

WHAT IS FIRST-YEAR/FRESHMAN SEMINAR (FYS)?

These seminars are special courses for first-year students designed to enhance their academic and social integration to college. Recent survey data from the National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience and Students in Transition indicates that approximately 70% of American colleges and universities offer a freshman or first-year seminar. The precise content and goals for these seminars differ from institution to institution. Some are academic courses which focus on a faculty member's special area of scholarly interest or an interdisciplinary theme. Others are offered within academic departments or professional schools in order to introduce students to the expectations of a major career. However, the overwhelming majority (about 70%) of such seminars are designed to provide students essential strategies and information to enhance the likelihood of their retention and academic/social success.

Freshman seminars as a course type have been part of the curriculum at American colleges and universities for over 100 years. The first freshman seminar was offered at Lee College, Kentucky, in 1882, and the first "for-credit" seminar became part of the curriculum at Reed College in 1911. But the popularity of this course type has fluctuated since that time. After almost disappearing in the 1960's, the freshman seminar has enjoyed a gradual and steady rebirth since the mid-1970's. It is now recognized as an effective curricular structure which addresses many of the issues and problems of contemporary college life. But more importantly, freshman seminars give students the opportunity to interact with and gain support from other students and the seminar instructor and to experience a real sense of community within the larger campus. Many of these seminars have been broadened in focus to include other categories of first-year students, especially transfer students, who, like freshmen, truly are students in transition. Hence, many of these former freshman seminars are becoming reconstituted as "new" student seminars.

What is First-Year Seminar at Idaho State University?

ACAD 102 First Year Seminar 1 Credit. Provides an extended orientation to the university for new students. Utilizes presenters from various campus support systems, collaborative learning activities, and written assignments which involve students in resources and activities on campus. F, S

FYS provides an introduction to the nature of higher education and a general orientation to the functions and resources of the University. The course is designed to help first-year students adjust to the University, develop a better understanding of the learning process, and acquire essential academic survival skills. The course also provides a support group of students in a critical transition year by examining problems common to the first-year experience.

Due to efforts of Jonathan Lawson, Janet Anderson, Jennifer Fisher, Barbara Lawrence and others committed to student success, the program expanded. First Year Seminar has been offered at ISU since Spring 1990, staffed by volunteers from Office of Enrollment Planning and

the Division of Student Affairs. A relatively small enrollment waxed and waned. However, in Fall 1996 and Spring 1997, a concerted effort was made to increase enrollment by offering 7 sections. In addition, two sections of a 2-credit special topics course called "Freshman Seminar" were offered in Idaho Falls; this course combined selected First Year Seminar topics with study skills content covered in EDUC 101 Study Skills. During Spring 1998, nine sections of First Year Seminar and one section of Freshman Seminar were offered for new freshmen as well as second semester freshmen who did not participate in the fall. A total of 561 students were enrolled 1997-98. This was the year faculty and professional staff teamed for the first time. This collaborative effort has been successful and continues.

Forty sections were offered 1998-99, enrolling 684 students. During this time we concentrated on program evaluation through student focus groups conducted by Melisa Moon Gorder, graduate assistant. What we learned provided the basis for changes in the course content and emphases. Nicole Fontana, Presidential Intern, also joined the staff to team teach First Year Seminar with a faculty/staff instructor fall and spring semesters. She has developed and implemented a peer instructor program which is in place for Fall 1999, beginning another exciting and challenging year for this expanding program.

Forty-five sections were offered 1999-2000, enrolling 818 students on both campuses and the School of Applied Technology, a 20% increase over 1998-1999. For the first time a peer instructor joined a faculty/staff team as teaching partner in 12 sections. Peer instructors earned two academic credits for completing "Spring Training", teaching, and completing a one-hour course provided to help them become effective instructors and mentors.