

**AN EVALUATION OF FRESHMAN SEMINARS
AT KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY**

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INTRODUCTION

Anytime a new program is launched, there comes a day of reckoning when those administering the program must make some kind of evaluation to determine whether or not that program is meeting the needs for which it was created and whether or not there is further justification for the continued use of staff members' time and energy and any monies allocated to the program. Thus, after three years of operation, it is time to take a long, hard look at the Freshman Seminar Program.

Essentially, four factors made this report advisable at this time:

- 1. The increase of sheer numbers of freshmen in the program as a result of sign-up following Microlabs in Communication during summer enrollment.**
- 2. The high drop-out rate of participating freshmen.**
- 3. A new Dean of Students and Assistant Dean of Students who seemed to feel the need for evaluating existing programs.**
- 4. Increased pooling of ideas, interests, and information as a result of more staff involvement in the program.**

THE FORMAT OF THE FRESHMAN SEMINAR PROGRAM

Freshman Seminars, as a part of the freshman orientation, became a reality at Kansas State University in the fall of 1966. For a number of years previous to this time, freshmen met in the stadium on the first day of fall orientation and became members of a temporary group called an "Orientation Group." These groups were led by an upperclass student who took the new students on a tour of the campus and served as a source of answers for questions as well as a stimulus and model. This system proved to be unsatisfactory and was abandoned.

The formulation of the longer term method for student adjustment in the form of Freshman Seminars was highly influenced by a Human Development Study being initiated by the Counseling Center and participated in by the Associate Dean of Students. Counseling Center and other personnel staff served as resource persons to the program.

The new program was established with the idea that orientation needed to be more than welcoming speeches and a tour of the campus. Its focus was on personal and social orientation. It was felt that students saw the importance of sharing the experiences they were having and that they wanted to evaluate these experiences in light of their goals for college and in light of what other students were experiencing.

The Associate Dean of Students' description follows:

Freshman Seminars are small groups (about 10) of new K-Staters who have agreed to meet with each other weekly for the purpose of sharing and exchanging their current experiences (satisfying and dissatisfying), their ideas, their feelings, their dreams and their expectations. In a way the seminars constitute a weekly report, a weekly inventory. We want students to use these meetings to learn to value their own experiences. Another way of expressing it is to say we hope the seminars not only provide a time for reporting (and savoring) integrative experiences of students, but that the seminar meetings themselves become the occasion for developing a new integration or synthesis of experience (Friesen, Spring 1967).

Beginning in the fall of 1966 and continuing each year since, the seminars have been established each September during orientation week. Each small group has as co-leaders two upperclass students, usually a man and a woman. Additional groups have sometimes been formed when new students entered at the beginning of the spring and summer terms. With the formation of new groups, participants have been asked to commit themselves to the group for a period of eight weeks.

Student leaders have usually been given some training during the spring semester before they become leaders in the fall. Most leaders had participated in the Freshman Seminar Program as new students (Friesen, July 1967).

The administration of the program has been largely the responsibility of a student personnel staff person with an already overloaded schedule. Other student personnel staff

serve as consultants and help with leader training. One graduate student has devoted two-tenths time (approximately ten hours per week) to the program during the past two years. Secretarial services have been provided from both the Counseling Center and the Office of the Dean of Students. The program has not had any specific funds for operating.

A RATIONALE FOR THE PROGRAM

Education is the openness to change. There is no learning unless there is an accompanying change in the learner's behavior.

Learning and change take place most effectively only when certain conditions are present, making it possible for the learner to enter into a process of diagnosis, experimentation, information finding, generalization, practice and application leading toward learning, growth and change (Bradford, 1958).

The function then, of an educational institution, is to provide those conditions under which learning and change are more likely to take place. Stated simply and idealistically, the conditions which make learning and change most likely to occur are the same conditions which help change to be experienced personally, quickly, enjoyably, inevitably, and be relevant to the student's present and future life.

Thus, education is a highly personal encounter and is something to be experienced from within. When the learner can be open to all his experiences he is more likely to

release his creative powers and move toward a better fulfillment of his self-realization in becoming his potentialities as a person (Rogers, 1961). Man seems to have a built-in urge toward self-realization--the urge to be, extend, expand, mature--the urge to express and activate all the capacities of the self. Openness to change and learning is the only way man can realize his full self. Self-realization is more likely to be accomplished under the conditions of freedom to change and minimum psychological fear of change.

