

The Whole University Supporting the Whole Student:
A One-year Demonstration Pilot for a “First Class” Educational Foundation
(2005-06)
April 8, 2004

“General Education (GE) at Sonoma State University investigates the complexity of human experience in a diverse natural and social world, and promotes informed and ethical participation as citizens of the world.” SSU Academic Senate, 2003

The *First Class* demonstration pilot is

- an experimental course to be mounted in fall/spring 2005-06 to learn about first-year pedagogy and resource implications for scalability and sustainability
- a multidisciplinary 2-semester lecture/seminar course (University 150, *First Class*) for 150 freshmen, providing credit in GE Areas A2, A3 and E for a total of 9 units;
- an interdisciplinary approach, providing an intentional context for discovering the meaning of liberal arts and sciences education and the complementary roles of general education and a major discipline.
- an integrated learning experience that transitions freshmen into college under the guidance of Learning Teams: faculty mentors, SSPs, and upper division student peers; and
- a common experience that is academically stimulating, rigorous, and supportive of students’ social transition into university life, comprised of 5 components:
 1. ***a multi-disciplinary problem-based lecture series***, delivered Wednesdays at noon for all 150 pilot students and their Learning Teams (LTs) that frames:
 2. ***small seminars*** of 15 students who meet twice weekly with their Learning Team for a total of 3 contact hours
 3. ***academic skill-building*** that introduces materials that complement weekly lectures and teaches college skills such as seminar discussions, reading, writing, and research aimed at developing deep and confident critical thinking abilities and a personal voice;
 4. ***students’ co-curricular and social needs*** identified and addressed using learning objectives of Freshman Seminar/EMT (U 102); empowering them to develop their educational objectives, including why they are in college, where they belong at SSU;
 5. ***academic advising***, college career counseling (including finding a major and an advisor within the major), and transitional support by knowledgeable Learning Team members.

First Class embraces the whole student—the social being as well as the learner. It inspires engagement, demonstrates rigor, promotes consistent standards and expectations across all *First Class* sections, and models creative problem solving.

Academic Content

First Class content and pedagogy will be developed collaboratively and explicitly by all involved faculty. *First Class* will particularly emphasize skill building with rigorous expectations in:

- ***reading*** in depth for meaning and analysis, including textbooks, syllabi, websites, videotext, etc.;
- ***writing*** as an integral tool in the process of learning, with a strong focus on interdisciplinary writing as the foundation for students’ experience of Writing Across the Curriculum at SSU; *

*Note: pilot students requiring remedial attention in English are concurrently enrolled in E30 or E99.

Academic Content (continued)

- **critical thinking** in an interdisciplinary context, allowing faculty and students to:
 - pose questions and discuss possible assumptions and conclusions;
 - evaluate multiple viewpoints found in a variety of relevant sources;
- **information literacy** and appreciation for research and scholarship in a variety of disciplines;
- **research methodology**: locate, select, evaluate, use, and cite sources for academic research;
- **listening skills** to enhance attention to course content and to each other;
- **learning skills**, note-taking, study strategies, and time management;
- **communication skills**, including participation in seminar discussions and oral reporting;
- **ethical behavior** in the pursuit of knowledge; and,
- **feedback** that is sustained and rich from faculty, SSPs, and peers at all levels.

Weekly class flow for students in *First Class*

<i>Fall & Spring 3 meetings weekly</i>	<i>Day 1 (M or T) 1hour 50 minutes</i>	<i>Day 2 Wed 12-12:50</i>	<i>Day 3 (Th or F) 1hour 50 minutes</i>
<i>Rotation 2 weeks curricular / 1 week co-curricular</i>	Seminar 15 students + LTs	Weekly Lecture Warren Auditorium 150 students + Learning Teams	Seminar 15 students + LTs
	Break		Break
	Session continues		OFFICE HOUR

Assessment

First Class coordinator and instructional faculty will develop learning objectives and assessment protocols. An outside evaluator, drawn from the SSU faculty, will analyze assessment results and provide feedback to the pilot coordinator and faculty, the GE Subcommittee, and EPC. The Office of Institutional Research will support both efforts. The assessment will:

- incorporate internal assessment tools and feedback loops to track student achievement in key learning outcomes;
- establish control groups of students in traditional delivery of A2, A3, and Freshman Seminar; and
- log and analyze issues and problems discovered through the pilot to be addressed in the recommendations.

Staffing

- faculty coordinator;
- 5-10 faculty (some may wish to teach 2 sections);
- 5-10 SSPs and 10 peer mentors;
- 30 speakers in the lecture series, one per lecture over two semesters; and
- faculty/student development mentoring team to support pilot faculty
- faculty evaluator (performs analysis of assessment data)

Funding

A preliminary projection and analysis regarding student-faculty ratio suggests that the WTU earned through the high-enrollment weekly lecture balances the very low SFR of 15:1 in the seminars to average at 23:1 overall. There will be certain program start-up costs, primarily to create/organize the demonstration pilot syllabus; coordinate faculty, SSPs and peers, and provide professional development. Funding features include:

- enrollment of 150 students at a minimum of 6 units for faculty, with a recommendation of 8 units, will produce 90 FTES (150 x 9/15=90);
- enrollment targets in Areas A2, A3, and E, prorated across those areas, will be reduced by 90 FTES to offset the reduced need for traditional GE sections;
- departments will be reimbursed at actual replacement cost for full-time faculty participating in the demonstration pilot;
- participating Lecturers will be directly compensated;
- summer stipends will be provided for faculty developing the *First Class* curriculum;
- demonstration pilot start-up support will be provided out of the Provost's Office;
- Other than the FTES target reduction for A&H, demonstration pilot funding will not require reductions to the Schools' budgets.

Timeline

April-May 2005	-Provost selects demonstration pilot coordinator, faculty, SSPs, and peers -Coordinator forms <i>First Class</i> Curriculum Committee -Committee brainstorms demonstration pilot lecture theme(s) and materials for demonstration pilot course
Summer 2005	-Coordinator and Learning Teams (LTs) develop lecture theme, syllabus, outcomes, course schedule -Demonstration pilot assessment methods determined -Mentoring Team offers LTs with strategies for teaching to writing, critical thinking, information literacy, seminar leadership, GE program, and advising, goals
Fall 2005	The <i>First Class</i> demonstration pilot explores a new way of delivering an explicit set of learning outcomes in a rigorous, engaging, and multidisciplinary way, and finding answers about the value, efficacy and resources of the <i>First Class</i> approach.
May 2006	

Recommendations for the Future

Possible outcomes by February 2006 are:

1. Major problems have been resolved, the design theory showed substantially correct. Expand *First Class* in 2006-07
2. Significant problems remain, but *First Class* is showing real promise. Mount a second demonstration pilot in 2006-07 at the 2005-06 levels, and continue working through the issues.
3. Problems are insurmountable or design is fatally flawed; go back to the drawing board in 2006-07

Additional information and resources are about the *First Class* demonstration pilot available at www.sonoma.edu/ge_initiative under "What's New"

- **FAQ sheet on questions raised by Academic Senate and EPC, April 2005 – coming soon!**
- **Redesigned PowerPoint presentation, April 2005**
- **White paper "The Whole University Supporting the Whole Student," December 2004**