

SKIDMORE

C O L L E G E

First-Year Experience Faculty Handbook

2024-2025



Introduction

Welcome to the First-Year Experience! Thank you for your commitment to this program, which is central to the education of our newest students. We trust that your experience teaching a Scribner Seminar will be both professionally stimulating and personally rewarding.

This Handbook offers some essential information about the program and its processes, and will serve as a reference as you develop more specific plans for your teaching and advising. Both this guide and all necessary forms are available on the FYE website:

www.skidmore.edu/fye/index.php.

If you have questions or concerns about anything related to the First-Year Experience, don't hesitate to call; we are eager to help. Comments about ways that we might improve the program are also welcome.

We look forward to working with you in the coming year.

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FYE Faculty Calendar

Spring 2024

Jan. 8	SSP 100 Proposals and/or Changes to be submitted via Course Leaf
Feb. 10	Peer Mentor's Name to be submitted to Christy Brown
Apr. 24	FYE Faculty-Peer Mentor Dinner

Summer 2024

July 31	Request for Additional Funds/Major Field Trips due
Aug. 31	Reflection and Projection (RAP) deadline for First-Years
TBD	Summer Reading Workshop

Fall Semester 2024

Aug. 29-Sept. 1	Pre-Orientation (optional but encouraged)
Sept. 1	New Student Convocation
Sept. 1-3	New Student Orientation
Sept. 3	Breakfast Meeting for Scribner Seminar Instructors; First Class Meeting with Seminar Students
Sept. 3-6	Individual Advising with Seminar Students
Sept. 4	Classes Begin
Sept. 10-11	President's Receptions for Scribner Seminars
Sept. 16	Summer Reading Keynote Event
Oct. 7	Study Day (no classes)
Oct. 18-20	Celebration Weekend (Friday afternoon reception for FYE faculty and parents)
Oct. 28	Advising Period Begins
Nov. 5	Registration for Spring 2025 Begins
Nov. 27-Dec. 1	Thanksgiving Vacation
Dec. 11	Last Day of Classes
Dec. 12-15	Study Days
Dec. 16-19	Final Examinations
Jan. 2	Fall Grades Due from Faculty (<i>note SSP incomplete deadline below</i>)
Jan. 6	Incomplete Grades for 2024 Scribner Seminars must be resolved (see p. 24)

Spring Semester 2025

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|---------|---|
| Jan. 8 | SSP 100 Proposals and/or Changes to be submitted via Course Leaf |
| Jan. 22 | Deadline for Candace Carlucci Backus Prize submissions |
| March | Advising Lunch for Fall 2024 SSP Instructors (advising rising sophomores) |
| March | Hold Group Meeting with Fall Seminar for Advising & Mentoring Purposes
(scheduled by individual faculty members) |

Frequently Asked Questions

How and when was the First Year Experience Program established at Skidmore?

The Committee on Educational Policies and Planning (CEPP) brought a motion to the faculty floor that was approved on October 1, 2004. September 2005 marked the inaugural year of the program.

How is the First Year Experience program staffed every year?

At the time of the program's implementation, CEPP recommended that each department, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty, would contribute to the FYE according to an agreed-upon formula that would maintain tenure-line faculty participation in the FYS and rotate among the faculty the opportunity and responsibility for teaching first-year seminars and serving as first-year advisors. For example, each department might contribute 6% of its full-time equivalents' (FTEs') teaching obligations to the FYS, so that a department would offer one FYS for approximately every three full-time faculty.

How many seminars do we offer each year?

About 45, depending on the size of the incoming class. Two additional seminars take place in London as part of the London FYE program; these are taught by Skidmore faculty.

What are the distinguishing features of Skidmore's First-Year Experience?

Each incoming student is enrolled in a Scribner Seminar, an intimate, topical, interdisciplinary course specially designed for students who are acclimating to college. The instructor serves as the advisor for all students in the course, enabling strong mentoring bonds. Scribner Seminars also feature a Peer Mentor, a specially-trained returning student who supports both the first-year students and the instructor by facilitating academic and social transitions to college. Other aspects of the program include a common summer reading with related programming and various special events—field trips, lectures, advising sessions—targeted at first-year students that may take place inside or outside the confines of the seminar itself.

What is the fourth credit hour component?

All seminars are four credits, but the fourth hour is set aside for some combination of mentoring activities, co-curricular events, and whatever else the instructor has in mind that will contribute to the academic and/or social well-being of the students. If the instructor wishes, Peer Mentors are trained to deliver special modules in the fourth hour on such topics including but not limited to academic integrity, alcohol and drug use, diversity and inclusion, and academic resources and opportunities. However, the decision on how to use the fourth credit hour is entirely up to the instructor, and may vary considerably from seminar to seminar.

If I wish to do something special with my class, how do I fund it?

Each seminar has a budget of \$600 that may be used for field trips, special supplies, or social outings, among other things. The instructor may also request additional funds if a proposed event exceeds the seminar budget; applications for supplementary funding are due on July 31st. Instructors sometimes set aside a portion of the seminar budget to be used by the Peer Mentor, who may then initiate and host activities of their own. Funds may only be used when the seminar is active (fall semester), and receipts must be submitted by Dec. 12th.