Man must relate to significant others to learn. The easier and more meaningful such relating, the more conducive are the conditions for learning. The educational institution which provides a broad pattern of possible relating experiences is providing one of the most important ingredients for the learning process. If the pattern of relating experiences is sufficiently broad, the total university life of a student becomes a learning experience. Such experiences can involve the total range of the student's life, ranging throughout his personal being. The total university under such conditions can become one big "creative classroom." Moustakas (1966) described the "creative" classroom as follows:

Being open to the inherent life in the classroom means first of all being open to one's own inner life as a person; it means centering oneself in evolving perceptions and potentialities which come to fulfillment in living itself; it means being aware of human values as

well as intellectual and social values; it means being open to the unfolding process in learning, and to values and meanings which include but transcend facts or techniques; it means letting each person be himself, encouraging and valuing individuality and letting it shine forth. . . . It means being open to all experiences and in participating in each experience as a new venture.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE FRESHMAN SEMINARS

Freshman Seminars were initiated as a pilot program to develop a method which would enable student personnel workers to find better ways to assist students and staff in bringing the "creative" classroom concept into reality.

There is a growing body of evidence to indicate educational institutions are not fulfilling their role to provide conditions sufficiently conducive to change and learning. To many students, the concept of the creative classroom and the university as they experience it, are far removed from each other.

Bound by rigidity of custom and tradition, sensitive to criticism from taxpayers and private philanthropers, increasingly dependent on the military and industry complex for financial support, and ever mindful of status recognition gained from heavy emphasis on research programs--many universities are accused by students and staff as having failed to treat the student as a total person, but consider him as an afterthought of abstracted intelligence to be dealt with at the end of its list of priority concerns. Granted the case

against universities may be overstated by the above, the rise of student protests, strikes, riots, and commitment to and participation in critical social and political issues of our time indicate a certain amount of truth in the harsh accusations voiced by today's generation of students.

Educational institutions find themselves in a dilemma. On the one hand, students are crying out for educational relevancy while on the other hand taxpayers, parents, and administrators strive for the university to attain its conception of excellence at lowest optimal cost. Today's students have been reared in a society of relative affluence, whereas taxpayers and parents of many of today's students grew up to a great extent under depressed economic conditions which shaped a standard of values quite different from those of today's students. Thus, administrators are caught between the demands of students for relevancy, and the demands of financial and political supporters for excellence, where excellence may too often be defined as being successful by today's middle-class society standards of affluent material means.

Sanford (1967) excellently stated many of the criticisms of universities voiced by today's students:

The question of priorities is rarely discussed in the academic world, and excellence is used as a slogan to justify what is mere imitation--programs that are new in name only, a senseless proliferation of causes, and research projects remarkable only for their soundness of

method--a criterion obtainable by any mediocre scientist. Projects are chosen on the basis of what others are doing, what is fashionable, and what brings in money.

Thus, today's students find disappointment in the disparity in what they want in the way of educational relevance and what they think they find in the university life as they actually experience it.

The Freshman Seminar Program could be called an attempt to provide a method to bring the student's desire for a meaningful education and the university's attempt to provide it into a proper juxtaposition. Such an attempt requires a recognition on the part of both students and university educators that the human individual is all in one piece and that his diverse features develop in interaction with one another; i.e., a recognition by educators and students that man is by nature a social animal. Implicit here is the belief that student personnel workers have an obligation and an opportunity to provide leadership in developing techniques and methods through the Freshman Seminar Program to bring about the proper juxtaposition mentioned above.

Kansas State University Administrators and staff have been leaders in recognizing the problem and in initiating action to try to make the student's college experience conducive to learning through the process of change. The staffs of the Dean of Students and the Counseling Center have

aggressively pursued a program to help incoming freshmen experience education as a highly personal and developmental process of the total human person.

The method of the Freshman Seminar Program involves the use of the small-group techniques in the process of change. Heavy emphasis is placed on close interpersonal contact among student and staff leaders in an atmosphere of association which, for the most part, has used little formal structure. The concept of the small-group process is predicated on the assumption that such a group is more conducive to meaningful rapport among the students, and yields itself to a more informal and useful relationship from the staff. Under such conditions, it was felt that students were more likely to openly disclose themselves and not limit their thinking to a limited set of aspects of people that are the usual targets of change, but would develop a sense of community where freedom to change and psychological safety for change would be increased.

