

2017-18

# First-Year Seminar Manual



Office of Student Success  
Wichita State University

# Introduction

First-Year Seminar is a unique, three-credit hour course designed specifically for new students and part of our General Education program. Seminar topics cover a broad range of issues and will include elements that engage students in our community of learners and teach successful student and life skills.

## History of First-Year Seminar at WSU

*Taken from the General Education Committee Review of Student Learning Outcomes, AY 2016-2017*

The proposal to create a required FYS for all incoming freshmen at WSU, originated in the General Education committee in 2014-15, based on the premise that such an offering would promote retention and student success. The idea was a modification to the WSU 101 courses which had not been as well received as had been hoped. The new proposal was to offer courses with specific disciplinary (or interdisciplinary) content combined with student success content. The proposal was presented to the Faculty Senate in November 2015, and was accepted as a pilot project in December 2015, to be implemented in the fall of 2016.

Faculty were recruited and curricula were approved by the Gen Ed committee in spring 2016, and 11 courses were offered for fall 2016. Although the Senate only approved courses for the fall semester, several instructors were asked to offer their courses a second time in the spring 2017 semester in order to gather more data to present to the Faculty Senate for a final decision regarding FYS in the fall 2017. This fall, full data from 2016-17 will be presented to Senate as well as recommendations regarding whether FYS should become a permanent part of the curriculum or not starting in 2018-19. Approval in the fall 2017 would allow all departments that want to offer FYS courses to be able to complete fall 2018 schedule building by the Jan/Feb 2018 deadline.

## Understanding first-year students

To begin understanding first-year students, we must first break it down to their most basic level of needs. We use Maslow's hierarchy of needs to best demonstrate this below. In order for students to be successful they need to have the lower levels met, so helping to get students connected to resources will be crucial to their success.

Lowest Level: *Food, water, sleep*

Second Level: *Security of Body, employment resources, family, health, property*

Third Level: *friendship, family, sexual intimacy*

Fourth Level: *Self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect for and by others*

Top Level: *Creativity, morality, spontaneity, problem solving*



Think about what your concerns were going into your first year of college. What were you nervous or confused about? Students are worried about where they are going to eat, who they will eat with, how they will pay for their meal, where will they be living, who will be their friends, where do they park, and the list goes on. Other concerns new students have can relate to choosing a major or career path, finding a job, getting involved, etc.

For the most part, students entering college today are born after 1998. To help gain an understanding of these student's world view we will use the [Beloit Mindset List](#). Since these students have been alive:

- Bluetooth has always been keeping us wireless and synchronized.
- X-rays have always been digital allowing them to be read immediately.
- NFL coaches have always had the opportunity to throw a red flag and question the ref.
- Robots have always been surgical partners in the O.R.
- They have never seen billboard ads for cigarettes.
- Airline tickets have always been purchased online.
- Snowboarding has always been an Olympic sport.
- A Bush and a Clinton have always been campaigning for something big.
- Books have always been read to you on audible.com.
- Citizens have always been able to register to vote when they get their driver's license.
- They disagree with their parents as to which was the "first" Star Wars episode.
- "Nanny cams" have always been available to check up on the babysitter.
- They have never had to watch or listen to programs at a scheduled time.
- The United States has always been at war.
- The Sandy Hook tragedy is their Columbine.

