

## II. A discussion of the options for Willamette University

### Introduction

Willamette University's World Views program has been in place for almost twenty years, and has included five different 4-year cycles: Victorian England, Latin America, Middle East, 5<sup>th</sup> Century Athens, and War and Its Alternatives. For two decades World Views has introduced students to the academic life of the university. Although topics have changed, the course has retained its focus on close reading of texts, writing, discussion, and critical thinking. The common texts also provide a shared experience across the student body. World Views has been an important locus for pedagogical discussions among faculty of different disciplines as well.

In recent years, however, the first-year seminar program has shown signs of wear, suggesting that it needs careful rethinking and revitalizing. We recognize that there is a wide diversity of views among both faculty and students about the effectiveness of the World Views program in meeting its objectives over the last two decades. But one thing is beyond dispute: the current first-year program is finding it increasingly difficult to attract full tenure-track faculty to teach in the program. This fall semester, 30 percent of the World Views instructors will not be tenure-track faculty (the number was about the same last fall as well). And many of the tenure-track faculty who are teaching in the program are deeply unhappy about being compelled to do so. Far too much administrative time is being spent twisting arms and beating the bushes to find people to teach in the program. If faculty are not eager and willing to teach the program then it seems incumbent on the faculty to reshape the program in ways that will make it more attractive to faculty while still fulfilling our core objectives.

The task force believes that a first-year program should meet the following objectives:

- (1) A first-year seminar should inculcate academic behaviors, norms, and expectations. It should not, however, be a remedial "college skills" class. It should instead be a content-based course focused on an academic subject.
- (2) A first-year seminar should focus on close reading, writing, discussion, and critical thinking.
- (3) A first-year seminar should be staffed in such a way that the responsibilities for teaching are shared equitably across the university's departments and divisions. It should not leave some departments feeling as if they are on the outside or cannot contribute meaningfully.
- (4) A first-year seminar should be taught entirely by tenure-track faculty members who can assume advising responsibilities.
- (5) Advising should be an integral part of the first-year seminar. All students should have the opportunity to have their first-year seminar teacher as their adviser.
- (6) Class size should be small. Sixteen should be the maximum, and the task force believes that 12-14 would be preferable.

## Common Syllabus Model

In this model, course instructors share a common syllabus, including shared readings, paper due dates, and lectures. “World Views” obviously fits this model. Only a small number of the comparison colleges (4) are following the common syllabus model.

Major Potential Advantages of the Common Syllabus Model:

1. Common experience for students and faculty, which creates a sense of community and identity.
2. Interdisciplinary exchange of ideas among students and faculty.
3. Since faculty are required to teach outside their disciplines, they structure the course around collaborative inquiry with their students.

Major Potential Disadvantages of the Common Syllabus Model:

1. Reduced faculty and student enthusiasm because of lack of choices.
2. Faculty feel the course competes with their other teaching commitments (which they would be less likely to feel about any 1<sup>st</sup>-year seminar that could contribute to existing departmental obligations).
3. Since faculty are required to teach outside their disciplines, they are less equipped to design an effective course than if they were teaching familiar subject matter.

### **Options: Ways to refine the common syllabus model**

If the faculty choose to continue with the common syllabus model, they could consider several possible ways to address its disadvantages. We are not necessarily endorsing these proposals, only suggesting that they might be worth considering.

Most of the changes proposed below are drawn from the Freshman Studies Seminar at Lawrence College, where they have used a common syllabus for over forty years.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Limits to Text Turn-Over*

There could be a limit on the frequency with which texts can be changed. For example, there could be a stipulation that no more than one text per year can be changed. (At Lawrence, no less than 20% and no more than 30% of the texts are to be changed every year.)

While individual texts would change slightly every year, the overall topic of the course would *not* change. (From what we’ve seen, regular topical rotation is unique to Willamette.) This means that the course topic would have to be fairly broad to allow the flexibility to bring in new texts over time and to ensure the participation of faculty members with diverse interests.

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<sup>1</sup>For extensive web materials on Lawrence College’s Freshman Studies program, including its philosophy, mechanics, and history, see [www.lawrence.edu/academics/frst](http://www.lawrence.edu/academics/frst)

Potential Advantage:

1. Reduces faculty “burn-out” from constant changes to the syllabus, presumably increasing faculty willingness to participate.

Potential Disadvantage:

1. The course may suffer from the lack of a clear overarching topic.

### *Campus-Wide Responsibility for Course Design*

There could be some explicit guarantee that all departments across campus have an equal say in the design of the course.