In summary, the rationale for the Freshman Seminar Program was well stated by Friesen (July 1967):

The evidence dramatically points to the disconcerting fact that the most important experiences are not necessarily those occurring in the classes and the laboratories but in the less formal student-faculty and student-student relationships and encounters. It follows, therefore, that student personnel workers have the major role in providing a significant student experience which affects growth and change in students. Apart from the purely service function of providing housing, food,

medical assistance, etc., our one definitive educational task is to create and support the conditions which will generate significant person-to-person encounter. If we seek to meet the challenge to become agents of change, we will have to understand what changes can be expected and the ways change can be effected.

Thus, the Freshman Seminar Program was begun as a challenge accepted by the staff to become agents of change to make the total university a "creative classroom" to enable the student to reach his self-realization and potential as a human being.

AVAILABLE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROGRAM

In the process of pulling together pertinent information about the program over the last three years, it was found that most of the evaluation on record for the first year was in the form of impressions by the director of the program. Copies of a questionnaire sent to leaders and another for freshmen were found in the files, but no information as to what happened to the data. The present coordinator of the program, who was nominally involved in its administration at the time, remembers only that there was a spotty return of the questionnaire. The questionnaire asked for important data which, if available, would be of real help in an evaluation of the present program.

In the second year of operation, the results of a questionnaire sent to leaders is on file. No attempt was

made to get feedback from freshmen except as it filtered through their leaders. There is feedback material from the staff resource people concerning their impressions of what was happening in the groups to which they were assigned. Each pair of leaders was to meet once a week with the resource person.

We do know that in the first year of operation there were approximately 160 freshmen who responded to the invitation to participate in the program. Two or three upperclass students who were in a training program in the previous spring, were assigned to each group. These leaders, in turn, met together in the fall in groups of six with a staff person. Following each meeting of the leaders, the general content, topics, and climate of the meeting were recorded for later examination. Friesen's reflections and impressions from what the leaders reported are included in a "First Report" early in October (1966) and a "Second Report" written November 30 (1966).

It is, perhaps, significant that many leaders reported they could not think of a good reason for getting their freshmen together and there was concern expressed about the fact that attendance by freshmen and leaders alike, had been rather inconsistent. From the very first there seemed to be problems of commitment and of communicating the purpose of the program. According to Friesen (October 1966), most

groups appeared to be averaging "approximately 70-80 per cent of their original group" in the first year of operation. This report was made early in October and if a time lag is allowed for the collection of data, it is quite possible the information concerning attendance was for the very first meeting or meetings when attendance would have been high. The writer believes this to be a rather optimistic figure and it is much higher than the report of attendance in this, the third year of the program. According to an attendance check made in October, 1968, only 39 per cent of the original freshmen were still participating. This figure was arrived at by using information taken from a survey of attendance made in late October and from information collected by staff members. Phone calls were made to leaders who had not responded so that 100 per cent of the groups reported. The attendance figure used was for any group meeting or an average attendance of a group's meetings, almost all of which took place during the month of October. A few were dated the last week in September.

In the second year of operation, there were 186 freshmen and 74 leaders who signed up to be a part of the seminars but no freshman attendance figures were available for that year. There are no figures indicating how long the groups met either the first or third years. A questionnaire sent late in the first semester of the second year of operation

indicated one third of the original groups for that year were still meeting. This would seem to indicate the possibility of needs being met and that a "we" feeling might have developed among the members of those groups.

In the spring of 1968, the planning for the fall program began. Some leaders from the previous year offered their services and others volunteered after reading a letter in the Collegian of the need for leaders. Two or three student personnel staff members met weekly with a small group of leaders beginning in March and continuing until near the end of the semester. These meetings were designed to function as a model for upperclass leaders who would have their own groups in the fall. There were fifty-five leaders who participated in these groups and it was thought at that time these leaders would be sufficient in number to serve the freshmen who signed up for the seminars. This might have been true except that it was decided to give freshmen enrolling in July an opportunity to participate in a Microlab in Communications.

