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Creation of a Custom Course Textbook for the WMU First-Year Experience Seminar

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What is First-Year Experience Seminar?

**First-Year Experience Seminar (FYS)**

Designed for first-year students, the First-Year Experience Seminar offers students the opportunity to work in partnership with a faculty/staff instructor and an upper class student instructor. The Seminar is a two-credit hour course that meets regularly during the entire semester. The content of the course is focused on several areas which include:

- Supporting and assisting students by getting to know them in smaller group settings
- Helping students understand the academic expectations required of at WMU
- Assisting students in making meaningful, supportive connections
- Assisting students in developing a strong foundation while in college
- Help students persist and realize graduation from WMU

Specifically, the FYE Seminar is intended to provide an intellectual and social transition into WMU under the guidance of your FYE instructor. The Seminar addresses different educational criteria but primarily focuses on the **habits of learning success**. Additionally, the Seminar supplies information about campus resources and generally helps students feel connected to the University and the Kalamazoo community.

**Course Learning Objectives**

- Students will make connections with WMU faculty, staff, student instructors and/or peers to facilitate success.
- Students will demonstrate competency in accessing university resources and services.
- Students will demonstrate responsible academic and social behaviors.
- Students will develop an appreciation of diversity in the broadest sense.
- Students will understand the requirements for earning a bachelor’s degree.
- Students will examine personal interests and explore related WMU academic and career pathways.

Western Michigan is a research intensive University, and therefore, some aspect of research is integrated into the Seminar experience along with critical thinking, writing, teamwork, community service, group discussion and group outings.

Planning Process Summary

In the Seminar, students use a variety of different tools to achieve the objectives of the course, including the use of a textbook. In the fall of 2009, a committee comprised of seminar faculty, staff and students began the planning process for creating a custom textbook for Western Michigan University’s First-Year Seminar. The coordinator of the Seminar was the project leader.

After the creation of the FYS textbook committee the following steps were taken to complete the process:

**Step 1**

- Five custom-text publishers were invited to present proposals to the committee
- Committee reviewed each proposal and selected two of the publishers to return to campus and provide additional information about their companies
- After final publisher presentations, in spring of 2010, committee selected the publishing company that contract with WMU First-Year Seminar, Kendall Hunt Publishing

**Step 2**

- Once Kendall Hunt was selected for the creation of the text, the coordinator of FYS worked closely with those WMU faculty, staff and students who agreed to submit content to the textbook
- Coordinator worked closely with University counsel to draft a contract between the University (FYE) and Kendall Hunt
- Contract negotiations took several months to complete and valuable lessons were learned throughout the process

**Step 3**

- Coordinator collected custom content from faculty, staff and students
- Based on content collected, coordinator selected to embark on a “mini-customization” for the inaugural text
- **Selected “Thriving in College and Beyond” by Joe Cuseo as a guiding text and ultimate “fold over” text for the project**
- The guiding text focuses on research-based strategies for successful academic and personal development

**Step 4**

- Last steps included reviewing of several drafts, obtaining photo and content release forms, ordering copies for the course and bookstore
- In the late summer of 2011, the final review was completed and approved
- In August 2011 the final version of the textbook went to press

Acknowledgements

The coordinator would like to thank all of the faculty, staff and students involved with this project. A special thanks to the University legal department and director of First-Year Experience Programs.

Final Thoughts & Contact Information

Since the inception of the FYS course in 2005, there has been a desire to create a custom textbook. Because of the knowledge gained through this experience, the FYS program will be fully prepared for a “full customization” textbook within the next two years. It’s been a pleasure!

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