UMD Seminar Advisory Group Report

University of Minnesota Duluth

February 2015

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Executive Summary

- In order to produce recommendations for improvements to UMD Seminar, the Advisory Group examined several theories of college student development, transition, and retention, including those of Perry, Chickering, and Schlossberg and was also informed by the work of Astin, Tinto, Cuseo, and Kuh.
- UMD has a long history of freshman seminar (orientation) courses, beginning in 1997 in LSBE. Over that time both the nature of Seminar and how it is funded have changed substantially.
- Survey results of freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors confirm that the course does meet its stated goals and learning outcomes and is appreciated by students.
- The Advisory Group is not recommending a change in the direction of the course. It is recommending increased clarity about what the course should be doing in light of student development theory and survey feedback. Recommendations are made relative to:
  - Revised Mission, Purpose, Goals, and Learning Outcomes;
  - Course core curriculum;
  - Credit hours (1 vs 2 credit options);
  - Audience (campus requirement vs collegiate options);
  - Assessment of student learning;
  - Instructor training;
  - Marketing;
  - Further research into course effectiveness.
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The Charge and Membership of the UMD Seminar Advisory Group

On February 13, 2014, the following individuals were contacted and asked if they would be willing to participate on an advisory group along with Lisa Reeves and Jerry Pepper (Samantha DeVilbiss had not yet been hired) aimed at assessing and recommending revisions to UMD Seminar: Julie Slowiak (faculty), Paul Kiprof (faculty), Loren Erickson (faculty), Elias Mokole (faculty), Kathryn Van Wert (faculty), Liz Wright (faculty), Kurt Guidinger (professional staff), Shelly Mann (professional staff), and Abigail Scheiderer (student). All of the faculty contacted were recommended by Associate Deans of the Colleges. Ultimately not all those contacted were able or interested in participating; thankfully, most were. For spring semester 2014 our Advisory Group consisted of Liz Wright, Katie Van Wert, Loren Erickson, Paul Kiprof, Elias Mokole, Kurt Guidinger, Shelly Mann, Lisa Reeves, and Jerry Pepper. Late in spring semester Sam DeVilbiss was hired by SIT to coordinate UMD Seminar. This group worked outside of the formal governance system.

Toward the end of spring semester, knowing that faculty governance would eventually need to play a role in whatever directions Seminar took, the group was asked their preference: disband and turn over the responsibility of reviewing and improving Seminar, or carry on with the work already begun when fall semester 2014 started. The group voted unanimously to remain intact. EVCAA Schokker agreed with our request to do so and the group reconvened at the beginning of fall 2014. Membership was the same group minus Loren Erickson, but adding Jane Carlson (faculty) and Roger Reinsch (faculty).

At the beginning of Fall semester, the Curriculum Committee informed us the Faculty Council requested that UMD Seminar be reviewed by the Curriculum Committee. Numerous conversations were held between the Committee and AVC Pepper, who advocated leaving the Advisory Group alone to complete its work outside of the governance system. The Curriculum Committee agreed with the understanding that it would receive regular updates and, eventually, a full report of findings.

The UMD Seminar Advisory Group has devoted over a year to researching first-year seminar best practices, understanding and evaluating our current model, and developing a comprehensive survey of students to identify the degree to which students believed the course meets its stated mission. This dedicated group has met bi-weekly or, recently, weekly, in order to complete its work by mid-February 2015 and deliver its report to the Campus Curriculum Subcommittee. The members of the group understand that once the report is submitted, assuming the Curriculum Committee does not request additional information, the Advisory Group will disband.

The Advisory Group (AG) was established to review UST 1000 and make recommendations towards improving the course. In order to ensure UST 1000 is a model course, the Advisory Group set out to explore the different types of first year seminar (FYS) courses (see Appendix B), the purpose behind FYS courses specifically and transitional programming in general, and the theory that informs transitional programming as well as to explore the current model of UST 1000 and its impact on students. This exploration was done with an eye to improve any elements of the current construct of the course in order to more completely acknowledge best practices in light of the purpose for transitional programming, the foundational theory, and the needs of our students at UMD.

Background

In order to develop recommendations for the future of UMD Seminar, the AG explored a number of theories that inform the areas of college student development, transition, and retention. This included Perry’s theory of intellectual and ethical development, Chickering’s theory of psychosocial development, and Schlossberg’s transition theory as well as her examination of mattering and marginality. The group also examined the reasoning behind the need for transition programming and the history and purpose of first year seminar programs in general and specifically at UMD. Other
theories that inform the areas of transition and retention include Astin’s Input-Environment-Output Model, Tinto’s Theory of Student Departure, and the work of Cuseo and Kuh. Because this course is focused on the personal development and academic success of our students rather than on a specific content area, as are the majority of courses taught at UMD, it was vital that the Advisory Group understand the elements that inform transitional programming and FYS classes, as it would be important for those working to improve a content-specific course to understand the knowledge and theoretical base behind that discipline. This understanding of the purpose of transitional programming and the theories that inform this work were foundational for the Group and served as the basis for all recommendations for how the course should function moving forward.

The Purpose of Transition Programming in Higher Education

When discussing student success in college, Gardner and Jewler (2001) make their stance on the purpose of transition programming, and the actions of a college or university in general, clear when stating, “All students should be able to succeed in their first year of college. As educators and scholars, it is our responsibility to provide dedicated support, customized to a variety of students’ unique needs” (p. vii). This stance indicates that the responsibility to increase student success rates during the first year lies with the faculty and staff within institutions of higher education. A number of sources make it clear that college student success is largely determined by experiences during the freshman year (Wolcott, 2009; Smith & Bracken, 2003; Tinto, 1993; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). Gardner (2001) goes so far as to say that students decide within the first few weeks of school whether they will pursue higher education seriously. This idea makes it that much more important that we focus intentionally on the needs of our students during this time. Gardner and Hansen (1993) as well as Twale (1989) assert that by giving students a “good start” to college, residual benefits will include enhanced retention, a positive atmosphere for new students, and key skills students will need to begin their studies and new lives.

As a result of the understood connection between the first year experience and retention, more schools have begun working to improve the transition experience for students. For example, two surveys conducted by the American Council on Education (ACE), entitled Campus Trends, found that 37% of institutions of higher education in the United States were “taking steps to improve the first year” in 1987 (El Khawas, 1987). However, through the course of the first year experience movement, that percent had increased to 83% by 1995 (El Khawas, 1995).

With so many institutions focusing so much on the first year experience, it is fair to wonder about what transition issues transition programming is meant to address. Topics include defining success; accepting responsibility; working towards interdependence; developing self-awareness and life-long learning; gaining emotional intelligence; managing alcohol and drugs; maintaining health; managing money; asking for help; developing relationships with professors and understanding their expectations; getting involved on campus; managing time; finding and maintaining motivation; selecting a major and choosing classes; finding oneself and one’s place on campus; grappling with homesickness; meeting people and making friends; managing friends and relationships back home; living with roommates; managing stress; and succeeding in class: using a syllabus, concentrating, understanding one’s learning style, discovering appropriate study strategies, evaluating sources of information, note taking, active reading, committing material to memory, researching and presenting, and preparing for and taking various types of tests. These are all issues with which students are dealing for the first time or in a very different way than in the past – all issues that could limit students’ abilities to successfully complete their first year and return for their second.

Much research and many articles have addressed the transition issues of first-year students as well. Robotham and Julian (2006) list such stressors as exams, time demands, financial pressures, new responsibilities, increased academic workload, new relationships, career decisions, fear of failure, and
parental pressure. Hoyt (1999) expresses that these competing demands on students’ time and attention, such as conflicts between work, personal, and family issues, can lead to a lack of academic commitment and social participation in education, ultimately leading to attrition. Extreme homesickness and separation anxiety can also lead to problems including nightmares, refusal to go to class, headaches, stomachaches, nausea, vomiting, stress, anxiety, depression, obsessivity, and loss of memory; which make it more difficult to cope with normal transition issues, when students lack effective coping strategies and do not seek help (Claborn & Kane, 2012; Fisher & Hood, 1987; Flett, Endler, & Besser, 2009; Ollendick, Lease, Cooper, 1993). In Martin, Swartz-Kulstad, and Madsen’s study (1999) the biggest predictor of attrition was social isolation. Komives and Woodard (2003) as well as Tinto (2006) also support this idea by arguing that the risk of student departure increases if students do not have the skills necessary to become socially integrated nor does the institution create or promote policies and programs to foster social integration. Relatedly, Pascarella, Smart, and Ethington (1986) state that both academic and social integration consistently have positive effects on retention and completion of degree.