**Transition** is defined by Goodman et al. (2006) "any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles." We see student's entire first year as a transition to college and the First-Year Seminar courses are designed to assist them in this process. Within their first year, students should have had the opportunity to experience the following:

- Gain perspective and sense of purpose between the demands and opportunities of college life
- Develop cognitive, behavioral, and communication skills to assimilate to campus
- Opportunities for interaction with faculty
- Foster development of a peer group, creating an atmosphere of comfortableness and reduced anxiety
- Acclimate students to the facilities, services, and members of the campus community

The term "first-year experience," as advocated by the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition at the University of South Carolina, describes a comprehensive and intentional approach to the first college year. It comprises both curricular and co-curricular initiatives. It is the sum of all experiences students have in their first year at college. The "first-year experience" is far more than a single event or program, successful programs reflect institutional mission, student demographics, and campus culture

# High-Impact Educational Practices

A list of commonly used programs and educational initiatives for use on college campuses has been developed and is referenced throughout student development theory and research. The initiatives on this list are referred to as High-Impact Practices and are considered beneficial for students from many backgrounds. While First-Year Seminars are on the list of High-Impact Practices, many of the additional components that have been added into FYS as requirements are also included.

## First-Year Seminars and Experiences

Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members' own research.

## Common Intellectual Experiences

The older idea of a "core" curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.

## Learning Communities

The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with "big questions" that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely

with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/ or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link "liberal arts" and "professional courses"; others feature service learning.

## Writing-Intensive Courses

These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice "across the curriculum" has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and, on some campuses, ethical inquiry.

## Collaborative Assignments and Projects

Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research.

### **Undergraduate Research**

Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students' early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

### **Diversity/Global Learning**

Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore “difficult differences” such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

### **Service Learning, Community-Based Learning**

In these programs, field-based “experiential learning” with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea

is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both apply what they are learning in real-world settings and reflect in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

### **Internships**

Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

### **Capstone Courses and Projects**

Whether they're called “senior capstones” or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of “best work,” or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.

Source: *Ensuring Quality & Taking High-Impact Practices to Scale* by George D. Kuh and Ken O'Donnell, with Case Studies by Sally Reed. (Washington, DC: AAC&U, 2013). For information and more resources and research from LEAP, see [www.aacu.org/leap](http://www.aacu.org/leap).

# Course Objectives

## General Education Outcomes (GEO)

1. Acquire knowledge in the arts, humanities, and/or natural and social sciences
2. Demonstrate the ability to think critically and independently
3. Effectively write and speak
4. Employ analytical reasoning and problem solving techniques
5. Develop fundamentals of information literacy and library research
6. Develop an appreciation for diversity

## Student Success Outcomes (SSO)

1. Connect to faculty and other students to develop an appreciation for others and respect for diversity.
2. Develop more effective study and life skills in areas including information literacy, time management, note taking, test taking, personal finance, and learning styles.
3. Immerse yourself into the Wichita State community to understand resources, campus traditions and culture and the value of student involvement.

# Components and requirements of FYS

The following activities are required components of **ALL** First-Year Seminars. FYS Instructors have the flexibility of how and when to incorporate this content with their course material and are encouraged to consult with the Office of Student Success for additional support.

*\*For quick access to more information about each requirement, simply click on the text and it will jump down to that section.\**

- [Written assessment](#)
  - Pre writing sample submitted within first two weeks of semester
  - Post writing sample submitted at end of semester
- [Study Skills](#)
  - Incorporated into class activities and/or presentations
  - Note taking, test taking, time management
- [Success Coach](#)
  - One-on-one meetings with students x3/semester
  - Peer leader in the classroom
- [Information Literacy](#)
  - Fundamentals of library research
- [Common Read](#)
  - Incorporating WSU Reads text into class discussion
  - Use for study skills, writing sample etc.
- [Campus Engagement](#)
  - Connect with campus community
- [Service Learning](#)
  - Class assignment or individual activity
  - Pre & post reflection
- [Diversity Content](#)
  - Gen Ed Requirement
  - Develop an appreciation for diversity
- [Financial Literacy](#)
  - Building credit, loans, debt
  - Classroom presentations: OSMM, Commerce Bank, Financial Aid

Remember, many of these requirements can be covered at the same time either during class or by sending students to an event. For example, you can encourage students to participate in Wu's Big Event and that would be their service learning experience as well as a campus engagement opportunity. Another way to combine two or more requirements into one activity or assignment would be teaching students about note taking while reviewing information about financial literacy or the common read. These requirements are not meant to create more work for students, but rather to encourage meaningful work that prepares them for college life by developing skills to be successful in college and building connections to the campus community.