Are funds available for pedagogical preparation?

Yes. Returning seminar instructors receive \$50 for pedagogical materials (books, films, software, etc.). First-time FYE instructors receive \$125. Receipts must be submitted to the FYE Office by Dec. 12th of the semester in which you teach your seminar. Anticipated overages must be discussed in advance (i.e., the summer prior to your teaching semester) with the FYE Director and will be supported if possible.

How do I acquire a Peer Mentor, and what are my responsibilities regarding him/her/them?

You are encouraged to identify and secure a Peer Mentor on your own. The FYE Office also accepts independent applications from interested students, establishing a pool of candidates whom you may interview if you wish. Your PM will sit in on your seminar and will be trained to assist with fourth hour programming; you will award a grade based on the quality of the PM's mentoring work. To ensure that the PM gets the most out of this leadership opportunity, please set up regular meetings and consultations.

What requirements must a Peer Mentor meet?

Peer Mentors must be committed to academic engagement, readily available and accessible to first-year students, and knowledgeable about the resources of the College. More specifically, every Peer Mentor must pass academic and social integrity checks and must be available for the following: 1) attendance in your Scribner seminar and enrollment in ID 202 Peer Mentor Experience; 2) enrollment in a one-credit ID 201 Peer Mentor Seminar that meets once a week throughout the fall; 3) attendance at Peer Mentor Training (the week prior to fall classes); 4) participation in New Student Orientation.

In addition to teaching the seminar, what are my other responsibilities to the First-Year Program?

Your most important obligation is to serve as advisor to your seminar students *for their first two years* at Skidmore or until they declare majors. In addition, you will have some special responsibilities during orientation period in early September—notably on the day before classes begin, when you will attend a breakfast briefing and then hold both group and individual meetings with your seminar students. (The group meeting usually includes a general advising session and a discussion of the summer reading.) You and your students will also attend a reception hosted by the President of the College, typically held during the first two weeks of classes. In the spring following the Scribner Seminar, new FYE faculty are expected to attend an advising workshop focused on advising issues relevant to rising sophomores. We also ask that FYE faculty host at least one group meeting in the spring prior to advising/registration to extend

the coherence of the seminar and provide advising, mentoring, and/or social support; modest funds are available for pizza or other refreshments.

Building a Scribner Seminar Course

As you prepare to construct or modify a Scribner Seminar syllabus it is important to keep in mind that these courses are fundamentally different from the courses typically offered at the College. They are unique in several ways: they are open only to first-year students; they include a fourth credit hour component that involves direct address of issues related to first-year adjustment to college life; they must be interdisciplinary in nature; and they include a Peer Mentor. *Your syllabus should reflect your own perspectives on these unique attributes.*

One of the biggest challenges in imagining a course and constructing a syllabus for the FYE is identifying a level of academic rigor that is appropriate for first-year students. We have heard in the past that students enter Skidmore with the false assumption that the Scribner Seminar is “fluffy” or easy and that traditional disciplinary courses are far more intellectually challenging. This is true neither in policy nor in practice. Ideally, Scribner Seminars offer an intense intellectual experience with the support of faculty and Peer Mentors present and attentive to academic challenges first-year college students often face.

We have included material to help you construct or modify your Scribner Seminar syllabus. Please pay particular attention to those components—such as the “Seminar Goals,” the description of fourth credit hour programming, the interdisciplinarity of the course, and so on—that *must* be included on your syllabus. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of the First-Year Experience.

Seminar Goals and General Guidelines

Scribner Seminars carry four credits and have no prerequisites; they must be accessible to all incoming students, including international students. Courses that satisfy the Scribner Seminar requirement may not be "double-counted" in order to satisfy other all-College or major or minor requirements.

Scribner Seminar Goals (to be included on your syllabus)

This course will introduce students to disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives on [insert the course topic], with the following goals [insert course-specific goals here or integrate them into the goals below]. In addition, this is a course about knowledge and knowing, particularly about ways to identify problems, formulate productive questions, and go about answering those questions. Students in this course will demonstrate the ability to:

- *distinguish among, and formulate, types of questions asked by different disciplines*
- *read critically, and gather and interpret evidence*
- *distinguish among the evidence and methodologies appropriate to different disciplines*
- *consider and address complexities and ambiguities*
- *make connections among ideas*

- *recognize choices, examine assumptions and ask questions of themselves and of their own work*
- *formulate conclusions based upon evidence*
- *communicate ideas both orally and in writing*
- *relate the results of the course to their educational goals*

Interdisciplinary Perspectives

Your course should help students see the benefits of employing more than one single disciplinary perspective when approaching any subject matter or issue. Ideally, students will learn to distinguish among, and formulate, the types of questions asked by different disciplines as well as learn to use their various methodologies to gain the most complete understanding possible.