Perry’s Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development

King & Howard-Hamilton (2000) believe that in cognitive-structural theories the “emphasis is on how people perceive and interpret their experiences, the 'how' of development” (p. 30). One major influence in developmental advising is the cognitive-structural theory by William Perry. William Perry, an educational psychologist, studied the intellectual and cognitive development of college students. In *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years (1968)*, Perry introduces his schema that has nine positions, similar to developmental stages. While Perry included nine positions, they have been collapsed down to 4 major schemas. Perry’s (1968) theory details how students progress logically, intellectually, and ethically throughout their four years in college. The four overarching schemas are: Dualism, Multiplicity, Relativism and Commitment. In the *Dualism* schema, students see knowledge as absolute, right or wrong, no in-between. They do not question what is told to them by people they see as having authority. Students present their judgments and evaluations as self-evident truths. In this phase, “authority’s omniscience is so taken-for-granted that no distinction is made between Authority and the Absolute” (p. 59). *Multiplicity* is when students begin to move from absolute thinking to understanding that people have varying viewpoints. They begin to value the viewpoints of their classmates and see there are multiple perspectives, but they are not yet able to evaluate them fully. Often, everyone’s viewpoint is acknowledged as valid and students will agree to disagree when not seeing eye to eye. Students in this phase can sometimes become overwhelmed by all the new possibilities and find themselves unable to move forward. *Relativism* is where students begin to see that knowledge is contextual and they are able to begin to evaluate various viewpoints based on evidence. Students may have trouble deciding between two choices that are equally valid and while they view authority as valued they are not above scrutiny. The last schema *Commitment* is where students begin to reflect and define their identity as commitments they will live out.

An incoming seminar course, like UMD Seminar, focuses on helping students move from Dualism to Multiplicity by offering differing points of view to consider, by allowing students to express different points of view while acknowledging the validity of those viewpoints, by asking questions to better understand their points of view, and by showing students how we struggle with coming to conclusions ourselves.
Chickering’s Seven Vectors of Development

In the second edition of *Education and Identity* (1993), Chickering and Reisser discuss the goals of Chickering’s vectors of development in stating that the work “argues for policies and practices to create higher education environments that will foster broad-based development of human talent and potentials” (p. xi). The authors’ stance after reading widely on the purpose and outcomes of higher education is that the unifying purpose for higher education is “human development, in all its complexity and orneriness” (p. xv). As a result, the authors relied heavily on Pascarella and Terenzini’s synthesis (1991) of more than 2,600 research studies on the impact of college on students as well as other literature to identify and describe the different elements of development through which they see students moving and through which institutions of higher education can assist.

The vectors are not traditional stages of development where one needs to be tackled before the next can be addressed. Instead, students could grapple with several, or even all, of the vectors at one time, though one or a few are usually more salient than the others to a student at any particular point in time. The seven vectors Chickering and Reisser (1993) discuss, each with their own direction and magnitude are as follows: (1) developing competence (viewed in three dimensions – intellectual, interpersonal, and physical), (2) managing emotions, (3) moving through autonomy toward interdependence, (4) developing mature interpersonal relationships, (5) establishing identity, (6) developing purpose, and (7) developing integrity.

An incoming seminar course, like UMD Seminar, assists students with a number of transitional concerns related to these vectors of development. For example, related to developing intellectual competence, these courses can assist students to develop study skills and use higher order thinking skills that will assist them in their other classes. Related to developing interpersonal competence, these courses can assist students in learning how to interact with faculty and staff and how to meet and connect with new people. Related to developing physical competence, these courses can address elements of healthy living now that students are typically living on their own, including healthy diet, exercise, and stress relief, while also addressing drug and alcohol use. Related to managing emotions, these courses can help to normalize the feelings that students have during their transition and assist them in finding ways to cope with things such as homesickness, depression, and anxiety. When needs related to physical and emotional well-being are addressed, students will be better able to focus on their other coursework. Related to moving through autonomy toward interdependence, these courses can address issues like managing money as well as identifying campus and community resources and seeking help when necessary. Related to developing mature personal relationships, these courses can assist students in understanding how to be effective group members and how to live with roommates, allowing students to be more effective in group projects and to better focus on coursework when not plagued with roommate problems. Related to establishing identity, these courses can assist students in clarifying their strengths and interests as well as identifying campus activities with which to get involved. Assisting students to find their place on campus, to become socially integrated, can lead to increased retention, while assisting students to identify their strengths and interests can help ensure they are in a major that is a good fit for them. Related to developing purpose, these courses can enable major and career exploration as well as assist students with goal-setting and understanding how to meet goals, which can assist in all areas of their lives. Lastly, related to developing integrity, these courses can help students to identify their values, to understand how to stand up for what they believe in, and to acknowledge concepts such as academic integrity.
Schlossberg’s Transition Theory

Nancy Schlossberg’s Transition Theory, typically categorized as a theory of adult development (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010) and initially targeted towards counseling professionals, “provides insights into factors related to the transition, the individual, and the environment that are likely to determine the degree of impact a given transition will have at a particular time” (pp. 212-213). Schlossberg (1984) identifies a primary goal of her theory as operationalizing variability, or rather, developing a framework that would facilitate an understanding of adults in transition and aid them in connecting to the help they need to cope with the “ordinary and extraordinary process of living” (p. vii). Schlossberg’s theory (1981) represents a conceptual integration of, and expansion on, existing theory and research and drew heavily “on the work of others” (p. 3), including D. J. Levinson (1978), Neugarten (1979), and Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1975). Over the years, Schlossberg’s model has continued to develop as she integrates the ideas of other theorists and researchers as well as the critiques of her own theory.

Schlossberg views transitions in an integrated way. As she understands it, we are all involved in a transition at any point in time, whether we are moving in, moving through, or moving out of a situation. Sometimes we can even be in different places in various transitions at one time. For example, if I accept a job and move to another state with my partner, I would be moving into my role in the new job and my new state, possibly moving into new friendships and coworker relations as well. I would be moving out of the role I had at my last job, possibly moving out of friendships and relationships with coworkers, established routines, and expectations. Because I am moving with my partner, I would be moving through my relationship.

In order to assist someone in successfully navigating through a transition, Schlossberg (2012) envisions three steps: 1) Approaching Transitions – This involves identifying the transition and how much it will change a person’s life as well as where the individual is in the transition process. 2) Taking Stock of Coping Resources: The 4 S System. 3) Taking Charge: Strengthening Resources. The resources that Schlossberg describes fall under four categories, and in any given situation, can be viewed as assets to a successful transition or liabilities, depending on how they are viewed by the individual and how they assist in her transition or make the transition more difficult.

