Putting the Plural in Partnerships:
Building buy-in and support for freshman seminars as a campus initiative

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It takes a village....

Prades, The Village  by Joan Miró
http://historyday.crf-usa.org/2806/miro_art.htm
A multi-layered incentive approach

- Because the President said so...
  - Presidential initiative
  - Link to strategic vision & words to action
  - Institutional benchmarking

- Freshman seminars are a good thing
  - Academic advisers & student affairs professionals
  - Retention & student engagement
  - National Center for Students In Transition

- The coolness factor
  - Pique faculty creativity and interest – freedom to experiment
  - Flexibility of models
  - Student feedback & satisfaction
What do quality freshman seminars do for students?

- **Introduce scholarly inquiry and the expectations of a scholar**
  - Institutional goals & competencies – LLGs and GCs
  - Disciplinary, inter-disciplinary – multiple ways of knowing
  - Supports development of skills necessary for a successful scholar

- **Incorporate a “coolness factor” in the first year curriculum**
  - Learning by doing
  - Issues and topics linking discipline and scholarly work to the real world – something that “matters”

- **Build a foundation for reflective learning**
  - Challenges students to make sense of their learning and invest it with personal meaning
  - Encourages students to define their personal goals or purpose

- **Facilitate transition needs**
  - Building relationships with faculty and peers; connections to campus resources
  - Fosters engagement through integrated co-curricular requirements
Challenges

- **Recruitment**
  - “I have a great idea for a seminar…”
  - The faculty eccentric
  - Young faculty and the “Dear Linda…” letter
  - “What?! VOLUNTEER?”

- **Programmatic**
  - Building quality first year pedagogy
  - Variable understanding of first year transition
  - Turf, power, and limelighet issues
Lessons learned

- Make it easy – work *for* your instructors
- Listen & encourage
- Give flight to innovative ideas
- Deliver regular recognition from the Provost
- Thank you goes a long way
- Spotlight faculty successes and college/departmental support in wider forums
- Keep the conversations going, evolution of thought is on your side.
freshman seminars @ state

- undergrad.msu.edu/programs/seminar
- studyabroad.isp.msu.edu/frseminar/intro.html
- National Resource Center for the First Year Transition - www.sc.edu/fye/