The Microlabs were a series of exercises thought to facilitate initial stages of group process and thus a logical springboard to freshman seminars. The effect of the Microlabs will be dealt with in another section of this paper. For now, it is to be noted that 653 freshmen signed up for the seminars and a few additional names were added to the

list in September. This meant there would be three times as many freshmen involved as had been previously anticipated, necessitating a hurried call for more upperclass leaders. An additional fifty-five students were recruited for a total of 110 leaders. Some of the additional fifty-five student leaders had been leaders previously, but many had had no training or experience. During registration week, a morning was devoted to leader training in the form of a Microlab with a staff person participating in each small group. These staff persons continued to meet with the same small group of leaders periodically as long as there was interest shown on the part of leaders. As feedback from the freshman groups continued, the staff felt it desirable to look more closely at the operation of the program. Hence, the beginning of the motivation for this study.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE SEMINARS

It would be folly to attempt to make any kind of study of a student personnel program without including student perceptions of the program. It was decided that rather intensive interviews with various segments of the student population of the seminars would reveal valuable information for consideration.

How students were selected for the interviews.

Categories were established with the idea of obtaining a cross section of perceptions from both leaders and freshmen. Those who were interviewed were arbitrarily selected but from different groups, and phone calls were made until all the categories were filled. This selected group included twelve women, six freshmen and six upperclass leaders, and twelve men, again six freshmen and six upperclass leaders. The groups were further divided to include two people each who were participating members, partially participating members, and non-participating members. A member being anyone who signed up for the program. A participating member is defined as one who met with an assigned group for a period of eight weeks. A partially participating member is defined as one who attended two to four meetings and then dropped out or the group ceased to function after that time. A non-participating member is defined as one who attended only the initial meeting or none at all.

Effect of the Microlabs in communication. Freshmen who were interviewed were encouraged to talk about the Microlabs since this was the vehicle by which they signed up for the Freshman Seminar Program. All twelve freshmen showed positive reactions to the Microlab experience and it was typically expressed in statements similar to "You get to

know each other in a small group quickly so it is a good idea for the freshmen."

Most of the freshmen who attended the Microlabs signed the roster for the seminars in a follow-the-leader fashion after the first person in the group signed. None of the freshmen referred to the length of time that elapsed between the sign-up-date and the date of the first meeting in the fall. It was not determined through the interviews why so many freshmen, having had a pleasant experience in the Microlab group during summer enrollment, did not attend the initial meeting of the seminars in the fall. The first meeting was announced in the orientation literature and the places of the group meetings were well marked on the day of the meeting.

There is evidence that some of the staff failed to communicate how the Microlabs differed from the Freshman Seminars. From three of the freshmen there were these comments:

"I thought the Freshman Seminars was a sort of continuation of the Microlab."

"We had the Microlab and that was really interesting and I thought the Freshman Seminars would be like that."

"Well, I don't really know if we were told exactly how the seminars would be different than the Microlab. I think I felt they would be more of the same. I just thought they used two different names for the same thing."

Only three of the leaders referred to this lack of communication of what the Freshman Seminars were. Their comments were:

"Many of them got the idea that it would be like the Microlab when they came back in the fall."

"Four or five of the freshmen came up to me and said they thought the groups in the fall would be like the Microlabs."

"The students went into the groups in the fall expecting something more like the Microlabs."

Since freshmen had positive reactions to the Microlabs, perhaps the program would profit by using this method of facilitating group process after the seminar groups are formed in the fall. The leaders would be available to participate with the freshmen assigned to their group for whatever advantage this would have.

Leader commitment. Each of the students interviewed made some statement that would indicate the importance of the commitment of the leaders if groups are to succeed. This commitment came out in various ways, but it was always there. One leader spoke of himself as a "sparkplug" for his group and very "necessary." One leader said it was very important that "interest" and "enthusiasm" be generated by the leaders if the groups are to succeed. Three of the leaders spoke of the importance of being there every time. Two of the leaders made statements about the necessity of being committed to the

individuals in the group. Leaders of successful groups were able to overcome the barriers they encountered. One leader suggested a way of overcoming the barrier he felt in having to compete with other activities. His full statement is included here as it also shows something of his commitment.

If we could establish a time that the students kept free; I think it would be very simple to pull a card and meet at a regular time just like the classes. It could be non-credit. I wouldn't want to get credit for it just as I wouldn't want to get paid for being a leader. I'm a leader because I enjoy doing it. I'm getting a lot out of it for myself.

All twelve of the freshmen thought the leader was the key to the success of the whole Freshman Seminar Program. Comments from the freshmen who failed to continue in a group indicate this as well as the difficulty of finding a meeting time that did not conflict with some other activity:

Partially participating freshman women.