The most obvious way to do this is to set aside certain percentages of the syllabus for groups of departments. For example, Lawrence’s departments are sorted into divisions (natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, arts, etc.), and each division is responsible for creating a proportionate section of the syllabus (roughly 20% of the readings are determined by each division). Divisions have to be aware of the texts chosen by other divisions and make text choices accordingly.

Other rules could be developed to guarantee campus-wide involvement in decisions about convocations and other matters. The rules for faculty participation in ongoing decision-making would be made explicit and agreed upon from the start.

Potential Advantages:

1. Creates a sense of fairness.
2. Improves faculty cohesion.
3. Expands and enriches the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas.

Potential Disadvantages:

1. Loss of course coherence.
2. Some faculty do not want to be equitably involved in the course.
3. Some faculty do not feel qualified teaching about other areas.

### *Democratic Selection of Texts*

The texts to be used in a given year could be voted on by the faculty, minimally by the faculty who will be teaching the course the next year (Lawrence’s system) and possibly by those who taught it the previous year and other faculty on campus. The rules for voting would be established in writing, and the voting would be structured in order to make the selections tie together in a coherent framework (e.g., stagger the voting, or a committee makes final selections from a larger, voted-on list of possible texts, etc.).

Potential Advantage:

1. Increased sense of faculty ownership of the program. Even if faculty don’t agree with all decisions (and inevitably they won’t), they feel they had a fair shot at influencing them.

Potential Disadvantage:

1. Loss of course coherence.

*Increased Instructor Autonomy*

Instructors could be allowed to put more of themselves into the course. Examples:

- 1) Instructors write their own summer assignments (based on the shared summer text);
- 2) Limit the number of convocations;
- 3) Make paper due dates flexible;
- 4) Encourage instructors to take ownership of the course in other ways.

Potential Advantage:

1. Increased faculty autonomy and satisfaction.

Potential Disadvantage:

1. Loss of common experience.

*Standard Way of Determining and Requiring Staffing*

A public, explicit, equitable formula could be developed for departmental participation in the program. For example, participation could be determined by number of full-time and part-time instructors in a department, or by courses taught by a department in a given year. The formula would also account for special circumstances (sabbatical leaves, possible “credits” for extra participation in the previous year, and so forth).

Once this formula was developed through an open, democratic process (including a faculty vote), participation would be required and non-participation would result in some form of pre-determined “costs” for the department in question. Although the coercive dimension can, theoretically, be separated from the principle of equity, the latter will soon be meaningless without the former.

Potential Advantages:

1. Creates a sense of fairness across campus.
2. Ensures faculty participation.

Potential Disadvantage:

1. Could get nasty, especially when those who have not been participating in “World Views” get integrated into this new course. (Depending on how appealing this newly-revised course is, the situation may not be as dire as it sounds.)

## **Topical Seminar Model**

A common first-year seminar program is the topical seminar model. The precise form the model takes varies a great deal by institution, but the model's basic feature is that individual instructors teach a topical seminar of their choosing. The topics of each first-year seminar vary greatly but the pedagogical goals remain the same – typically close reading, critical thinking, writing, and discussion. Most topical first-year seminar programs publish a set of guidelines and criteria for seminar proposals, and then leave individual faculty wide latitude in ways of meeting course goals within those guidelines.

The chief benefits of the topical seminar model are:

1. Because faculty members have greater autonomy to teach subjects and texts of their own choosing, they are more likely to want to participate in the program. Two corollaries follow:
  - (a) it is easier to staff the program with tenure-track faculty.
  - (b) there is less need for administrative coercion as compared with common text programs.
2. Because faculty members are teaching subjects they are passionate about (and know something about), students can presumably expect a higher quality course.
3. Students are given more choice about the topic they study and are thus more likely to be satisfied with the course.
4. Makes it easier to allow faculty from across the university to contribute since the topic of the seminar is of the faculty member's choosing. For instance, among the varied first-year seminar topics that we found taught by scientists, mathematicians, and computer scientists are “Germs,” “Math and Other Four-Letter Words,” “Pills, Potions, Poisons, and Pathogens: Exploring the Mysterious World of Fungi,” “A Dying Ocean,” “Order From Chaos in Science and Society,” “Physics or Philosophy? The Debate Over Intelligent Design,” “What’s At Stake? When Mathematics and Human Nature Collide,” “Hackers: Innovators or Criminals,” “Earth, Air, Fire, and Water,” “Biomechanics: The Machines of Life,” “Scientific Integrity and Research Methods,” “The Weather: Historical Events, Great Storms,” “Ideas and Innovation,” and so on.

