

January 29, 2008

To: Provost Duane Nellis

From: Gregory Eiselein, Professor, Department of English
Emily Lehning, Assistant Dean of Student Life and Coordinator of New Student Services

CC: Vicki Clegg, Lynn Ewanow, Pedro Leite, Karen Myers-Bowman, Cia Verschelden, and Greg Zolnerowich

RE: Proposal for Pilot Study of First-Year General Education Seminars

In light of the recommendations of the General Education Task Force Committee in its June 2007 report and the recommendations of the First-Year Experience Task Force in its February 2007 report, we would like to propose a pilot study for first-year general education seminars.

The proposed pilot study would take place in the fall of 2008. It would include the following courses:

- COT 299 Mastering Academic Conversations
- DEN 210 History of Building & Construction [final confirmation still pending]
- EDLST 212 Introduction to Leadership
- EDSEC 310 Foundations of Education
- ENGL 231 Classical Humanities
- ENGL 251 Introduction to Literature
- ENGL 270 American Literature
- ENGL 270 American Literature
- ENGL 287 Great Books
- ENTOM 301 Insects and People
- FSHS 110 Intro Human Development
- GEOG 100 World Regional Geography [final confirmation still pending]
- GEOL 125 Natural Disasters
- SOCIO 211 Introduction to Sociology
- POLSC 110 Introduction to Political Science
- WOMST 105 Introduction to Women's Studies

The pilot study will include sixteen different sections of fifteen different courses across twelve different departments. Six different colleges will participate: Agriculture, Arts & Sciences, Education, Engineering, Human Ecology, and Technology & Aviation.

In the process of developing this proposal, we also had conversations with College of Architecture, Planning & Design and the College of Business Administration about offering courses for the pilot study. Both colleges expressed interest and specific ideas about courses and instructors, but neither was able to offer a course until 2009. We did not talk with the College of Veterinary Medicine or the Graduate School.

The College of Arts & Sciences will offer the most sections in the pilot study because it currently offers the most courses for first-year undergraduate students at K-State. We had hoped to offer one or two more sections of courses from departments in the mathematical and natural sciences; those departments we contacted (but not listed above) were not able to offer a course for the pilot, though their feedback was positive.

Enrollment in each of the seminars listed above would be limited to twenty-two students and open to first-year students only. They would be designed with the general education of first-year, non-major students in mind. To maintain the integrity of the study and to restrict enrollments to first-year students, we are developing an enrollment management plan in cooperation with the Registrar's Office and Enrollment Services.

The pilot courses would each include, in some way consistent with the discipline and the course itself, an emphasis on critical thinking and communication skills. Other common elements – such as an introduction to general education, an explanation of the standards of college-level work, and connections across the various sections – will also be a part of each seminar.

Gregory Eiselein and Emily Lehning will oversee the pilot study and prepare in the spring of 2009 a report on the results of the study to be shared with the Provost, his staff, and the departments participating in the pilot study. Vicki Clegg (Director for the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning) will serve as an advisor.

For this pilot, we have recruited a strong, experienced, dedicated teaching faculty to teach the seminars listed above. Instructors participating in this pilot will meet in the spring of 2008 to discuss plans for the pilot study. We will also schedule meetings before and during the fall semester; the directors of the pilot study and the participating instructors will determine the frequency and nature of these additional meetings. These instructors will also help with some follow-up assessment after the fall semester is completed.

Cia Verschelden (Director for the Office of Assessment) along with Clive Fullagar (Professor, Department of Psychology) and Disha Rupayana (graduate student, Department of Psychology) will offer advice and support for the assessment component of the pilot study. The assessment portion of this pilot study will include the designation of specific student learning outcomes for each course, direct measurement of student learning (through faculty scoring of student work), student course evaluation (through the TEVAL system), a separate survey to measure student engagement in the seminars, and a survey of participating faculty.

Because seminar-sized courses at this level may create resource needs at the department level, we are hoping that the Office of the Provost can offer some help to participating departments to help cover instructional costs created by smaller class sizes. We would recommend that each participating department receive \$4,000. With twelve different departments in the study, the base cost of this pilot study would be approximately \$48,000.

There may be some other small costs to support participant meetings and our assessment process. We anticipate some incidental costs related to organizational meetings on-campus for participating instructors; we expect these costs to be low. We have so far attempted to design an assessment process that requires no additional costs—that relies on instruments and resources already in place at K-State. However, should we discover specific learning assessment tools that seem ideal for the pilot, we might want to take advantage of them and would seek advice and approval from your office before moving forward with any assessment requiring additional costs.

In our conversations with various departments from across campus, we have emphasized that this money would be available only for the pilot study in the fall of 2008. If the pilot study is successful and there is a decision to implement and expand the first-year seminar recommendation, the University will need to work with its colleges and departments to develop a long-term funding solution for these seminars.

If you would like to move forward with this pilot study, please let us know. We are open to suggestions that would improve or make more feasible this pilot project. If you have any questions or concerns or would like to discuss further any aspect of the proposal, please contact us at your convenience.

Thank you.