"Our group wasn't very successful. No one wanted to take any of the responsibility. A lot of the kids weren't interested in it, yet they had signed up. There were only two or three of us who were interested."

"Our group really didn't do anything, we just talked. Only three or four ever showed up at the two meetings I attended. Up here it seems you don't get to know anyone except on the surface. I missed a meeting to go to church and they didn't call me again."

Partially participating freshman men.

"The leaders chose Thursday night and that is the night the dorm had functions and I have a lab. Once when I didn't go because of a function, they didn't call again."

"They were to let me know where it was to meet but since then I haven't heard anything. I know some of the names of the people in the group but I didn't know where they lived."

Non-participating
freshman women.

"No one seemed interested. In the summer there was a lot of interest but only two or three ever showed up at the one meeting I attended. Something came up and I couldn't go to the next meeting and no one got in touch with me again."

"I always seemed to have a conflict and finally they didn't call me anymore."

Non-participating
freshman men.

"I was busy when they had the first meeting and I never did find out where they were going to meet again. I wish that the leaders had contacted me again."

"I meant to go to the first meeting but I had an opportunity to do something else. I didn't know when there were other meetings."

Further probing in the interviews showed that ten out of twelve freshmen expected leaders to be somewhat authoritarian and promote the same kind of structure as had been characteristic of groups they had known before coming to the college campus. One freshman woman who was very pleased about the sense of "community" she felt in her group responded when asked what made her group go:

Well first of all, the leaders are really dedicated to our group. They feel we should meet every week and not postpone meetings. They don't want to postpone meetings because they don't want us to feel it isn't important. The main thing is we have good leaders. It's important to them, too. The people in our group have something in common--some kind of bond, even though we all have different majors.

This statement aroused enough curiosity that the writer decided to check to see which leaders had been assigned to this particular group. It was discovered that just a few days before, these leaders had indicated a desire to talk with a staff member about the group. One of the leaders had said, "We have a great Freshman Seminar Group and we have some ideas about why it is such a good group. We'd like to come in and share these ideas with you." In a later conversation, these two leaders talked about their commitment to the group. One leader said:

We are always there when we are supposed to meet and the freshmen know the meeting comes first with us. We feel a real sense of community and we all look forward to getting together. We feel free enough to say what we really feel and we have some great discussions.

The "quality" of the content of some of the functioning groups is indicated in the following comments:

- Leader 1 "So far our group hasn't discussed real deep subjects but we are looking for that kind of atmosphere."
- Leader 2 "There is a bond or unity, a closeness, but you really don't know what it is. A special communication has been established."
- Leader 3 "It's the enthusiasm generated the first time you meet, how you get to know the freshmen, and setting up a successful meeting time."
- Leader 4 "If something is really bothering you or if you just want to talk, people will listen and understand without giving advice. It boils down to closeness and communication."

- Freshman 1 "At first it was a party group, then we decided to get together and talk about why our group wasn't really succeeding. We got into a good discussion and decided we had plenty to talk about."
- Freshman 2 "It was a place to get ideas from other students and to get a better feeling of the things going on around you. You could meet a few more people and get to know them."
- Freshman 3 "You can always depend on the group to listen to you. You don't know the people much at all but there is a bond."
- Freshman 4 "Our group is a discussion group; sometimes lighthearted and sometimes serious. And if someone has a problem we listen."

These leaders seemed to have an understanding of the rationale of the program though it came through in a practical rather than a theoretical way. In a subtle way, they were communicating this message to the freshmen. Perhaps successful leaders have some understanding of the rationale of the program, even when they are unable to put it into words, but it is the kind of understanding that seems to make them committed leaders. If this is true, it has real implications for leader training.

Involvement in living groups. With a freshman drop-out of 61 per cent, we may be inclined to wonder if there are not a lot of lonely freshmen around. There was only one freshman who seemed to be a "loner" and without ties to some kind of a group. He seemed to have one or two close friends and appeared to like it this way. In spite of the negative

comments frequently heard about the dormitory complexes, with the one exception, all students in the interview group who did not become a part of the Seminars were involved in a close-knit group in their living unit.