The chief drawback of the topical seminar model is:

1. It dispenses with a common theme and texts. For students, this means that there is a dilution of the shared academic experience that comes with a common theme and texts. For faculty, it takes away a forum (the weekly Friday afternoon meetings, for instance) for intellectual and pedagogical discussions that cross disciplinary boundaries.

### **Ways to Create a Common Experience in a Topical Seminar Program**

If the faculty adopted a topical seminar model, there are several ways of creating some commonality in experience, themes, and/or texts. The first is through a “cluster” program, the second is through a common summer reading, and the third is through faculty workshops.

### *Clusters*

A number of schools with topical first-year seminar programs allow for clusters of seminars that share theme, texts, and sometimes syllabus. At Bryn Mawr, the first-year seminar program was initially organized around 6 or 7 clusters, but the program has proved difficult to sustain, and so next year the university will allow stand-alone seminars as well as clusters. At Trinity College clusters have been optional from the beginning, and there the program (and clusters) seem to have thrived. For instance, Trinity currently has what the program administrator described as a “mega cluster” focused on the theme of Human Rights. At Trinity there are no guidelines about the percentage of texts to be shared in common within a cluster, and the amount and type of common programming vary by cluster. At Bryn Mawr readings within a cluster were almost entirely common readings. The experience of Bryn Mawr and Trinity suggests that a first-year topical program perhaps should allow for but not mandate clusters.

### *Summer Reading*

Some schools compensate for the lack of a common theme and texts by assigning a summer text that all students read and discuss in the opening days. The advantages of such a scheme are that

1. it enables students to “hit the ground running” in the first class session, helping to ensure that their first exposure to Willamette is an academic one, rather than mere ice-breaking activities, alcohol awareness programs, and games designed by residential life;
2. it allows for a common convocation lecture at the beginning of school, much like Willamette currently has.

The disadvantages are that

1. such reading would necessarily be disconnected from the substance of most if not all of the first-year seminars, and
2. would reduce the amount of time the instructor has for the substantive course if the seminar ends, as it currently does, at Thanksgiving, or, if the course extends to the end of the semester, the teaching of the summer reading would effectively be an overload.

An alternative model is to have the individual instructor set the summer assignment (and reading, if applicable) for the course. Trinity College does this, for instance, and the program administrator reports that it works well. The advantage is that the assignment, because it is set by the instructor, will be better integrated into the course and will be evaluated appropriately. Such a model would achieve benefit (a) listed above without the two disadvantages listed above.

### *Faculty Workshops*

Most topical seminars have a modest schedule of faculty workshops focused on the core objectives of the program, for instance, the teaching of writing or the fostering of class discussion. These workshops provide a university-wide forum for discussions of pedagogy.

## Questions to be Confronted if a Topical Model is Adopted

### *Credits*

The task force assumes that a topical seminar model would retain the writing-centered designation that the World Views course currently has, but the faculty will need to think about whether a first-year topical seminar should be allowed to count toward MOI requirements or toward the major. Programs we have looked at have handled this issue in different ways: some give the course a department prefix and allow it to count it toward the major and/or toward a breadth requirement, whereas others give the course a special first-year seminar designation and do not allow the course to count toward any other general education requirement (except a writing requirement).

The chief advantages of allowing the course to count toward a major or toward a breadth requirement are that it will

1. increase faculty willingness and ability to participate in the program.
2. reduce the number of other MOI course offerings that will be needed, which in turn will free up resources for other things, including, potentially, smaller class sizes in the first-year seminar course.

The chief disadvantages of allowing the first-year seminar to count toward breadth requirements and/or the major are that:

1. it raises a question as to whether there is anything distinctive going on in the first-year seminar requirement such that it justifies the label of a first-year seminar. If it's really just another Economics class, then why have a first-year seminar program? An answer to this might be that the course consists of first-year students only, is writing-centered, discussion-oriented, tied to advising, and so on.
2. counting the course toward the major may, at least in some fields, require a shift in the class away from the seminar's objectives of learning to read carefully, write clearly, and participate actively (using largely papers and discussions) toward a more content-driven curriculum (and hence more exams and lectures)
3. piling an additional "mode of inquiry" objective onto what is already a substantial list of first-year seminar objectives may make it difficult for the course to achieve its mode of inquiry objective.
4. if some courses count toward the major or fulfill general education distribution requirements and others do not, then student preference may be skewed toward courses that allow them to double count (much as happens currently when courses fulfill more than one mode of inquiry). This problem could be overcome if every course had to have a mode of inquiry designation.

