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FROM: Leslie Schiff, Associate Dean, Office of Undergraduate Education

SUBJECT: 2017-18 Freshman Seminar Course Proposal Information and Deadlines

We are pleased to outline below the Freshman Seminar process for 2017-18. Thank you to everyone who participated in our Curricular Contacts Group and offered feedback and helpful ideas to make this process more workable for everyone, and provide better information for our students. As a result of our collective efforts, the process has been significantly streamlined. Please read all of the following information and contact the Office of Undergraduate Education (OUE) at oue@umn.edu if you have any questions.

Freshman Seminar Submission Process

Existing process: Freshman Seminars have historically been proposed and scheduled as topics courses. Specific course numbers (1901-1910W, 1942, 1943W) were identified as Freshman Seminars, and each number corresponded to a different LE and/or WI designation (e.g., 1901=Environment, 1909W=Global Studies and WI, etc.). This numbering system was the mechanism by which Freshman Seminars were identified and tracked. The application process involved the following steps:
● Submit a topic shell in ECAS
● Submit a separate proposal to WorkflowGen form, including instructor information, class days/times/location, syllabus, and LE/WI application if applicable
● Adjust ECAS shell course number if LE/WI is not approved and the course plans to move forward without LE/WI designation
● Submit topic title in ECAS
● Schedule course in CCS

**New process:** Freshman Seminars proposed for the 2017-2018 academic year will be transitioned to regular courses in ECAS, which will significantly streamline the submission process. A Freshman Seminar attribute has been added to ECAS, so all Freshman Seminars will be easily identifiable through that attribute (proposers will be able to select it just like you select whether a course is an honors course), rather than by a specific course number.

Departments will simply enter each Freshman Seminar as a regular course in ECAS, and select the Freshman Seminar attribute. The course review process will not change, but it will be streamlined because all of the relevant information will be contained within ECAS, and routed via normal ECAS protocols. If a Freshman Seminar is proposed for consideration to meet an LE and/or WI requirement, the proposal will automatically route to the appropriate review committee(s). Departments will be able to check on the status of a proposal by viewing its location in ECAS at any time. Decision letters regarding LE/WI status will continue to be sent when review has been completed.

The new Freshman Seminar attribute in ECAS means that these courses will now be searchable in the online course search just like LEs and WI, so students and advisors can easily search for and peruse all Freshman Seminars. The attribute will also enable OUE, colleges, and departments to quickly generate more accurate, consistent, and useful Freshman Seminar data and reports.

**Frequently Asked Questions about the New Process**

**We will need to use more course numbers now since each Freshman Seminar will require its own unique number. How should courses be numbered?**

A. Departments may use any 1xxx course numbers that are available within their departments. Freshman Seminars will now be identified by the Freshman Seminar attribute, and are not required to include the words “Freshman Seminar” in the title.

**New regular courses usually require Campus Curriculum Committee (CCC) review. Will Freshman Seminars have to be reviewed by the CCC when we transition them to regular courses?**

A. No. Freshman seminars are one of a few types of courses exempt from CCC review.

**Regular course proposals in ECAS require a syllabus, but non-LE/WI Freshman Seminars have not previously required a syllabus to be submitted. Is that changing?**

A. No. Freshman Seminars proposed for LE/WI must include a syllabus in the ECAS proposal, but non-LE/WI courses are not required to do so. Many Freshman Seminars have been taught previously, so we recommend including a previous syllabus as a best practice. New non-LE/WI Freshman Seminars are encouraged to include reading lists, weekly topics, or any other available information if a syllabus has not yet been finalized.

**Some information previously requested for Freshman Seminars isn’t automatically collected in ECAS. Do we still have to include that, and where?**

A. Yes, some additional information still needs to be collected to create the *Freshman Seminar Brochure* that gets distributed to incoming freshmen, but we are committed to keeping the Freshman Seminar proposal process streamlined, and confined within a single ECAS proposal...
going forward. Accordingly, please include the following information in the **Editor Comments** section in the ECAS proposal:

- Faculty instructor name
- Home department of the faculty member teaching the seminar
- Day(s) offered
- Time(s) offered
- Campus location (East Bank, West Bank, Saint Paul)
- Three-sentence biography of faculty member teaching the seminar

It is not necessary to label each item, so a typical entry might look like this:

Leslie Schiff  
Microbiology  
TuTh  
11:15am – 12:05pm  
East Bank  
Leslie Schiff is a virologist and professor of microbiology. When she isn’t grading papers or watching one of her son’s swim meets, she enjoys playing with her German shepherd, Gunnar, and debating with colleagues about the extraordinary merits of the University curriculum. Leslie loves working with undergraduates, and enjoys handing out plush viruses when students answer a question particularly brilliantly.