The 4 S System includes examining the situation, the self, support, and strategies. An understanding of the situation includes an examination of elements such as the trigger for the transition, the timing, the source or level of control over the situation, whether a role change is involved, the duration of the transition, previous experience with similar transitions, concurrent stress, and one’s assessment of the transition as positive or negative. An understanding of the self in terms of coping assets and liabilities includes an understanding of one’s personal characteristics and psychological resources, including socioeconomic status, gender and sexual orientation, age and stage of life, state of health, ethnicity/culture, psychological resources, ego development, outlook – optimism and self-efficacy, commitment and values, and spirituality and resilience. Support can be varied and can include family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, classmates, strangers, organizations, institutions, etc. Lastly, strategies can vary greatly as well, but can be viewed in three categories, according to Schlossberg (2012). Responses that modify the situation to alter the source of strain include negotiation, optimistic action, self-reliance versus advice seeking, and exercise of potency versus helpless resignation. Responses that control the meaning of the problem to cognitively neutralize the threat include positive comparisons, selective ignoring, and substitution of rewards. Finally, responses that help the individual manage stress once it has occurred include emotional discharge, self-assertion, and passive forbearance. The ratio of assets to liabilities helps to explain “why individuals react differently to the same type of transition and why the same person reacts differently at different times” (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995, p. 57).
Schlossberg’s Marginality and Mattering Theory

In addition to her transition theory, Schlossberg also developed a theory on marginality and mattering (1989a). In addition to the 4 S’s and how their elements assist or hinder an individual in his or her transition, mattering and marginality are two constructs that also can influence how individuals cope with new situations, such as the transition to college. When individuals transition from a familiar environment to a new, unfamiliar one, these individuals also transition from a sense of belonging, or mattering, to a sense of marginality, with unclear roles and expectations. These individuals begin striving to discover their place in the new environment and whether there is a place for them at all. A sense of not belonging or not fitting in, marginality, can lead to self-consciousness, irritability, and depression. When students are preoccupied with belonging, they are less focused on their academics. Further, when students are unable to resolve the uncertainty of their new environment and don’t feel like they belong, they are at a greater risk of leaving the institution entirely.

On the other hand, when students feel as though they matter, that the institution cares about them and takes an interest in them, persistence is facilitated (Braxton, 2003). Schlossberg (1989a) indicates that institutions can communicate to students that they matter, that they belong, by attending to the five aspects of mattering: 1) attention, the feeling that one is noticed; 2) importance, the belief that one is cared about; 3) ego extension, the feeling that someone else will be proud of what one does or will sympathize with one’s failure; 4) dependence, the feeling of being needed; and 5) appreciation, the feeling that one’s efforts are appreciated by others. Incoming seminar courses, like UMD Seminar, when founded on the understanding that it is important to make students feel as though they matter in these ways are able to help students to feel integrated in the social and academic life of college, which can lead to a successful transition and increased retention (Tinto, 1993).
History of First Year Seminars

During the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, higher education was solely within the realm of elite white men. The wealthy who were groomed from birth for college education had no need for programs orienting them to higher education. However, technological and social changes of the nineteenth-century began causing numerous people outside this elite circle to seek and get higher education (Wright & Halloran, 2001).

One of the first programs to orient first year students to higher education was at Harvard University. Appalled by what the Harvard faculty saw as students meeting very low standards, Harvard began educational programs to assure these students had the basics in education, and to exclude those who could not meet or accept these basics. In the academic year 1874-75, Harvard created Freshman English which not only taught writing, but also “help[ed] the student where he most needed help” (Brown, 1995, p. 30). The teacher for this 1874 course, Le Baron Russell Briggs, recognized “how little the freshmen know about the college and the world in which they live” as well as “about the social machine,” so he would use the course’s “third hour,” often bringing others into the class to offer their perspectives, to “give his freshman glimpses of the world in which they supposedly lived” (Brown, p. 31).

Brigg’s practice “spread throughout the country.” For example, the University of Washington’s course designed for the school’s coeducational population, attempted to help students “find themselves” (Fitts & Swift, 1930, p. 156). Divided into three sections of six weeks each, the course first presented students with “the general subject of the vocational opportunities and social demands of our times; [and] the responsibilities that men and women will meet and measure themselves against in the modern world” (Fitts & Swift, p. 157). The second section had representatives of the College’s various departments discuss the purposes, goals, methodologies, and opportunities of the various fields, while the third allowed members of the administration to discuss university activities and their relationships with the “intellectual life of the university” (Fitts & Swift, p. 157). Other schools with first year programs included Oregon’s Reed College, with its twelve part “College Life Course,” Iowa State’s series of lectures that attempted to introduce students to professional discourse, Amherst College’s survey of disciplines course, and Brown University’s lectures of advice to students (Fitts & Swift). Interestingly, nineteenth-century women’s colleges did not embrace this trend. Discussing women’s college’s lack of the first year seminars, Mount Holyoke professor Margaret Ball (1923) commented that “women’s colleges are not represented in the recent professorial bulletin on initiatory courses. Either because of innate conservatism or because they have not felt the same difficulties as the universities and the colleges for men, they have not been inclined to experiment with this particular scheme” (p. 208).

Various orientation programs for first year students continued through the early twentieth centuries, though the purposes of these programs varied enormously. Some wanted to make students good citizens; others wanted to expose students to the various electives at the schools. And there was a full range of other goals. Such programs became important—though increasingly diminished in the early twentieth century as universities were increasingly encouraged to participate in the research model of the university, focusing on faculty projects and high level graduate students, not undergraduates or freshmen (Veysey, 1970; Rudolf, 1962; Kitzhaber, 1990). Money for research encouraged this focus, since World War II and the Cold War encouraged scientific research (Watts, 1999). However, the undergraduates kept coming. With the GI Bill sending thousands of students to college and the resulting problem of far too many students, universities did not see the need to coddle the first year students. In fact, undergraduate education became a nuisance. In a report to USC, a United States admiral, Norman Smith, damned undergraduates, noting that vital research was limited because of the University’s “serious overload of undergraduate students” (qtd. Watts, p. 25).

The 1960s was the timeframe when FYE (First Year Experience, a term often used in reference to first year seminar courses, but also used to discuss the full range of programming towards first-year
students), as it is currently known, began. As the National Resource Center ("Our History," n.d.) describes it, FYS (First Year Seminar) “was the brainchild” of the University of South Carolina’s President Thomas Jones, “who in May 1970 faced a campus fractured by protests.” Aiming to “bond students to the institution and transform the way that undergraduate students were taught,” the university created a new course, University 101 (para. 1).

Jones had inherited a university that was known as a party school which he had been tasked to convert into a research institution. Jones largely succeeded, but in the process discovered much student discontent from forced racial desegregation, women’s growing demands for university participation, peace protests, and a drug culture. This discontent peaked in May 1970 when, just after the Kent State and just before the Jackson State shootings, USC too had its riot, a riot that fortunately did not lead to any student deaths (Ball, Michael, 1970). Jones recognized he had to do more than create a research institution which continually sent the message to undergraduates that the academy did not care about them (Watts, 1999). Attempting to “engineer students who would not riot” (qtd. Watts, p. 4), Jones worked to create a holistic approach to education, one that would make students feel good about the university. Through trial and error, Jones eventually created University 101, a course modeled on Upward Bound programs that began with the person not the curriculum, as well as on human relations and behavioral theories (Watts). As the course began to have success with student retention, it became a model for many other universities, so much so that, according to the American Council on Education, 78% of universities and colleges in the United States had some sort of FYS in 1978 (Watts, p. 348, El-Khawas, 1985, p. 9), and in 1999, USC founded the National Resource Center under the direction of John Gardner to promote the FYE model.

While growing in popularity among administrators, faculty have been hesitant in their support throughout the development of the FYE and USC’s National Resource Center (Watts, 1999). In particular, many faculty were concerned with FYE’s “interdisciplinary generalizations and knowledge as personal experience” (p. 257). Without the faculty support, then, FYE’s creators found other means to deliver the course. Since FYE approached the university holistically, its creators believed any university employee could teach the class. Appealing especially to student affairs staff, FYE increasingly gained administrative support—especially because data repeatedly shows the course increases retention and because of Gardner’s political and administrative expertise (Watts). Desiring to become accepted as an academic discipline, the Resource Center began authoring books on how to teach UN 101, commissioned publishers, and with the founding of the National Resource Center in 1987, USC began the Journal of the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition to report research that showed the benefits of FYE and commenced publishing books on their own.