### *Course Times*

World Views courses are all offered at the same time slot. Under a topical seminar model it would be possible to allow for more flexibility in the times that first-year seminar courses were offered. Most schools do not have all first-year seminars in the same time slot. Courses within a cluster would presumably want to have a common time slot. Maintaining the single time slot for all first-year seminars has the advantage of eliminating time as a reason for taking a course and minimizing time conflicts between the first-year seminar and other courses a student might want to take.

*Who Approves/Solicits the Courses?*

The faculty would need to decide who would be the body that accepts first-year seminar proposals. Would such proposals go through Academic Programs (and Academic Council), or should there be a separate First-year Seminar committee that takes on this responsibility? And who would have the responsibility for soliciting and nurturing such courses? And for issuing guidelines about what are appropriate levels and kinds of work for such courses. A number of successful topical seminar programs—Trinity being one very good example—have a full time First-year Seminar Coordinator, who is charged with much of this responsibility, often assisted by a faculty advisory committee. To be effective such a person would need to have an academic profile and be well respected by faculty.

## History Matters

Institutional memory and tradition play a large part in facilitating and impeding curricular change. In examining the first-year curricula at our selected institutions, and in speaking with faculty and administrators responsible for directing these curricula, we learned that the leading role of an institution's history manifests itself in distinctive ways. A central lesson the task force has drawn from the examples discussed below is that curriculum planning must both acknowledge institutional history and, at the same time, move forward in directions that respect and accommodate recurring concerns from faculty, students, and administrators.

The Freshman Studies curriculum at Lawrence University, extending back to 1945, has maintained and continues to maintain its original focus on intellectual stimulation over the acquisition of "mechanical skills." In addition, the curriculum has retained for the most part its dedication to common texts and common syllabus for all course sections. At the same time, however, the program's administrators have responded pragmatically to concerns about faculty workload, among other things. In the early years of the program, this resulted in trimming down the program's initially ambitious requirements of seven hours per week in the classroom, three of which were a lab session devoted to participation in artistic activities. More recently, issues of faculty buy-in have been addressed through the implementation of democratic processes in the selection of texts for the program. Finally, Lawrence University has made its Freshman Studies the centerpiece of the curriculum for so many years that these courses are considered a major point in hiring, mentoring, and tenuring faculty. Stated more explicitly, teaching Freshman Studies is part of every professor's contract, and an interviewee's interest in and aptitude for such an assignment figures centrally in hiring decisions (source: telephone interview with Peter Peregrine, Freshman Studies Director and Associate Professor of Anthropology).

Wooster College has had a required first-year seminar since the 1970s. Changes to the format and organization of the seminar have been more dramatic than those at Lawrence. From the mid-1980s, Wooster's seminars were organized around a common theme and common texts on a three-year cycle. When faculty became discouraged with maintaining momentum through the cycle, the college switched to an annual change of theme and texts. Dissatisfaction erupted. The current format, instituted in 1996, allows for topical seminars proposed by individual faculty members. Faculty participate according to a quota system: for every four faculty, a department supplies one member for the first-year seminar. Student response to the topical format has been positive; they report being excited by the topics. Faculty seem pleased with the current arrangement, with one caveat: some miss the common experience of the previous format. The college has responded in two ways: first, by incorporating a fall forum series in which faculty share in readings, sessions, showings and trips; and second, by adding a common summer reading which is the subject of the opening convocation.

In sum, Lawrence University and Wooster College constitute extremes in the history of their first-year programs: while Lawrence has maintained a relatively stable content and implementation, Wooster's program has undergone cataclysmic change. Two common

points in their history nevertheless bear emphasis here: first, the flexibility demonstrated by both institutions in supporting the changing needs of faculty and the curriculum; and second, the careful consideration involved in recruiting faculty to teach in the program. Lawrence builds recruiting in to its hiring procedure; Wooster has devised a system that divides teaching responsibilities equitably across departments.

At Willamette, we must consider these aspects of our history and tradition: first, the goals of the curriculum as they were initially formulated; second, the subsequent history of the World Views curriculum (20 years at the end of the current rotation); third, the staffing of the program (problematic at present); and fourth, clearly defined institutional expectations and rewards for participation in the program.

