MSU’s Freshman Seminar Abroad Model

Freshman Seminars Symposium • Michigan State University • September 30, 2011

Presenters:

Linda Gross, Ph.D.  
James M. Lucas, Ph.D.  
Inge Steglitz, Ph.D.
Topics for today’s session

- Context for first-year seminars
- First-year seminar models at Michigan State
- History and evolution of MSU’s freshman seminar abroad program
- Details and lessons learned based on the last 8 years
An Incomplete History of Freshman Seminars at MSU

- **1980s- Getting started**
  - ORO 500 launched in 1987

- **1990s- Experimenting and Refining**
  - Program based seminars
  - PRO 101 seminars launched as Presidential Initiative in 1997

- **2000s – Inspiring New Ideas and Models**
  - 2002 Freshman Seminars Abroad launched
  - PRO 200H Research Seminars launched
  - Various college and program based initiatives
  - 2006 – First Freshman Seminar Seminar Away
National Contexts:  Types of Seminars

- **Extended Orientation Seminar.** Sometimes called a freshman orientation, college survival, college transition, or student success course.

- **Academic seminar with generally uniform academic content across sections.** May be an interdisciplinary or theme-oriented course, sometimes part of a general education requirement.

- **Academic seminar on various topics.** Similar to previously mentioned academic seminar except that specific topics vary from section to section.

- **Pre-professional or discipline-linked seminar.** Designed to prepare students for the demands of the major/discipline and the profession.

- **Basic study skills seminar.** Offered for academically under-prepared students. The focus is on basic academic skills such as grammar, note-taking, and reading texts.

- **Hybrid.** Has elements from two or more types of seminars.

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
UGS Freshman Seminars – At home, abroad, and away.

- Initially conceived as an introduction to scholarship and inquiry taught by *volunteer faculty* focus on scholarly content with an awareness of student transition needs.

- Small sections to foster relationships between faculty and student peers.

- Have served as a place to experiment and pilot first year seminar models and pedagogy – CAAP seminar, UUD seminars, college/major seminars, residential program seminars.
UGS 101:
*Freshman seminars on campus*


- Introduction to scholarship and inquiry taught by *volunteer faculty* on a topic of high interest
- Small sections to foster relationships between faculty and student peers
- Intended focus on scholarly content with an awareness of student transition needs
- UGS 101 has served as a place to experiment and pilot first year seminar models and pedagogy
- One credit, graded Pass/No Pass

Contact: Dr. Linda Gross
UGS 101:

Freshman seminars on campus


Topics to Provoke and Engage:

- Game Theory in the Social Sciences
- Inside the Glass Castle
- From Beanies to Piercings: The History of Student Life at MSU
- Critical Reasoning and Public Health
- Eating Green: Sustainable Food Systems and You
- Designing and Testing Serious Games
- Sweatshops, Sit-ins and Students Seeking Economic Justice
- Science, Energy and the Future of Our Planet
- Beyond CNN: Inside the Middle East
- Art in the Public Domain
- Bugs and Bodies
- The Archeology of Middle Earth
UGS 102: Freshman Seminars Abroad


- Introduction to inquiry in global contexts
- Immersion experience
- 2 credits, graded numerical scale
- Trans-semester Summer/Fall course
UGS 102: Freshman Seminars Abroad


Outcomes

- Mini-semester transition
- Assistance with time management, independence, life skills, budgeting, study skills
- Social and academic support network
- Study abroad repeaters
Engaged Learning in the Field

- Ecology and Environment at Kellogg Biological Station (2006 – 2008) - Dr. Kay Gross, University Distinguished Professor, Plant Biology


- Art, Creativity and Economic Development (2009- present) - Dr. David Sheridan, RCAH

Summing up common features

- **Introduces scholarly inquiry and the expectations of a scholar**
  - Institutional goals & competencies
  - Disciplinary, inter-disciplinary – multiple ways of knowing

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

- **Builds 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

- **Facilitates transition needs**
  - Building relationships with faculty and peers
  - Fosters engagement through integrated co-curricular requirements
Common outcomes across freshman seminar models

- Students have a high level of satisfaction with first year seminars.
- Experiential learning rocks! Students place a high value on learning by doing.
- Students value the relationships they build in first year seminars with 1) peers and 2) instructors.
- Students who participate in freshman seminars appear to demonstrate higher levels of engagement in and out of the classroom.
- Students value exposure to resources and opportunities through first year seminars.
- Students have a greater sense of connection/belonging and confidence in navigating the university/discipline.
Mechanics of the UGS 102 programs

- 2 faculty with 10 – 15 students each, 1 support person
- Most programs run 10 – 14 days during the summer, one winter break program (Dubai)
- ½ time classroom-based, ½ experiential
- Programs offered in:
  - Mexico, Canada (Quebec), Japan, New Zealand, Italy, Ireland, South Africa, and Dubai
  - China as new target for 2012
APUE Role