# Written Assessment

FYS instructors are required to submit two writing samples from their classes to be evaluated by an external reviewer based on the AAC&U Written Communication rubric to assess GEO #3 “Effectively write and speak”. The first paper should be assigned within the first 2 weeks of the semester to gauge students’ writing at the beginning of the course, and then again towards the end to assess how much their writing has improved during the course. Papers can be submitted either in hard copy, digitally through email, or via Blackboard. The writing prompt must be included when you submit your papers so the reviewers know what the students were asked to write about to be able to evaluate the context of and purpose for writing.

## Study Skills

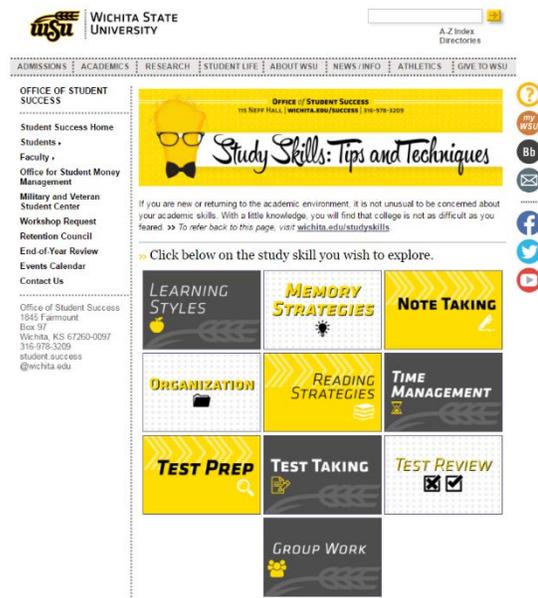
One of the benefits for students enrolled in First-Year Seminars is the focus on developing student’s study skills. This course will teach students various strategies and resources to achieve academic success in college. The Office of Student Success has many resources and tools for faculty to incorporate study skill development into their curricula. Most of these resources can be accessed online by going to [www.wichita.edu/StudySkills](http://www.wichita.edu/StudySkills).

For faculty and staff wishing to bring in guest speakers to cover study skills the following options are available:

- Presentations and workshops by a staff member from the Office of Student Success are available on time management, note taking, test prep, test taking, textbook reading, general study skills, and other presentation by request.
- Success Coaches are also trained to be able to present on the same topics or work one-on-one with students as needed.

We strongly recommend incorporating these skills into the delivery of your course content. **Be sure to be very clear about the purpose behind each activity when introducing the assignment to students.** *An example would be to explain to students the focus for today’s class will be on note taking. Next, give a brief presentation on how to take notes and have students practice taking notes during a lecture/presentation/video that is related back to your class theme. At the conclusion of the lecture, review the activity and have students reflect on what note taking style works best for them.*

If you need any assistance incorporating study skills with your class theme please consult with the Office of Students Success and we would be happy to help.



## Success Coaches

All First-Year Seminar Instructors will be paired up with an undergraduate student Success Coach. The role of a Success Coach is to help students develop into independent learners by supporting them in their transition to college, developing time management and study skills, and connecting them with campus resources.

Success Coaches are responsible for the following:

- Facilitating workshops on study skills, time management, test-preparation, etc.
- Preparing handouts, learning aids, etc. for classes and workshops
- Helping students strengthen academic background, understand class materials, comprehend the textbook, organize assignments and notes, and improve general learning and study skills.
- Being knowledgeable of campus resources and referring students when appropriate
- Having an awareness of relevant campus events and important deadlines (ex. last day to withdraw with “W”)
- Meeting one-on-one with students to determine any underlying issues and developing a plan for success

Similar to TAs, Success Coaches can lead classroom activities and discussions and should be seen as leaders in the classroom. Success Coaches should not have access to grades or be used for grading assignments as this will interfere with the trust and relationships they are building with the students outside of the classroom.

