions or topics and ask the students to work in pairs
  or triads on the questions. After a specified period of time, have the entire group
discuss their responses.
Teaching Freshman Seminars

Teaching Tips and Techniques

“Do whatever you can to get them to talk right away. We did a ‘goals’ exercise in which students worked in groups to clarify their goals for the course, and that is what we worked with the remainder of the semester.”

**Freshman Seminar faculty**

- Develop short non-graded quizzes for students. Use the questions and student answers as the discussion introduction. Ask students to explain or defend their answers.
- Ask students to develop test or quiz items. Distribute these to the class and discuss how the questions relate to the topics or objectives of the class.
- Have students write and perform short skits on the class material.
- Prepare debate questions and have pairs of students debate the issues.

**Students don’t always respond immediately when I ask questions. How can I make the class more interactive?**

- Wait. Most people don’t like silence, faculty included, who often answer the question themselves or go on to something else. Try increasing the wait time.
- Discussion can be encouraged from the first day of class. Some students are reticent or nervous to talk in class for fear that their answers will be wrong or not valued. Beginning on the first day of class, ask each of the students something about themselves, their experiences, their lives on campus, etc. Acknowledge their responses and encourage them to talk. When students believe their voices are being heard, they are more likely to speak up.
- Start with questions that students can answer.

**I expect students in my Freshman Seminar to share their thoughts and ideas. How can I make sure the rest of the class respects their input?**

Creating an environment that is relatively risk-free is not always easy. One way to do this is to ask students to set up class rules and guidelines for talking and responding in class. This could be an activity for the first day. Students usually respect each other when they have had input into the process. These rules might include:

- Time limits for talking during discussions.
- How to respectfully disagree with the ideas of others (helping students “focus” on the idea and not the person).
- How to recognize a student with a question (raise hands, use a “next speaker” card, etc.).
- How to handle food/drinks. Sometimes food can create an inviting atmosphere; however, talking about rules can help the students avoid being rude while others are talking.
- Don’t be afraid to ask students to speak up and speak clearly. They need to learn how to communicate effectively.

**My seminar meets for over an hour each week. What can I do to motivate the students to stay attentive?**

Although the students are college students, many still have short attention spans, especially when it comes to difficult concepts and new material. In a small class, such as a Freshman Seminar, it is difficult for students to read *The Daily* or fall asleep without being noticed, but they can and will do little things in an attempt to entertain themselves if they get bored. Several thoughts in addition to those outlined in “Fink’s Five Principles of Good Course Design” (Fink, 1999):

- Have a variety of activities for each class period.
- Have the students work in small groups and report back to the class.
Teaching Freshman Seminars

• Change the format of each class.
• Give the students a short break in the middle of class.
• Bring small treats to class.
• Use different seating arrangements each class so students sit next to different students.

Is it okay to give students a break part way through the seminar?
Some faculty prefer to let students take their own breaks throughout the class. Others decide that they need every minute of class time to cover the content. In short, it is really up to the individual faculty member. However, whatever one decides, it is best to talk to the students about the break policy.

Should I stand or sit when teaching my Freshman Seminar?
There is no clear-cut answer to this question because it would depend upon the activity. However, since Freshman Seminars are designed as discussion or interactive type course, sitting is more conducive to these formats. This does not preclude the instructor from standing. It is more important that the faculty member is comfortable with the class; if sitting with the students causes discomfort, then by all means stand.

Do you have any helpful hints for facilitating discussions? I don’t want to dominate the discussion.
Freshman Seminars should be a time for students to read, write, and test their ideas in a low-risk setting that allows for the exchange of ideas. In this context, faculty too should be willing to listen and learn, and be willing to lead the students in discussions pertinent to the content area as well as how it relates to helping the students grow intellectually and develop as productive citizens.

There can be a certain amount of unavoidable intimidation by instructors and peers, even in a small class, which may be hard to overcome. This can also be the case when Freshman Seminars have low enrollment. Some faculty make a concerted effort to keep the tone light, precisely to make students less fearful of speaking. Some give extra credit toward the final grade for active classroom participation. Feel free to use appropriate humor and jokes.

This can be difficult for some faculty. In a sense they must give up some control by not offering their opinion or provide the essential facts during a discussion. Freshman Seminars were developed to help students develop skills that will help them succeed in college, particularly speaking in class and writing. Using questions as a way to steer the discussion can help accomplish these goals. For example,
• Could you please elaborate further on that thought?
• Have you thought about…?
• That’s an interesting idea, how does such and such apply?
• Can someone take that a step further?
• Student A, would you summarize what student B just said?
• What would happen if…?

“This class really made me think. It pushed me to develop my own thoughts.”
Freshman Seminar student
When I have taught a Freshman Seminar in the past, I didn’t get to know the students as well as I might have. Is it appropriate to ask them how things are going?

The Freshman Seminar program was begun under former President Mark Yudof who, as president, taught a Freshman Seminar each year. He advocated using Freshman Seminars to get to know students and see how things are going:

“I also begin each class by asking them whether there are problems or suggestions that I should address emanating from their lives as students at the U. Over the years I have heard about everything from the quality of toilet tissue in the residence halls and the availability of scented soap to access to the Internet, class access, food lines in the cafeteria, financial aid packaging, etc. I would hope other instructors in Freshman Seminars would do the same thing, and then e-mail me what they have learned. We can only improve the student experience at the U if we have good mechanisms for listening to them and responding to their concerns.”

— Mark G. Yudof, former University of Minnesota President and Freshman Seminar faculty

Although the University of Minnesota has a different president, if students express concerns that faculty believe can be resolved, please contact Laura Coffin Koch at 612-624-1085 or koch@umn.edu.

What do I do if I find out they are having problems?

Faculty are not expected to handle every situation that arises with first-year students in their seminars. In some cases, students should be referred to other campus professionals who are better prepared to assist them. A comprehensive list of non-academic University Services is included in this handbook (Appendix E). In addition, the Office for Student Affairs has more information about academic success, stress, depression, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual violence, and relationship violence. For assistance with an issue that is not listed, please call Office for Student Affairs at 612-624-3560.

It is easy to assume that someone on campus is helping a particular student. Taking the time to reach out to students can sometimes feel overwhelming. However, Freshman Seminar faculty may be the only adult that a student knows on campus. Please try to find out if the student knows about University resources, if they have a contact name, and if they know where to go for help. Follow-up is also important to make sure that the student has contacted professionals and has received the assistance that they need to succeed at the University. If a student does not follow through, faculty should do the following:

• Make sure that the student knows where to go and how to get there.
• Phone for an appointment while the student is in your presence.
• Walk with the student to the referred person’s office.

What general information or messages should I give freshmen in my seminar?