One leader of a successful group that met in Van Zile Hall made the statement that students who live in the Honors Dorm seem to have little seminar groups springing up spontaneously all the time. He seemed to be a bit envious of the atmosphere there and indicated it was not like that in the fraternity where he lived. This student saw the Honors Dorm as carrying out the purpose we define for the Freshman Seminars. If students are inclined to become involved in their living groups, there seems to be the possibility of setting up a significant program through such groups. A women's group could be combined with a men's group in the same proximity. This would certainly help relieve the one big problem of getting messages through. Obviously, a different plan would be needed for students not living on campus. There are limitations to the plan but it is a possibility.

PROBLEMS, PROGRESS, AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The relevant questions regarding the Freshman Seminar program for which answers must be sought may be stated as follows:

1. Is the Freshman Seminar Program successful in terms of the rationale?
2. Are criteria available to enable reasonable evaluation?
3. If continued, what changes should be made to make them more effective?

Any new venture in the area of student personnel work always carries with it a risk of failure. It is also easy to rationalize any attempt at improvement as a success. Unless there are agreed upon criteria by which to measure success or failure, any statement regarding success or failure of the seminars may be viewed at best as one of "learned opinion from observation" or at worst a "nebulous mental gymnastic." But, even if we were to conclude that Freshman Seminars are less than an unqualified success, this would not mean the effort expended on them has been wasted.

Positive change is usually slow and progress toward a given goal may be painful. If education is to be viewed as change, it follows then that education may also be slow and perhaps painful as attempts are made to change the established norms.

Our present established concepts of the functions of a university have been developed over a period of several hundred years. The concept that a university education is to provide a student training to do or to be some particular

thing is deeply ingrained in the university structure. Therefore, it is not reasonable to expect a Freshman Seminar Program, initiated as a pilot project, to quickly lead to a pathway of unqualified progress or change.

Probably, the best testimony for justifying the Freshman Seminars was that the staff of the Counseling Center and the Office of The Dean of Students, along with students, saw the need for a university experience to be made more meaningful and were willing to assume the risk and responsibility of attempting to find a way to make it so. Whether or not the Freshman Seminar Program is to be continued will depend on what we are willing to accept as a sufficient success from them, what we are willing to change in the program, and what kind or amount of resources, including staff, we are willing to commit to them.

The attitude of most staff personnel in the Counseling Center and Office of The Dean of Students is one of commitment to group process as a method in bringing about change and assisting students to experience personal growth during their careers. The Philosophy of Leadership which seems to prevail among the staff is neither completely authoritarian nor permissive, but hinges on what may be called integration of the two where a leader is viewed as a person who acts as a "catalyst" to help a group experience the benefits of the group process.

There are four main difficulties in using the group process method in Freshman Seminars:

1. Where group leaders are to be used, the leader's function may be so ill-defined as to confuse him.
2. Criteria for evaluation are difficult to establish, or if established, may be stated in terms so vague they become of little use for further program planning and resource commitment.
3. Goals for the seminars are hard to clearly formulate.
4. If goals are set, they may be too rigid to allow flexibility for changes as need arises.

Difficulty in formulating goals. The Freshman Seminars seem to have been conceived in an atmosphere of haste with little time elapsing between the conception of the idea of the seminars and the launching of the program to carry out the idea. The attitude of the staff toward education as a process of change was sound, and it quickly became a policy; i.e., a commitment to make the total university relevant to student life in today's world. The Freshman Seminar Program became one of the means to carry out the policy.

Probably the main difficulty in carrying out the seminar program is that nothing approaching definite goals

was ever clearly stated to provide a norm against which the program could be evaluated and guidelines established for further action. However, this is not all "bad." Inasmuch as the Counseling Center and Office of The Dean of Students personnel are generally committed to a people-centered non-directive approach to programs, attempts to set goals and evaluation criteria too specifically may lead away from student development through process and toward a focus on organizational structure. The seminars can probably be improved with some goal setting, but care should be used to prevent so much rigidity in the program that needed change cannot be made quickly.

Evaluation. The program has to be evaluated on the basis of opinions of the participating students and staff and any other measure we can develop.

One measure which can be used is the "drop out rate" by the beginning participants. It is reasonable to assume that if the seminars met a felt need, a student would be more likely to stay in the program. This in turn may be affected by his concept of his priorities of felt needs.

The rate of dropout for the fall program, 1968, was 61 per cent. There were degrees of "dropping out" ranging all the way from complete withdrawal from the group to partial attendance and participation. There is not

sufficient information at this time to show what traits of different students and what specific needs which were met or unmet to cause some students to drop out and others to find the program meaningful.