The interdisciplinary focus may be broad, drawing on a wide range of disciplines (e.g., biology, economics, and literature). Alternatively, the course may reflect the perspectives of a smaller number of disciplines, and those disciplines may all be within a similar area of study. For instance, one might propose a course that draws on the social sciences (e.g., combining historical and economic perspectives), or the sciences (e.g., combining biological, mathematical, and physics perspectives).

Critical Thinking

Your course should develop the sorts of skills that are consistent with the notion of Critical Thinking as espoused in Skidmore's [Goals for Student Learning and Development](#). Specifically, students will learn to read critically and to gather and interpret evidence. They will learn to consider and address complexities and ambiguities. They will learn to make connections among ideas. They will come to recognize choices, examine assumptions, and ask questions of themselves and of their own work. They will learn to formulate conclusions based on evidence.

Communication Skills

Your course should seek to develop the Communications Skills espoused in the Goals for Student Learning and Development. Specifically, students will learn to communicate ideas in writing through routine writing assignments. Drafting and revising their written work with attention to clarity and correctness will help strengthen their writing skills. They will learn to focus an essay with a thesis or main idea, organize their ideas logically, and use appropriate transitions between ideas. Consistent with the goals of Critical Thinking, they will learn to support their assertions with evidence. Students will be introduced to conventions of documentation and understand the purpose of using sources and the need to uphold standards of academic integrity.

Students will also learn to communicate ideas orally. Therefore, regular attendance of class sessions is crucial to student performance and assessment. The small size of the seminar should allow regular student participation in discussions. In that environment, they should learn to express their positions clearly and contribute meaningfully to productive intellectual exchanges.

Accessibility

All Scribner Seminars must be accessible to all incoming students. Please keep in mind, in particular, that international students may be excited to study American topics but may have less familiarity with our culture. If your course is in any way specific to the United States, such students may require additional patience and support.

Procedure for Course Approval

Instructors must upload their course proposals in the Courseleaf's CIM system by January 8, 2024. Once inside the system, choose "Scribner Seminar Proposal Form," even if you are proposing a revision of an existing course. In addition to filling out all required fields, you will be asked to upload your syllabus.

Please note that your Scribner Seminar syllabus must include the following:

- Learning Goals for Scribner Seminars (though you may also include your own learning goals)
- A clear statement of how your fourth credit hour will be used
- Weekly schedule with readings (with chapters or page ranges specified)
- Assignments and relevant grade percentages

Please "launch" and "approve" your proposal, which sets it into motion within the system. It will be approved by your Chair; the FYE Director; and the Associate Dean before moving to the Curriculum Committee. At any stage you may be asked for further inclusions or clarifications.

Catalog Descriptions for Scribner Seminars: Recommendations from Curriculum Committee

When writing catalog descriptions, Scribner Seminar faculty should keep in mind a few things:

- Curriculum Committee has guidelines that apply to any catalog description.
- Your audience for a Scribner Seminar consists of recent high school graduates who are not on campus and are not familiar with the curriculum.
- Your description should be carefully worded to reflect the actual content of the course, and it should be brief. It is customary to begin the description with a sentence fragment; avoid passive voice, especially regarding student involvement, and avoid using phrases such as "in-depth" or "intense," which add nothing substantive to the description. Please limit abstractions and long Latinate words, and use student-centered, concrete examples whenever possible.
- Consult the [Skidmore College Guide to Writing](#) for stylistic clarification and the FYE website for examples of [Scribner Seminar descriptions](#).

How to Schedule your Scribner Seminar

Course scheduling for Scribner Seminars happens each January—before departmental deadlines. You will receive an e-mail in early January with instructions on how to submit your day/time and classroom preferences. The four credit hour seminar may be delivered in two ways: 1) via a standard 4-credit hour block; or 2) via a three credit hour block + an additional "floating" hour for the 4th credit. For option #2, the floating 4th credit hour may be scheduled on any weekday morning, 8:30-9:30 a.m., or on a weekday evening (MTWTh), 6:30-7:30 p.m. or 7:30-8:30 p.m.

Please note that you must submit three options. While we will do everything possible to give you your first choice, we must balance a variety of concerns as we schedule courses. We will confirm with you first before recommending the final day and time to the Registrar's Office.

[SEE THE REGISTRAR'S WEBSITE FOR A LIST OF SCHEDULING OPTIONS.](#)

Additional Pedagogical Considerations

Cluster Approaches

Scribner Seminars lend themselves to collaborations. Feel free to be creative regarding potential interactions with another seminar instructor; this might even involve occasional joint teaching. Successful models have included "Human Dilemmas" (up to 9 seminars with a common syllabus) and "Sport and Society" (two instructors teaching the same course at separate times and joining together for the fourth hour).

Writing in the Seminars

Writing plays a crucial role in the seminars and links to the larger goal of helping students understand and practice the conventions of academic discourse:

- reading critically
- analyzing ideas and formulating relevant questions
- generating original ideas
- developing a thesis and using it to focus an essay or presentation
- organizing ideas logically
- supporting claims with evidence
- presenting material orally
- moving through the process of drafting to revising
- attending to clarity, cohesiveness, and grammar
- using sources appropriately
- upholding standards of academic integrity

Possible assignments might include:

- brief written responses to readings
- online discussions or chat room participation
- in-class three- to five-minute writing exercises in response to specific prompts
- activities to help generate ideas (brainstorming, listing, mapping, free writing) in relation to a specific reading or a specific assignment
- discussions that examine a reading's organization, use of argument, and use of evidence
- peer critiques (it is helpful to provide guidelines)
- classroom workshops

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON TEACHING WRITING IS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE FYE OFFICE OR [THE SKIDMORE WRITING CENTER](#).