- Collaborate with Study Abroad on locations and institutional international priorities
- Work with the Colleges to identify and recruit faculty and staff
- Collaborate across campus on marketing and scholarships
- Approve and consult with faculty about pedagogy, academic models, student selection, etc.
- Course management
- Faculty orientation and development
- Assessment
Pre, During, and Post Model

- Two nights on campus prior to departure for an orientation program
- Faculty development and support around program development
  - College transition/working with FY students
  - Student development
  - Teaching and learning
  - Experiential learning
- 2 required re-entry programs
Best Practice Model

- Programs seek to embody best practices for Education Abroad and the FYE
  - Transition
  - Reflection
  - Scaffolding
  - Global and intercultural competency
  - Program design and review

- FSA programs are a gateway experience for students, faculty, and staff
Student Learning Outcomes

- Networking and relationships
  - New friends, support system on campus
- Confidence
  - Academic, interpersonal, self-management
- Clarity around values and purpose
- Critical thinking
- Cultural and global awareness
Program Benefits for Faculty/Staff

- Synergy between faculty and staff from different backgrounds
- Faculty experience with first-year students and their needs (whole-student perspective)
- Faculty experience with international settings and study abroad
- Powerful, positive teaching experience and relationship building
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Readiness for college work and independence</td>
<td>Work and reading load for first-year students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural engagement</td>
<td>Teaching in an international setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maturity and behavior</td>
<td>Interface with student affairs responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not as bad as you might assume!
Evolving lessons Learned

- Male and female staff members
- Two adults traveling with students at all times
- Parent component to orientation
- Orientation and development
- No outside guests
- Limited outside work
- “Trainee” program
- Stipends
Freshman Seminars Abroad as an Education Abroad Model

A bit of history

- February 2003: (How) can we make this kind of experience happen at MSU?
- July 2003: The first program (Québec City, 35 students)
- March 2004: The second program (Mérida, Mexico, 20 students)
- 2003-2011: 1000 students & 8 locations (Canada, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, UK-Scotland)
- 2012: planning program in China (Sichuan U.)
Collaboration across campus

- Sponsoring unit: Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education (APUE)
- Other essential partners:
  - Office of Admissions
  - Registrar’s Office
  - Residential & Hospitality Services
  - Career Services Network
  - MSU Colleges
Collaboration across campus

- Writing Center
- Health Education Services
- Student Life
- Resource Center for Students with Disabilities
- Department of Police and Public Safety
- Others as needed
The Office of Study Abroad: Making the programs happen

- The hub where it all comes together
- Contributing expertise to translate pedagogy and design into high quality programs
  - Regional expertise
  - Linguistic and (cross-) cultural expertise
  - Education abroad models and best practice
- Tapping into international partner networks to stage programs world-wide
- Serving on (new) FSAs as needed
The Office of Study Abroad: Making the programs happen

BEFORE

- Collaborate with APUE on
  - selecting program locations
  - program marketing
  - program leader orientation

- Serve on program planning team

- Manage application/acceptance process

- Administer/coordinate FSA scholarships
The Office of Study Abroad: Making the programs happen

- Pay bills
- Organize group flights
- Implement programs on-site
- Prepare program leaders for travel
  - Financials
  - Health and safety
- Coordinate and participate in the on-campus orientation program
- Compile/coordinate program-specific mailings
- Communicate, communicate, communicate
The Office of Study Abroad: Making the programs happen

DURING

- Be on-call for on-site problems, crises, and emergencies
- Coordinate student disciplinary process as needed
- Serve as central communications hub
The Office of Study Abroad: Making the programs happen

AFTER

- Coordinate and participate in FSA “Unpacking” sessions
- Collaborate with APUE on program debriefing sessions with program teams
- Work with program leaders on program and travel reconciliations
Some challenges

- Communication
  - students not yet on campus
  - strict MSU policy about communicating directly to parents
  - complex organizational structure

- Coordination with on-campus Academic Orientation Program

- Integration of FSA policies and procedures into regular SA procedures

- Ensuring consistency across programs
Going deeper

Breakout sessions

3:00 PM

- **Putting the Plural in Partnerships**: Building buy-in and support for freshman seminars as a campus initiative (Gross) (Riverside Room)

- **Pedagogy to Practice**: Working with first-year students (Lucas) (Room 61)

- **Planning, Preparing, Parents and Pubs**: Making the programs happen (Steglitz) (Room 62)
3:35 PM

- **Pedagogy to Practice**: Working with first-year students (Lucas) (Room 61)
- **Planning, Preparing, Parents and Pubs**: Making the programs happen (Steglitz) (Room 62)
- **Perspectives in Progress**: Unpacking experiences abroad in the context of first year transition (Gross) (Riverside Room)