Outcomes of First Year Seminars

As a number of publications have strived to demonstrate and present the outcomes of FYS courses, this report will not attempt to cite every study or such reference. Keup and Webb Petschauer (2011) cite a number of studies and sources that have examined the impact of FYS courses on outcomes including retention, persistence to graduation, and academic performance as well as the positive impacts on a number of other outcomes including “involvement in campus activities; interaction with faculty; student engagement; improvement of students’ skills in problem solving, critical thinking, writing, and general study behaviors” (p. 4-5); and improved teaching performance through the use of engaging pedagogies. The National Resource Center has also published several monographs reporting on a collection of studies exploring the outcomes connected to FYS courses (e.g. Tobolowsky, Cox, & Wagner, 2005), including career and life planning, effects on faculty, graduation rates, library use, peer relationships, retention and persistence, student adjustment and involvement, student satisfaction, and study skills. Cuseo (2010), also presents a number of studies showing positive impacts on student
retention and academic performance, while also discussing potential campus-wide benefits of FYS courses, including promoting curricular development, stimulating instructional development, promoting collaboration across campus, promoting positive perceptions of students among faculty and staff, enhancing faculty and staff knowledge and understanding of students, promoting new students’ enthusiasm for and commitment to their college, increasing utilization of campus support services and student involvement, increasing student satisfaction with the institution, facilitating major selection and progress towards degree, enhancing college marketing and student recruitment, enhancing curriculum management and institutional revenue, early identification of academically at-risk students, a vehicle for gathering data on students at college entry, and greater gains in student development. Further, Padgett, Keup, and Pascarella’s (2013) study showed that students who participated in FYS courses had higher levels of life-long learning orientations than those who did not participate in FYS courses even when other variables were controlled.

Those interested in learning of the array of research that has been conducted on FYS courses and other elements related to the impact of college on students can refer to Pascarella and Terenzini’s vast synthesis of literature published in 1991 and in a second volume in 2005. In 1991, Pascarella and Terenzini summed up their meta-analysis of the data by saying “In short, the weight of evidence indicates that FYS participation has statistically significant and substantial, positive effects on a student’s successful transition to college and the likelihood of persistence into the second year as well as on academic performance while in college and on a considerable array of other college experiences known to be related directly and indirectly to bachelor’s degree completion” (p. 402-403). When looking at more recent data in 2005, Pascarella and Terenzini confirmed their previous assessment.

**History of UMD Seminar**

1997
- LSBE offers SSE 0001: Required orientation course for all students who were not previously enrolled in college.

2005
- SFA requires SSP 1000 for all incoming students.
- CLA introduces Learning Communities. CLA 1001 is required for all Undeclared students.
- CLA Declared students are required to take SSP 1000.

2009
- CEHSP requires SSP 1000 for all incoming students.

2010
- SSP 1000 course title changes from Introduction to College to Learning Communities to UMD Seminar.

2011
- CLA abolishes learning communities. All students are now required to take SSP 1000.

2012
- Spring Course designator changes from SSP to UST.

**Salary Funding** - This is what HR has been able to pull for salary. We are missing salary for 1997-2005
- 2006 - 2009 - $1200/credit for all instructors
- 2010 - 2013 - $1300/credit for all instructors
- 2014 - The UEA contract section on workload was put into effect. The salary for current faculty teaching in a unit is the overload rate for their faculty annual base salary.
- Staff are paid at a flat rate of $1445/credit
Timeline for UMD Seminar and Salary Funding

In 1997, the School of Business and Economics (SBE) required all incoming business students who were not previously enrolled in college to take SBE 001, a freshman orientation course. The course was offered fall only and it was not a credit bearing course. By 1999, the First Year Experience Office (FYE) had proposed a freshman seminar course. The course SSP 1000 – Introduction to College Learning was housed under the Supportive Service Program, managed by the FYE office but owned by Educational Policy Committee (EPC). Beginning in 1999, SBE (now LSBE) stopped offering SBE 0001 and now required all incoming new high school students to take SSP 1000.

In 2005, School of Fine Arts (SFA) began requiring SSP 1000 for all incoming high school students. Transfer students with 24 semester credits or more are exempt from the requirement. The College of Liberal Arts (CLA) introduced learning communities in 2005. Undeclared students were required to take CLA 1001 – Learning Community Integrative Seminar. Declared students in CLA were required to take SSP 1000. SSP 1000 is not required for transfer students or for current UMD students who change colleges into CLA. New high school students with 24 or more PSEO credits may request to have the course waived.

In 2009, College of Education and Human Service Professions (CEHSP) began requiring SSP 1000 for all incoming students. Transfer students or students who change colleges from a college where it is not required will have the course waived.

In 2010, SSP 1000 changed the course title from Introduction to College Learning to UMD Seminar.

Starting in Fall 2011, learning communities were no longer offered in CLA. At that time, all CLA students were required to take SSP 1000. Transfer students with 24 or more credits or students who change colleges into CLA are exempt from the requirement. Students with 24 or more PSEO credits may request a waiver from the course. In Fall 2012, the course was moved out of SSP and placed under Academic Affairs with the course designator of UST (University Studies). Four out of the five colleges require UMD Seminar. Swenson College of Science and Engineering (SCSE) is the only college that does not require students to take the course. This was not a decision made by the FYE or SIT office.

Salary History

Between 2006 and 2009, the salary was a flat rate of $1200/credit for anyone teaching this course. This course was, and continues to be, an overload for all instructors. In 2010, the salary increased slightly to $1300/credit for all instructors. In 2014, UMD Seminar began following the salary structure of the UEA, meaning that different instructors of the course may be paid a different amount. The salary for a current faculty member teaching in a unit is paid the overload rate for their faculty annual base salary (see equation below, which uses sample numbers utilized to determine the pay rate for staff). Staff teaching the course must have a Master’s degree and they are now paid a flat rate of $1445/credit. This figure was determined working with Linda Kinnear using the formula from the UEA contract.
Survey on Effectiveness of UMD Seminar

This section will review past evaluations of UMD Seminar and review results from the Fall 2014 student survey sent to students from 2010-2014 to get their feedback on how they view/viewed their UMD Seminar experience.

Student Evaluation of UMD Seminar

In the past, evaluation of UMD Seminar’s impact on students has been based on the overall results of 4-5 questions found on UMD Course Evaluation forms. Even though the past results showed support for the course (see tables below), some were skeptical of the results and wondered if the higher marks were not more about love of teacher than love of course. Obviously, this is a concern raised about all student evaluations and is not unique to UMD Seminar.

Questions used for evaluation (standard 6-point Likert-type scale):
Q2: The instructor’s teaching style motivated me to learn
Q6: The course assignments, exams, and projects were a good measure of my learning
Q7: The instructor created an open, respectful learning environment that supported my learning
Q13: I would recommend this instructor to a fellow student
Q14: Overall, I learned a lot in this course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>N (Sections)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.2</td>
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<td>4.96</td>
<td>0.52</td>
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<td>Q.6</td>
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<td>47</td>
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<td>Q.7</td>
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<td>47</td>
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<td>Q.13</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>0.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q.14</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>47</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Creation of New Survey Sent to Students Who Took UMD Seminar

In fall 2014, the Curriculum Committee requested the Office for Students in Transition (SIT) create a survey about UMD Seminar and send it to current and past students to get their input on the course and what impact the course had on them.

Samantha DeVilbiss, Coordinator for UMD Seminar and Lisa Rigoni Reeves, Director of Office for Students in Transition in conjunction with the UMD Seminar Advisory Group created a survey to send to students. The questions were created using the current UMD Seminar Learning Outcomes and Course themes to see if the course met those outcomes and themes effectively.

SIT contacted ITSS to facilitate the logistics for the survey. Data were requested going back to Fall 2010 and included email addresses, term course was taken, and what course was taken (SSP or UST).

The survey was sent to 4699 students on December 2, 2014 (8:00am) and closed on December 15, 2014 (11:55pm). We offered students a chance to win one of thirty gift cards to UMD Dining Services as an added incentive to take the survey. 1202 students responded giving us an overall return rate of 25%.

