The First-Year Experience and FYI 100 First Year Introduction Guidelines (2015-2016)

Important Notice – There is very little funding for FYI 100! There will be no funds available for any field trip expenses. See 6F below for field trip recommendations.

Please Note: Parts of this document contains information specific for Fall 2014. This is not a misprint. The document will be updated before the Fall 2015 semester and made available on the secret website (http://www1.easternct.edu/firstyear/faculty_info/).

What is the First-Year Experience

The First-Year Experience (FYE) is designed to assist all new first-year students in the transition to Eastern’s campus. In addition to the required academic component of the program (FYI 100), students will participate in many FYE events and programs and use the resources available to aid in their transition to college. Becoming actively engaged in the campus community early in a student’s college career will pave the way to a positive, well-rounded and enriching experience. For more information about Eastern’s First-Year Experience go to: http://www1.easternct.edu/firstyearexperience/

First-Year Experience Goals

• To assist every first-time, full-time student towards a successful transition from high school to college level academics and to promote academic success
• To help first-year students understand the importance of modeling good behavior and respecting themselves and their community.
• To provide opportunities for new students to develop multicultural awareness and cultural competence.
• To provide students with information about campus resources and opportunities available on campus while establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships within the university community and a connectedness to campus life.
• To enable students to develop effective personal leadership development skills that will enhance their ability to become leaders who will contribute to the greater community.
• To encourage students to be socially responsible and by enlisting in civic engagement and service learning projects on campus and in the local community.
What is FYI 100?

FYI 100 is a part of Eastern’s Liberal Arts Core as well as the required academic component of Eastern’s First-Year Experience. This three-credit course, taken by all first-year, first-time students as well as transfer students below 15 credits is a gateway to the Liberal Arts Core Curriculum.

Specifically, FYI 100

- creates learning communities and provides instruction in both academic and college survival skills.
- Must be completed within the first 30 credits of coursework at Eastern
- is required of all first-time, full-time students in the fall semester of their first year.
- is required of all transfer students with less than 15 transfer credits
- is capped at no more than 25 students per class.
- is taught by both full-time and part-time faculty
- has a peer mentor assigned to each class to assist with community building and the instruction of college survival skills. The peer mentor may also be incorporated into some classes to serve as a model for academic behavior, i.e. participation in discussions, etc.

Each FYI 100 class focuses on a particular topic chosen by the instructor and approved by the FYI 100 Committee (formerly known as the First-Year Program Committee). Every FYI 100 must pursue three primary objectives:

1. **College Survival Skills** – To introduce college survival skills, each FYI 100 class will employ learning modules consisting of PowerPoint presentations and quizzes. The peer mentors will give the PowerPoint presentations in class. The peer mentor or the FYI 100 instructor will administer the quizzes.

2. **Academic Skills** – Through the academic subject matter in each seminar, students will be introduced to the intellectual and academic skills that correspond to the higher academic standards they will be expected to meet during their study at Eastern. The primary objectives in this area are to begin the development of critical thinking skills and provide an introduction to what it means to participate in an academic community. Class discussions and reading and writing assignments will be designed to introduce students to critical thinking skills, the ability to access credible information effectively while critically evaluating that information, and the ability to share that information with others in their learning community.

3. **Creation of Learning Communities** – Given small class sizes and the participatory nature of these courses, instructors will work to create learning communities that will help to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships among the students and between the students, peer mentors and faculty. Leaning communities can be built around a particular theme, major, or even an activity. Students will work collaboratively with each other and their instructor both in and out of the classroom.

**FYI 100 Committee Guidelines for Teaching FYI 100**

1. **College Survival Skills**
Learning Modules

The learning modules will consist of several PowerPoint presentations and accompanying quizzes, each designed to provide first-year students with college survival skills-related instruction and reinforcement and timely advising announcements and instructions. Links to the Learning Modules can be found on the FYI 100 website (http://www1.easternct.edu/firstyear/academic-component/) and are accessible to everyone. Peer mentors are required to give these presentations in class. See number 5 below for the list of PPT presentations from Fall 2014. These will be modified somewhat for Fall 2015.

2. Academic Skills

Many of these elements will be covered within the context of the academic component of the course.