In many cases, students enrolled in Freshman Seminars have little or no personal interactions with adults throughout the semester. They are generally in large classes and may see an adviser once during the semester. They do receive information
through e-mail, but for the most part are unsure of its importance. Faculty teaching first-year students, especially in Freshman Seminars, can help students understand the University and what is expected of them. For example, talk to students about:

- Attendance, not only in the seminar, but in all their classes.
- Mid-term alerts and what students can do to improve their performance in their classes.
- How they will be graded in the seminar and how they should check all their grades regularly—especially at the end of the term—and what to do if they disagree with a reported grade. Some students may need help with how GPAs are calculated.
- Many students are unsure about what constitutes academic dishonesty. It is a good idea to make it as clear as possible. They should be reminded to ask their instructors if they are not sure.
- Some students are shy and reserved, but would like to be more active on campus. Faculty might talk to their students about getting connected with student groups, community service opportunity, UROP, or other opportunities on campus where they might find community.
- Encourage students to use faculty office hours in all their classes. One way to do this is to have an assignment in which students are required to visit faculty members in their offices, even if it is just to turn in a paper.

**What else should I know about the University’s Mid-Term Alert System?**

Copies of each mid-term alert from faculty will be sent to students and their adviser(s). Sometimes students don’t realize how poorly they are doing and a reminder from an adviser to a student to change study habits or seek help with non-academic problems will have a significant impact. If the system is used by all faculty, advisers will be alerted to situations where a student is having trouble in more than one course.

For more information about mid-term alerts and how to access the system, go to http://onestop.umn.edu/registrar/midterm-alerts. If you have questions about the mid-term alert system, contact the Student Records Training Team at 612-625-2803 or techteam@sossgw.stu.umn.edu.

**Is there a sample mid-semester course evaluation?**

There is no University or campus-wide evaluation form for evaluating a course mid-semester. It often works best for faculty to develop a list of four to six items related to their particular course. Sample questions could include:

- How is the course going for you so far?
- Is there anything you would change about the course?
- What would you keep the same?
- Are there any areas/topics we have covered that are still unclear?
- How helpful are the course readings (guests/field trips/films/quizzes/etc.)?
- Are you getting enough feedback about your progress in this course?
If I find through a mid-semester evaluation there are things I should change on my syllabus, are there University policies that prohibit me from making those changes?

No, the University does not have a policy prohibiting faculty from making mid-semester corrections to the course syllabus. However, providing written documentation to students helps to facilitate communication of the changes.

Can I require a student to visit an academic resource center to improve their writing skills?

Yes, a student can be required to visit one of the campus writing centers. It is important to clarify what the student needs to work on to improve their writing. It is difficult to “require” and document visits to a writing center, but if an individual student needs extra assistance in this area it may be necessary. Learning to write for a Freshman Seminar will also help a student do better in other classes.

What other teaching resources are available in addition to this handbook?

A variety of resources are available to faculty on campus to assist with faculty development. In addition, an extensive on-line search has generated a comprehensive list of sites that provide detailed and usable information about teaching and assessment. The main content areas of each site have been outlined to help faculty navigate the content areas.

University of Minnesota Teaching Resources

University of Minnesota Freshman Seminars
http://www.evpp.umn.edu/freshsem

Faculty One Stop for Teaching
http://onestop.umn.edu/Faculty/Teaching/index.html

Center for Teaching and Learning Services
http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn

University Libraries
http://www.lib.umn.edu/research/instruction

University of Minnesota Digital Media Center
http://dmc.umn.edu/teach-tips/index.shtml

The Cooperative Learning Center
http://www.co-operation.org

University of Minnesota Senate Policies
http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/usen/policies.html


2003 Faculty Comments: Creative Techniques to Engage Students

- Treasure hunts
- Readers theater
- Creative group assignments
- Field trips
- “Read My Mind”—students read an article and then try to predict what kinds of exam questions might be asked
- Guest speakers
- Role playing
- Concept mapping
- Ungraded pop quizzes
- Videos
- Debates
- Quiz bowl
- Weekly writing portfolios
- “Fascinating Facts”
- Small group presentations
Non-University Teaching Resources

Honolulu Community College Teaching Tips and Techniques – Award Winning Web Site
http://www.hcc.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/teachtip.htm
• Assessment techniques
• First day of class
• Course design
• Motivating students
• Using questions effectively
• Teaching techniques

A Berkley Compendium of Suggestions for Teaching with Excellence
http://teaching.berkeley.edu/compendium
• Discussing points of view other than your own
• Discussing recent developments
• Encouraging class discussion
• Inviting students to share their knowledge and experiences
• Inviting criticism of your own ideas
• Giving personal help to students
• Relating to students
• Keeping students informed of their progress
• Giving exams demonstrating student understanding

Iowa State Center for Teaching Excellence
http://www.cte.iastate.edu/resources
• Specific approaches and techniques for teaching
• Mid-term assessment
• In-class discussions
• First day of class

University of Oklahoma Instructional Development Program
http://www.ou.edu/idp/tips/getready.htm
• “Fink’s Five Principles of Course Design”
• Planning your course
• Diagram of learning activities
• Types of information for a course syllabus
• First day of class
References


“Take a field trip, go for pizza—get out of the classroom so students can see faculty and learning as not being restricted to the classroom or campus.”

Freshman Seminar faculty
Appendix A

Criteria for Courses in the Council on Liberal Education (CLE) Designated Themes and Writing Intensive (WI) Courses

A theme should be approximately a third of the course. The syllabus should document, both in the stated course objectives and the course activities, that the theme is an integral part of the course.

Cultural Diversity

The purpose of these courses is to increase students’ awareness of the cultural origins and rich diversity of traditions and values represented in contemporary American society and to enhance their understanding of how gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class structure the human experience.

To qualify for designation, a course must:

A. Focus on historical and/or contemporary manifestations of social and cultural diversity with an emphasis on issues such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, affectional orientation or religious belief; and

B. Offer students an opportunity to critically examine issues of social and cultural diversity through instructional methods that foster interpersonal interactions.

Courses meeting this requirement would examine the lived experience of a particular group within the larger U.S. society. Examples might include African Americans, Latinos, single parents, Native Americans or disabled veterans, and so on. Alternatively, a course might explore issues of race, class, gender or social class in a comparative framework, identifying the relationship between these factors and beliefs and practices. In general, courses that emphasize issues of race, gender, class or ethnicity in a broader sociopolitical context will qualify for the Cultural Diversity designated theme.

International Perspectives

The purpose of these courses is to increase students’ understanding of their role in a rapidly changing global environment.

