

**Freshman Seminar**  
**White Paper No. 1**  
*by Committee on Designated Curriculum Matters*  
*Northwest Missouri State University*

This report is first in a series of four white papers written by the Designated Curriculum Matters subcommittee in the 2004-2005 academic year. This white paper will address Freshman Seminar, a general education requirement.

**KQIs of Freshman Seminar**

1. Students will be presented the material to enable them to learn to learn: Initiate students into the life, structure, and culture of the University.
2. Students will have the information in order to align expectations with what is needed for academic success.
3. Students will develop self-reliance, independence, and a sense of community.

**Mission Statement of Freshman Seminar**

The mission of the Freshman Seminar Program at Northwest Missouri State University is to provide a quality learning environment empowering students to be successful by helping them develop: essential academic skills, information regarding resources available on campus, a plan for success both in and after college, a connection to the co-curricular opportunities with their curricular goals, abilities to understand the moral and ethical values of a diverse society, and socially as they make the transition from high school to college. The student will have the opportunity for close interaction with an assigned instructor and peer advisor in a small group/class setting. The topics to be addressed relate to helping students understand their responsibility for their college experience through developing an appreciation for the value of a general education as they prepare for a technologically evolving and culturally diverse world.

**Valuing Competencies**

The Advisory Group is led by Sue Frucht, Director of Freshman Seminar. In the Spring 2005 trimester, the advisory group went through the seven-step process and evaluated the valuing competencies of Freshman Seminar, as part of the 42-hour general education package launched in Fall 2002. Upon analysis of feedback from faculty and students, it has become evident that the valuing competencies are too broad to implement successfully and efficiently in a course students take their first ten weeks at Northwest. Attempting to complete the competencies has drawn time from the core mission of Freshman Seminar.

Since Fall 2002, the following institutional competencies have been part of Freshman Seminar:

- A. Students will recognize the values (especially moral and ethical) of a diverse society.
- B. Students will identify personal values and the values of others.
- C. Students will analyze choices based on values (especially moral and ethical).
- D. Students will analyze the implications of moral and ethical choices in a diverse society.

As a result, a curriculum proposal is being proposed to the Faculty Senate in April 2005 for approval that states that Freshman Seminar will:

- Remove the parenthetical phrase (especially moral and ethical) from Institutional Competency C.
- Freshman Seminar will meet Institutional Competency B by having students develop a Student Plan which involves identifying personal values and the values of others through an exploration of personal, educational, and career goals.
- Freshman Seminar will meet Institutional Competency C by having students analyze curricular choices that will assist them in achieving their personal goals and by having students examine how personal choices impact their success at college.
- The Freshman Seminar Director will assist the Committee on Designated Curriculum Matters in identifying General Education courses that, taken as a whole package, will meet Institutional Competencies A and D, should they be retained as Institutional Competencies.

### **Other Concerns**

Not only has the valuing component of Freshman Seminar drawn criticism and continual feedback from students and faculty, other issues are of concern to faculty:

- Major-specific sections – although an efficient way to discuss curricular matters with students of the same major, it is questionable that such sections truly meet the spirit of “general education.” However, without such sections, advising of students can become even more “dangerous” when advisors outside of certain majors are advising students on course selection and enrollment.
- Rigor of staffing – staffing Freshman Seminar sections is not an easy task. Departments vary in how sections are assigned to faculty. Many staff also teach Freshman Seminar sections, and although these individuals can be quite knowledgeable about the structure and culture of Northwest, their role is not one of advising and the integrity of major advising, course selection, and

enrollment is questioned. The \$1000 stipend can also lure faculty and staff to teach Freshman Seminar for the “money only.”

- Consistency in advising students is a concern among Freshman Seminar. With many “Deciding Major’ sections and sections taught by staff members, students may not be getting the most accurate advice and guidance in course selection and enrollment.

### **Call to Action**

- Given Proposal 205-FS-01, revise the mission statement with specific attention to the phrasing “moral and ethical values.”
- The DCM subcommittee will review Freshman Seminar to see the effect of the change in valuing competencies.