

Sophomore Leadership Seminar

Today's world will need innovators; students able to reconfigure existing limited resources to propose solutions to issues where we might not have all of the potential facts and information. We will need leaders who can think critically and act courageously with a willingness to take that small degree of calculated risk needed to transform the world in which they live. The pace of technological and social change in the world necessitates this.

The liberal arts education has long employed this mantra and placed it as one of its foundational pillars. The process of learning takes a more critical role rather than specific skill-sets that might soon be obsolete in the rapidly changing world. We wish to encourage our students to take initiative and challenge themselves to do more; to become the great leaders who will embrace the process of developing solutions.

With our current CLAS ambassadors, we initiated the prototype of this program last year by developing a curriculum designed to give them biweekly trainings in professionalism and critical thinking based on experiential learning. Through our observations of them, it has become clear that the students have enjoyed and benefited from the lesson plans. Moreover though, we have also realized that we have much more curriculum developed than the biweekly format allows. On top of that, we have also realized that much of our material provides more of a benefit the younger the student is, and thus the more time they have to take our lessons and direct them into their curricular and co-curricular activities. Thus, we are moving this material to a new CLAS Sophomore Leadership Seminar that would provide our current Liberal Arts and Sciences sophomores the important skills in leadership and critical thinking that can add to their current undergraduate experiences.

Course Format and Curriculum

The Sophomore Leadership Seminar is a year-long program and students would be expected to complete both fall and spring portions of the program. It is inherently smaller so that it can be delivered in a live format and provide the students with that small classroom experience that is missing from the majority of freshmen and sophomore level courses.

The curriculum is based on the leadership training program that we developed for the ambassadors last summer. It will not be offered for credit. The seminar would focus on the eight following areas that we have found in the few sophomore leadership programs that exist at other institutions in the country:

First Semester course: Primarily theoretical and instructional based with some service learning components

- Module 1: Theoretical Leadership
- Module 2: Personal Values
- Module 3: Leadership Skills and Team Building
- Module 4: Goal Setting

Second Semester: Project and experiential learning based using first term skills to assist others

Module 1: Building a vision

Module 2: Establishing credibility and Commitment

Module 3: Making Vision Reality

Module 4: Reflecting on experience and dealing with failure

Conclusion

There is a significant body of research and discussion in literature on higher education concerning the sophomore slump and the general disconnect that sophomore students feel. We feel this program can be a significant factor in alleviating that slump. The format of group instruction with small groups led by ambassadors can realistically support significant expansion.