To qualify, a course must explicitly compare, across national boundaries, important interdependencies, similarities, and differences of people, ideas, cultures, or institutions in today’s world. The perspective of the people of each of the nations involved must be explicitly addressed. Attention to the historical background of the interdependencies, similarities, or differences being studied is welcome, as long as the main focus remains on the relevance of that history to today’s world.

Citizenship and Public Ethics

Liberal education has, from its inception, gone beyond academic inquiry and professional training to prepare students for responsible citizenship. The requirement...
in Citizenship and Public Ethics enables students to reflect upon and determine a clearer sense of their present and future civic relationships and their obligations to the community. Responsible citizenship includes among other things the capacity to discuss, deliberate, and participate in public affairs as well as to reflect upon the ethical dimensions of public and professional life and one’s involvement in it.

To meet the Citizenship and Public Ethics requirement approved courses will have the following components:

A. A consideration of issues and themes of citizenship, public affairs, and public ethics in the abstract, as these relate to the discipline or field of knowledge in question;
B. An application of these abstract issues and themes to concrete instances; and
C. The inclusion of class discussions and writing components that would be designed to help students develop their own civic judgment, skills, and capacities for ethical deliberation.

Course themes might include the past and present meaning of “citizenship” and/or the various rights and obligations that citizens may be said to have in their communities. On a concrete level, these themes might be discussed with specific reference to the civic and ethical responsibilities of people in specific careers. Courses should be structured to present a wide spectrum of views that encourage students to develop their own positions.

To meet the criteria listed above, course proposals for the Citizenship and Public Ethics requirement should indicate how the course will address some or all of the following topics: professional ethics and debates about the public responsibilities in one’s profession or field; the relationship of the citizen to her or his community, the political process, and the public world; the debates in a democracy over rights, duties, obligations, welfare, or international aid to other countries; the current or historical patterns of power, political interaction, and conflict among racial, ethnic, religious, and other groups; and the complexities and possibilities of public collaboration and problem-solving in a society of immensely diverse interests, perspectives, and values.

Environment

The relationship between humans and the natural environment is an interaction of biophysical and social systems. A key element in the preparation of the liberally educated individual is an acknowledgement of this interaction and an acceptance of responsibility for the planetary consequences of human endeavor. Environmental issues are well suited to intercollegiate cooperation and interdisciplinary examination. The Council on Liberal Education encourages the development of a diverse set of courses at both the introductory and advanced preparation levels that will challenge students to become engaged with environmental issues of enduring importance. The fundamental idea underlying this call is that humans and the natural environment are inextricably interdependent.

Courses proposed to satisfy the environmental education theme must:

A. Focus on the interdependency of humans and the natural environment and use critical issues of this interaction for illustrative and explanatory purposes,
B. Consider the regenerative capacity of the biosphere, and
C. Consider both the cultural and social implications of human intervention in biophysical planetary processes.

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Risky Business: Peter Bernstein’s *Against The Gods: The Remarkable Story of Risk*

This seminar explores Peter L. Bernstein’s, *Against The Gods: The Remarkable Story of Risk*, which traces the rational process of risk-taking developed by brilliant scientists, inventors, and philosophers to guide decision-making—from allocating wealth in our market economy to safeguarding public health, from waging war to planning a family, from paying an insurance premium to mapping the human genome.

Taught by Andrew Whitman, Carlson School of Management.
Note that mere demonstration of interdependence between the human and biophysical world is not sufficient to meet the criteria above. Courses in the natural and social sciences and in the humanities can all be considered for this theme if they satisfy all three of the criteria above. Examples might include courses in natural resource management, the environmental implications of agricultural and industrial activities, use of models in land use planning, theoretical, philosophical, and artistic treatment of issues in development and conservation, or the emergence of indigenous knowledge as a cultural expression of human interactions with the environment.

Courses With a Practicum
Courses that include a practicum (e.g., applied field research, clinical work, internship, service learning, study abroad) provide a valuable learning experience for students. The Council encourages submission of such courses to satisfy the thematic requirements.

Writing Intensive Courses
Writing Intensive (WI) courses, as understood by the Council on Liberal Education, are defined as courses at either the upper or lower division level in which the course grade is directly tied to the quality of the student's writing as well as to knowledge of the subject matter, so that students cannot pass the course who do not meet minimal standards of writing competence. In WI courses a significant amount of writing is required—minimally ten to fifteen finished pages beyond informal writing and in-class examinations, if any. Students in WI courses are given instruction on the writing aspect of the assignments, and these assignments include at least one for which students are required to revise and resubmit a draft after receiving feedback. Otherwise, writing assignments may be of various kinds and have various purposes, as appropriate to the discipline.

Students are required to take four WI courses in addition to first-year writing courses offered by English, Rhetoric, and General College. At least two of the four required courses must be taken at the 3xxx-level or above. It is expected that, at a minimum, one upper division WI course will be offered within each major or program area. More than one WI course per major is certainly encouraged, especially in the case of majors with few electives.

In addition to sample syllabi, assistance in planning and offering WI courses is available from the Center for Writing at http://writing.umn.edu. Students in need of help beyond what a WI instructor can offer may be referred to the University's writing centers and tutorial services http://www.writinghelp.umn.edu. (Appendix D)

To propose a course for Writing Intensive status please submit a proposal on the Electronic Course Authorization System (ECAS) at http://www.irr.umn.edu/ecas/template/selact.cfm?cmp=1 or e-mail CLEwrit@umn.edu. Any questions may be directed to Laurel Carroll at l-carr@umn.edu or 612-624-1320.
**Water, Water Everywhere and Not a Drop to Drink**

How can one of the most abundant substances on our planet be so precious, and how is it that water sometimes "flows uphill, toward money"? These and other questions will be examined as we discuss the scarcity and abundance of water from a number of different perspectives. Topics will include environmentalism, pollution, politics, history, geology, conservation, ecology, chemistry, sociology, limnology, and fluid mechanics. No specific background is required, only an interest in what is arguably the most important molecule on Earth. Course grading will be determined through a combination of written assignments and class participation.

Taught by Kristopher McNeill, Institute of Technology
Appendix B

Syllabus Requirements

The following list is based upon the University of Minnesota Faculty Senate Classroom Expectations Guidelines. If additional policy information is required, visit the University Senate Policy Web site at http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/usen/policies.html.

