

# First-Year Engagement Plan Submission Form

## University Park

**Submission Date:** January 25, 2009  
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Background. The First-Year Seminar legislation passed by the University Faculty Senate on April 29, 2008, requires that each University Park college and DUS submit a First-Year Engagement plan. The complete Senate legislation is available online at <http://senate.psu.edu/agenda/2007-2008/apr29-08agn/appb.pdf>; parts of the legislation are reproduced in this form.

As your unit's contact, please briefly provide the information requested below. A lengthy response is not needed if the information can be provided by checking a box, or supplying a sentence or two or a paragraph. However, if your unit's First-Year Engagement plan does not fit the options in the form below, please contact Yvonne Gaudelius (Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education and co-chair, FYE Committee, [ymg100@psu.edu](mailto:ymg100@psu.edu)) for alternative instructions. Thank you in advance for your participation in this process.

**1. First-Year Seminar characteristics.** University Park colleges are required to provide at least one credit of first-year seminar. Does your first-year seminar meet the following criteria? **All criteria below (a-e) must be met for the plan to fulfill the legislation.**

**Enter an X in front of each criterion below (a-e) that is followed by your College/Unit.**

**NA** a. taught by tenure-line or other regular, full-time faculty members (not staff or graduate students\*) (\*the college dean may grant reasonable exceptions, such as for professional practitioners who teach annually but whose appointments are not full-time)

If the college dean plans to grant an exception, please provide explanation in space below.  
**(Please limit your answer to 500 words or less.)**

**NA** b. taught in the student's college of enrollment (in other words, you will provide a FYS for all incoming students in your college)

**NA** c. taught in sections of not more than 25 students

**NA** d. academic in content, exemplifying the full weightiness and expectations of University-level coursework (ideally satisfying General Education or other College or Major requirements, though this is not essential)

**NA** e. explicitly address the FYE goals and objectives, which are listed here:

## Goals

- Goal 1: to engage students in learning and orient them to the scholarly community from the outset of their undergraduate studies in a way that will bridge to later experiences in their chosen majors, and
- Goal 2: to facilitate students' adjustment to the high expectations, demanding workload, increased liberties, and other aspects of the transition to college life

## Objectives

- Objective 1: to introduce students to University study
- Objective 2: to introduce students to Penn State as an academic community, including fields of study and areas of interest available to students
- Objective 3: to acquaint students with the learning tools and resources available at Penn State
- Objective 4: to provide an opportunity for students to develop relationships with full-time faculty and other students in an academic area of interest to them
- Objective 5: to introduce students to their responsibilities as part of the University community.

**2. Credit requirements.** How many credits does your required first-year seminar provide? Please answer 1 Credit, 2 Credits, 3 Credits, or Other (For example, different sections provide 1, 2, or 3 credits).

Enter an X    NA     1 Credit     2 Credits     3 Credits     Other

If you answered "Other" in Question Number 2 above, please provide explanation below.  
**(Please limit your answer to 500 words or less.)**

**3. Supplemental programming.** [This question must be answered unless your unit will require all students to take a 3-credit first-year seminar. If your unit will require all students to take a 3-credit first-year seminar, this question is optional, though responding is encouraged because supplemental programming will help to make your unit's overall first-year experience richer.]

Identify and briefly describe the additional components (other than the small-class experience) that you plan to offer, such as other courses, special advising programs, intensive orientation experiences, special programs offered by Student Affairs, etc., to meet the goals and objectives of the First-Year Engagement Plan:

**(Please limit your answer to 500 words or less.)**

The Division of Undergraduate Studies is responsible for developing and delivering the First-Year Testing, Consulting, and Advising Program (FTCAP), in collaboration with the colleges. Via FTCAP, all University Park students, including students enrolled in the Division of Undergraduate Studies (DUS), are involved in activities that address the five objectives identified in the Senate

legislation. Building on the FTCAP curriculum, multiple programs and activities are offered specifically for DUS students to supplement their involvement in appropriate college-based first-year seminars. First-Year Engagement objectives are the focus of these initiatives.

The listing for each engagement objective below first identifies activities provided for all students via FTCAP. The specific supplemental activities provided for DUS students follow *in italics*.

**Objective 1. Introduce students to University study.** “Understanding a Penn State Degree” interactive online learning module (<http://www.psu.edu/ftcap/up/advising/preps.htm>) focuses on the goals of higher education and the components of a Penn State degree.