World Views was instituted at Willamette in 1987. Faculty hoped to accomplish two primary goals with the new program: first, to remove the negative precedent of having Greek rush be the dominant experience of Opening Days; second, to establish a positive precedent of introducing students to the academic life of the college by immediately engaging them in seminar-style discussion and writing. Reinventing the topic every four years would ensure that the seminar remained timely and fresh. From the outset, the curriculum was intended to be faculty owned rather than imposed by administrators. While participation from faculty across the disciplines was both expected and encouraged, no formula or formal system mandated a particular level of involvement for individuals or departments.

World Views thrived through its first two cycles: Victorian England and Latin America. By the end of the second cycle, however, faculty recruitment had become a problem, and the Dean's office had to exert more pressure to adequately staff the course. Increasingly, World Views has come to rely on adjunct faculty. While during the 1990s the Dean's office expected to supply adjuncts for 2 or 3 sections, especially at the end of a cycle, that number has now grown to 10 sections taught by adjuncts. And but for arm twisting by the Dean's office, the numbers of tenure-track faculty teaching in the program would be even lower.

A recent review of World Views undertaken by Academic Council in 2000-2001 resulted in a change from the world views concept to a model in which the topic need not be constrained by a circumscribed time and place. (The course has since reverted to its old title, however.) Additionally, the Council urged that a new "flexible" unit be added to the curriculum to enable WV faculty to design at least part of the course themselves and to play to their own disciplinary strengths. Overall attitudes to World Views have changed little, however, and faculty recruitment is, if anything, a more serious problem for the program.

It is the consensus of this task force that staffing World Views is among the most crucial issues facing the program at this time. Our institutional history tells us that the changes adopted by the faculty in the most recent review of the program failed to remedy the problem of faculty commitment to and ownership of our first-year program. Thus, any reexamination of Willamette's first-year program must (1) rethink and reorganize the program so as to ensure the sort of faculty commitment that World Views had in its early years, and (2) devise a system that clearly defines an equitable structure of expectations and rewards for tenured and tenure-track faculty members' participation in the program.

## **Administering a first-year program**

### **Who administers the first-year program?**

Clearly, effective and efficient administrative support for the program is fundamental in establishing, maintaining, and, if necessary, revising a first-year program. Perhaps not surprisingly, program directors report consistently that programs require someone whom the faculty respects as an academic peer and who has the authority and resources to make the program run smoothly.

Our phone interviews provided us with information about several administrative models: one individual or one committee, or a combination of the following individuals or committees, administers the first-year program, but one setup seems to work remarkably better than others. Most of the administrative positions have a set term (or a term that corresponds with the term of their post as Dean or Provost). Each of these individuals/committees works closely with an administrative assistant or team of assistants.

- a) Dean of Faculty or Associate Dean or Associate/Vice Provost, part of whose charge is the first-year program
- b) Dean of First-Year Program, whose sole charge is the first-year program
- c) Program Director, whose sole charge is the first-year program (who may have faculty status, but who might not be teaching)
- d) Program Director (faculty member who receives course release in order to administer the program)
- e) University Committee (relatively large committee [8 members] including 4-5 faculty members—likely a faculty member as chair—and possibly student life representative, admissions representative, administrator with direct link to program (program director and/or associate dean/dean)
- f) Faculty committee (smaller group [3], each receives a course release)
- g) Faculty member-Writing Center Director team (each receives one course release)

### **Administrative Duties**

Program administrators have many of the same responsibilities, but not necessarily all of them, and these responsibilities are usually shared by the program director(s), faculty committees, the Registrar, administrative assistants, and others.

- a) Advising and its coordination
- b) Program assessment
  - a. Feedback
  - b. Focus-group interviews with students and faculty
  - c. Reviews/evaluations
    - i. Annual
    - ii. After a set term—every four years
  - d. Extra tasks (monitor grade equity)
- c) Clearing house that insures that first-year students are receiving all their information
- d) Common readings