## Information Literacy

As part of the Gen Ed requirements, all FYS courses should help students “develop fundamentals of information literacy and library research.” Below are some suggestions for how to incorporate the University Libraries into your FYS.

- Collaborate with the liaison librarian for your course before you finalize your syllabus and Blackboard shell to discuss options for including information literacy throughout the course.
- Ask the librarian about engaging activities to reinforce information literacy concepts.
- Embed the liaison librarian in your Blackboard shell so that s/he can add content about information literacy and library research skills that will be helpful to students.
- Consider having the librarian give at least two library instruction sessions.
  - One for an introduction to the library and information literacy or a session focusing on an aspect of information literacy of your choice.
  - The second time just before an assignment requiring citations is due so that the librarian can assist students in constructing their citations in whichever style you specify. Improperly formatted citations were the most frequently mentioned information literacy problem in the library’s survey of the fall 2016 FYS professors.

- Consider bringing your class to the library’s instruction room, Ablah 217 for at least one of the library instruction sessions. It has about 25 computers for hands-on activities,
- Have students work through at least part of the information literacy tutorials before the librarian gives the introductory library instruction session to the class.
- Instruct students to have questions that occurred to them while working through the tutorials to ask the librarian at the beginning of the introductory library instruction session.
- In addition to whatever engaging activity you and the librarian include in the library instruction session, have students do an assignment due the next week that requires demonstration of some skill the librarian covered.
- Encourage students to seek out the liaison librarian at the reference desk or schedule one-on-one appointments.

## Request for Your Assistance in Assessing FYS General Education Outcomes

Would you please help the library assess the FYS General Education Outcome “Develop fundamentals of information literacy and library research?”

1. The library would like to do short online pre- and post-tests as the assessment.
2. The library would appreciate it if you would please have your students complete the pre-test at the very beginning of the semester.
3. Then the library would appreciate it if you would have them complete the post-test about 3 weeks before the end of classes – for instance, during the week of Nov. 13-17, 2017, for the fall semester and during the week of Apr. 16-20, 2018, for the spring semester.
4. The liaison librarian for your course will provide the links to the pre- and post-tests before the first day of the semester.
5. It would be great if you would be willing to give your students incentive to complete the two tests – for example, by giving points for completing them or by giving extra credit. The more tests completed, the more valuable the results of the pre- and post-tests.

Title of FYS Course	Liaison Librarian’s Name and Contact Info		
Cross Cultural Communication	Aaron Bowen	x5077	aaron.bowen@wichita.edu
Introduction to Technology & Innovation	Aaron Bowen	x5077	aaron.bowen@wichita.edu
Law and Politics	Nathan Filbert	x5210	nathan.filbert@wichita.edu
Music as the Key to Success	Rachel Crane	x5078	rachel.crane@wichita.edu
Music Really Does Make You Smarter	Rachel Crane	x5078	rachel.crane@wichita.edu
Powerful Narratives	Meghann Kuhlmann	x5075	meghann.kuhlmann@wichita.edu
Race & Ethnicity in Modern America	Kathy Delker	x6331	kathy.delker@wichita.edu
Solutions by Design	Meghann Kuhlmann	x5075	meghann.kuhlmann@wichita.edu
Superheroes Go to School	Nathan Filbert	x5210	nathan.filbert@wichita.edu
World Cultures in Popular Media	Meghann Kuhlmann	x5075	meghann.kuhlmann@wichita.edu

# Common Read

**WSU Reads**, Wichita State's common read program, has selected *The Influencing Machine* by Brooke Gladstone and illustrated by Josh Neufeld as the book for 2017-18 academic year. This book is distributed to all new students during orientation over the summer and is used across campus in a variety of ways: all First-Year Seminars will use this book as well as all English composition courses. For more information on the WSU Reads program, the book selection process, or the book selected for upcoming years visit [www.wichita.edu/WSUreads](http://www.wichita.edu/WSUreads).

