Rethinking First-Year Learning Communities:
The Writing-Intensive Seminar

Introduction: The Learning Community
• Learning communities at TAMU-CC are designed to help students make a successful academic and social transition from high school to college. They are a HIPs themselves.
• Triads and tetrads are the typical learning community model, consisting of the large lecture course, a seminar course, and a composition course.

Moving Forward:
Considering Alternative Models
• Dyad: A large lecture course with a seminar course.
• Stand-alone seminar course: A seminar course not linked to any other courses.
• Alternative triads and tetrads: Schemes with multiple large lecture courses and a seminar course.

Course Redesign/High Impact Practice
• Writing-intensive seminar course.
• Enrollment capped at 25.
• Small-class setting.
• Instructor/peer familiarity.
• Potential to cater to the first-year writing experience.

“Quite simply, writing is both a process of doing critical thinking and a product that communicates the results of critical thinking (Bean, 2011).”

Methods/Plan
Best Practices
• Multiple drafts (rewriting)
• Required Writing Center visits
• Individualized feedback at level appropriate to student (including sentence-level feedback)
• Share personal writing/revisions
• Writing conferences
• Peer editing
• High standard for finished products

Writing Assignments
• Reflection (midterm)
• Portfolio (end of semester)
• Discipline-specific assignments (e.g.: Political Science)
  • Op-ed
  • Policy backgrounder
  • Literature review
  • Book review
  • Political theory essay (normative)

Goals/SLOs
• Self-reports of increased student confidence in the writing process.
• Students produce multiples drafts; better appreciate the writing process.
• Increased comfort with peer editing.
• Improved sentence-level writing.
• Improved higher-level writing.
• Increased familiarity with discipline-specific approaches to writing.

Amy Carter, M.A., J.D.
Professional Assistant Professor, First Year Learning Communities Program
Amy.Carter@tamucc.edu

Large Lecture
Course
Composition
Seminar