Introduction: RAP courses provide the framework for first-year college students to master course content, cultivate academic skills and develop valuable relationships with instructors and peers.

The general mission of RAP is to foster student success and satisfaction academically, personally and socially, while increasing retention and student progress toward graduation.

The primary goals of RAP are to:

- Support students in achieving a smooth transition to college life.
- Ensure first-year students are aware of the multitude of resources and opportunities that are available at UMass Amherst.
- Promote the General Education curriculum goals, with a focus developing an awareness and appreciation for the specific skills (inquiry and analysis, problem solving, critical and creative thinking, etc.) that are found in all Gen Ed courses.
- Introduce students to the skills embedded in the Integrative Experience (IE) requirement – specifically the practice of thinking about, talking about and making connections between courses and life experience in order to deepen engagement, understanding and ultimately increase the value of their college education.
- Provide first-year students with structured guidance in the development/advancement of various skills necessary to be successful in their college experience and be prepared to be engaged members of a global community upon graduation.

Qualifications:

- Member of the UMass Amherst community
- Experience working with first-year college students or willingness to participate in training
- Mastery of content/consent of department

Specific Instructor Responsibilities:

Curriculum:

- Follow the departmental curriculum for the course.
- Prepare a syllabus that integrates UMass General Education and RAP goals.
- Integrate intentional dialogue about Gen Ed skills into the class.

Methods:

- Engage students in conversation and/or activities that require them to articulate their expectations for this small course experience offered through RAP.
- Establish a dynamic classroom environment that supports first-year students in achieving a smooth transition to the college life (encouragement of asking questions, speaking out in class, utilizing technology opportunities such as Moodle discussion, sharing experiences, small group and/or individual activities and/or projects, etc.).
- Provide written feedback to students regarding their academic progress on a regular basis (especially prior to the ‘W’ date of the semester).
- Encourage students to seek academic assistance during your scheduled office hours as well as through other support venues across campus (Learning Resource Center, department, Peer Mentor, etc.).

Connections & RAP activities:

- Be responsive to all materials disseminated from the RAP office by specified deadlines. (may include academic announcements, surveys, etc.).
- Attend required meetings (minimum of three); one with the Director of Academic Programs for First-Year Students prior to signing contract and a minimum of two additional required meetings during the semester. (detailed description attached).
- Be educated about the opportunities available to instructors through the collaboration with Residential Learning Communities programs. Activities such as movie viewing, study groups and field trips can be planned and supported by contacting RLC@sacl.umass.edu.
- Encourage students to develop connections/relationship with their academic advisors or advising office.
### RAP meetings/collaboration

| What: | Meet with Kathy (kathyw@acad.umass.edu) before TO contract is submitted to Grad Assistantship Office for processing. To understand expectations of a RAP instructor and confirm that it’s a good fit.  
  - NEW INSTRUCTORS: learn about RAP mission, goals and structure and introduction  
  - RETURNING INSTRUCTORS: discuss and reflect on prior experience  
  - Discuss the Student Resource Booklet and ways to guide students to access the various resources presented. | When: Fall/winter | Where: Goodell |
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| What: | Meet 2x with Kathy and/or RAP staff and small group of instructors in a Faculty Learning Community.  
  - Share information with other instructors regarding course content, classroom environment, successful teaching strategies and/or feedback regarding Student Resource Booklet  
  - Feb: Discuss importance of mid-semester RAP survey (online or paper) for instructors and future RAP program development  
  - March: Review mid-semester survey results and discuss/develop an action plan if needed. | When: Mid-February AND Late March | Where: Goodell |
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### RAP specific expectations

| What: | Submit course description for distribution.  
Updated course descriptions provide timely information for students and will help ensure that courses fill to capacity. | When: November | Where: To Kathy |
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| What: | Submit syllabus for review and feedback.  
  - Ensure that RAP and Gen Ed goals are incorporated into the syllabus. See syllabus template documents for suggestions.  
  - Ensure that information and expectations are easily understandable by first-year students. | When: By mid-January | Where: In person or online |
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| What: | Pick up classroom key, temporary parking permit and complete other paperwork.  
To make a personal connection to the RAP office and ensure that the semester gets off to a smooth start. | When: By beginning of semester | Where: Hampden 200 |
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| What: | Pick up Student Resource Booklets to be distributed no later than the beginning of the second week of class.  
Ensure that students receive the resource information in a timely manner. | When: By end of first week of semester | Where: Goodell |
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| What: | Reply promptly to all emails from RAP office, Kathy and/or Maureen.  
Ensure that RAP programming needs/ survey completion stays on track. | When: On going | Where: Online |
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| What: | Facilitate student completion of mid-semester RAP survey (allow class time if necessary)  
Ensure that the RAP office has time to analyze survey results and share them with instructors with ample time remaining in the semester to make changes if needed. | When: By specified deadline | Where: Classroom |
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| What: | Have students complete SRTIs.  
Get critical feedback for instructors and program analysis. | When: By specified deadline | Where: Classroom |
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| What: | Complete end of semester instructor RAP survey.  
Ensure that the RAP office gets meaningful information that could lead to programmatic changes for subsequent semesters. | When: By specified deadline | Where: Online |
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