



UNIVERSITY of MASSACHUSETTS
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To: Tenure system Faculty, Senior Lecturers, and Emeriti

From: James V. Staros, Provost
John Cunningham, Deputy Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education

Re: Request for First-Year Seminar proposals

More than thirty faculty participated in our inaugural one credit Faculty First Year Seminars (FFYS) this year and engaged first year students in explorations of fantastic topics. You can find the course descriptions and a bit more information on the Undergraduate Advising & Learning Communities (UA&LC) website (<http://ualc.umass.edu/firstyearseminars/facultyfirstyearseminars/>).

We are starting to plan the FFYS schedule for the Fall 2010 semester and are soliciting proposals from faculty. We plan to offer at least fifty one credit (pass/fail) seminars in the fall, which will be advertised to incoming first year students for enrollment during the summer orientation sessions.

Teaching a FFYS can be an exciting new opportunity for you to interact with a small group of our first year undergraduates. Chancellor Holub initiated this program along the lines of what continues to work well at UCal Berkeley and other universities (see <http://fss.berkeley.edu/freshman.lasso>). He taught at least a dozen of these seminars at Berkeley and Knoxville, and offered "Friedrich Nietzsche's Beyond Good & Evil" for our students last fall.

The FFYS is envisioned to improve first year retention in at least two ways: (1) by engaging students in a topic that catches their interest and enables them to experience the excitement of collegiate level learning with a faculty member in a small setting; and (2) by providing an avenue for being mentored during the first year of the transition to college. These courses supplement ongoing retention efforts within departments and in our advising units.

Our faculty who taught a FFYS this year confirm the chancellor's prediction of a thoroughly enjoyable teaching experience. Faculty have the opportunity to teach something about which they are passionate; students have a chance to meet a tenure-system faculty member in their initial year on campus and to discuss important topics with fellow students who have similar interests.

Please consider submitting a proposal to teach a FFYS. The application form is available at a link from the Provost's Office page, www.umass.edu/provost. Your description should take into consideration that out-of-class work should not exceed two hours weekly on average.

Faculty First year Seminars are taught outside a faculty member's regular teaching duties, i.e., as an overload. Faculty teaching a FFYS with enrollment of at least ten students will receive a research stipend of \$2000, which may be used on any legitimate research expense. Each also has the option of donating the stipend to the "Reasons to Give" initiative which supports student scholarships.

We hope that you will join Chancellor Holub and the other faculty who taught this year and make this program a huge success for the UMass Amherst campus.