1. *Introduction to the Liberal Arts
2. *Academic skills at the University level
   a. Introduction to Critical Thinking
   b. Academic Research Skills – Students should be aware that research is the production of new knowledge; accessing credible academic resource sources is important
   c. Written and Oral Communication of Academic Research (seminar participation)
3. *Co-curricular Activities - Co-curricular activities are any on or off campus activity that the instructor designates as a requirement for the course (see list below).
4. Field Trips are highly recommended. Local activities are encouraged since there are no funds available

*FYI 100 required elements

Here are some examples of how an instructor could approach FYI 100’s required elements.

1. Introduction to the Liberal Arts – A PowerPoint presentation on the history of the liberal arts in higher education and the Liberal Arts Core Curriculum at Eastern is available online at (http://www1.easternct.edu/firstyear/faculty_info/). It is under “Resources” (Teaching)
2. Academic Skills within Course context (theme)
   a. A list of skills/literature of critical thinking can be found online at (http://www1.easternct.edu/firstyear/faculty_info/)
   b. Examples of what can be done in the classroom
      i. Research proposals
      ii. Debate
      iii. Individual library research
      iv. Group presentations and active learning - A list of collaborative and acting learning techniques can be found online at (http://www1.easternct.edu/firstyear/faculty_info/)
      v. Individual Oral Reports
3. Co-curricular activities – There must be at least two specific required co-curricular activities to be attended by all students in the class and their peer mentor. Our hope is that one of these activities will be a field trip in spite of the fact that there is no funding. Additional co-curricular activities are recommended. Peer mentors are only required to attend two co-curricular activities one of which should be a field trip. Co-curricular activities include, but are not limited to:
   a. Field trips
   b. University Hour
   c. Arts and Lecture Series
   d. On and off campus excursions (individual or small groups)
e. 3rd Thursday – (downtown festival in Willimantic on September 18)
f. Community Services
g. Sports Events
h. Theatre productions

3. Creation of Learning Communities

Learning communities can be built around a particular theme, major, or activity.

   1. Promoting a Learning Community
      a. Working together in small groups
      b. Having classroom discussions
      c. Group presentations and active learning
      d. Using name tags and other methods of getting to know each other
      e. Ice-breaker for first day
      f. Field trips and on and off campus excursions

4. Guidelines for Grading FYI 100

While learning and understanding the academic content of any FYR 100 is important, it is not the primary goal and objective of the course. Grading FYI 100 should mainly be reflective of those activities and assignments that support the three primary objectives (college survival skills, academic skills, and creating learning communities) of the course. The following course grading guidelines should be used when preparing a syllabus for the course:

1. Learning Module PowerPoints and Quizzes – 10%
2. Evaluation of Academic Course Content By Testing – No more than 20%
3. Class participation/academic skills – 70%

A faculty member may subdivide each of the above. For example, number 3 could be broken down into class participation, oral reports, papers, research, etc.

5. Peer Mentors

All FYI 100 faculty currently have a FYI 100 Committee approved syllabus. It is understood that there may be some “housekeeping” changes to this syllabus before the class actually begins or from year to year. For example, the syllabus will have to be modified to reflect peer mentor involvement in the course. In addition to their name and contact information, activities and responsibilities that are the duties of the peer mentor should be included in the syllabus.

Peer mentors will attend one FYI 100 class for a continuous 50 minutes each week. A peer mentor has specific duties, including the Learning Module PowerPoint presentations that will require weekly up front class time.

Here is the fall 2014 peer mentor activities schedule. The dates shown below are last year’s dates. You will receive an updated version of this sometime before Fall 2015 begins.

Week One (first class meeting) – August 28-September 5: Icebreaker and Announcements

Conduct icebreaker. Explain open add/drop. Open add/drop ends on September 4. No modules will be presented this week. Explain open add/drop to your students and remind them that it ends on September 4. After September 4 and until September 11, tell them that they can add a course with permission of the
instructor. The appropriate form is available online and at the Registrar's website. If you wish, you can go online and show them how to find the form. You could also show them how to access the University calendar of events.

The Learning Module Presentations will begin on September 8th and continue weekly until the end of the week of November 10th. In addition to presenting the PPT's peer mentors will always discuss on-campus activities, clubs and organizations, their own experiences, etc.

