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Recommendations of the Faculty Work Group of the Undergraduate Experience Task Force

The Undergraduate Experience Task Force recommendations aim to integrate academic and non-academic aspects of student life by connecting curricular and co-curricular activities in the context of an interdisciplinary first year seminar. We are proposing a structure and a process that aims to establish high expectations, to offer a rigorous academic experience, and to build community.

We propose that UNH require all first year students to take during their first year a four credit course (at the 400 level) from those offered by the First Year Interdisciplinary Seminar Institute. This course will explore new concepts and develop new ways of thinking about, and looking at, issues from an interdisciplinary perspective. We recommend that each course include extensive and intensive class discussion as well as readings, written assignments, collaborative problem solving, joint projects with other students, and interaction with professors and staff outside of the classroom. The course will blend in and out class experiences. Some will be residence-hall based. The program will be phased in over a five year period.

First year Interdisciplinary Seminar Institute

The Institute will be comprised of 10 senior fellows each of whom will lead a team of six first year teaching faculty. These teams/clusters will develop courses around a theme or set of themes that each group selects. Teaching fellowships will be awarded on a competitive basis, and teaching fellows, in addition to leading interdisciplinary teams of faculty, will teach a seminar each semester. We recommend two large group events for each cluster: 1) A team-building exercise, designed in collaboration with Pam McPhee of the Browne Center. 2) A content-based event (lecture, film, theater performance). Other co-curricular events will be planned collaboratively within the cluster.

First year Seminars as Learning Communities

Organizing first-year seminars by interdisciplinary teams, we are able to bring students together into learning communities. Some of the learning communities will be residence hall based. We recommend that two residence hall-based learning communities (defined by belonging to the same cluster) be offered each fall semester. If student demand grows, we recommend expanding the number of residence hall-based clusters.

First year Seminar Faculty

Faculty who teach first year seminars will be asked to work together in interdisciplinary faculty teams, to attend a planning retreat, and to participate in co-curricular activities with students and staff. Plans for incentives, compensation, and recognition need to take into consideration the intense involvement of time associated with teaching the first year seminar. We recommend that the seminar constitute a 2 course load for the first time, and 1 ½ thereafter.

Measures: Increase undergraduate engagement in learning, improve writing and analytical skills, improve active and collaborative learning, increase early contact and interaction with faculty members, improve faculty satisfaction in teaching, improve retention rates, develop sense of academic community among and between students, faculty and staff.

ACTION PLANS

- a) Create Budget for 10 teaching fellowships per year. Costs involve teaching replacement for 3 courses per year, per fellow. Responsibility: Provost's Office.
- b) Create First Year Interdisciplinary Seminar Institute space. Responsibility: Provost's Office.
- c) Create interest in competing for First Year Teaching Fellowships. Responsibility: Provost's Office
- d) Work with Registrar and Judy Spiller for student scheduling of first year seminars during June orientation. Responsibility: Teaching Fellows
- e) Work with Scott Chesney and Judy Spiller to create residence hall-based learning communities: Responsibility: Provost's Office
- f) Create faculty incentives and compensation for teaching First Year Seminars: Provost's Office.

Actions: Now and five years from now:

Measure a:

Now: Create budget for 2 fellows beginning Fall 2003.

In Five Years: Increase each year until 10 funded by 2008.

Measure b:

Now: Designate a well-equipped seminar room for meetings of First-year fellows with teaching faculty and staff.

In Five Years: Have Institute space with offices for fellows.

Measure c:

Now: In Spring of 2003, create application procedure and distribute to all UNH faculty a call for applications for 2 teaching fellowships.

In Five Years: Increase fellowships incrementally to reach 10 by 2008.

Measure d:

Now: Plan to schedule two residence hall-based clusters (16 seminars) for Fall of 2003.

In Five Years: Schedule 10 clusters (7 seminars per cluster) of seminars for each fall and spring semester, increasing residence hall-based clusters if student demand exists.

Measure e:

Now: Designate 2 residence halls and staff for residence hall-based learning communities.

In Five Years: Increase the number of halls according to student demand.

Measure f:

Now: Create budget to replace 2 clusters of faculty teaching First Year Seminars.

In Five Years: Create budget to replace 10 clusters of faculty teaching First Year Seminars.