Developing Research Assignments for First-Year Students

Research assignments may be small or large, but they should follow some basic guidelines:

- Assignments should be specific and unambiguous
- Adequate time and assistance need to be provided
- Research should enhance course content and build on course objectives
- Students should learn how to locate, interpret, and evaluate sources
- Issues of academic integrity and ethical scholarship should be addressed

Scribner seminar instructors might consider the following in order to teach and facilitate research assignments:

- Scheduling a class session in the library with an appropriate reference librarian
- Placing high-demand research materials on reserve in the library
- Breaking large research projects into smaller chunks with discrete goals and deadlines

Please contact the Director of the FYE with any questions or concerns that arise as you contemplate the development of a new Scribner Seminar or significant changes to an already approved Seminar.

4th Credit Hour Program

Designing the Fourth Hour Component

The Scribner Seminars were designed to respond to some of the challenges of teaching new college students. Specifically, the 4th credit hour component allows students to explore some of the curricular and co-curricular issues that often arise in the first year of college but go largely unaddressed in other college courses.

So, for example, a Scribner Seminar might take advantage of the 4th credit hour to examine topics ranging from “how to manage your time” to “how to make an effective oral presentation” to “how to use the library.” That same seminar might also explore internships, studying abroad, and/or joining a club or organization on campus. Sometimes the fourth hour might be used for a special field trip or a social outing, or you might require that your students attend a public lecture or mandate that they volunteer in a specific organization. Although we hope that faculty members are mentoring their first-year students throughout the entire Seminar experience, the 4th credit hour is specifically designed to allow additional time for that to happen.

The Office of the First-Year Experience provides programming through the Peer Mentors if you wish to take advantage of it, but each faculty member must decide what works best for his/her/their course. Indeed, Scribner Seminar instructors are encouraged to develop their own approaches to the fourth credit hour, organizing events and addressing issues that they deem appropriate for first-year students.

Programming Offered by the FYE

The Office of the First-Year Experience trains Peer Mentors to support programming on the following topics, any or all of which may be integrated into 4th credit hour programming:

- Academic Integrity
- Knowing Your Academic Resources and Opportunities
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Summer Reading
- Civic Engagement and Campus Community
- Co-Curricular Life
- Sex- and Gender-Based Misconduct
- Alcohol and Drug Use
- Mental Health and Wellness

The Peer Mentors are able to deliver brief modules and/or facilitate conversations on these topics if you wish. We encourage you to collaborate with your Peer Mentor to implement specific sessions into the curriculum, preferably in a staged way throughout the semester.

While the Peer Mentors can offer these sessions outside of class, they are probably best delivered in the classroom with your encouragement and even participation, since they support student learning and engagement. The first-year students are more likely to recognize their importance if they are endorsed and sessions are attended by the faculty; however, the faculty will decide what

roles, if any, these sessions will play in the classroom. Wherever these sessions occur, the faculty and Peer Mentors will want to coordinate timing.

There are, of course, a number of offices on campus that might also prove useful to your first-year students and might be incorporated into fourth hour programming. Among these are the Tang Museum, the Office of Off-Campus Study and Exchanges, the Counseling Center, Career Services, the Writing Center, the Library, etc. We are happy to facilitate “open houses” if faculty would like to learn more about these offices. If you would like more focused attention for your class, we encourage you to contact these campus offices directly; you do not need the FYE’s approval to schedule individualized sessions.

Funding

Each seminar receives a \$650 budget: \$600 for co-curricular programming, and \$50 for course development (books and other pedagogical materials). Faculty members who have not yet taught in the FYE receive an additional \$75 (for a total of \$125) for pedagogical materials. Receipts for reimbursement must be submitted by Dec. 12th of your teaching semester. See POLICIES AND PROCEDURES for further information.

The FYE encourages faculty to think creatively about ways to enhance student learning. If you have something in mind that exceeds your budget, you may petition the Director for additional funds; this must be done by July 31st via the form available on the FYE website. We will accommodate as many requests as possible.

The FYE further encourages collaboration among faculty in the planning of co-curricular events; indeed, several faculty members might wish to pool their resources. The FYE website lists the fall Scribner Seminars and provides brief course descriptions; we invite you to contact other faculty to explore possible collaborations. With some advance planning, seminars might, for example, combine forces and funding for a field trip. The FYE office is available to facilitate these collaborations, so please feel free to utilize us.

Arranging Special Events

Please contact Christy Brown in the FYE Office for assistance in scheduling and arranging all field trips and for help with any other special event, including the ordering of food. Christy will also keep track of your budget and will let you know if you are approaching your limit.

