

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Northwest Missouri State University

Project Details			
Title	Retention via Freshman Seminar course redesign	Status	ACTIVE
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	Updated	
Timeline		Reviewed	
	Planned Project Kickoff 08-21-2012	Created	09-12-2012
	Target Completion 09-01-2013	Version	1

1: Project Goal

A: Review and revise the curriculum and structure of the Freshman Seminar Course in order to improve student satisfaction, learning, retention and faculty engagement.

2: Reasons For Project

A: The Freshman Seminar course is a 1 credit hour graduation requirement in the General Education curriculum. All students entering the university with less than 15 hours of college credit are registered for the class in their first semester.

A recent self-study (using the Foundations of Excellence model in consultation with staff from the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education) identified the Freshman Seminar course as an opportunity for improvement. More specifically, three of nine committees called for reviewing Freshman Seminar, including:

- Developing ways to make the curriculum more engaging (Learning Dimension)
- Considering the role the course plays in the overall curriculum (Faculty Dimension)
- Evaluating the number of weeks the course meets (Roles and Purposes)

These recommendations are consistent with concerns expressed in a number of other venues, including a 2005 White Paper from the University's Designated Curriculum Matters committee and data from studies conducted by Marketing Research classes in the Fall of 2009.

The redesign will also allow members of the university community to collaborate to address concerns related to administrative restructuring of the course: in Fall 2013, students will be randomly assigned to sections rather than being assigned according to their declared academic major.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: We anticipate the redesign will influence instruction, registration, and advisement processes as well as processes related to communicating with freshmen about other matters. Currently, the curriculum and structure of the course intersects with numerous organizational areas, including (but not limited to):

- Academic Departments
- New Student Orientations
- Office of Advisement Assistance
- Office of the Registrar
- Residential Life
- Campus Activities

Each of those areas may be influenced by the outcomes of the project.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: A committee of faculty members representing multiple disciplines and ranks will convene during the FA12 term to conduct a needs analysis, discuss learner characteristics, determine course objectives, and make recommendations for activities to achieve those

objectives. The resulting proposal will be vetted through the shared governance process, including review and approval by the Designated Curriculum Matters (DCM) committee, the Curriculum and Degree Requirements (CDR) committee, and Faculty Senate. Concurrent activities will include meetings with academic and staff representatives to develop a new advising structure that complements the change in Freshman Seminar. In addition, the need to develop other venues where student cohorts can connect during their first semester/year will need to be explored and developed. During the SP13 term, additional discussions will take place to ensure affected areas are familiar with the implications of curricular changes

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: To allow for timely selection of instructors for the FA 13 term, curricular changes will need to be approved by January 2013. That will require approval by DCM in late October or early November 2012, approval by CDR in late November or early December 2012 and approval by the Faculty Senate in January 2013. The creation of cohorts will need to be determined by December of 2012 and approved by academic and service departments to allow time to implement the model prior to the end of the spring 2013 trimester.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: Success will be monitored by the degree to which progress adheres to the timeline noted above as well as on-going qualitative assessment of the degree to which members of the campus community are engaging in productive conversation about the Freshman Seminar curriculum and related processes. The first-time freshmen fall to spring retention rate and end of term evaluations will be other indicators of success

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: Project outcomes will be assessed as follows.

- Student satisfaction:
 - Responses to end of term evaluations
 - Responses to NSSE survey
 - Learning:
 - Achievement of outcomes as determined by the Curriculum Committee
 - Retention
 - Percentage of students who attended first Freshman Seminar class and are still in attendance on the census date
 - Fall to fall retention rates
 - Four and six year graduation rates for each cohort
 - Faculty engagement
 - Number of faculty members applying to teach Freshman Seminar
 - Responses to end of term evaluations