## Opportunities to incorporate the WSU Reads book into the classroom

- Tied into course content where relevant
- Writing sample – if the topic is really a stretch to relate it back to the theme of your course, have students write a paper about a theme or chapter of the book and use that as either their pre or post writing sample for the course
- Note taking & test taking skills – have students practice taking notes about the book or create a test on a specific chapter of the book to give students practice preparing for a test
- Group work and discussion – simply have students work together to develop a presentation on a section or theme within the book to develop their group work and public speaking skills

In addition, there will be many opportunities outside of class for students to engage with the book. Instructors can choose to assign students extra credit for attending events related to the book such as: Academic Convocation, Dine & Dialogue, and Coffee & Conversation.

### Fall 2017 Events

#### **Academic Convocation**

Thursday, Sep 14 | 9:30am

Wilner Auditorium

*Keynote: Brooke Gladstone*

#### **Dine & Dialogue**

Wednesday, Sep 27 | 6:00pm

RSC 142, Harvest Room

#### **Coffee & Conversation**

Wednesday, Oct 25 | 11:00am

1<sup>st</sup> floor RSC

### Spring 2018 Events

#### **Dine & Dialogue**

Wednesday, Feb 21 | 6:00pm

RSC 142, Harvest Room

*Keynote: Josh Neufeld*

#### **Coffee & Conversation**

Wednesday, Apr 18 | 11:00am

1<sup>st</sup> floor RSC

**Teaching Guide** - A Teaching Guide for WSU Reads was developed by the WSU English department and First-Year Programs. The guide is available in digital and print format, if you would like a copy please contact [Samantha.Greenberg@wichita.edu](mailto:Samantha.Greenberg@wichita.edu).

**Library Guide** - An additional supplemental resource for instructors to use when incorporating WSU Reads into the classroom has been developed by the University Libraries. The library guide has lots of information and resources for similar books, articles, and video clips. [Student and faculty can both access the guide here.](#)

# Campus Engagement

Student Success Outcome #1 and #3 relate to building connections across campus. We want to ensure that students are connecting and engaging with other students, faculty and staff around campus, as well as developing an affinity for Wichita State University. The best opportunity for students to become engaged on campus is by getting involved with student organizations and attending events. Between Student Involvement, Student Activities Council, First-Year Programs and many more departments, there is always something happening on campus for student to get involved in. We suggest that you and your students attend events together as a class and talk about what that experience was like for them the next time you meet. Incentivize students to attend campus events by giving out extra credit points for those who attend and write a reflection about their experience.

There are numerous benefits to involvement on campus:

- More likely to stay at WSU and Graduate
- Build Network of Friends & Professionals
- Attend Conferences/Workshops
- Gain New Skills
- Have fun!

## Events to consider:

Event	Date	Time
Back to School Bash	Saturday, August 19	6:00 – 8:00pm
Shocker Resource Fair	Wednesday, August 23	10:30 – 12:30 pm
Clash of Colleges	Friday, August 25	4:00pm
Volunteer Fair	Monday, August 28	10:30am – 12:30pm
Syllabus Party	Tuesday, August 29	11:00am – 2:00pm
Involvement Fair	Wednesday, August 30	11:00am – 1:00pm
Wellness Fair	Wednesday, September 13	11:00am
Academic Convocation	Thursday, September 14	9:30am
Carmen Perez	Thursday, September 28	6:00 pm
Family Weekend	Friday, September 29	all day
Wu's Big Event	Saturday, October 7	9:00am
Shocktoberfest	Saturday, October 21 – Saturday, October 28	all day

# Service Learning

*Community Engagement* is the “application of institutional resources to address and solve challenges facing communities, through collaboration with these communities”

*Community Engaged Pedagogy* is a method of experiential learning that emphasizes action, reflection, & real world engagement that supports students in their development of real-world skills

**Service-Learning** at Wichita State University is an experiential learning method that integrates community service with instruction and reflection to increase student civic-mindedness and build community capacity.