Please be advised that all trips requiring bussing, including local field trips, necessitate the submission of a "[Funding Request Form](#)" (available on the FYE website). All forms must be submitted by July 31st. For trips without bussing, the field trip form must be submitted two weeks in advance.

SEE [POLICIES & PROCEDURES](#) REGARDING TRANSPORTATION, PURCHASES, ACCESSING FUNDS, ETC.

Working with Peer Mentors

Peer Mentor Program

The Peer Mentor program provides training to upper-level students so they can assist first-year students in making the transition to college life. In exchange for their service, Peer Mentors receive both financial compensation and academic credit.

The ideal Peer Mentor is committed to academic excellence, readily available and accessible to first-year students, and knowledgeable about the wide array of resources at the college. Since Peer Mentors serve as role models for first year students, they are expected to have and maintain excellent social and academic integrity records (and will not be accepted into the program without passing an integrity check). They are also expected to support the seminar instructor and to represent the College and the Office of the FYE in a positive and helpful way.

Peer Mentors may be sophomores, juniors, or seniors. They are required to:

- Attend a week-long pre-orientation training session in **the week prior to Fall classes**;
- Accompany first-year students in all New Student Orientation activities;
- Enroll in ID202 Peer Mentor Experience and attend all class meetings of their assigned Scribner Seminar;
- Enroll in and attend all meetings of ID201 Peer Mentoring Seminar;
- Support the seminar instructor in executing fourth hour programming.

Peer Mentors are also expected to

- Serve as academic and social role models for first-year students;
- Help new students integrate into the Skidmore community;
- Address strategies (time/stress management, study skills, etc.) to foster academic success;
- Identify and facilitate use of such resources as the Writing Center; peer academic coaching; Office of Academic Advising; clubs and organizations; Career Services; the Counseling Center; Health Services;
- Serve as a general resource for the students in the seminar.

Peer Mentors should not

- Act as teaching assistants. They do not grade, teach academic subject matter, or do clerical work.

In working with a Peer Mentor, faculty are encouraged to

- Share the syllabus as early as possible so that the Peer Mentor understands the content and rationale for the course;
- Arrive at a contractual agreement with the Peer Mentor, spelling out clearly his/her/their role and duties (see FYE website for a sample contract);
- Meet with the Peer Mentor regularly so that his/her/their role emerges from and is refined through a collaborative process of consultation and discussion;
- Endorse the Peer Mentor's role and activities in the classroom;

- Leave room in the syllabus for activities led by the Peer Mentor, possibly including the delivery of workshops for which the mentor has been trained;
- Allocate some portion of the FYE funds to the Peer Mentor to support co-curricular and extra-curricular activities;
- Remember that the Peer Mentor is a student; specifically, he/she/they is (are) learning how to be a leader and will require your patience and active guidance.

Peer Mentor Selection

There are two ways for a Scribner Seminar instructor to choose a Peer Mentor:

1. Invite a specific student
2. Interview applicants who have applied to the FYE Office

If you choose to select your own Peer Mentor, please send the student's name to Christy Brown (x8111 or christybrown@skidmore.edu). She or the Director of the FYE will notify you of any integrity violations that preclude involvement. No other action is necessary.

Please note that it is to your advantage to ask a potential Peer Mentor if s/he has an integrity violation before submitting his/her/their name. Students with a violation within the past year will not be considered; violations prior to that may require a meeting with the FYE Director, and decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

If you have not identified a Peer Mentor and would like to interview applicants, please let the FYE Office know. We will collect applications (including a faculty referral) from interested students and share potential names with you.

Your Peer Mentor should be identified by early March, since Peer Mentors will have to arrange their fall schedule around the corresponding faculty seminar and ID201 Peer Mentor Seminar.

Compensation and Academic Credit for Peer Mentors

Peer mentors are compensated in a variety of ways. They are paid an hourly wage for their work with first-year students outside of the classroom (up to three hours per week). In addition, they are paid \$250 for their work during New Student Orientation.

Peer mentors also receive academic credit as follows:

- 1) One credit for completing ID201 (Peer Mentoring Seminar), taught by the Director of the FYE. (This course is independent of the credits the Peer Mentor receive for participation in the Scribner Seminar.) Grading for ID 201 is the responsibility of the Director of the FYE.
- 2) Two credits for the Scribner Seminar itself (coded as ID202). Grading for this experience is the responsibility of the seminar instructor, but the Director of the FYE will submit the grades for this course. Basic expectations associated with the Peer Mentor include attending *all* classes, completing *all* reading assignments and in-class activities,

participating in class discussions (when appropriate), mentoring students, supporting students as they make the academic and social transition to college, meeting with students outside of class, helping the instructor with fourth-credit hour programming, and so on. Peer Mentors are not expected to undergo major assessments (tests, papers), nor are they graded for such work. The grade assigned should reflect the quality of their mentoring and the support they provide.

Termination Policy

FYE Peer Mentors hold a unique position in their seminars and on campus. They are not exactly College employees and yet neither are they typical seminar students. On the contrary, they are specially trained to fill a particular role as resources for *both* the first year students *and* the seminar instructors. Moreover, they are the only group of student workers on campus who receive both academic credit and pay for a single experience.