A Freshman Seminar syllabus should contain the following:

**Instructor Information**
- Instructor’s name, degree, and appropriate background information
- Office location
- Office hours
- At least one method of contacting the instructor including phone, e-mail, and fax

**Practical Course Details**
- Course title (try to make it interesting to first-year students)
- Course designator
- Course number (remember to use the Freshman Seminar numbering system)
- Number of credits
- Day, time, and place of class meetings (make sure location is conducive to seminar meetings whenever possible)
- Course prerequisites (Freshman Seminars should not have prerequisites)
- Degree requirements fulfilled by the course

**Course Description**
- A brief description of the course (this can also be used to market the course)
- Course goals, objectives, and expectations

**Instructional Methods and Materials**
- Description of classroom teaching techniques and a rationale for why they are being used, expectations for class participation
- Required and recommended materials and the location of the materials

**Methods for Evaluating Student Performance**
- Schedule of assignments, papers, projects, etc. (appropriate distribution of assignments can help you assess the progress of each individual throughout the semester; also remember to be clear about due dates)
- Criteria for grading and grading standards (including the University of Minnesota definition of grades)
A—Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B—Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
C—Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
D—Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.
S—Achievement that is satisfactory, which is equivalent to a C- or better.
F (or N)—Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either 1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit; or 2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I (see below).
I—(Incomplete) Assigned at the discretion of the instructor when, due to extraordinary circumstances (e.g., hospitalization), a student is prevented from completing the work of the course on time. Requires a written agreement between instructor and student.

Incomplete grades can only be given if a student has completed a significant portion of the course. “I” grades will automatically lapse to “F”s at the end of the next semester of a student’s registration, unless an instructor agrees to submit a change of grade for a student during a subsequent semester to maintain the grade as an “I.”

University Policies Related to Teaching

Makeup Exam Policy
Students should be advised of how faculty will handle missed exams. The University policy on missed classes:

Statement on Makeup Examinations for Legitimate Absences

Students shall not be penalized for absence due to unavoidable or legitimate circumstances. Such circumstances include, but are not limited to, verified illness, participation in intercollegiate athletic events or other group activities sponsored by the University, subpoenas, jury duty, military service, and religious observances. Students are responsible for providing documentation to the instructor to verify the reason for the absence.

1. It is the responsibility of the student to notify faculty members of such circumstances as far in advance as possible.

2. It is the responsibility of the faculty member to provide reasonable accommodations or opportunities to make up exams or other course assignments that have an impact on the course grade. See http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/policies/makeupexam.html.

Senate Student Academic Workload Policy

For undergraduate courses, one credit is defined as equivalent to an average of three hours of learning effort per week necessary for an average student to achieve an average grade in the course. For example, a student taking 15 credits should require approximately 45 hours of work each week.

Statement on penalties for late work

Each faculty member should state explicitly how late work will be handled for the seminar.

How to Win a Nobel Prize

To see the impact of science on our lives, one only has to consider last year’s Nobel Prize awarded for the invention of integrated circuits, work on semiconductors, and information and communication technology. What began as fundamental research eventually led to applications that touch all of us, such as the Internet. A look at the Nobel Prizes awarded during the last 100 years can help us understand many developments in science and medicine. We will take an interdisciplinary approach to study the lives, works, and legacies of selected Nobel laureates in chemistry, physics, and medicine. Who are the individuals behind the prizes? What is the importance of the work? Readings and discussions will provide the necessary background at a level appropriate for entering college students in any discipline. The course will also include training in library search techniques, tours of state-of-the-art laboratories at the University of Minnesota, and a visit to the annual Nobel Conference at Gustavus Adolphus College, featuring lectures by recent Nobel Prize winners.

Taught by Andreas Stein, Institute of Technology.
From Alchemy and Magic to Modern Chemistry in Our World Today

In this seminar we will explore some chemical magic and discover what the alchemists learned about chemistry. We will do many seemingly magical experiments in the lab and describe them in the context of modern science. We will explore how chemistry improves our lives and also how it is often twisted around to promote bogus products. Part of this seminar will be devoted to learning and study skills, and how to get the most out of your university experience. We will read and discuss the book “The Alchemist” by Paulo Coelho and possibly discover how a magical journey and alchemy can help you do well and prosper. This seminar is writing intensive so you will be required to write on topics related to the class material each week. It is not required that you have exposure to chemistry beyond the high school level but it is important that you have an interest in science, its impact on our society, and a willingness to explore many cool chemistry experiments. Grading in this course will be based primarily on your writings and on class participation.

Taught by Louis Pignolet, Institute of Technology.

Statement on accommodations for students with disabilities

Students with disabilities that affect their ability to participate fully in class or to meet all course requirements are encouraged to bring this to the attention of the instructor so that appropriate accommodations can be provided for students with physical, sensory, learning, and psychiatric disabilities.

Statement on classroom conduct

The University of Minnesota Student Conduct Code governs all activities in the University, including this course. Students who engage in behavior that disrupts the learning environment for others may be subject to disciplinary action under the Code. In addition, students responsible for such behavior may be asked to cancel their registration (or have their registration canceled).

Statement on academic misconduct

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; or altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabrication or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. Scholastic dishonesty in any portion of the academic work for a course shall be grounds for awarding a grade of F or N for the entire course.

Plagiarism occurs when students turn in work that is not their own. Plagiarism occurs when written work 1) fails to cite quotations and borrowed ideas from outside sources, including the World Wide Web and other student work; 2) fails to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks; and 3) fails to put summaries and paraphrases in the writer’s own words. The definition of plagiarism was derived from Diana Hacker’s A Writer’s Reference, Fourth Edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1999.

Statement on complaints with teaching or grading

Students with complaints about teaching or grading should first try to resolve the problem with the instructor involved. If no satisfactory resolution can be reached, students may then discuss the matter with a departmental or collegiate official* who will attempt to mediate. Failing an informal resolution, the Office of Academic Affairs and Curriculum will facilitate the filing of a formal complaint.

Statement regarding harassment

The University of Minnesota is committed to providing a safe climate for all students, faculty, and staff. All persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation. Reports of harassment are taken seriously, and there are individuals and offices available for help.

*Faculty should determine who this person is and insert the person’s name and phone number.
Appendix C


Fifty classroom assessment techniques are presented in this book. A copy of the book can be viewed in Laura Coffin Koch's office if you want additional techniques or additional information on the five described below. These techniques are to be used as starting points—ideas to be adapted and improved upon.

**Background Knowledge Probe**

**Description**

At the first class meeting, many college teachers ask students for general information on their level of preparation, often requesting that students list courses they have already taken in the relevant field. This technique is designed to collect much more specific, and more useful, feedback on students’ prior learning. “Background Knowledge Probes” are short, simple questionnaires prepared by instructors for use at the beginning of a course, at the start of a new unit or lesson, or prior to introducing an important new topic. A “Background Knowledge Probe” may require students to write short answers, to circle the correct response to multiple-choice questions, or both.

**Step-by-Step Procedure**

1. Before introducing an important new concept, subject, or topic in the course syllabus, consider what the students may already know about it. Recognizing that their knowledge may be partial, fragmentary, simplistic, or even incorrect, try to find at least one point that most students are likely to know, and use that point to lead into other, less familiar points.