- Freshmen recipients (1482) – 35.96% return rate (533)
- Sophomores recipients (1080) – 22.04% return rate (238)
- Juniors recipients (860) – 20.12% return rate (173)
- Seniors recipients (1277) – 20.20% return rate (258)

The Qualtrics survey questions used a **4 point Likert Scale**: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). This was done to force a student response to each question.

The following charts will show
- Respondent information: strongly agree/agree responses, audience and response rate, which course students took (SSP or UST), and which term course was taken.
- Questions: the 8 questions asked along with overall responses, responses by student status and the mean response by student status.
Respondent Information: Percentage of Respondents Selecting Strongly Agree/Agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree/Agree Responses</th>
<th>Freshman (recipients 1482/responses 533)</th>
<th>Sophomore (recipients 1080/responses 238)</th>
<th>Junior (recipients 860/responses 173)</th>
<th>Senior (recipients 1277/responses 258)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 1: UMD Seminar helped me feel more comfortable as a new student at UMD</td>
<td>73.55%</td>
<td>65.13%</td>
<td>70.52%</td>
<td>72.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2: UMD Seminar helped me to be able to have level-headed conversations with individuals who have different perspectives</td>
<td>66.23%</td>
<td>61.34%</td>
<td>64.16%</td>
<td>57.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3: Taking UMD Seminar together with other first-year students made it easier for me to meet people and form connections</td>
<td>67.17%</td>
<td>53.78%</td>
<td>67.63%</td>
<td>61.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 4: UMD Seminar helped me begin to explore what's important to me</td>
<td>63.79%</td>
<td>48.24%</td>
<td>54.34%</td>
<td>51.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5: UMD Seminar helped me to be able to evaluate options to make responsible decisions</td>
<td>71.29%</td>
<td>65.97%</td>
<td>65.32%</td>
<td>65.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 6: As a result of UMD Seminar, I learned more about what it means to be a college student</td>
<td>73.55%</td>
<td>61.76%</td>
<td>63.58%</td>
<td>62.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 7: I have learned skills and resources that have helped me in my other courses</td>
<td>70.36%</td>
<td>59.24%</td>
<td>56.65%</td>
<td>62.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 8: I would recommend UMD Seminar to an incoming first-year student</td>
<td>63.23%</td>
<td>54.20%</td>
<td>64.74%</td>
<td>62.02%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondent Information: Audience and Response Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience and Response Rate</th>
<th>Recipients (4699)</th>
<th>Total respondents (1202)</th>
<th>Response rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>1482</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>35.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>22.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>20.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>1277</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>20.20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Respondent Information: Which Course Students Took

SSP – 666
UST - 536

Respondent Information: Term course was taken by the respondents

- F2010-Sp2011 – 63
- F2011-Sp2012 – 195
- F2012-Sp2013 – 173
- F2013-Sp2014 – 238
- F2014 - 533

Following is a breakdown of data on each question from the survey. Each question will have a graph that provides the raw number and the percentage of respondents who strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed to that question. There will then be a second graph that shows the percentage of students from each class (freshman through senior) who strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. Lastly, for each question, there is a table providing the raw numbers of students from each class who provided each answer as well as the mean, standard deviation, median, and mode for each class.

Note: While we are providing the information on mean and standard deviation, the numbers that we are most interested in, and which appear on the graphs are the raw numbers and percentages for each response. The reason for this is because we are more concerned with how each individual viewed their experience, which can be seen in the raw numbers and conceptualized through the percentages, and not how a hypothetical average person viewed the experience. The graphs present essentially a raw look at responses before the mean, median, and mode present various summative perspectives on them.
**Question 1**

**Question 1: UMD Seminar helped me feel more comfortable as a new student at UMD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Status</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>.78</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>.77</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 2**

**Question 2: UMD Seminar helped me to be able to have level-headed conversations with individuals who have different perspectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Status</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>121</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>.79</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 3

Question 3: Taking UMD Seminar together with other first-year students made it easier for me to meet people and form connections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>518</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total Responses: 1202

Mean: 2.68

Student Status:
- Freshmen: 109 Strongly Agree, 249 Agree, 136 Disagree, 39 Strongly Disagree, Total Responses: 533, Mean: 2.80, SD: .85, Median: 3, Mode: 3
- Sophomore: 41 Strongly Agree, 87 Agree, 84 Disagree, 26 Strongly Disagree, Total Responses: 238, Mean: 2.60, SD: .90, Median: 3, Mode: 3
- Junior: 36 Strongly Agree, 81 Agree, 42 Disagree, 14 Strongly Disagree, Total Responses: 173, Mean: 2.80, SD: .86, Median: 3, Mode: 3
- Senior: 58 Strongly Agree, 101 Agree, 79 Disagree, 20 Strongly Disagree, Total Responses: 258, Mean: 2.76, SD: .89, Median: 3, Mode: 3

Question 4

Question 4: UMD Seminar helped me begin to explore what's important to me

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>516</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Responses: 1202

Mean: 2.61

Student Status:
- Freshmen: 95 Strongly Agree, 245 Agree, 150 Disagree, 43 Strongly Disagree, Total Responses: 533, Mean: 2.74, SD: .84, Median: 3, Mode: 3
- Sophomore: 22 Strongly Agree, 94 Agree, 91 Disagree, 31 Strongly Disagree, Total Responses: 238, Mean: 2.45, SD: .83, Median: 2, Mode: 3
- Junior: 21 Strongly Agree, 73 Agree, 63 Disagree, 16 Strongly Disagree, Total Responses: 173, Mean: 2.57, SD: .82, Median: 3, Mode: 3
- Senior: 28 Strongly Agree, 104 Agree, 103 Disagree, 28 Strongly Disagree, Total Responses: 258, Mean: 2.53, SD: .80, Median: 3, Mode: 3
### Question 5

**Question 5: UMD Seminar helped me to be able to evaluate options to make responsible decisions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Status</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
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<td>123</td>
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<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>48</td>
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</table>

### Question 6

**Question 6: As a result of UMD Seminar, I learned more about what it means to be a college student**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Status</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>533</td>
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<td>.79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
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<td>2.69</td>
<td>.84</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Question 7

**Question 7: I have learned skills and resources that have helped me in my other courses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Status</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>.81</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>14</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>.89</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 8

**Question 8: I would recommend UMD Seminar to an incoming first-year student**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Status</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen</td>
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<td>533</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
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<td>.97</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The survey also included two open-ended answer questions: “If you would recommend this course to an incoming first-year student, why?” and “If you would not recommend this course to an incoming first-year student, why not?” (bolding in the original). Not all respondents answered the open ended questions. Five-hundred, sixty-four (564) students provided reasons they would not recommend the course. Six-hundred, ninety-eight (698) students provided reasons they would recommend the course. The would-not-recommend responses broke down into five categories: 1) Didn’t learn much/waste of time, 2) Covered things we already knew, 3) Too much work/took time from other classes, 4) Assignments not meaningful, and 5) Shouldn’t be required of everyone or should be personalized. The would-recommend responses broke down into nine categories: 1) To earn credit/it’s a requirement, 2) It’s helpful/cool, 3) To meet new people, 4) To know others are going through the same things, 5) To feel more comfortable at UMD, 6) To learn more about what it means to be a college student, 7) To learn more about campus (and Duluth) and get connected to resources, 8) To develop skills needed in college, and 9) To identify why I’m in college/what I want to do with my life/who I am.

The would-not-recommend responses mostly fell into the first three categories, with the last two only containing a handful of responses each. In general, the would-not-recommend responses were typically brief and fairly repetitive. As a result, rather than simply providing a representative list of verbatim examples of each theme below, the reader will find responses that, while representative in their message, provide a higher level of detail than the typical responses to this question.

