February 25, 2019

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: Request for Faculty First-Year Seminar proposals

Planning for Fall 2019 Faculty First-Year Seminars has begun, and we are currently soliciting proposals to teach these courses. As we prepare for the eleventh year of this successful program, we would like to provide a brief review of the structure and goals and to clarify the specific requirements.

Student Success:
UMass Amherst recently established the unit of Undergraduate Student Success. In alignment with the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan, we hold various initiatives that support student persistence and timely progress toward degree completion. 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. As such, our unit is well-positioned to lead the administration and support for the First-Year Seminar program. The First-Year Seminar program is comprised of First-Year Seminars offered within each School/College as well as the Faculty First-Year Seminar program open to any first-year student across campus.

Program Explained:
First-Year Seminars (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 common content and goals that were developed for Fall 2017 and required for Fall 2018, 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’ understanding of the transition from high school to being part of a college community and the core values and community standards defining what it means to be a member of the UMass Amherst community.
- **Goal #3, Self-Guided Learning:** Introduce students to the importance of 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 topics within the goals into their 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 from a new student’s early days on campus.

**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 2018 Academic Planner PDF](#), for reference)
3. Provide a student facing document that addresses the Common Content Goals and links to pages in the Planner ([Fall 2018 version](#) for reference). A new handout will be developed for Fall 2019. Hard copies and links to an on-line version will be available.

**Application Details and Process:**
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 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 2019.

**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 18, 2019.

Thank you.