Several topics that would were covered in SOAR and elsewhere will now be covered in FYI 100. Most of these topics have been incorporated into the Learning Module PowerPoint presentations. If a peer mentor gives each PowerPoint presentation during the recommended week, these topics will be included in the PPT and be presented at the appropriate time. **WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT EVERYONE FOLLOW THE RECOMMENDED TIME SCHEDULE.** We will send all peer mentors “.ppt” versions of the presentations by email as soon as they are available.

**Week Two – September 8-12: “Accessing Important Information”**

**Week Three – September 15-19: “Campus Involvement and Community Engagement”**

**Week Four – September 22-26: “Financial Literacy and How to Find Holds”**

**Week Five – September 29-October 3: “Time Management”**

**Week Six – October 6-10: “Academic Integrity”**

**Week Seven – October 13-17: “Important Academic Policies”**

**Week Eight – October 20-24: “Planning Spring 2015 Course Schedule/Eastern in 4 Plans (also ongoing)”**

**Week Nine – October 27-31: “Preparing to See Your Advisor”**

**Week Ten – November 3-7: “Center for Internships and Career Development + Advisement and Registration Discussion”**

**Week Eleven – November 10-14: – “Health Services and CAPS + Registration Follow-up”**

Other Peer Mentor Requirements:

I. **Campus Involvement** - For two to five minutes each week, the peer mentor should announce the major extracurricular/co-curricular activities occurring on campus during the week. Co-curricular activities are determined by the instructor. Additionally, peer mentors should encourage their students to join campus clubs and organizations.

II. **Advising Announcements** – At specific times during the semester, peer mentors will be required to provide time-sensitive announcements on issues such as add/drop, accessing the university catalog, the liberal arts curriculum, etc. As mentioned above, many of these may be covered in the PowerPoint presentations where possible.

III. **Personal Experiences of the Peer Mentor (time permitting)** – This could include such topics as student clubs, resident hall experiences, classroom experiences, etc.
IV. The peer mentor will act as a role model for student behavior.

V. The peer mentor will participate in the field trip and at least one other co-curricular activity with his or her students.

VI. The peer mentor will meet with students outside of the class, either one-on-one or in small groups.

6. General FYI 100 Teaching Recommendations

With a limit of 25 students, FYI 100 provides faculty with a learning environment that encourages enhanced teacher-student relationships. Therefore, one of the most significant elements of this course is the potential it offers faculty working with a peer mentor to mentor and advise first-time, first-year students. Please note that as a rule of thumb, instructors should plan to teach academic content-related material for two thirds of the class time (100 minutes) with the other third relegated to peer mentor related activities.

A. Classroom attendance should be mandatory. Your peer mentor can be assigned the task of taking attendance each week. He/she could then contact students who are not attending class to determine why.

FYI classes should not be cancelled when co-curricular assignments are given. It is not appropriate to assign students to a co-curricular activity and cancel their FYI class in “compensation.” Co-curricular, by definition, means required assignments outside of the classroom (see below).

B. Learning Modules for Campus Survival Skills

The FYR 314 instructor will not be posting or asking peer mentors to post any content to FYI 100 Blackboard Learn sites. PowerPoint presentations and quizzes will be used by the peer mentors to present non-academic campus survival skills.

C. Co-Curricular and Extra-Curricular Activities

Two co-curricular activities (includes the field trip) are required, more are recommended. Co-curricular activities are most often defined as activities occurring outside of the classroom that are required for the course. Extra-curricular activities also occur outside of the classroom, but are not specifically required for the course. Any instructor can define any particular event as a co-curricular activity. Eastern offers excellent opportunities for co-curricular activities, ranging from regularly scheduled events (i.e., University Hour; Arts & Lecture Series) to special presentations (Performing Arts Department musical and theatrical productions, Akus Gallery exhibits, etc). FYI 100 faculty members are encouraged to participate with their students in these activities, since they clearly contribute to the students’ successful integration into the Eastern community.

Co-curricular activities can also be local resources found in Willimantic and neighboring communities—for example Third Thursday and the Windham Textile and History Museum. Please consider accompanying your students to one/some of these and have them reflect on the experiences, as these have an impact on how well and how quickly our students settle into their new environment.