**Didn’t learn much/waste of time**
- I already had friends and didn’t struggle making friends or adjusting to life as a college student. While it did help with a few things, I didn’t feel as though it changed anything dramatically.
- It’s so boring and useless. Sure you learning about your resources but that is about it.
- You don’t learn anything of value. Nothing that has been taught to me is valuable to my education.
- It seemed like a waste of a credit and time

**Covered things we already knew**
- I felt the class was not very informative and that some of the topics are common sense. I am a good student who does their homework and is organized so I knew what study habits worked for me, I know how to participate in groups, etc. The class was not very impactful.
- Everything is redundant and covered in welcome week or the class on registration or some other required freshman activity. Financial literacy, sexual harassment, cultural awareness, and alcohol awareness were all previously covered by the time we covered them in seminar. The class is entirely unnecessary.

**Too much work/took time from other classes**
- I just feel that it is a waste of time and money. I feel that it takes time away from one’s other classes and that it is just a lot of busy work that does not really help you at all. I do not feel like I really learned anything. It just put a lot of stress on me when trying to get the assignments done from this class when I had other assignments that I felt were more important.
- It takes away from time that could be used for classes that are helpful for your major and it is only one credit.
- This course doesn't actually do anything to help anybody. We could be using our money and time so much more effectively doing something that will help us achieve our degree.
Assignments not meaningful
- I don't think seminar helped me learn how to be successful in college. My seminar was just more random assignments and projects that didn't seem to connect to anything.

Shouldn't be required for everyone or should be personalized
- The class is a great introduction course but it should not be a necessary class.
- I would not recommend this class to student who have previously taken college level classes in high school. Seminar is a transition class between high school and college. If students have already taken college level classes in high school it would be a pointless class because they have already transitioned.

The would-recommend responses mostly fell into categories 3-8, with categories 1, 2, and 9 containing a handful of responses each. Responses falling into categories one and two were typically brief, while responses falling into the other categories were typically much richer in detailed information. Below the reader will find responses that are representative of those found within each would-recommend category.

To earn credit/it's a requirement:
- It's required
- easy credit

It's helpful/cool:
- It's helpful
- It's cool

To meet new people:
- This class helped me on more than just school work. It helps me think about my personal problems inside and outside of school. It was hard for me to make friends because I was a shy person and I don't live on campus. The seminar class is a small enough class for me to get to know everyone. Now I have two very good friends and they're both in my seminar class. I'm so glad to have that class or else I would've been behind on my class work and my personal things. I wouldn't have had two good friends to talk to and study with.
- Because of UMD seminar, I got close to a staff which was helpful and it was my favorite thing to go to once a week. It was a place to talk with other students I might not have met.
- It helps you connect with people with similar majors and interests. It also can help you have a wider perspective on the world around you.
- It is a fun course that allows students to get to know each other. I especially enjoyed collaborating on projects with students from different disciplines.
- It's a class where you meet your first college buddy!
- Because, I have been friends with some of the people in my senior seminar since freshman year (4 years ago)
- I met some of my best friends there. Great place to meet people.

To know others are going through the same things:
- It is nice to be able to voice concerns to people who are facing similar issues (ie. Roommate problems, homesickness, etc.).
Because it puts you in the same room with people in the same situation as you. It helps because I've gotten a lot of advice and help from my peers. It makes for a comfortable learning experience.

I would recommend it because even if you do not meet new people as a result of your class, it helps to know that you are not going through the freshman experience alone. You learn many coping strategies as well as hear others' experiences.

It was helpful for me personally to see that I was not the only one having fears or doubts about school.

I would recommend this course to an incoming first-year student because it did in fact make me feel more comfortable in being a first year student at UMD. This class made me feel less out of place because everyone else in the class was in the same situation as I was. First time experiencing college and all that it offers.

To feel more comfortable at UMD:

- It helps you answer the questions every incoming student has and helps you feel more comfortable with being a college student. One last thing it does is that it helps you believe you can survive college and whatever is thrown your way.
- I would recommend it to first-year students because it has helped me find a place at UMD.
- I would recommend this course because it is completely different than any other course you will take at UMD and because it isn't all about the course work. This class is all about making the transition and adjusting to college life which is equally as important as school itself.
- The teachers I had in the course were very good at letting us know what was expected of us in all of our courses that we were taking and would be taking in the future at UMD. You also have a great opportunity to meet new people in the class and form a connection with a teacher and an upper-class student. These things made me feel comfortable at UMD knowing that I had the information I needed and a couple people behind me to help me along the way.
- It is beneficial to meet with other incoming students and getting a sense of your experience at UMD. It was nice to have a class to transition you into college, rather than just diving into all academics.
- No other course is as welcoming as UMD seminar. You also talk about relatable topics that are relevant to you whereas other courses aren't so relevant to you specifically.

To learn more about what it means to be a college student:

- This course goes over the main topics in being a successful college student, and even though we all know them, I think it is important to go over them because it really helped me talk it all out. It gives you a chance to calm down and think about what’s important and what you need to do.
- I strongly believe UMD Seminar helps freshman students understand what it is like and what it is all about to be a college student, and also understand what their priorities are while being in college.
- It really gives you a sense of what college is and what you can do to make it a success while also learning resources to help you along the way.
- It introduces you to what you should expect college to be like. It made my first semester a lot less nerve-wracking.
- I would recommend this course to an incoming freshman because it has helped me in ways I never thought possible. It seems like it would be a waste of time, but in reality, this class taught me the basics. It laid the ground work for college education. It taught me how to respectfully disagree with people, it broadened my perspective on different lifestyles, as well as coached me
in accepting others. It taught me how to be a better student overall, and a better classmate to my peers. I learned a hell of a lot from UMD Seminar.

To learn more about campus (and Duluth) and get connected to resources:

- It is very helpful in getting to know the campus, also it is a great way to see all of the clubs that UMD has to offer.
- In seminar, we learned about on-campus and local activities to make the adjustment more fun and comfortable.
- Gave you a lot of resources to contact if you ever needed help or had questions
- I knew a lot of the topics that were discussed but it is nice to have a teacher I can go to if I need it.
- UMD seminar showed me lots of new resources and how to use them. I came into this course with a lot of questions and a lot were answered through the course.
- It helps you get familiar with UMD culture and helps you navigate the UMD technical world which can be pretty complex at times
- This class was a good overview of what going to school at UMD is like. It taught me where I need to go to figure out what I need to complete to graduate. It also helped me understand how many ways there are to become involved at UMD through club and intramural sports.
- You learn certain things and little hidden gems about UMD and Duluth as a whole that you may not learn elsewhere
- It gives you information you cannot get in any other way at UMD, and will help you throughout your whole college career.
- I felt that as a freshman who took UMD seminar, I was more prepared than my peers who were not required to take a similar class. UMD seminar helped me understand the registration process, and learn about resources available to me on campus.

To develop skills needed in college:

- It provides study tips and better insight on how to do well in college.
- I learned that college is a time to take responsibility and in the class they teach you financial tips along with how to choose a career.
- In the class you get a good idea of how to register for classes and who to talk to in certain situations. I have found the things learned in that class have been very valuable when it comes to registering. I also like that you learn about grad planner and egradebook and Moodle. It really helps a first year student who feels lost
- While taking UMD Seminar, our professor asked the class if there were any specific aspects of being a college student that we would like her to help us with. As most of our class had never used a public transit system, our professor organized an optional extracurricular event taking us down to Canal Park so we could have first hand experience using the DTA. That was a much more effective way of teaching us than simply telling us how it works.
- It helped me to think more critically
- I learned a lot about how UMD works academically, how to register for classes, create a grad planner, time management etc. that really helped me throughout my college career.
- Ultimately it put me a little more at ease about taking on college life. Not only the academic aspect but also on topics related to college life. It was useful in teaching some skills such as balancing work and school, being responsible when it comes to "extracurricular activities", deciding on a career to pursue and so on.
• It helps you feel more organized with your other classes and makes the transition into college a lot easier.
• The basics of going to college are not likely to be known by incoming students. Things like how to properly address an email to a professor or how to utilize graduation planner are small things that are beneficial to learn.

