

Memorandum

To: Bonnie Prunty, Director of Residential Life
Jim Rothenberg, Associate Professor, Sociology
Warren Schlesinger, Associate Professor, Business Accounting

From: Peter W. Bardaglio, Provost/VPAA

Re: Ithaca Seminar Proposal

Date: November 10, 2006

I am writing to accept in principle the proposal for the Ithaca Seminar Program, prepared by Bonnie Prunty, Jim Rothenberg, and Warren Schlesinger, to outline my expectations for the next phase in development, and to situate that next phase in the context of the ongoing evolution of the program.

Let me begin by recognizing the exemplary work of Bonnie, Jim, and Warren: as a subcommittee of the new First Year Experience Coordinating Committee, they have engaged in an exhaustive and inclusive process of developing this proposal. All future success of this program will be due in large part to their foundational work, for which we owe them our gratitude. I accept their recommendations, as articulated on the first page of the proposal, either as elements for current implementation or as directions for future development and consideration.

The Recommendations

The subcommittee's specific recommendations follow, along with my response to each:

- *Offer four credit Ithaca Seminars that will be required for all fall semester first year students. All seminars will have an interdisciplinary perspective.*

I expect that fall 2007 will see the next important step in the implementation of the Ithaca Seminar program, the merger of the existing interdisciplinary seminars with the H&S First Year Seminar Program and the development of the co-curricular content common to all seminars. (See "Implementation," below.) In order to accomplish these goals, the fall 2007 offerings will be divided between three-credit and four-credit courses, and will be resourced appropriately. Faculty, in consultation with their departments and deans, may propose either.

The issue of crediting will form part of the assessment of this next stage. I look forward to a thoughtful, data-driven, and broad-based discussion about the costs and benefits of the various options.

- *Eliminate or replace all other existing first year seminars.*

To be precise, the H&S First Year Seminar Program will merge with the Ithaca Seminar, and the IC Residential Seminar, which has been offered experimentally these two years, will no longer be offered. I want to commend the work of those involved in the IC Residential Seminar, and to recognize that their experience and expertise has been key to the development of the Ithaca Seminar program.

- *Faculty teaching the course will determine the Ithaca Seminar topics. Credit hours generated are credited to the department of the instructor offering the course.*

Accepted.

- *All Ithaca Seminars will include a set of topics and programs that will create a shared experience for all Ithaca College First Year Students.*

Accepted, with this amendment: the experience will be shared by all students who are participating in the program.

- *By the third year of implementation, all sections must be either linked or part of a team taught set of sections.*

I accept this as the direction for further curricular and faculty development, and trust that the Ithaca Seminar Steering committee will continue to monitor its viability.

- *Faculty members will be the assigned advisors for all exploratory students in their sections.*

Accepted.

- *All Ithaca Seminar Courses will be designated as Liberal Arts (LA) courses, will have the appropriate HU/SS/FA/NS designation, and will have an H&S General Education designation.*

Accepted.

- *Each school will be required to offer a specified number of sections a year based on their size. Each school may determine the mechanism for how this will be accomplished.*

I endorse the general notion that the Seminars should come from every School and the Division of Interdisciplinary and International Studies, and will work with Dean's Council to determine both the mechanism and the basis upon which an equitable distribution will be made. School size is one measure, but it is not the only one that could be contemplated.

- *All students in Ithaca Seminars will be scheduled to meet for four hours per week. One of those hours will be at a common meeting time to allow students to participate in Ithaca Seminar programs, workshops, and attend presentations by guest speakers. Assistant and Associate Deans within each of the schools will work to make sure other first year courses (Level - 1) are scheduled around these times. (At this point, the Monday,*

*Wednesday, and Friday noon hour are the preferred time periods.)
Programs will be provided during seven of these "common hours."*

Accepted, with this amendment: three-credit seminars will meet three hours a week, one hour being given to the common time and program. This common hour will be shared by all sections, whether three- or four-credit.

I accept the rest of the proposal as providing guidance and direction for the work ahead, with these comments:

1. I would underscore the extent to which this is a proposal for a program that will undergo significant further development. The section describing the budget for the proposal, especially, should be seen in this light; the particulars of the budget will be the subject of work by Dean's Council in the coming years (see their charge, below), in concert with the Budget committee and others.
2. For the same reason, the curricular approval for the program will not begin prior to the assessment of the fall 2007 pilot and its incorporation into the proposal. I ask the Associate Provost to build upon the existing process to review College-wide curricular proposals, ensuring its sufficiency for the task at hand.

Implementation

As I see it, the next phase of implementation has two main activities:

- 1) The merger of the Ithaca Seminar and Humanities and Sciences First Year Seminar programs; and
- 2) The development and implementation of the "common academic and programmatic content" for all sections.

Taken together, these activities will allow the Program to emerge as a coherent whole and be assessed for its effectiveness and viability. My expectation is that we will offer 40 sections in fall 2007, with a target of at least 800 students registered across all sections, or approximately half of all incoming first-year students. Of the 40 sections, I expect that 30 will be taught by faculty from H&S, with the remaining ten sections drawn from every other school and DIIS. Currently, approximately 70% of incoming H&S students, and 80% of Exploratory students, take H&S First Year Seminars; I anticipate at least meeting this standard of service.

This initiative has grown out of a collaboration between academic and student affairs that has sought to engage the entire campus in educating the whole student: the next phase of development should be no different, and strive further to develop the potential of this and other collaborations. In this spirit, I charge the following three groups with advancing the project in the coming year:

- 1) A new Ithaca Seminar Steering Committee, to be formed from the membership of the H&S First Year Seminar Steering Committee with additional representation as articulated in the proposal. The committee will be led by co-chairs Jim Rothenberg and Jodi Cohen under the supervision of David García. Their charge includes

- a. merging the two programs;
 - b. ensuring the continuity and quality of exploratory advising;
 - c. identifying and coordinating of common hour times with the Registrar's office and Schools (through the Assistant/Associate Dean's Group, which will have an important role in the next task as well); and
 - d. investigating the possibility of pre-registration for exploratory students.
- 2) A task group formed under the auspices of the First Year Experience Coordinating Committee, under the leadership of Roger Richardson and Bonnie Prunty. Their charge is to develop the common academic and programmatic content, drawing on the lessons learned from the IC Residential Seminar and the close collaboration and consultation the FYECC affords.
- 3) Dean's Council, which is charged with working through what I see as the two unresolved long-term questions about the Program:
- a. Requirement: currently, the H&S First Year Seminar program is offered to all students in H&S who wish to take it. What are the relative costs and benefits to requiring the Ithaca Seminar for all first year students?
 - b. Budget: long term, what is the mechanism for resource allocation to support the program? What new resources will be necessary?

This is a complex project, and will require some division of labor; I want to underscore, however, that through collaboration and interlocking membership, I expect these groups to work in consultation with one another, and to find these interactions powerful and productive. I also expect they will extend beyond this circle to engage the entire campus in this key element of the "Ithaca Experience."