*DUS: Through interactions with academic advisers and the “DUS Navigator” ([www.psu.edu/dus/navigator/](http://www.psu.edu/dus/navigator/)), an online educational program, students are encouraged to reflect on their academic experiences (e.g., study skills, changing expectations, interest in subject matter, needed review work).*

**Objective 2. Introduce students to Penn State as an academic community, including fields of study and areas of interest available to students.** “Exploring Your Choices” interactive module facilitates understanding of General Education and its potential for exploring various disciplines. The academic community concept is a focus of the FTCAP Advising Day curriculum.

*DUS: “DUS Navigator” enables students’ exploration of majors, requirements, careers, and components of decisions about these areas. DUS students are encouraged to use the Navigator to explore and confirm their intended academic directions.*

**Objective 3. Acquaint students with the learning tools and resources available at Penn State.** During the Advising Day, students receive the “Educational Planner” which identifies multiple learning resources (e.g., Advising @ PSU, eLion, Research Opportunities, and ANGEL). Several interactive activities focus on enabling students to use these resources.

*DUS: DUS Advisers regularly refer students to the Navigator, DUS Web site, Advising @ PSU, relevant college and other academic offices, and Web sites.*

**Objective 4. Provide an opportunity for students to develop relationships with full-time faculty and other students in an academic area of interest to them.** FTCAP student activities include meeting in pairs and small groups with other new first-year students and upper class students serving as group facilitators.

*DUS: DUS students (including those residing in Discover House) are encouraged to meet with full-time faculty as part of their exploration process. A significant component of Discover House activity includes referring students to full-time faculty and bringing full-time faculty to the House as part of programming efforts.*

**Objective 5. Introduce students to their responsibilities as part of the University community.** “Responsibility” is a message that pervades FTCAP. “Taking Responsibility” video, part of the online learning module, introduces the message in terms of the student’s role for academic decisions. “Academic Planning Group” discussion focuses on changing roles for students (and parents) as they come to campus. “Student-to-Student” session expands the concept of responsibility to other decisions students face when first transitioning away from home and into the academic community.

*DUS: Advisers, all DUS resources (e.g., Navigator, Web site, etc.), and the initial Welcome Week Dean’s Meeting communicate the responsibility students have to make educated decisions.*

**4. How will you accommodate DUS students?** You have been provided with data showing a rolling average number of students who have moved from DUS into your academic unit in recent years; briefly indicate how you will accommodate this approximate number. **(Please limit your answer to 500 words or less.)**

NA

**5. Assessment plan.** How will you assess the extent to which the First-Year Engagement goals and objectives are met? **(Please limit your answer to 500 words or less.)**

Assessment of the extent to which first-year engagement goals and objectives are met for DUS students begins in FTCAP (stage 1 assessment), with follow-up measurement strategies implemented at appropriate points during the DUS enrollment experience (stage 2 assessment).

Stage 1 Assessment (FTCAP experience).

Monitoring the extent to which student learning outcomes are achieved in FTCAP is an ongoing, high priority for our staff. Multiple types of information are gathered to enable this assessment, including:

- Level of involvement in the “FTCAP classroom” measured through clicker use
- Extent to which students identify a priority academic or social goal for their first semester as indicated in an online survey.
- Identification by students of the most important concept learned during the FTCAP Advising Day as indicated in an online survey.

Beginning in 2007 students were invited to join an ANGEL group following their participation in the FTCAP Advising Day. Through the ANGEL group students were then able to complete the FTCAP assessment survey. Although acceptable response rates were achieved in 2007 (18%) and 2008 (21%), we plan to implement improved procedures for gaining student feedback about what they accomplished via FTCAP.

Stage 2 Assessment (DUS enrollment period).

Unlike classroom settings, embedded assessments are not as naturally incorporated within the DUS academic advising setting. Nevertheless, DUS staff members have implemented multiple approaches to assessing student progress in achieving learning outcomes associated with identifying majors of interest and in pursuing these majors successfully. An important qualitative assessment of student progress is implemented via the Academic Review procedure which takes place at the beginning of each semester. The Academic Review is an eLion application enabling the adviser to assess the student’s academic goal in terms of allowable enrollment time in DUS, course grades and cumulative grade average, and planned course schedule for the coming semester. This review is sent directly to the student, facilitating important interaction between the adviser and the student.

Surveys, interviews, and adviser observations (guided by rubrics) have been employed by teams of advisers. Also, we monitor the annual number of advising contacts provided for DUS students. In the next year, we may also review empirical data from the “Where are they now” project to assess stability of academic choice, along with selected results from the NSSE and Penn State Student Satisfaction projects to gain additional information about students’ perceptions of their progress with respect to the engagement outcomes.