To identify why I'm in college/what I want to do with my life/who I am:
• We learned about many skills and resources that are of great help for me and my classmates. I learned how to create a better resume along with other skills that will help me in my future. This class helped me understand what I want to do with my life and even helped me decide on a major.
• It helps define the person who you are
• It helped to connect with students who had similar interests as I did. It also helped to find my personal strengths and what I could work on. It was very helpful.
• It is just something that really helps with getting a good idea of what college is like. It helps with students that are undecided about their major and also forces students to look at possible careers that majors may lead to. All in all it is just a class that can really help with getting someone on track for their future and how to reach certain goals.
• It helps you evolve as a person and connect with other freshman that are in the same position as you.
• It is a good opportunity to reflect upon the experiences you are having.

The survey communicated that overall students have had a positive experience with UMD Seminar and that, in general, Seminar has been meeting its goals. These numbers show room for improvement, as they would with any course. The open-ended responses communicate that students who had an unfavorable experience with the class had the perception that the class was meaningless and that other courses were more important, while students who saw value in the course could give explicit statements regarding what they got out of it. These take-aways relate to the theoretical foundation of the course. When students talk about valuing the advice of their classmates, they show a movement from Dualism to Multiplicity. When students discuss developing skills they need in college, they are addressing developing competence. When students talk of finding clubs and organizations to get involved with and being connected to resources, they are addressing finding support. And when students discuss having instructors and teaching assistants behind them, they are addressing feeling as though they matter. These are just a handful of examples where countless others could be highlighted. These survey results communicated to the Advisory Group that the course is on track; that it simply must be highly intentional about its mission, purpose, goals, learning objectives, curriculum, instructor training, assessment, and marketing.
Recommendations

Based on the background work done by the Advisory Group, examining theories of cognitive and psychosocial development, transition, and retention as well as exploring the purpose of transitional programming and the history and outcomes of first year seminars in general and specifically at UMD; through long discussions and drafting, the AG has put together the following recommendations for UMD Seminar moving forward in regards to mission, purpose, goals, learning outcomes, course core curriculum, credit hours, audience, measurement and assessment, instructor hiring and training processes, marketing, and further research into course effectiveness. To view the current version of UMD Seminar’s purpose, themes, learning outcomes, and recommended topics, please view Appendix A.

As indicated above, the Advisory Group is not recommending a change in direction for the course, but rather an increased clarity about what the course should be doing in light of the theoretical foundation behind the program, and an increased intentionality about how it is fulfilling its mission. Previously, the course had a purpose, themes, learning outcomes, and recommended topics (Appendix A). Moving forward, the Advisory Group has recommended the following mission, purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and required curricular elements as well as a focus to continue to improve assessment, marketing, and instructor training moving forward.

Mission

UMD Seminar facilitates the successful transition into college learning and student life at UMD.

Purpose

UMD Seminar is a course designed to assist students in making a successful transition to UMD. It is an introduction to the academic, social, cultural, and personal opportunities that UMD can offer. Students will examine who they are, explore who they are becoming at UMD, and begin thinking about how their UMD experiences will affect their lives and the world around them after they graduate. UMD Seminar requires both practical and reflective learning, where students are encouraged to focus on how the course material applies to their unique experience as a new UMD student. The course will help students achieve success in their educational and life goals by making personal connections, laying the foundation for lifelong learning, and participating in diverse communities. It is an invitation to possibilities.

Goals

The UMD Seminar goals have been linked to UMD’s student learning outcomes (SLOs).

- Explore the differing expectations and demands between secondary and higher education (SLO: 2, 5, 9)
- Introduce tools, skills, and resources necessary for UMD success (SLO: 2, 9)
- Help new students feel welcome at UMD by making it easy to meet people and form connections (SLO: 8, 9)
- Engage students in respectful conversations with individuals who have different perspectives (SLO: 2, 4, 6, 7, 9)
- Guide students on the journey of self-exploration as they begin to discover what is important to them (SLO: 2, 4, 5, 8, 9)
- Help students evaluate options to make responsible decisions (SLO: 2, 3, 4, 9)

**Learning Outcomes**

- Transfer academic and life skills
- Access campus resources in planning for academic, social, and personal success in college
- Get involved on campus and meet people
- Appropriately and effectively communicate in various contexts
- Acknowledge that people approach the world from different perspectives
- Explore who they are and who they want to become
- Think reflectively
- Recognize that making decisions involves weighing the benefits and consequences of possible options

**Course Core Curriculum**

In the past, the curriculum for UMD Seminar has been summed up by the themes, learning outcomes, and recommended weekly topics. While the Advisory Group is not recommending a common syllabus in order to honor academic freedom, the group is recommending the following required curricular elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals:</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes Students will be able to:</th>
<th>Course Core Curriculum:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Explore the differing expectations and demands between secondary and higher education (SLO: 2, 5, 9) | • Transfer academic and life skills | • Values and possibilities of a liberal education  
• Learning preferences  
• Study skills  
• Syllabus utilization  
• Interactions with professionals  
• Self-directed learning  
• Higher order learning tasks and products |
| Introduce tools, skills, and resources necessary for UMD success (SLO: 2, 9) | • Access campus resources in planning for academic, social, and personal success in college | • Time management  
• Academic planning, graduation planner, APAS, registration basics  
• Moodle and Google basics  
• Campus resources |
| Help new students feel welcome at UMD by making it easy to meet people and form connections (SLO: 8, 9) | • Get involved on campus and meet people | • Ways to get involved and connected to campus  
• Academic and social life balance  
• Interactions with faculty and staff  
• Ways to connect to the Duluth area |

| Engage students in respectful conversations with individuals who have different perspectives (SLO: 2, 4, 6, 7, 9) | • Appropriately and effectively communicate in various contexts  
• Acknowledge that people approach the world from different perspectives | • Intercultural effectiveness  
• Group interactions  
• Appropriate use of electronic communication including email and social media |
| Guide students on the journey of self-exploration as they begin to discover what is important to them (SLO: 2, 4, 5, 8, 9) | • Explore who they are and who they want to become | • Internal vs external motivation and initiative  
• Goal setting  
• Major, career, and interest exploration  
• Value exploration  
• Fixed vs growth mindset  
• Transitional experience model (W curve)  
• Relationship between college and lifelong learning  
• Resiliency and risk-taking |
| Help students evaluate options to make responsible decisions (SLO: 2, 3, 4, 9) | • Think reflectively  
• Recognize that making decisions involves weighing the benefits and consequences of possible options | • Mental and physical wellness  
• School, work, personal, family, and social time balance  
• Personal financial management  
• Major and career selection  
• Adjustment to independent living |

Credit Hours

Previously the majority of the sections of UMD Seminar have been one-credit hour courses, though some sections with specific focuses have been two-credit hour courses. Both instructors and students have indicated connecting more with each other and with the material in two-credit hour sections. Additionally, now that the course core curriculum has been fully articulated, most members of the Advisory Group see that there is more in the core curriculum than could be taught with depth during a one-credit hour course. After much discussion, the AG was unable to come to an agreement on a recommendation of credit hours. Instead, the members chose to go on record in the following ways:

- Liz Wright feels that by combining curricular topics and referring students to existing student support structures, UMD Seminar could be successfully delivered in one-credit hour.
- Jane Carlson, Kurt Guidinger, Elias Mokole, Roger Reinsch, and Katie Van Wert acknowledge that based on the theoretical foundation; student survey responses; and established mission, purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and core curriculum of UMD Seminar, a two-credit delivery would be better, allowing for a thorough treatment of the course material and time for students to apply the topics and work through developmental issues. However, this group would like to go on record in support of an open recommendation that continues to allow for one-credit hour and two-credit hour sections, recognizing that some curricular elements will need to be cut from one-credit sections to allow for appropriate coverage of remaining topics. These members think it is most important that all students take UMD Seminar, even if it cannot be at two-credit hours.
• Samantha DeVilbiss, Paul Kiprof, Shelly Mann, Jerry Pepper, and Lisa Reeves, while acknowledging that it would be better that the course is offered to students at one-credit hour than not at all, would like to go on record as recommending a two-credit hour model that allows all areas of the curriculum, as informed by foundational theory and the student survey, to be thoroughly taught. This group would like to see a substantive course that incorporates the theoretical background in such a way that allows students a better understanding of themselves and enables them to approach challenges in a more informed and rational way.