- a. Determine whether common readings will be included in program (if only for summer reading).
- b. Facilitate the selection of common readings
- e) Faculty involvement (often done with department chairs)
  - a. Monitor how often faculty members take part
  - b. Get faculty on board. How?
    - i. By quota (a department of four must provide one faculty member each year; a dept. of six would provide three every two years)
    - ii. Reward (does not preclude that a quota system will also reward faculty)
      - 1. Stipends—either for course or for summer preparation
      - 2. Extra credit (considered 1.5 courses in your load)
    - iii. Bargain, arm-twist, threaten
    - iv. No encouragement needed
      - 1. Happy to take part
      - 2. General understanding that must take part
      - 3. Contractual understanding that must take part
- f) Faculty sessions
  - a. Retreats or luncheons
  - b. Reviews at end of semester
  - c. Training sessions/workshops to prepare the program and to review topics like the following ones:
    - i. Interaction with students
    - ii. Using film in the class
    - iii. How to use Blackboard discussion tools
    - iv. Incorporating writing assignments
    - v. Employing particular texts
- g) Funding, fund raising, budget administration
- h) Peer mentors for program
  - a. Review applications for mentors
  - b. Select mentors
  - c. Determine responsibilities of mentors
- i) Orientation (i.e., Opening Days) meetings and convocation
- j) Proposals for new courses
  - a. Considered by first-year program director/committee or dean/provost
  - b. Considered by regular curricular/program committee
    - i. In either case, courses generally are broad with focus on goals of writing, critical thinking, close reading, and discussion rather than on close examination of content
    - ii. Course proposals must explain how the course will meet these fundamental goals
- k) Proposals for each year's curriculum
  - a. In the common syllabus model, such as Lawrence's, determine which text(s) will change for that year
  - b. In the topical model, determine which courses will be offered as FYE courses
- l) Publicize/celebrate the program

- a. Among the faculty
  - b. Among the rest of the university
  - c. On the web and with thoughtful and attractive brochure materials for, most importantly, prospective students and their parents
- m) Selection of courses by students.
- a. Try to achieve some balance (gender, diversity) in the classes
  - b. Try to give the largest number of students their highest ranked choices (applies to topical)
    - i. Most places ask students to rank their top 6 or so choices
    - ii. One place has a ranking system and a point-based wagering system, which helps to break ties if, say, two students want the last spot in a class
      - 1. Registrar's Office handles it
      - 2. Director/Committee handles it
      - 3. Registrar's Office and the Director/Committee work together
- n) Coordinate residential component, if applicable

## Residential Components of First-Year Seminars

A number of the colleges we examined have a residential component to their first-year seminars. These options ranged from voluntary participation in the residential component of a voluntary first-year seminar to mandatory participation in a mandatory first-year seminar. Below, we discuss each option with an example from one of our comparison schools.

At Bucknell, the first-year seminar is optional and has a residential component that is also optional, up to a point. Students can choose seminar *courses* that have a required residence, but they can also choose seminar courses that are not linked to any residence. Faculty hold seminars for the former type (in addition to regular class hours) in the evening (7-9 PM) at the appropriate residence hall. The majority of the seminars are not tied to a residence hall.

At Holy Cross, the residential component is required of those students who choose to participate in the first-year seminar; all students in the seminar reside in the same hall, which holds 160 students (less than a quarter of the incoming class). The seminar faculty are expected to participate regularly in the co-curricular activities related to the seminar.

Hobart and William Smith Colleges have a required first-year seminar, and students are assigned to residence halls according to their choice of seminar topic. It does not appear that faculty participate in the residential component. At Gettysburg, on the other hand, the College has made efforts to bring teaching in to the residence halls, with at least some success.

Some schools, such as Sewanee and Trinity, have peer mentors who aid with the residential component (among other things). The mentors reside in the dorm and thus are available to continue discussions with seminar students outside the classroom. In some programs, each seminar is linked to a specific dorm (but not hall). With this model, peer mentors bridge the gap between the classroom and the dorm room, freeing faculty for other things. They can also keep an eye on the new freshmen to help catch potential problems early on, and they have a specific faculty member to go to when they see such problems developing. In nearly all cases, peer mentors are compensated in some way, with money, course credit, or both.

Students seemed to appreciate and enjoy these residential experiences; it appears that the residential components were effective in contributing to our avowed seminar goal of creating *esprit de corps* among the freshman class. As the freshmen will all be housed on campus anyway, it requires but a small investment in time and energy to coordinate their dorm assignments by seminar section, and the potential payoff is significant. This would require coordination between residence life and the program administrator(s). It would also allow the University to draw on the creativity of our residence life staff and provide the residence life staff an opportunity to contribute to the academic lives of our students. At the same time, it would encourage a greater academic thrust in the residential life of students. If we do implement a residential component to our first-year seminar, we should also be aware that at the institutions we studied, few faculty seemed to want to participate directly in a residential component.