

March 17, 2020

To: Tenure system Faculty, Senior Lecturers and Lecturers
From: Kathy Weilerstein, Director of Student Success Academic Programs
Carolyn Bassett, Associate Provost for Student Success
Re: **DEADLINE EXTENDED TO Monday, April 6:** Request for Faculty First-Year Seminar proposals

Greetings. I am happy to say that planning for Fall 2020 Faculty First-Year Seminars (FFYS) has begun. We are currently soliciting proposals for instructors. As a High-Impact Practice (HIP) First-Year Seminars have proven to successfully increase student satisfaction and academic success in the first year. First-Year Seminars offer a structure to engage students intellectually and interpersonally, assisting them in their transition to college, while also providing useful information on resources and opportunities. See below for a brief review of the structure, goals and specific requirements for our FFYS program.

Program Explained:

At UMass Amherst, the First-Year Seminar (FYS) program is comprised of FYSs offered within each School/College (designed for students within a particular school/college) as well as the Faculty First-Year Seminar (FFYS) program which is open to any first-year student across campus. FYS are an ideal way to welcome and support the newest members of our community and to make sure that we are consistent in reaching all of them with critical information. All FYSs offer engaging learning opportunities in a small class setting with a capacity of 19. This structure allows for the development of close relationships between the students as well as with the instructor, increasing a student's sense of belonging, another important marker of satisfaction, persistence and success. Utilizing required common content and goals, our university FYS structure ensures that students will be introduced to information that builds a foundation of supports, leading to a smooth transition and successful start to college.

Common Content:

The Faculty First-Year Seminar is an opportunity for faculty to teach something about which they are passionate, being able to choose a topic of their liking. All FFYSs will also be required to **incorporate these three common content goals:**

- **Goal #1, Enhancing Engagement:** Ensure students are well informed about the wide array of opportunities and campus resources that will assist them and enhance their college experience.
- **Goal #2, Building Connections:** Foster students' feeling of connection to their fellow students and various partners across campus. Assist students in understanding the core values and community standards that define what it means to be a member of the UMass Amherst community.
- **Goal #3, Self-Guided Learning:** Introduce students to the importance of developing and utilizing mindful time management, targeted study strategies, and intentional planning for academic achievement and pathways to success.

The method in which these concepts will be addressed will vary depending upon the seminar topic and structure. Some faculty will choose to imbed the common content within their seminar topic curriculum. Other faculty will choose to block out time on designated days to address the common content goals separate from the main topic of the seminar. All will achieve the intended learning outcome, supporting student success and transition to college.

Faculty Support:

The Student Success unit will:

1. Be available to any faculty member to aid in developing a syllabus, determining ways to address the Common Content Goals, and to answer any questions before and during the semester.
2. Provide FFYS instructors with a hard copy and/or on-line version of the Student Success Planner that is distributed to all first-year students their first weekend on campus. ([Fall 2019 Student Success Planner PDF](#), for reference)
3. Provide a student-facing document that addresses the Common Content Goals and links to pages in the Planner ([Fall 2019 FYS Student Resource Guide](#) for reference). A new handout will be developed for Fall 2020. Hard copies and links to an on-line version will be available.

Application Details and Process:

FFYS are taught outside a faculty member's regular teaching duties, i.e., as an overload. Faculty teaching a FFYS with enrollment of at least **8** students and maximum enrollment of **19** students will receive a stipend of \$2334. The faculty can select to receive this stipend as research funds, which may be used on any legitimate research or educational-related expense, or as one-time additional compensation subject to appropriate taxation and other deductions.

Please consider submitting a proposal to teach a FFYS for Fall 2020, the 12th year of this successful program.

The application and an Instructor's Resource Guide for First-Year Seminars is posted on the [Student Success website](#). **The deadline for applications is ~~March 23~~, Monday, April 6, 2020.**

Feel free to contact me at seminars@umass.edu if you have any questions or would like assistance in the application process.

Regards,

Kathy Weilerstein