## Benefits of Service Learning



### Faculty

- Student centered
- Measurable outcomes
- Identification with the community
- Scholarship support
- Engagement with multiple systems
- Faculty development
- Grant opportunities
- Curriculum improvement



### Students

- Building relational and communication skills with multiple systems
- Identify development: awareness of self and diverse individuals and populations
- Developing research skills: inquiry/interviewing, listening, storytelling, empathy, recognition of impact
- Cognition benefits: lessen resistance to change, Build tolerance of ambiguity, curiosity, experience with project management, moved to action, critical & creative thinking
- Empowerment approach
- Gained interest in Higher Ed



### Community

- Engagement with University and students
- Experiencing re-energizing
- Support for goals
- Shared leadership
- Strengths-based approach
- Processing and experiencing challenge and growth
- Reflection & feedback opportunities
- Teaching through experiences
- Outreach and appreciation for special knowledge

## Community-Based Partnerships

- United Way 211 Website (<http://www.unitedwayplains.org/> & [www.211kansas.org](http://www.211kansas.org) )
- Lord's Diner, Food Bank, Boys & Girls Club
- Community Service Board ([www.Wichita.edu/csb](http://www.Wichita.edu/csb)) transportation issues, campus events, info & help
- Community Engagement Institute ([www.communityengagementinstitute.org](http://www.communityengagementinstitute.org))
- IMPACT Center application for opportunities
- Campus Connect (Galaxy Digital)

## What do I grade?

- Grade the reflections
- Grade the principles related to your class
- Adding points for increased depth in reflection
- Assignments in and out of class
- You can utilize community partner feedback for portion of grading
- Rubrics
- Student Individual &/or Group Presentations (related to content, style, use of technology)
- Self and Peer Assessment
- Portfolios
- Project newsletter
- Social Media activity/documentation
- Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, Instagram

Questions regarding Service Learning can be directed to:

### Student Involvement

(316) 978-3022

[getinvolved@wichita.edu](mailto:getinvolved@wichita.edu)

[www.wichita.edu/involvement](http://www.wichita.edu/involvement)

## *Diversity Content*

As a part of First-Year Seminar meeting general education requirements, all courses should have some type of diversity content incorporated into it. GEO #6 is for students to “develop an appreciation for diversity”. Some First-Year Seminars, due the topic, will inherently cover diversity content throughout the course of the semester. If this is the case for your course, great! However, if your course does not naturally have diversity content worked into the curriculum, you will need to find ways to incorporate this into the learning and experience that students get while enrolled in your FYS.

Some options for how to incorporate diversity content into the classroom are:

- Bringing a representative from the Office of Diversity and Inclusion into the classroom to facilitate a discussion on a specific topic
- Encourage students to participate in one of the trainings hosted by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion such as Safe Zone, Gender Diversity, etc.
- Incentivize student’s participation with in events focused on diversity, especially discussion based programs such as the Brown Bag Series hosted by ODI, by giving extra credit points

# Financial Literacy

Students who drop out after their first year of college often cite financial issues as their primary reason for leaving (Inceptia, 2012). There are many campus and community resources available to help educate students about financial literacy. Below is a list of partners to utilize for classroom presentations or for handouts and additional information.