Oral presentations, short written reports, and classroom discussion are just a few ways of relating co-curricular class activities to the major goals of the FYI 100 course. Faculty should involve their peer mentors in taking students to these events.
D. Guest Lecturers

Faculty are free to invite guest lecturers to their FYI 100 courses. Please use prudence when inviting guests. While students enjoy an occasional guest lecturer, they do not appreciate a continuous stream of new faces into their classroom. Too many lecturers will interfere with the faculty member’s ability to cover other topics and to connect with his/her students. Rather than relying on guest lecturers, peer mentors could give a presentation other than those that are required. There are no funds available for honoraria.

E. The Community

Eastern exists in the community of Willimantic. It is important that students get a good sense of the history and people in this area. In past years, some classes have visited the Willimantic Soup Kitchen, the Windham Textile and History Museum and other organizations. These types of excursions are great ways for your students to make connections and make excellent low cost field trips. When used as a field trip, these activities are best if done early in the semester, but a walking tour is a welcome diversion anytime during the semester.

F. FYI 100 Expenses and Field Trips

The budget has been significantly reduced from last year and there are no funds available for field trips. In my opinion, field trips are still the best mechanisms we have to make those vital learning community connections. The field trip venue does not have to be related to the academic course content, however it should be “educational” and/or “informative.” The major goal of a field trip is personal interactions. This can be done with little or no cost. Locally, students have gone to the Windham Textile and History Museum, The Willimantic Food Co-op, The Covenant Soup Kitchen, the Windham Arts Collaborative and Third Thursday (September 17, 2015). Students can easily walk to these venues. Such activities with the exception of Third Thursday should be planned in advance with a representative from the venue you wish to visit. Students who had taken a field trip as freshmen have told us time and again that it was the field trip that enabled them to get to know each other, their professor, and their peer mentor.

Invariably, those students who had their field trip experience at the end of the semester said that it would have been much more effective had it been at the beginning of the semester. Please try and plan a field-trip-like experience for the beginning of the semester.

There are generally three cost considerations associated with a field trip; transportation, venue fees, and meals.

1. Transportation – Since field trip funds are no longer available, there are only two no cost travel alternatives; university vans and walking. To reserve a van(s), contact Scott Smith (X54326, smithsc@easternct.edu), Athletics Equipment Manager/Vehicle Coordinator, Sports Center Room 118. As for drivers, anyone employed by Eastern (student workers included) can drive most of the vans. Of course, if the venue is close enough, you can walk.

2. Venue Costs - Some venues can be quite expensive. Since the students will have to pay all costs associated with the venue, please consider keeping the cost to no greater than $10.00. If a student cannot afford the cost associated with a field trip, they should be excused from the activity and given an alternative assignment.

3. Meals – If a field trip lasts longer than three hours, there will usually be a meal involved. Students can either pay for their own meals as long as you have made arrangements for them to
purchase food somewhere or have Eastern’s food service pack them a box lunch. You can arrange to have food services prepare boxed lunches for all of your students if you give them one week’s notice. The lunches can then be picked up as you leave campus.

If students will miss classes or a sport practice, you must give them a written note (also found at [http://www1.easternct.edu/firstyear/faculty_info/](http://www1.easternct.edu/firstyear/faculty_info/)) to give to their instructors or coach. Inevitably, someone will not be able to go for one reason or another. In such cases, a substantial make-up assignment should be considered. This should be clearly stated in your syllabus.

You must complete a *Travel Authorization* form (link found at the secret website [http://www1.easternct.edu/firstyear/faculty_info/](http://www1.easternct.edu/firstyear/faculty_info/)) including a list of all participants for your field trip. Once you have completely filled out your TA, have your department chair sign it and send or bring it to my office, currently Webb 147.

G. “Secret” FYI 100 Faculty Website

Many useful documents can be found at this website: ([http://www1.easternct.edu/firstyear/faculty_info/](http://www1.easternct.edu/firstyear/faculty_info/)). At the time these guidelines were written (see date below) several of the documents at this link were in need of revision. This will be done during the summer. This link cannot be accessed from the “Resources for FYE Faculty” link at the Academic Component (FI 100) website, so please keep it handy. You might consider going to the website and bookmarking it.

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