There are a few details which will no longer be collected: section number, building/room location, and the 5-digit registration number. The section number is no longer necessary because each course will have its own number. The building/room locations are subject to change and thus are not useful to include in the printed *Freshman Seminar Brochure*. And the 5-digit registration number will no longer be crucial to helping students identify a specific course because each seminar will have its own number and be searchable using the Freshman Seminar attribute.

**If a Freshman Seminar has been previously approved for LE/WI, will it need to be recertified when we enter it as a regular course?**

A. No. If a course has previously been approved for LE/WI, please note the most recent semester of previous approval in the **Proposal Changes** section in ECAS, and include the current syllabus in the **Syllabus** section. Because Freshman Seminars will now be regular courses, that documentation will stay in ECAS and will no longer require annual approval. Freshman Seminars with LE/WI designation will need to be recertified only every five years.

**Won’t all of these courses clog up the online course catalog and make it confusing to determine which will be available each semester?**

A. OUE will deactivate all Freshman Seminars after each semester, so departments will never need to worry about a course rolling over automatically in the course schedule or showing up erroneously in the online catalog. Departments can easily reactivate Freshman Seminars as needed for subsequent semesters. If a Freshman Seminar is canceled, departments should notify OUE by emailing oue@umn.edu.

**Ad Hoc Funding Process**

As in previous years, OUE will provide some “Ad Hoc” funding to colleges in 2017-18 to support Freshman Seminars. Any college that exceeds its formal collegiate obligation to teach Freshman Seminars is eligible for these special funds. The formal collegiate obligations were established based on allocated faculty positions when the Freshman Seminar program was founded. Ad Hoc funding is
transferred to the college, not to individuals or departments. It is a college commitment to provide seminars and a college decision on how these funds will be used.

After all 2017-18 Freshman Seminars have been proposed in ECAS, OUE will use the new Freshman Seminar attribute to determine how many credits each college has proposed to offer in 2017-18. Available funds will be distributed equitably among colleges, based on the percentage each college offers beyond its formal obligation.

**Here are the collegiate credit obligations for Freshman Seminars:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>FS Credit Obligation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCE</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDES</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEHD</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFANS</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLA</td>
<td>135</td>
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<td>Nursing</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before the end of April 2017, each college will receive a memo indicating the amount of Ad Hoc funding it has been allocated for 2017-18. Those funds will be transferred in Spring 2018 after verification of the number of Freshman Seminars that have been offered.

**Characteristics of Successful Freshman Seminars**

Experience over the past seventeen years has provided strong evidence that the most successful Freshman Seminars have the following characteristics:

- they are taught by faculty who have a genuine interest in engaging with undergraduate students and who are willing to connect with students on issues not directly related to the course materials;
- they explore subjects that are meaningful and accessible to first-year students;
- they are designed to encourage discussion and writing;
- they take place in an in-person classroom setting;
- and they give students real coaching in developing skills that will help them be successful in college (analysis, research, speaking in class, contacting the professor, using the library, writing). These skills are consciously honed and not just implicit in class assignments.

Freshman Seminars are not survey courses and should not strive for “coverage.” They should not have a comprehensive final examination. Enrollment limits should be set no higher than 20, and University policies regarding *Expected Student Academic Work per Credit* and *Instructional Time per Course Credit* must be followed.

**Freshman Seminar Submission Deadlines and Expectations**

Freshman Seminars being proposed for Liberal Education (LE) or Writing Intensive (WI) designation for 2017-18 must be submitted to the Provost level in ECAS by **February 1, 2017**.
All Freshman Seminars being proposed for a **Liberal Education theme** must meet the LE criteria and be approved by the Council on Liberal Education (CLE). The LE criteria can be found at [http://asr.umn.edu/training-and-support/course-proposal-guidelines](http://asr.umn.edu/training-and-support/course-proposal-guidelines)

All Freshman Seminars being proposed for **Writing Intensive** designation must meet the WI criteria and be approved by the Campus Writing Board (CWB). The WI criteria can be found at [http://www.undergrad.umn.edu/cwb/definition.html](http://www.undergrad.umn.edu/cwb/definition.html)

All non LE/WI Freshman Seminars that will be offered for 2017-18 must be submitted to the Provost level in ECAS by **March 1, 2017**. Freshman Seminars submitted by this time (including those submitted earlier for LE/WI) will be included in the *Freshman Seminar Brochure* that will be distributed to all first-year students during summer 2017 Orientation. The 2016-17 *Freshman Seminar Brochure* is available for your reference at [http://www.ofyp.umn.edu/more/first-year-programs/freshman-seminars](http://www.ofyp.umn.edu/more/first-year-programs/freshman-seminars)

Thank you again for your contributions to the success of our first-year students and for providing them with an exceptional first-year experience in the Freshman Seminar courses.