2. Prepare two or three open-ended questions, a handful of short-answer questions, or ten to twenty multiple-choice questions that will probe the students’ existing knowledge of that concept, subject, or topic. These questions need to be carefully phrased, since a vocabulary that may not be familiar to the students can obscure your assessment of how well they know the facts or concepts.

3. Write your open-ended questions on the chalkboard, or hand out short questionnaires. Direct students to answer open-ended questions succinctly, in two or three sentences if possible. Make a point of announcing that these “Background Knowledge Probes” are not tests or quizzes and will not be graded. Encourage students to give thoughtful answers that will help you make effective instructional decisions.

4. At the next class meeting, or as soon as possible, let students know the results, and tell them how that information will affect what you do as the teacher and how it should affect what they do as learners.

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**After Wounded Knee: American Indians in the Twentieth Century**

The events of December 1890 have long been written as the final chapter of American Indian history. By 1890, most American Indians were living on reservations and some had witnessed the end of warfare between tribes and the United States. This course will consider the important years in American Indian history after Wounded Knee through analysis of the assimilation movement, the policy of land allotment, urbanization, termination, political activism, the struggle for treaty rights, and the emergence of what some have termed the “new buffalo” of tribal gaming. Through reading, lectures, documentary films, discussions, and a visit to the Minnesota History Center, students will be introduced to the idea that Indian history must be presented as a national and as a regional and local story.

Taught by Brenda Child, College of Liberal Arts.
Teaching Freshman Seminars

**Minute Paper**

**Description**

No other technique has been used more often or by more college teachers than the “Minute Paper.” This technique—also known as the “One-Minute Paper” and the “Half-Sheet Response”—provides a quick and extremely simple way to collect written feedback on student learning. To use the “Minute Paper,” an instructor stops class two or three minutes early and asks students to respond briefly to some variation on the following two questions: “What was the most important thing you learned during this class?” and “What important question remains unanswered?” Students write their responses on index cards or half-sheets of scrap paper and hand them in.

**Step-by-Step Procedure**

1. Decide first what you want to focus on and, as a consequence, when to administer the “Minute Paper.” If you want to focus on students’ understanding of a lecture, the last few minutes of class may be the best time. If your focus is on a prior homework assignment, however, the first few minutes may be more appropriate.

2. Using the two basic questions from the description above as starting points, write “Minute Paper” questions that fit your course and students. Try out your “Minute Paper” on a colleague or teaching assistant before using it in class.

3. Plan to set aside five to ten minutes of your next class to use the technique, as well as time later to discuss the results.

4. Before class, write one or, at the most, two “Minute Paper” questions on the chalkboard or prepare an overhead transparency.

5. At a convenient time, hand out index cards or half-sheets of scrap paper.

6. Unless there is a very good reason to know who wrote what, direct students to leave their names off the papers or cards.

7. Let the students know how much time they will have (two to five minutes per question is usually enough), what kinds of answers you want (words, phrases, or short sentences), and when they can expect your feedback.

**Muddiest Point**

**Description**

The “Muddiest Point” is a very simple technique. It is also remarkably efficient, since it provides a high information return for a very low investment of time and energy. It consists of asking students to jot down a quick response to one question: “What was the muddiest point in .......?” The focus of the “Muddiest Point” assessment might be a lecture, a discussion, a homework assignment, a play, or a film.

**Step-by-Step Procedure**

1. Determine what you want feedback on: the entire class session or one self-contained segment? A lecture, a discussion, a presentation?

2. If you are using the technique in class, reserve a few minutes at the end of the class session. Leave enough time to ask the question, to allow students to respond, and to collect their responses by the usual ending time.

3. Let students know beforehand how much time they will have to respond and how you will use their responses.
4. Pass out slips of paper or index cards for students to write on.

5. Collect the responses as or before students leave. Stationing yourself at the door and collecting “Muddy Points” as students file out is one way; leaving a “Muddy Point” collection box by the exit is another.

6. Respond to the students’ feedback during the next class meeting or as soon as possible afterward.

**One-Sentence Summary**

**Description**

This simple technique challenges students to answer the questions “Who does what to whom, when, where, how, and why?” (represented by the letters WDWWWWWHW) about a given topic, and then to synthesize those answers into a simple informative, grammatical, and long summary sentence.

**Step-by-Step Procedure**

1. Select an important topic or work that your students have recently studied in your course and that you expect them to learn to summarize.


3. Next, turn your answers into a grammatical sentence that follows WDWWWWWHS pattern. Note how long this second step takes.

4. Allow your students up to twice as much time as it took you to carry out the task and give them clear direction on the “One-Sentence Summary” technique before you announce the topic to be summarized.

**What’s the Principle?**

**Description**

After students figure out what type of problem they are dealing with, they often must then decide what principle or principles to apply in order to solve the problem. This technique focuses on this step in problem solving. It provides students with a few problems and asks them to state the principle that best applies to each problem.

**Step-by-Step Procedure**

1. Identify the basic principles that you expect students to learn in your course. Make sure to focus only on those that students have been taught.

2. Find or create sample problems or short examples that illustrate each of these principles. Each example should illustrate only one principle.

3. Create a “What’s the Principle?” form that includes a listing of the relevant principles and specific examples or problems for students to match to those principles.

4. Try out your assessment on a graduate student or colleague to make certain it is not too difficult or too time-consuming to use in class.

5. After you have made any necessary revisions to the form, apply the assessment.
Appendix D

University Resources to Assist with Academic Achievement

Writing Assistance
There are several centers on campus designed to assist students who are having difficulty with the writing process:

Student Writing Center
http://swc.umn.edu
306B Lind Hall
612-625-1893

The Student Writing Center (SWC) provides writing assistance for undergraduate students who seek to improve their writing abilities. Although the SWC is not a proofreading service, tutors are available to offer instruction and guidance to help students improve their writing performance. Tutors provide constructive feedback, techniques to improve writing, editing, and proofreading skills.

Department of Rhetoric Online Writing Center
http://www.owc.umn.edu

All services provided by the Department of Rhetoric Online Writing Center are offered online. The expert writing tutors provide short lessons on writing topics to students taking Writing Intensive courses. They have compiled resources that are web-accessible for students and faculty.

General College Writing Center
http://www.gen.umn.edu/resources/arc/writing
17 Appleby Hall
612-624-0342
writers@umn.edu

The General College Writing Center (GCWC) staff consists of undergraduate students and a professional staff member with expertise in working with people who have English as a second language. The GCWC is primarily a walk-in center, which means that there is no need to sign up ahead of time.

Writing Help for Undergraduates Web Page
http://cisw.cla.umn.edu/undergrads/index.html

The Writing Help for Undergraduates Web page provides links to University writing services and other online resources for students working on writing assignments.