Audience

Currently the course is required of students in four out of the five colleges at UMD, College of Education and Human Service Professions (CEHSP), College of Liberal Arts (CLA), Labovitz School of Business and Economics (LSBE), and School of Fine Arts (SFA); but is not required of students in Swenson College of Science and Engineering (SCSE). The Advisory Group recommends that UMD Seminar be required of students from all five colleges for several reasons. One reason is that we know that many students at UMD change their majors throughout their time in college. This leads to many changes between colleges as well. When a student transfers from a college that does not require the course into a college that does, the Advising and Academic Service offices see an increase of one-on-one time they have to spend catching the student up on information discussed in seminar, particularly, APAS, Catalog, and other campus resources. Further when students change from SCSE to one of the other colleges, the other colleges are left to decide whether to waive the requirement or ask a more experienced student to go back and take this course. Students taking the course who are already experienced students at UMD would not find the same value in the course as new students. Further, their presence would change the classroom dynamic for the other students in the class. When the course is waived, as well as simply not required for one of the five colleges, it communicates to other students in CEHSP, CLA, LSBE, and SFA that the course is not really that important. It can lead them to question why they were required to take this course and can create an environment where the importance of the course is questioned and the class devalued and criticized to the point where students taking the course do not take it seriously and therefore do not receive the full value of the course. It is the Advisory Group’s belief that this is happening currently. Additionally, the Advisory Group stands behind the importance and meaningfulness of UMD Seminar’s mission, purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and curriculum. It is our belief that these items are important for all students transitioning to UMD in order to be successful in and out of their coursework. If the elements of the course are important for all students, the AG recommends it be required of all students. Lastly, a coherent first year experience with a reimagined charge and curriculum, can give the students a common experience and way to connect with each other beyond simply their own classroom, but rather across campus.

Measurement and Assessment

In the past, assessment of the course has been based on end of semester course evaluations completed by students and assessment of learning outcomes has been based on instructor’s evaluations of two student items. Instructors have collected and assessed an academic planning assignment from students as well as another assignment related to UMD Seminar’s three year assessment cycle. For example, in the 2014-2015 academic year, instructors have required an assignment related to critical thinking and assessed these assignments based on the AACU’s Critical Thinking Values Rubric. Moving forward, once the goals and learning outcomes are finalized, SIT would like to explore ways to better ensure that these goals and outcomes are being achieved. SIT will work with campus student learning assessment professionals for best strategies.
Instructor Training

Over time, UMD Seminar’s training for faculty and staff with a master’s degree who have been offered positions to teach the course has expanded to a two-day program in May for new instructors, and a one-day program for all instructors in August, focusing on what have been believed to be important foundational and technical elements of the course. Beginning with preparation for the 2014-2015 academic year, returning instructors were also asked to come to a half day of the May program in addition to the August day, and there was an increased focus on foundational theory including Schlossberg. Moving forward, with the new charge and increased intentionality of UMD Seminar, the Advisory Group recommends all instructors for the 2015-2016 year attend the multi-day May training, which will focus highly on the foundational theories including Perry, Chickering, and Schlossberg’s transition theory as well as her theory of marginality and mattering in addition to the updated mission, purpose, goals, learning outcomes, core curriculum, assessment, and UMD resources. Moving forward, all new instructors will be expected to attend the multi-day May training, while all instructors will attend a one-day refresher training in August. Additionally, instructors will be invited to mid-semester fall meetings to go over additional training topics and/or discuss issues that have arisen during the semester.

Marketing

It seems to the Advisory Group that UMD Seminar has developed a bit of an image problem to some faculty, staff, and students on campus. It is believed that this is, in large part, due to a lack of understanding of the purpose, curriculum, and outcomes of this course. For this reason, it will be important moving forward that this information be widely shared to faculty, staff, and students, as well as parents. These messages can be shared through the SIT website as well as during programming such as Advisement and Registration. It is a further recommendation of the Advisory Group that this information be included in marketing materials from the Admissions office as well, under the belief that if students and parents see UMD’s interest in conceptualizing students as whole people, not only as academic creatures, and our interest in assisting students in making a successful transition to college, we will be able to attract more students in addition to being able to retain them.

Future Explorations

Based on the limited time frame within which the Advisory Group needed to work in order to forward recommendations to the Curriculum Committee in February 2015, the AG was not able to explore every topic they thought could inform the delivery of UMD Seminar. As a result, the AG recommends the following areas for future research and explorations:

- Considering a model for the course that involves one credit hour during the fall semester and one credit hour during the spring semester
- Looking into the sophomore experience, specifically exploring why their survey responses were the lowest of all the classes and whether this trend will continue when this survey is conducted in future years
- Performing a campus assessment of what transitional programming is offered to new students, whether through the National Resource Center for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition or otherwise conducted, to examine the comprehensive first year experience at UMD
- Examining the one-credit versus two-credit sections in terms of outcomes and which students are taking which version of the course, if the course continues to be offered through both one-credit hour and two-credit hour sections
References


South Carolina, National Resource Center for The First Year Experience and Students in Transition.


Appendix A

Current Purpose

UMD Seminar is a course designed to assist you in making a successful transition to UMD. It is an “invitation to possibilities” – the academic, social, cultural, and personal opportunities that UMD can offer. You will examine who you are, explore who you are becoming at UMD, and begin thinking about how your UMD experience will affect your life and the world around you after you graduate. UMD Seminar requires both practical and reflective learning, and you are encouraged to focus on how the course material applies to your unique experience as a new UMD student. The purpose of the course is to help you achieve success in your educational and life goals by making personal connections, fostering lifelong learning, and participating in diverse communities.

Current Themes

- Building Relationships: Connecting with peers, staff, and faculty on campus
- UMD Tools and Resources: Effectively using campus services and technologies
- Thinking and Learning: Study skills, critical and creative thinking, ethical problem-solving, foundations of liberal education
- Self-Knowledge and Growth: Personal reflection and development, planning for success
- Behavior and Communication: Making healthy choices, personal problem-solving, interpersonal communication, and professional etiquette
- Working Effectively in Groups: Working with others, effective collaboration, accountability
- Trying New Things: Getting involved on campus, academic and self-exploration
- Intercultural Effectiveness: Recognizing diversity, exploring multiple perspectives, understanding and defining identity and privilege

Current Program Learning Outcomes

PLO 1: Students will apply effective communication skills when exploring diverse perspectives (SLOs 5,6,7,9)

PLO 2: Students will be familiar with and able to access campus resources in planning for academic, social, and personal success in college (SLOs 2,4,5,6,9)

PLO 3: Students will explore foundational skills in critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and self-knowledge across a range of developmental areas (SLOs 2,3,4,5)

PLO 4: Students will explain their role in the campus community and their sense of belonging at UMD (SLOs 4,7,8,9)
Current Recommended Weekly Topics

Invitation to the possibilities reflective learning
Connection to campus
Intercultural Effectiveness (Part 1)
Alcohol, sex & healthy college living
Achieving balance in college
Thinking & learning
Values and possibilities of liberal education
Academic planning, graduation planner & registration basics
Working in groups
Locus of control and goal setting
Major and career exploration
Possibilities of creative and critical thinking
Intercultural Effectiveness (Part 2)
Beyond UMD
Wrapping it up: reflecting on the first semester
Appendix B

The National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition acknowledges four primary types of FYS courses, with the first two the most common. The Resource Center also notes that institutions can develop courses that meld the different types to meet the specific needs of the students of the college or university (Keup & Petschauer, 2011):

1. Extended Orientation: provides general academic support and an introduction to campus resources
2. Academic: general uniform content or thematic sections with variable content
3. Preprofessional: discipline-linked seminar (serves as introduction to major)
4. Basic study skills: support academically underprepared students