

Request for First-Year Seminar Proposals

Overview

Since 2005, the [First-Year Seminar \(FSEM\) program](#) has been a showcase feature of undergraduate education at DU. A small and rigorous four-credit course, FSEM introduces students to the academic values and norms of the University community. In addition to teaching the seminar in the fall, FSEM faculty meet with students throughout the year to provide academic advising, mentoring, and support. Up to ninety FSEMs are offered each autumn on topics reflecting a wide array of faculty intellectual passions.

FSEM Student Learning Outcome: Students who complete FSEM will be able to engage in critical inquiry in the examination of concepts, texts, or artifacts; effectively communicate the results of such inquiry; and access University resources.

Program Features:

A key priority of the First-Year Seminar program is to introduce students to the value and excitement of pursuing intellectual questions, and the rewards that come from developing deeper levels of expertise. Faculty cultivate this and other program priorities through four features:

- 1) **Intellectual Community.** FSEM faculty emphasize intellectual community and academic discourse as key elements of college life. Students demonstrate active membership in our academic community through critical reading, discussion, research, and writing. As well, students may participate in a variety of activities selected by faculty (e.g., field trips, community projects, laboratory or research experiences, on/off-campus lectures, films, concerts, and performances).
- 2) **High Expectations.** Seminars introduce students to university-level academic expectations, including that the quantity and quality of college-level work is significantly more demanding than high school; that students must allocate sufficient time outside of class to independent and focused learning; and that students are responsible for mastering course material. FSEM students feel challenged and know they must work hard to meet faculty expectations.
- 3) **Active Learning Environment.** FSEM faculty create an active learning environment where writing, performance, collaboration, laboratory work, and other experiential activities structure the seminar. Activities vary according to faculty preference and seminar emphases. Some seminars might require several short papers, ask students collaborate on a class project, or make use of a research log. Others might assign creative projects, performances, debates, or oral presentations.
- 4) **Strong Mentoring Relationships.** FSEM faculty build relationships that extend beyond the transactional aspects of academic planning. Across a full year of mentoring, faculty help students navigate University resources and access various networks of support. Faculty guide students to make thoughtful course selections, while framing the common curriculum as an entrée to formative, integrated, and deep learning experiences. Students turn to FSEM faculty with all manner of questions; faculty provide resources that empower students to find the answers they seek.

Faculty Expectations

1. **Training.** Instructors are required to attend FSEM faculty training events. New instructors are required to attend three training sessions, and returning FSEM faculty are required to attend one, as designated below:
 - a. **New faculty orientation:** Friday, April 12 from 1:00–3:00
 - b. **All FSEM faculty info session:** Wednesday, August 28th from 9:00–1:00 pm
 - c. **Advising training:** Thursday, August 29th from 8:00–12:00 pm
2. **Discoveries Week.** Assisted by a student orientation leader, FSEM faculty facilitate classroom sessions with students during [Discoveries Week](#). Faculty attend each session at its scheduled time and location (September 4–5, 2024) and organize a group “Destinations” trip for students on Friday, September 6th. The intellectual and social interactions that occur during Discoveries orientation and the Destinations trip are critical to the success of FSEM courses; thus, full faculty participation is mandatory.

While Discoveries is aimed at helping students transition to DU, it can be overwhelming for some students. FSEM faculty should include information to support students’ transition to university life throughout the fall quarter, particularly during the first few weeks.

3. **Advising.** In partnership with staff academic advisors, FSEM faculty provide academic guidance and advising throughout the first year. Faculty may meet with students individually to prepare for registration during Advising Week in the fall, winter, and spring quarters. Students begin fall registration in mid-July. Over summer break, FSEM faculty send welcome letters, review student schedules, and respond to student questions.
4. **Mentoring.** FSEM faculty serve as trusted mentors, assisting students in exploring new fields of study, supporting development of effective intellectual habits, and generally serving as an on-campus student advocate. FSEM faculty regularly refer students to on-campus resources; document mentoring/advising meetings in the Inspire advising platform; flag students needing academic support; and report students in crisis to [Student Outreach and Support](#).
5. **Availability.** Faculty proposing First-Year Seminars should plan to be on campus all three quarters of the academic year. Faculty new to the university should have completed *one full academic year* on campus before teaching in this program. Faculty on leave during any academic quarter *or* Discoveries Orientation in the 2024–2025 school year are not eligible to teach FSEM.
6. **Assessment.** Faculty contribute to individual and program-wide assessment activities, including course/instructor evaluations, an orientation survey, and a teaching reflection.