Ethics of Attitude
Many questions central to modern moral philosophy have to do with how we should act. However, in everyday ethical life, the attitudes, emotions, or feelings that we feel and/or express toward others and ourselves - and those that others feel and/or express toward us - present themselves as likewise subject to the question of whether we should feel this way. Is indignation, resentment, or contempt something we are better off morally to forgo? Does it tarnish our virtue to feel anger at an injustice done us? Or in response to an otherwise insignificant slight? The question arises not only for the individual but for groups of various kinds, as well. Is it appropriate for a community to attempt to "shame" lawbreakers with their contempt? In taking up such questions, this seminar takes up the ethical relevance of our normative relation to others where that is understood to encompass facets of practical life that extend beyond our actions. Specific emotions and attitudes we will discuss include: resentment, indignation, forgiveness, hatred, trust, respect, shame, guilt, and contempt.

Taught by Michelle Mason, College of Liberal Arts.
Math, Physics and Chemistry Assistance

Departments of Math, Physics, and Chemistry
Assistance is available for students who are experiencing difficulty in math, physics and chemistry.

128/150 Lind Hall
612-624-2890

All three departments arrange tutoring for introductory courses within the department. In addition, tutoring services are available in all three areas in three different formats and locations. These services are available to any student from any college and are available during daytime hours only. Tutors are also available, free-of-charge, for students living in the residence halls, Sunday through Thursday, 7:00 to 10:00 p.m.

General College Math Center
9 Appleby Hall
612-626-7572

The General College Math Center offers free drop-in tutoring for students enrolled in math courses ranging from elementary algebra through pre-calculus and fulfilling the mathematical thinking requirements of the Liberal Education diversified core curriculum.

Study Skills Assistance
Learning and Academic Skills Center
http://www.ucs.umn.edu/lasc/lasc.html
109 Eddy Hall
612-624-3323

The Learning and Academic Skills Center, a division of the University Counseling and Consulting Services, offers assistance to students who want to become more efficient and effective learners.

Learning Assistance
Learning Assistance offers specific skill-building help in reading and writing improvement, time management, taking notes, test preparation and taking tests, concentration and memory.

Individual Counseling
Counseling is provided by psychologists, psychology interns, and counselors. This service focuses on some of the personal and emotional issues, that can interfere with academic success. These issues include: procrastination, test-taking anxiety, low motivation, fear of failure or success, perfectionism and difficult learning histories.

Political Propaganda
"Rosie the Riveter," "Be all that you can be," "the evil empire," "Willie Horton." Political propaganda is everywhere—from WWI and WWII leaflets to campaign commercials. In this course, we will explore the origins and strategies of modern political propaganda by discussing the political and psychological underpinnings of persuasive political messages. We will discuss examples of a variety of types of political propaganda (e.g., war posters, campaign commercials, and campaign mail)—ones that were successful and ones that backfired. Students will write a research paper on an aspect of political propaganda of their choosing. In addition, students will have the opportunity to create their own campaign commercials and show them to the class.

Taught by Joanne Miller, College of Liberal Arts.
Teaching Freshman Seminars

The Israeli/Palestinian Situation

“They have been fighting since the beginning of time.” This is how many Americans regard Palestine and Israel, Ireland, Bosnia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and other regions of protracted intercommunal conflict. In this seminar, we will consider this “...since the beginning of time...” proposition for the particular case of Israelis and Palestinians. We will study south Mediterranean Jewish/Islamic relationships in the pre-modern era; the evolution of Israeli and Palestinian political institutions; the relevant policies and diplomatic endeavors of Great Powers; the residues of Ottoman multiculturalism and the effect of this heritage on the contemporary situation; differing schools of thought within Israeli and Palestinian communities about who “we” are, who “they” are, and what to do; the impact of factors such as water scarcity; and the late 20th century rise of religiously oriented political groups in both Israeli and Palestinian communities.

Taught by Martin Sampson, College of Liberal Arts.

Academic Success Course (LASK 1101), Mid-Semester Offerings

Students explore what makes learning in college difficult and discover why many students don’t meet their own or the University’s standards for achievement. Then, rather than just hope that things will change for the better, students find options for getting what they want. Permission number is required.

Contact: Scott Slattery 612-625-4568 or slatt008@umn.edu

Second Wind: A Mid-Semester Academic Success Workshop

125 Coffey Hall
St. Paul Campus
612-624-3323

This program of the St. Paul office of University Counseling and Consulting Services is a concentrated study skills workshop providing tools and perspectives to help students down the home stretch of the semester. Topics covered include what makes an academically successful student, time management, note taking, reading and study strategies, concentration, and test preparation.

Personal Assistance

University Counseling and Consulting Services
www.ucs.umn.edu

Individual Learning and Assistance and Counseling

109 Eddy Hall
612-624-3323

The University Counseling and Consulting Services (UCCS) counseling program helps students who are experiencing personal and academic stress, relationship concerns and transitions that interfere with college achievement. UCCS has experienced counselors who can help students select and achieve goals for personal and career development.

Academic Support for Multicultural Students

Multicultural Center for Academic Programs
http://www.oma.umn.edu/academic.html
185 Klaeber Court
612-624-8063
Appendix E

University Resources to Assist with Health, Personal, and Financial Issues

A comprehensive list of University Resources can be found at www.osa.umn.edu/resources For assistance with an issue that is not listed, please call Office for Student Affairs at 612-624-3560.

Alcohol and/or Drug Misuse

Boynton Mental Health Clinic*
612-624-1444

Boynton Health Promotion-Chemical Health
612-626-1145

Financial

Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid
612-624-1111

Legal

University Student Legal Service
612-624-1001

Mental health

Suicide, depression, anxiety, stress, death or serious illness of a loved one

Boynton Mental Health Clinic*
Appointments: 612-624-1444
Crisis: 612-625-8475

University Counseling & Consulting Services
612-624-3323

ET Call Home: The Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence

This seminar will review the history of searches for extraterrestrial intelligence, and discuss the astronomical background necessary to understand those searches, e.g., planetary formation, NASA exploration of the planets in our solar system, discovery of planets around other stars, odds for finding life elsewhere in our galaxy, difficulties of space travel, present-day searches, and SETI-at-Home. Students will also read the book "Contact" by Carl Sagan as a fictionalized account of a successful search based on the SETI project.

Taught by Len Kuh, Institute of Technology.
Teaching Freshman Seminars

Social Diversity in the Shadow of Hate
This seminar examines social diversity in the United States, with emphasis on race, ethnicity, gender, social class, age, disability, sexual orientation, and religious diversity. The course develops a context in which participants develop insights in the personal nature of bias while they study episodes of contemporary and historical intolerance.
Taught by Geoffrey Maruyama, College of Education and Human Development.