The decision to relieve a Peer Mentor of his/her/their duties will only occur in exceptional circumstances. In the event that an instructor believes that disciplinary action—especially leading to the possible termination of a Peer Mentor—is called for, it is imperative that the instructor contact the FYE Director immediately.

Social or academic integrity offenses on the part of a Peer Mentor are taken seriously; a single serious offense or a series of minor offenses will be automatic cause for termination. The Director of the FYE will review any infractions on a case by case basis.

Disciplinary action that does not rise to the level of termination falls within the sole jurisdiction of the individual faculty member. The Director of the FYE can be a valuable resource in these situations and is always available for consultation.

Advising and Mentoring First-Year Students

The Role of the Advisor/Mentor

A unique aspect of the Scribner Seminar is the instructor's role as advisor *and* mentor to his/her/their first year students. The advisor role entails official responsibilities, while mentoring is a broader category that is more loosely defined. What is important, however, is that FYE faculty members are actively engaged in helping new students integrate into the intellectual life of the College.

As **advisors**, faculty members will meet with new students on the day before classes begin in the fall semester to initiate the advising relationship and answer any questions about schedules, College policies, etc. Thereafter, faculty members will meet advisees to discuss curricular choices during advising week each semester. (First-year students typically remain with their FYE advisors until they declare their majors.)

As **mentors**, faculty members are called upon to model intellectual engagement and to guide students in making informed choices about their college lives; this may include conversations about curricular, co-curricular, and career plans, as well as the way those areas intersect. Faculty mentors may also direct students to other appropriate faculty members for advice about aspirations and goals; in general, mentors serve as a resource as students explore the varied opportunities that the College offers. During the Scribner Seminar semester, of course, the faculty member will be able to build this mentoring relationship through curricular and co-curricular means.

NOTE: The Office of Academic Advising will host two different advising workshops—one in each semester in advance of the advising period—to prepare FYE instructors/advisors for the specific advising needs of this population.

Reflection and Projection (RAP) Document

The RAP is an electronic document that serves as a reflection tool and is also used for advising purposes. In the summer before they arrive at Skidmore, incoming students respond to a question (typically about the role of liberal education in their lives) in an essay format; the resulting document may provide the basis for the first advising session during New Student Orientation. Students may add to this document later on, notably in the second semester, thereby developing habits of reflection about educational goals and creating a record of growth and change. The RAP is part of each student's record and may be accessed at any time by his/her/their advisor.

Summer Reading

This common reading offers another opportunity for early modeling of intellectual engagement and for getting to know your advisees. Each SSP faculty member will lead a discussion of the Summer Reading for his/her/their seminar group during New Student Orientation; you will receive a series of talking points to assist you. Preparation for discussing the Summer Reading and programming around the reading will be organized by a committee made up of several current SSP faculty members.

Policies and Procedures

Accessing Seminar Funds

Each seminar has a budget of \$650— \$600 for co-curricular events and \$50 for pedagogical materials such as books. Faculty who have never taught a Scribner seminar receive an extra \$75 (for a total of \$125) for pedagogical materials. [Anticipated overages for special pedagogical needs, including trips, must be requested by July 31st preceding the seminar.](#)

You may set aside a portion of your seminar funding to be used by your Peer Mentor to host activities. (Please notify the FYE office if you choose to do so.) All expenditures associated with your Scribner Seminar must be processed through Oracle following the step-by-step instruction found on the [Oracle Cloud Training website](#).

For pedagogical funds:

Itemized receipts must be received by the FYE Office by December 12th of the semester in which you are teaching. Please remember that taxes will not be reimbursed; a tax-exempt card should be procured from the FYE Office before making any purchases. No bookstore purchases should be charged to the FYE without advance approval.

If you make copies at print services that have a fee associated with them, please forward a copy of your print services receipt to the FYE Administrative Assistant. Additionally, please be aware that color copies are quite expensive. Only print in color if necessary, and please budget accordingly.

For co-curricular funds:

Field trips. The dual aims of field trips are to augment the academic experiences of first-year students and create bonds between faculty, Peer Mentor, and first-year students that will enhance supportive mentoring relationships. The latter of these two aims is at least as important as the former. Activities meant to accomplish one or both of these aims are encouraged and will be funded up to \$600. Local travel arrangements can be arranged through Christy Brown (christybrown@skidmore.edu). See p. 21-22 for details.

Meals and Refreshments. If you or your Seminar's Peer Mentor purchase food for such activities, please bring *itemized* receipts to the FYE Office for reimbursement. You may also speak with Christy about ordering refreshments from dining services for an on-campus site; please note that dining services requires two weeks' notice. Please keep off-campus dining outings to no more than \$300; overages must be approved in *advance*. Note that the Business Office will not approve more than a 20% gratuity; if you leave a larger tip, it will not be reimbursed. Tax is not reimbursable.

(The dining hall has several private spaces that can be reserved; students on the meal plan can simply get their food and gather in the designated space. You may purchase tickets through the FYE Office for faculty or students not on the meal plan.)