## **Office of Student Money Management**

115 Neff Hall

[OSMM@wichita.edu](mailto:OSMM@wichita.edu)

316-978-3254

[www.wichita.edu/OSMM](http://www.wichita.edu/OSMM)

## **My College Money Plan**

[www.mycollegemoneyplan.org](http://www.mycollegemoneyplan.org)

## **Office of Financial Aid**

203 Jardine Hall

[finaid@wichita.edu](mailto:finaid@wichita.edu)

(316) 978-3430 or (855)-978-1787

[www.wichita.edu/financialaid](http://www.wichita.edu/financialaid)

## **Commerce Bank**

RSC 1<sup>st</sup> floor

(316) 978-3850

<https://commercebank.com/shockercard>

## **Meritrust Credit Union**

316.683.1199

[www.meritrustcu.org](http://www.meritrustcu.org)

## Tips from faculty for FYS Instructors

Tips / Strategic Considerations [Some of these are obviously good practices for all classes, but the impact is high when carrying out these strategies for a class full of first semester freshman.]

- Explain the learning value of each activity. Take a few minutes to regularly communicate to the class why the course includes the modules that it does: student success components, extracurricular components, service learning, etc. It can be obvious to us (who designed the course) why these elements are included and how they advance the FYS goals, but it may be less obvious to the students. A few quick sentences when introducing a class visitor from OSMM or the Career Center regarding the goal of helping students succeed outside the classroom and beyond college is likely all that is needed.
- Explain concepts and norms that we might assume that they already know. Its ok for those who know to get a reminder, but it might be the first time a student hears about key concepts or norms as a college student. [Ex: if you skip class, your professor is likely to assume it is a deliberate choice, not that you were sick. Communicate with your professor.]
- Work collaboratively with the student Success Coaches. They are in the course to build connections with the students. They can help serve as a liaison between the faculty member and students. They provide insights for faculty into what students might be struggling with or thinking about with regard to the content and structure of the course. They can serve as an additional voice to drive home the key points the faculty member wants to convey (additional 'words of wisdom', and from a peer sometimes have more impact). Keep the success coach in the loop and find ways they can enhance the students' experiences in the course.
- Carefully consider the level of knowledge the students might bring to the class. If your course is designed to appeal broadly, you may not have any majors in the course, and in fact might be teaching to students from multiple colleges. This requires a different approach than courses that are designed to draw in students from more specific majors. • Have them create some evaluation materials like a quiz and use it. It may help them read the materials in a different way.
- Do several activities so the students team up or mingle. Building community contributes to the goal of retaining these students at WSU.
- Work on peer-review activities. This can provide opportunities for mentoring and well as learning from each other. 5
- Encourage discussion outside the class (Blackboard forum, Facebook group, etc.)
- Encourage them to get out of their comfort zone as a learning tool and give them support in doing this. This might take many forms (role playing, giving a speech, interviewing

someone on/off campus, discussing controversial topics, attending talks or performances, etc.).

- Take them to places like the library or a talk.
- Invite a guest to talk about x topic.
- Have some kind of personal meeting(s) with them. They have met with advisors, but likely have not had any personal meetings with a faculty member on campus. Help them recognize that faculty members are people who want to see them succeed.
- Send reminders a couple days before each deadline, and encourage them to learn how to keep calendars and take responsibility for their assignments because not all faculty will provide reminders.
- Put everything on Blackboard for easy and timely location. Explain the format you want for each assignment and put it on Blackboard.
- Give them all the good feedback you can. You are helping them transition effectively to the college environment and they need to know what their expectations are and how they can improve their work.
- Submit mid semester evaluations and use SEAS (Student Early Alert System). They need to be told explicitly if they are performing well or if adjustments are needed to achieve the grade they want in the class.

# WRITTEN COMMUNICATION VALUE RUBRIC

*for more information, please contact [value@aacu.org](mailto:value@aacu.org)*



The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can be shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

## Definition

Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

## Framing Language

This writing rubric is designed for use in a wide variety of educational institutions. The most clear finding to emerge from decades of research on writing assessment is that the best writing assessments are locally determined and sensitive to local context and mission. Users of this rubric should, in the end, consider making adaptations and additions that clearly link the language of the rubric to individual campus contexts.