Personal safety
University of Minnesota Police Department
612-624-3550

Escort Service (24 hours)
612-624-walk (612-624-9255)

Physical health
Acute and chronic illness, infectious diseases, injuries

Boynton Health Service
612-625-8400

Relationships

Boynton Mental Health Clinic*
Appointments: 612-624-1444
Crisis: 612-625-8475

University Counseling & Consulting Services
612-624-3323

Sexual or Domestic Violence

Aurora Center for Advocacy and Education (formerly Program Against Sexual Violence)
612-626-2929
24 hour crisis line: 612-626-9111

Stress Relief

Boynton Health Service Massage Clinic*
612-625-3222

Boynton Health Service Comfort Zone classes
612-625-6410

* There may be a small charge for this service.
Appendix F

Seven Principles of Teaching

The “Seven Principles” of good practice in undergraduate education can be a good model for faculty who teach Freshman Seminars:

1. Encourage contact between students and faculty

Frequent student-faculty contact in and out of class is a most important factor in student motivation and involvement. Faculty concern helps students get through rough times and keep on working. Knowing a few faculty members well enhances students’ intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and plans.

2. Develop reciprocity and cooperation among students

Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing and responding to ideas improves thinking and deepens understanding.

3. Encourage active learning

Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write reflectively about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.

4. Give prompt feedback

Knowing what you know and don’t know focuses your learning. Students need appropriate feedback on performance to benefit from courses. When getting started, students need help in assessing their existing knowledge and competence. Then, in classes, students need frequent opportunities to perform and receive suggestions for improvement. At various points during college, and at its end, students need chances to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how they might assess themselves.

5. Emphasize time on task

Time plus energy equals learning. There is no substitute for time on task. Learning to use one’s time well is critical for students and professionals alike. Allocating realistic amounts of time means effective learning for students and effective teaching for faculty. How an institution defines time expectations for students, faculty, administrators, and other professional staff can establish the basis for high performance for all.
6. Communicate high expectations
Expect more and you will get it. High expectations are important for everyone—for the poorly prepared, for those unwilling to exert themselves, and for the bright and well motivated. Expecting students to perform well becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when teachers and institutions hold high expectations for themselves and make efforts.

7. Respect diverse talents and ways of learning
There are many roads that lead to learning. Different students bring different talents and styles to college. Brilliant students in a seminar might be all thumbs in a lab or studio; student’s rich in hands-on experience may not do so well with theory. Students need opportunities to show their talents and learn in ways that work for them. Then they can be pushed to learn in new ways that do not come so easily.

The Lawn: History of an American Obsession
We will read a book by Virginia Scott Jenkins, *The Lawn: History of an American Obsession*, which opens us to discussion of the environmental impact of this ecosystem, how we have been encouraged to embrace it, and how the future of the lawn (including parks and golf courses) may change as freshwater resources become strained and the impacts of pesticides and fertilizers on our urban systems plays out, and as we have less time to devote to a lawn’s time demands. There will be lots of opportunities for students to do research on specific aspects of this topic both literature research and some field projects since there are lots of lawns to visit near campus. The class will also serve as an orientation to the University environment and will discuss topics such as academic survival skills.

Taught by Patrice Morrow, College of Biological Sciences.
Appendix G

Example of Student Evaluation Form for Freshmen Seminars

Overall Rating of the Freshman Seminar Experience
Dear Student: At the end of this course, you will be given an opportunity to evaluate the course itself and the instructor. At the present time, we'd like to ask you a few questions about the general experience of being in a Freshman Seminar. We hope to continue to enlarge and improve the Freshman Seminar program, and your comments will help us.

Thank you for your time.

1. What was the most valuable thing you got out of this seminar? (Please rank your responses: 1 most valuable to 7 least valuable.)
   ____ Specific content knowledge
   ____ Opportunity to meet other students
   ____ Contact with a faculty member
   ____ Small group discussions
   ____ Opportunity to be in small class
   ____ Develop particular skills (please explain)___________________________
   ____ Other_____________________________________________________

2. How did the workload of this class compare with your other classes? (Taking into account the number of credits per class.)
   ____ Less work than other classes
   ____ About the same as other classes
   ____ More work than other classes

3. Does your seminar include writing experiences?
   ____ No   ____ Yes
   If yes, please indicate which one of the following most closely matches the quantity of writing you have done:
   ____ No significant writing
   ____ Several short papers plus a longer paper
   ____ Several short papers
   ____ One long paper
   ____ Other (please describe)________________________________________

Alien Invasions: Impacts and Control of Exotic Species
Non-indigenous (exotic) species are becoming increasingly common worldwide and are considered one of the major causes of loss of biodiversity. What are these species? Where do they come from and how do they get there? What allows some species to invade and become a nuisance? How can we control them? This seminar will introduce students to the topic via reading, presentation, and discussion of selected primary literature. In addition to learning more about the topic, students will learn how to read, critique, and summarize primary literature and gain insight into how science is conducted and translated into management actions.
Taught by Raymond M. Newman, College of Natural Resources.
Teaching Freshman Seminars

4. Did this seminar provide you with a useful introduction to what it will be like to be a University student?
   ___ Yes. Please explain how.
   ___ No. Please explain how we might do it better next time.

5. With respect to the completion of Freshman Seminar requirements, did the instructor discuss matters of academic integrity, such as proper citation of source material, when collaboration with others on assignments was appropriate, guidance regarding the use of internet sites, etc.?
   ___ Yes, specific emphasis was given
   ___ Yes, general reference was provided in the syllabus
   ___ No, topics were not discussed

6. Would you recommend to next year’s freshmen that they take a Freshman Seminar?
   ___ Definitely yes
   ___ Probably not
   ___ Probably yes
   ___ Definitely not
   Please comment on your answer:

7. Did this freshman seminar meet your expectations?
   ___ Definitely yes
   ___ Somewhat
   ___ No
   Please explain:

8. Was there something you especially liked about your Freshman Seminar? If so, what was it?

9. What advice do you have for faculty teaching Freshman Seminars?

Human Population: Six Billion and Who’s Counting?
Recently the world’s human population passed the 6 billion mark. Since 1900 the human population has increased almost four-fold. What has contributed to this rapid population expansion? Can it continue at the same rate? What are the implications for the future in terms of availability of living space, food, water, energy, and other key resources? Does an increasing population of urban dwellers put the human population at greater risk of a devastating viral or bacterial epidemic? We will discuss the implications of the burgeoning human population with respect to our own livelihood, in terms of the impacts for other biological organisms, and we will explore the ethical implications of our personal life styles on the world’s rapidly vanishing resources. The class will also serve as an orientation to the University environment and will discuss topics such as academic survival skills. Taught by John S. Anderson and Robert J. Roon, College of Biological Sciences.
Appendix H

Example of Faculty Evaluation Form for Freshman Seminars

FACULTY QUESTIONNAIRE ON FRESHMAN SEMINARS

What was your experience like teaching your Freshman Seminar this semester?