PLEASE NOTE THAT UNUSED FUNDS DO NOT "ROLL OVER" INTO THE SPRING.

NO SOCIAL EVENTS MAY BE HOSTED DURING STUDY DAYS OR FINAL EXAMS.

Critical College policies to keep in mind:

Tax paid for any item will not be refunded. You or your Peer Mentor must use the college's tax-exempt card/form when making purchases (available in the FYE Office or on Skidmore's website); otherwise, you will be reimbursed for the item(s) but not the tax.

The college will not reimburse you without an itemized receipt. If you purchase food or beverages for your students, we must have a complete itemized account, not just a final total.

Check requests for less than \$250 will be approved and returned to you for submission at Barrett Center. Reimbursements for more than \$250 will be mailed to you via campus mail.

PLEASE CHECK WITH THE FYE DIRECTOR IF YOU ARE UNSURE ABOUT ANY POSSIBLE USE OF SEMINAR FUNDS.

Field Trips

****IMPORTANT:** All field trips requiring busing (local or trips beyond the local area) must be approved in the summer before your seminar. Submit the [funding request](#) by the July 31st deadline. Local trips not requiring busing must be approved two weeks in advance. For local, non-bussing field trips, please reach out the Director or the Administrative Assistant for approval.

General Considerations

No trip may be scheduled for a weekday unless it can be fully contained within the seminar block without encroaching on students' other obligations.

Outings are considered co-curricular in nature and must remain optional for students. (Keep in mind that athletic meets, jobs, and other obligations may prevent individual students from participating.) If an assignment is connected to a particular outing, alternatives must be made available for students who are unable to attend.

Important: All students who participate in an outing must both depart and return with the group.

If you are planning a major trip in excess of your seminar funding, it is expected that all of your \$600 budget will be devoted to the trip. You may not hold out funds for other purposes.

Waivers

For trips to destinations outside the immediate Saratoga vicinity, all students must fill out a waiver. Students under 18 years of age will also require a confirmation email from a parent, sent to the instructor and forwarded to the Director of the FYE. The waiver forms (paper or electronic copies) and the parent emails must be submitted to the Director at least 24 hours prior to the field trip departure or by the date set by the Director.

Transportation

For local excursions (e.g., Saratoga Springs and New York state Capital Region area):

- CDTA bus (free for those with a Skidmore ID). Bus routes available at: <https://www.cdta.org/routes-and-schedules/saratoga>
- Taxi cabs (pricey, but possible, depending on your destination). Skidmore typically deals with Saratoga Taxi (584-2700). Contact the FYE Office to arrange direct billing for your trip OR get a receipt so you can be reimbursed from your seminar funds.
- Rented or College Fleet vehicles. Drivers must be authorized by Skidmore, which requires filling out the [Driver Authorization Form](#) and taking it to Business Services in Barrett Center. Your license will be checked to be sure there are no infractions. Peer mentors may also become authorized drivers provided they are at least 18 years old. Please be aware that checking on NYS licenses takes a matter of minutes; out-of-state licenses may take several days. Costs of rental vehicles will be deducted from your seminar funds; the FYE Office can assist with possible reservation of a college van, which is free of charge.

7-person vans may be rented from Enterprise Rental; you will need to submit the Enterprise Rental Insurance Form. If you wish to use another agency, please contact the FYE Office.

The College's driving policy is available at:

https://www.skidmore.edu/risk-management/motor_vehicle_policy/MotorVehiclePolicy9.2019.pdf

For trips beyond the local area:

Please call the FYE Office; we will coordinate each trip with Upstate Transit and deduct expenses from your seminar funds.

Buses vary in size (28/40/55 passengers) and range in price from \$650 (for 4-hour trips within the radius of Glens Falls and Clifton Park) to \$2500 or more (for day trips to New York City). For more expensive trips, the FYE will ask seminars to join together and share the cost. TRIPS MUST BE ARRANGED IN THE SUMMER PRECEDING YOUR SEMINAR.

Tickets, Reservations, Food Arrangements

Please contact the FYE Office so Christy Brown can help you. If you choose to purchase food on your own, be sure to get a tax-exempt card in advance (taxes will not be reimbursed); you will also need an itemized receipt. Reimbursements will be made up until Dec. 12th.

CAS Policies (Withdrawals, Failures, etc.)

Some students will be unable to complete their Scribner Seminar due to 1) a personal or medical leave of absence; 2) withdrawal; or 3) failure. The Director of the First Year Experience and the Committee on Academic Standing (CAS) have developed the following guidelines to determine if and when it makes sense for a student to repeat a Scribner Seminar or to move on with his/her/their academic program.

1) Leaves of Absence:

First-year students may apply to take a leave of absence for one or two semesters. Leaves for one semester are not automatically granted. Applications for a one-semester leave during the student's first term should describe the student's academic progress and challenges during their first semester and provide a detailed academic plan that will maximize their chances for success upon return to the College. The DFYE reviews and approves these applications on behalf of CAS. To prepare for their return, students taking a one-semester leave in the fall term must meet with the DFYE prior to their spring registration.