POSSIBLE CHANGES TO IMPROVE THE SEMINARS

Offer more variety in the program to cater to initially felt needs. One possibility of more nearly meeting the felt needs of freshmen through the seminars is to offer a wider variety of activities in the program. It is quite possible that many entering freshmen bring with them what they think are "felt needs," but in actuality turn out to be "parent determined goals" or goals that are at least heavily influenced by parents. Interviews with the freshmen indicate many are quite "parent conscious" in regard to flunking out, discipline problems, and money problems. Several of the group leaders voiced the opinion that in the beginning, more attention should be paid to such objective needs and then gradually move into other areas.

If we accept the view that the initial felt needs of entering freshmen are considerably determined by parental influence, some changes in the structure of the program are desirable if students are to be helped in moving from initial parent-influenced goals toward those areas which may contribute more to the students' personal growth and

development. This does not mean that the parent-influenced needs are wrong or are unimportant. It does mean that if Freshman Seminars are to fulfill their functions, we must recognize the problem, take freshmen as they are, and offer a program which encourages a student to grow away from too much emphasis on task accomplishment to more emphasis on his higher needs of self actualization. The recognized struggle of college students for independence should facilitate this goal.

The "initial felt" needs, as the freshmen conceived them, could be reasonably well determined through intensive personal interviews. An analysis of the interviews would allow the establishment of a hierarchy of such needs and provide some guidance in setting up temporary priorities to help meet these needs in the Freshman Seminar Program. The small-group method could still be used but would need to be structured sufficiently to allow the groups in the beginning to concentrate more on a task-oriented basis. With good group leadership and some guidance from the support staff, the group could gradually move away from task orientation to group process activity.

Possibly limit the number of participants admitted to the program. To formulate a program on the above basis would require more resources on a per student basis in terms of

time and staff. In order to keep the program feasible in terms of presently available resources, it may be advisable to limit the program to a smaller number of incoming freshmen. Later, if the program proved successful and administrators wish to expand it, more resources could be allocated to this purpose.

Such changes in the format of the program may not be as difficult as it first appears. Up until now, the program has drawn almost exclusively on the support staff of the Counseling Center and Office of The Dean of Students, along with voluntary upperclass student volunteers. It is possible that the proposed intensive interviews with incoming freshmen will reveal needs which could be more readily filled in the early phase of the program by staff from other departments in the university. If the university as a whole is making progress in becoming a "creative classroom," we might gain some staff support from other departments. If so, the staff of the Counseling Center and Office of The Dean of Students could leave more of the task-oriented phases of the program to such assistance and concentrate more of its efforts on the program to move it toward group process later.

Improve leader training. A key area in the successful functioning of the Freshman Seminar Program is the selection and training of upperclass students as group leaders.

It is recommended we continue with student group leaders.

If the number of freshmen admitted to the seminar program is limited, there will be a need for fewer groups and fewer group leaders. This assumes, of course, that the group size would remain on the average about the same as in the first two years of operation, and the number of leaders per group would remain the same. If so, greater selectivity could be used in choosing group leaders, and there could be a focus toward a more qualitative program. Some good prospective leaders can be obtained from the freshmen who participated in the 1968 program. It is recommended that leaders selected for the 1969 program be given intensive training. Such training will require more time and effort on the leaders' part and some method of incentive to provide added motivation to devote the necessary time and effort seems desirable even though some leaders may construe the experience of leadership as an ample incentive.

One form of leader training which would probably be meaningful to a leader would be to give college credit for a Leadership Training Course. Such a course could be offered as a joint venture among several departments such as Sociology, Psychology, Education, English, and perhaps Speech, with personnel from the staff of the Counseling Center and Office of The Dean of Students serving in an advisory capacity. The leadership of a group in the Freshman Seminar

Program could be considered as a part of the course. In addition to assistance from the departments already mentioned, there is a possibility of obtaining some help from the Kansas State University Cooperative Extension Service. Several of the staff personnel in Extension Administration have undergone extensive training in group process during the last few years and have advanced degrees in their fields. Their heavy emphasis during the last few years on group process as a method in off-campus adult education programs could prove valuable in a leader training program for Freshman Seminars.

Improve feedback from the group. The number of Freshman Seminar Groups, the looseness of their organization structure, and limited staff personnel have made it difficult to develop a satisfactory system of feedback necessary to enable any necessary changes in the program to be made easily and quickly. The line of communication from the group leaders has not been defined precisely enough to allow staff personnel to keep sufficiently informed about the groups' problems.

