



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 eighty FSEMs are offered each autumn on topics that reflect a wide array of faculty intellectual passions.

FSEM Student Learning Outcomes: 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 the following 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 and participating in class activities. 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. New instructors are required to attend three training sessions, and returning **FSEM faculty are required to attend the faculty info session and the advising if you are advising your FSEM class**, as designated below:



- a. **New faculty orientation:** Friday, April 11 from 1:00–3:00
 - b. **All FSEM faculty info session:** Wednesday, August 27th from 9:00–1:00 pm
 - c. **Advising training:** Thursday, August 28th from 8:30–12:00 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 2nd and 3rd, 2026) and organize an off-campus or select and on-campus “Destinations” trip for students on Friday, September 4th. The intellectual and social interactions that occur during Discoveries Week and the Destinations trip are critical to the success of FSEM courses; thus, full faculty participation is mandatory. If an emergency occurs and you are unable to attend Discoveries Week, please reach out to the Faculty Director of FSEM & ASEM, Rachael.Liberman@du.edu, to begin planning a faculty replacement for that week. While Discoveries Orientation 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 the *Advising Period* in the fall, winter, and spring quarters (“opting-in” to the full year of advising) OR they can choose to partner with the Office of Academic Advising during the winter and spring quarters (“opting-out” of winter and spring advising). Faculty will be asked to identify/select their method of advising during the all-FSEM faculty training in August. 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](#). FSEM faculty are also supported by their 4D Peer Mentors, and will have the option to engage with them in three different levels of partnership: Standard, Enhanced, or Advanced.
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 2025–2026 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

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

The 2026–2027 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 2025–2026.

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, 2026Materials 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			<u>\$250.00</u>
Total			\$750.00

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

Materials 2026 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 divisions of Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences; Natural Sciences; Mathematics; and the Writing Program. Members of the FSEM Faculty Committee are available to speak with you should you have any questions.

2025–2026 First-Year Seminar Committee:

Chair, Rachael Liberman (rachael.liberman@du.edu)

Susan Walter (Susan.Walter@du.edu)

Michael Greenberger (Michael.Greenberger@du.edu)

Christy Rossi (Christy.Rossi@du.edu)

Roddy MacInnes (roddy.macinnes@du.edu)

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

Application Process

We invite proposals from appointed faculty across the University, provided that the proposed courses have a liberal arts/science orientation. Please click [here](#) to review our AY2526 offerings for guidance and examples of accepted



courses. *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 the Friday Discoveries Week between the hours of 9am–3pm. Organized group trips can be arranged on request. *Note that charter buses are not available for 2026 Destinations.*
 - c. Tentative day and time of course**

All scheduling should be coordinated through your *home department* to avoid conflicts with departmental courses. Please note that your home academic department is charged with ensuring courses are distributed evenly across available course days and times, so please consider offering your 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 16, 2026 using this [Qualtrics link](#).** Faculty will be notified by February 1. Please direct any questions to the Faculty Director of FSEM & ASEM, Rachael.Liberman@du.edu