Students who return in the spring semester following a fall-term leave are not required to enroll in a Scribner Seminar the following fall; the interdisciplinary (Scribner Seminar) requirement of the General Education Curriculum is considered fulfilled for these students upon successful completion of the spring term at Skidmore. Students who do not return for or complete the spring term, are required to enroll in a Scribner Seminar. In some cases, when students have demonstrated academic success by completing coursework at another college while they were on leave, the DFYE may waive the Scribner Seminar requirement upon the student's return.

2) Withdrawals and Failures:

Students who seek to withdraw because they are doing poorly in their Scribner Seminar must consult with their faculty instructor and the FYE Director to determine if a withdrawal is appropriate. Because Scribner Seminars are a required component of the General Education Curriculum and integral to the First Year Experience, the CAS expects withdrawals to be rarely granted. Even if a withdrawal is approved, the student will be considered for disqualification by the CAS during Academic Review for not meeting minimum standards for continuation. Students who fail their Scribner Seminar are also reviewed by the CAS.

During review, the CAS considers the student's academic record as well as the student's transition to Skidmore and engagement with the college community. The CAS pays

particular attention to the student's demonstrated success—and potential for improvement—in academic courses of three or more credits. First-year students who are offered a waiver and who failed or withdrew from their Scribner Seminar are not required to enroll in another Scribner Seminar. However, the CAS may require first-year students on waiver to enroll in one or more academic courses of at least three credits each so that the students may continue to mature as learners. The interdisciplinary (Scribner Seminar) requirement of the General Education Curriculum will be considered fulfilled when the students return to good academic standing.

3) Transfers:

All transfer students who have been matriculated at another institution for at least one full semester (12 credits) will be exempt from the Scribner Seminars. They have already made the first-semester transition to college.

In addition to the minimal standards for continuation—which the CAS establishes (with Faculty approval), monitors, and interprets—the CAS also reviews the records of students who have not completed all the appropriate "Foundation" and "Interdisciplinary Study" requirements by their specified deadlines. Students in this situation are considered during Academic Review in January or June. In most cases, the CAS will grant a one-semester waiver of minimal standards so that the student may improve his/her/their academic standing by taking an appropriate course during the next semester of study. During the next semester of study, the student will be "on waiver" and thus ineligible for any opportunities dependent on the student's academic standing (such as study abroad or participation in student government or athletics).

Important: The CAS is particularly concerned about students who fail their Scribner Seminar. The academic record and rationale of students in this situation will be carefully considered by the CAS during Academic Review for evidence that the student can improve his/her/their standing with another semester of study.

Incompletes

As with all courses, a grade of Incomplete in a Scribner Seminar should be granted *only* in exceptional circumstances. Please inform the FYE Director if you are considering a grade of Incomplete. Due to the need to identify in a timely manner those students who will have to stand for the January CAS Academic Review, all Incompletes for Scribner Seminars must be resolved by the deadline posted on the academic calendar (usually around January 5th). The final grade should be submitted to the Registrar by that date.

Evaluations

As with all other courses, first-year students will evaluate their seminars near the end of the semester. Please ask your Peer Mentor to administer the evaluations and return them to the FYE office.

At the end of the semester, you will also be invited to give feedback of the program via email, in-person, and/or by a brief questionnaire. We appreciate timely return of these questionnaires, as they help us identify potential improvements to the program and assist us with overall assessment.

FYE Prize

The First-Year Experience Prize, funded through the generosity of Candace Carlucci Backus '66, recognizes outstanding scholarly or artistic achievement in the Scribner Seminars. Nominations may be for individual or collaborative projects and may include any kind of exemplary work—written, visual, or performative. Up to three awards may be made each year.

The FYE Office will solicit nominations (due in January) from the Fall's Scribner Seminar instructors. A committee of faculty members will review the submissions and choose the recipient(s). FYE Prize winners will be acknowledged at a special dinner in the spring and their names will be inscribed on a plaque in the FYE Office.

Spring Expectations

Scribner Seminar faculty who have just completed their first semester of FYE teaching are expected to attend an advising lunch in the spring semester co-sponsored by the Office of Academic Advising and the Office of the FYE; this will help them prepare to advise first-year students as they consider the transition to sophomore year.

All FYE faculty members are also expected to meet at least once with their seminar students prior to registration for a group advising and mentoring session. (Peer Mentors are also encouraged to attend.) Ideally, this should be a fun and interactive gathering and the conversation should help students reflect on their experiences thus far in college. Meeting in the dining hall is often the best arrangement, as students on the meal plan can simply get their food and gather in a designated spot; meal tickets are available for the faculty member and any student not on the meal plan. (The FYE Office can also help you reserve the test kitchen.) Alternatively, modest funds are available if you would like to host pizza or other refreshments somewhere else on campus.

****Please note that unspent money from the fall seminar budgets does not "roll over" to spring.**

Peer Mentors may be paid for a total of up to ten hours in the spring semester for any work they do with the seminar group, including attendance at the advising/mentoring session. Please encourage them to stay connected to the first-year students.