Compensation & Budget

Compensation

Faculty are eligible for several types of additional compensation for their work in the FSEM program.

The 2024–2025 budget is currently under review by the DU Budget and Planning Office. Updated compensation information will be shared with the FSEM faculty as soon as it becomes available to the UAP office.

Available Budgets

FSEM faculty should schedule events or outings that support FSEM goals. To that end, each instructor may draw from three funding sources. We intend to preserve all budget items; however, all funds are subject to University budget guidelines for 2024–2025.

Fund	Description
Destinations & Activities	\$25 per student for the year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty may use these funds to support their Destinations trip and/or other activities throughout the year. FSEM offers several free activities on-campus during Destinations Friday.
Course Materials	\$250 for new FSEM faculty, \$100 for returning FSEM faculty. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Available by request beginning July 1. Materials are for the current fall FSEM quarter only

Funds for NEW faculty (for a class of 19 students)			
Activities/Destinations	\$25	per person	\$500.00
Materials			\$250.00
		Total	\$750.00

Funds for RETURNING faculty (for a class of 19 students)			
Activities/ Destinations	\$25	per person	\$500.00
Materials			\$100.00*
		Total	\$600.00

Materials 2024 Update: Due to budget constraints, returning faculty members will be granted materials funding up to \$100 by request only. Materials purchases made prior to obtaining approval may not be reimbursed or covered by Academic Programs.

First-Year Faculty Seminar Committee

Seminars are selected and overseen by members of the FSEM Faculty Committee, which is comprised of elected representatives from the colleges of Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences; Natural Sciences; Mathematics; and the Writing Program. FSEM Faculty Committee members are available to address any questions.

2024–2025 First-Year Seminar Committee:

Chair, Heather Martin, (heather.martin@du.edu)

Richard Colby (richard.colby@du.edu)

Frederique Chevillot (chevillot.frederique@du.edu)

Helen Hazen (helen.hazen@du.edu)

Sarah Huff (sarah.huff@du.edu)

Susan Schulten (susan.schulten@du.edu)

Jing Sun (jing.sun@du.edu)

Paul Sutton (paul.sutton@du.edu)

Ex-officio, Jennifer Karas (jennifer.karas@du.edu)

Ex-officio, Monica Kosanovich (monica.kosanovich@du.edu)

Application Process

We invite proposals from appointed faculty across the University, provided that the proposed courses have a liberal arts/science orientation. *All seminars must be taught on-load.*

Proposal Guidelines

A complete proposal consists of the following:

1. **Completed course survey**

a. Course description (200 words)

- Describe the course for a first-year student audience.

b. Tentative Destinations trip agenda

- Develop a “Destinations” trip plan for Friday, September 6, between 9am and 3pm. Several on campus activity options will be available to choose from. Organized group trips can be arranged by request to the UAP office. Transportation to and from locations around metro Denver must be on RTD busses or light rail.

c. Tentative day and time of FSEM course in the Fall Quarter

All scheduling should be coordinated through faculty *home department* to avoid conflicts with departmental courses. The faculty home department is responsible for ensuring courses are distributed evenly across available course days and times. Please consider offering First-Year Seminar at a non-prime time (i.e., before 10 am or after 4 pm) to provide a variety of options for students.

2. **Course proposal, maximum two single-spaced pages.** Describe the course, with attention to how it addresses each FSEM feature outlined on page 1.

3. **Proposed syllabus, including reading list and assignments.** Provide a detailed syllabus to give the committee a sense of how the course will proceed week-by-week, including what students will be doing in class. Please include the FSEM student learning outcome on the syllabus and offer examples of course assignments and activities designed to meet it.

Submission

All application materials (course proposal, syllabus, reading list, assignments) should be combined into one Word or PDF document. **All faculty (including returning instructors) should [submit the proposal](#) by Friday, January 12, 2024.** Faculty will be notified by February 15. Please direct any questions to Academic Programs staff at firstsem@du.edu.