When you think about your students in your Freshman Seminar, what experiences stand out in your mind?

If you had it to do over again, would you design your seminar the same way? If yes, what changes would you make?

What creative techniques did you use to engage your students?

What do you feel are important incentives for faculty participation in the Freshman Seminar program?

How do you assess your students’ progress over the semester?

What part of your Freshman Seminar do you feel was successful and would share with others teaching a freshman seminar for the first time?

What advice/comments do you have for faculty teaching Freshman Seminars in the future?

Did you introduce and discuss with students the importance of academic integrity in specific regard to seminar assignments and exams?

If there was a handbook for faculty teaching Freshman Seminars, what kind of information would be helpful?

The Art of Aging

The course will present an overview of the humanities (novels, short fiction, drama, nonfiction, poetry, films) as they relate to the study of aging. Study with this focus can enrich our understanding of many universal aspects of aging, increase our awareness of the effects of ageism, and inform our attitudes about the basis of old age and family relationships. This course will emphasize the experience of aging as it is perceived from the older person’s point of view, especially as it relates to the experience of family living. The class sessions will be structured as workshops, and student participation in small groups will be encouraged. Students will be encouraged to consider their attitudes toward their own aging and to analyze the significance of their relationships with older persons.

Taught by Robert Yahnke, General College.
Appendix I

2003 Cooperative Institutional Research Program Summary

This data was taken from the 2003 Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Institutional Profile for University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Campus. Students who took this survey were first-time full-time students. The survey was conducted during New Student Orientation. Eighty-three percent (approximately 4,300 out of 5,186) of the first-year class completed the survey. Below are just a sample of the questions asked of the students, but they are particularly relevant to faculty teaching first-year students.

Question:
During your last year in high school, how much time did you spend during a typical week studying/doing homework?

Data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studying/Homework</th>
<th>Percent of University of Minnesota Students Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 5 hours</td>
<td>65.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 hours</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 hours</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20 hours</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20 hours</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implications for Teaching First-Year Students

Eighty-five percent of University of Minnesota students spent less than 10 hours per week doing homework or studying during high school. Sixty-five percent of the students spent less then five hours. The study habits students have in high school are dramatically different from what is expected at the collegiate level. Faculty should be explicit in setting expectations for their students, both in terms of the number of hours and the type of study activities necessary to be successful in their course. Most University of Minnesota students report doing well in high school—67.2 percent of students say they earned and A- or better on average in high school and 28.4 percent earned a B or B+ average. Because of this, many students believe they are ready for the challenges of college, but in fact, they may not be prepared for the competition of their new set of peers, the intensity of college coursework, and the necessity to self-regulate their time.
Question:
During your last year in high school, how much time did you spend during a typical week doing the following?

Data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working (for pay)</th>
<th>Percent of University of Minnesota Students Responding</th>
<th>Percent of Students from Highly Selective Public Universities Responding</th>
<th>Percent of Students from Other Public Universities Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 hours</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>44.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 hours</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 hours</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20 hours</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20 hours</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question:
How much of your first year’s educational expenses (room, board, tuition, and fees) do you expect to cover from the following?

Data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My own resources (savings from work, work-study, other income)</th>
<th>Percent of University of Minnesota Students Responding</th>
<th>Percent of Students from Highly Selective Public Universities Responding</th>
<th>Percent of Students from Other Public Universities Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$1,000+</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family resources (parents, relatives, spouses, etc.)</td>
<td>Percent of University of Minnesota Students Responding</td>
<td>Percent of Students from Highly Selective Public Universities Responding</td>
<td>Percent of Students from Other Public Universities Responding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000 +</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid that must be repaid (loans, etc.)</td>
<td>Percent of University of Minnesota Students Responding</td>
<td>Percent of Students from Highly Selective Public Universities Responding</td>
<td>Percent of Students from Other Public Universities Responding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>56.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Freshman 15: Do’s and Don’ts of Diets
Most students have an innate interest in what they eat, whether it is to improve athletic performance or looks. During the freshman year, many students have their first opportunity to make all of their food choices themselves. Studies have shown that often freshman gain weight the first year of school, their first year of independent food choices. Students may be influenced by peers or advertising and not really understand the basis of any given choice of their daily diet. Various subgroups of students, such as athletes or dancers, may be influenced by coaches or trainers to eat a certain diet. This course covers current U.S. dietary guidelines and how these were established; comments and controversies over "what is a healthy diet;" caloric needs and in what form these "should" be met; what is legal advertising and labeling of foods and supplements and what is ethical; why people diet—weight loss, improved health, improved athletic performance, etc.; various popular diets—The Zone, Atkins, Ornish, etc.—and their rationale, evidence, popular practice; unpopular diets; and dorm food.

Taught by Linda Brady, College of Human Ecology.
Implications for Teaching First-Year Students

Fifty-two percent of University of Minnesota students worked over 11 hours per week while still in high schools compared to 38.9 percent and 43.1 percent of their peers at other public institutions. Students attending the University of Minnesota are concerned about financing their education and are spending more of their time working.

Approximately 54 percent of University of Minnesota first-year students expected to finance at least $1,000 of their education through their own savings, work study, or other employment compared to 32.6 percent of their peers at other highly selective public universities, and 32.5 percent at other public universities. In addition, 20.1 percent of University of Minnesota students expect to finance between $3,000 and $10,000 of their first year’s educational expenses by working compared to 9.8 percent of their peers at other highly selective public universities and 10.3 percent at other public universities. University of Minnesota students are less likely to have family support, take out loans, and pay for their own education than students at other public institutions. These factors contribute to the fact that our students tend to work more while in college which could impact the amount of time they are able to put into their schoolwork.

Question:
What were very important reasons in deciding to go to college?

Data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Three Reasons Students Attend College</th>
<th>Percent of University of Minnesota Students Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To learn more about things that interest me.</td>
<td>81.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be able to get a better job.</td>
<td>76.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be able to make more money.</td>
<td>74.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implications for Teaching First-Year Students

Although the students’ top reason for deciding to go to college is to learn, it is followed very closely by getting a job and making more money. The results of this question indicate that students want to learn more and use that education to find a well-paid job. Levitz and Noel (1989) report that students are often unsure of their goals for their education. Faculty and academic advisers can help first-year students wind their way through the college experience in order to find the connection between a college education, a career, and a successful future.