Restricting the total number of freshman groups and increasing the amount of structure in the group, particularly in the early phase of the program, along with improved leader training, can help make better feedback possible. It is suggested that interviews with the leaders and freshmen be

held on a reasonably regular basis to facilitate an exchange of information regarding progress and problems encountered by the group. Thus, staff personnel can more easily be informed and effect necessary changes as the need arises.

SUMMARY

The Freshman Seminar Program is not an unqualified success, but is a movement in the right direction. The rationale of the program is sound. The program is a pioneer effort to make a student's university career a more meaningful experience. Inasmuch as it is a pioneering effort, with no precedent on which to build such a program, it is to be expected that it will go through a period of experimentation, frustration, and doubt as to its value before it can be developed into a format that can become a routine part of total student services.

The seminar has had a good effect on those students who continued throughout the program. It has been a good tool to all on the staff to develop their concept of education as change.

The main weakness of the seminar from the standpoint of student participation seems to center around insufficient task orientation to get the group "off the ground" and enable them to make more personal development through the dynamics of group process.

The decision to continue or to drop Freshman Seminars in 1969 is, in the final analysis, an administrative decision. If they are to be continued, various changes need to be made. The results of this study, while not empirically verified, indicate that the following changes need to be considered:

1. Provide more structure for the groups in the early phase of this program and increase the variety of activities offered to meet more of the felt needs of incoming freshmen.
2. Consider limiting the number of freshmen admitted to the program, at least until a more satisfactory format can be worked out.
3. Be more selective in obtaining leaders and provide more and better training for such leaders.
4. Improve feedback on system from the group to the staff.

Finally, the staff should give more attention to setting goals for the seminar which can reasonably be expected to be attained and evaluated on a reasonable basis.

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**AN EVALUATION OF FRESHMAN SEMINARS
AT KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY**

by

DORIS H. COPPERSMITH

B. S., Western Kentucky University, 1948

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

**KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas**

1969

The purpose of the study was to provide information which could be of assistance in improving student services offered by Kansas State University.

The objectives of the study were to provide a concise description of the reasons for initiating the Freshman Seminar Program, describe the operations of the program, provide an evaluation, and make suggestions regarding the future possibilities for such programs.

The study covered the three-year period the Seminar Program has been in existence. Very little satisfactory data were available from the first two years of the period studied. Data for the 1968-69 program were obtained through personal interviews with student group leaders and participating freshmen and by written questionnaire.

A selected group was established for the purpose of the interviews which included twelve women, six freshmen and six upperclass leaders, and twelve men, again, six freshmen and six upperclass leaders. The groups of six were further divided to include two people each who were fully participating members, partially participating members, and non-participating members.

The purpose of the program was to assist students to gain a more meaningful education through their university experience.

Man must relate to significant others to learn. The easier and more meaningful such relating, the more conducive are the conditions for learning. The educational institution which provides a broad pattern of possible relating experiences is providing one of the most important ingredients for the learning process. If the pattern of relating experiences is sufficiently broad, the total university life of a student becomes a learning experience. The Freshman Seminar Program was an attempt to help provide that broader pattern of relating experiences.

The program is not an unqualified success but is a step in the right direction. The following are considered weak points:

1. The program did not have sufficiently specific goals.
2. Criteria for evaluation were not adequate.
3. The drop out rate of 68 per cent in 1968 was too high compared to the 20 per cent drop out rate claimed in 1966.
4. The program did not cater sufficiently to initially felt needs of the freshmen which may account for the high drop out rate.
5. Leaders were inadequately trained.
6. The feedback system from the freshmen to the staff was inadequate.

The decision to continue or to drop freshman seminars in 1969 is, in the final analysis, an administrative decision. If they are to be continued, various changes need to be made. The results of this study, while not empirically verified, indicate that the following changes need to be considered:

1. Provide more structure for the groups in the early phase of this program and increase the variety of activity offered to meet more of the felt needs of incoming freshmen.
2. Consider limiting the number of freshmen admitted to the program, at least until more satisfactory format can be worked out.
3. Be more selective in obtaining leaders and provide more and better training for such leaders.
4. Improve feedback on system from the group to the staff.

Finally, the staff should give more attention to setting goals for the seminar which can reasonably be expected to be attained and evaluated on a reasonable basis.