This rubric focuses assessment on how specific written work samples or collections of work respond to specific contexts. The central question guiding the rubric is "How well does writing respond to the needs of audience(s) for the work?" In focusing on this question the rubric does not attend to other aspects of writing that are equally important: issues of writing process, writing strategies, writers' fluency with different modes of textual production or publication, or writer's growing engagement with writing and disciplinary through the process of writing.

Evaluators using this rubric must have information about the assignments or purposes for writing guiding writers' work. Also recommended is including reflective work samples of collections of work that address such questions as: What decisions did the writer make about audience, purpose, and genre as s/he compiled the work in the portfolio? How are those choices evident in the writing -- in the content, organization and structure, reasoning, evidence, mechanical and surface conventions, and citational systems used in the writing? This will enable evaluators to have a clear sense of how writers understand the assignments and take it into consideration as they evaluate.

The first section of this rubric addresses the context and purpose for writing. A work sample or collections of work can convey the context and purpose for the writing tasks it showcases by including the writing assignments associated with work samples. But writers may also convey the context and purpose for their writing within the texts. It is important for faculty and institutions to include directions for students about how they should represent their writing contexts and purposes.

Faculty interested in the research on writing assessment that has guided our work here can consult the National Council of Teachers of English/Council of Writing Program Administrators' White Paper on Writing Assessment (2008; [www.pacouncil.org/whitepaper](http://www.pacouncil.org/whitepaper)) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication's Writing Assessment: A Position Statement (2008; [www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/123784.htm](http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/123784.htm))

## Glossary

The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.

- **Content Development:** The ways in which the text explores and represents its topic in relation to its audience and purpose.
- **Context of and purpose for writing:** The context of writing is the situation surrounding a text: who is reading it? who is writing it? Under what circumstances will the text be shared or circulated? What social or political factors might affect how the text is composed or interpreted? The purpose for writing is the writer's intended effect on an audience. Writers might want to persuade or inform; they might want to report or summarize information; they might want to work through complexity or confusion; they might want to argue with other writers, or connect with other writers; they might want to convey urgency or amuse; they might write for themselves or for an assignment or to remember.
- **Disciplinary conventions:** Formal and informal rules that constitute what is seen generally as appropriate within different academic fields, e.g. introductory strategies, use of passive voice or first person point of view, expectations for thesis or hypothesis, expectations for kinds of evidence and support that are appropriate to the task at hand, use of primary and secondary sources to provide evidence and support arguments and to document critical perspectives on the topic. Writers will incorporate sources according to disciplinary and genre conventions, according to the writer's purpose for the text. Through increasingly sophisticated use of sources, writers develop an ability to differentiate between their own ideas and the ideas of others, credit and build upon work already accomplished in the field or issue they are addressing, and provide meaningful examples to readers.
- **Evidence:** Source material that is used to extend, in purposeful ways, writers' ideas in a text.
- **Genre conventions:** Formal and informal rules for particular kinds of texts and/or media that guide formatting, organization, and stylistic choices, e.g. lab reports, academic papers, poetry, webpages, or personal essays.
- **Sources:** Texts (written, oral, behavioral, visual, or other) that writers draw on as they work for a variety of purposes -- to extend, argue with, develop, define, or shape their ideas, for example.

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## Definition

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*Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.*

	Capstone 4	3	Milestones 2	Benchmark 1
<b>Context of and Purpose for Writing</b> <i>Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).</i>	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work.	Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context).	Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions).	Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience).
<b>Content Development</b>	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work.
<b>Genre and Disciplinary Conventions</b> <i>Formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields (please see glossary).</i>	Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task (s) including organization, content, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices	Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices	Follows expectations appropriate to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) for basic organization, content, and presentation	Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation.
<b>Sources and Evidence</b>	Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.
<b>Control of Syntax and Mechanics</b>	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free.	Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors.	Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.	Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.