A Faculty Member's Guide to the First-Year Experience

2020-2021
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. Of course, 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

Summer 2020

July 31 Request for Additional Funds due
July 31 Request for Major Field Trip due (Beyond Saratoga region)
Aug. (TBA) New Faculty Advisors Workshop (Office of Academic Advising)
Aug. 30 Reflection and Projection (RAP) deadline for First-Years
Late Aug. Summer Reading Workshop

Fall Semester 2020

Sept. 6 New Student Orientation and Convocation
Sept. 8 Brunch Meeting for Scribner Seminar Instructors; first class meeting with seminar students; individual advising with seminar students
Sept. 9 Classes Begin
Mid Sept. President’s Receptions for Scribner Seminars (dates TBA)
Oct. 16-18 Celebration Weekend (Friday 4:00 reception for FYE Faculty and parents)
Oct. 26-29 Advising Period
Nov. 3 Registration for Spring 2021 Begins
Nov. 25-29 Thanksgiving Vacation
Dec. 11 Classes End
Dec. 12-14 Study Days
Dec. 15-18 Final Examinations
Dec. 19 Fall Semester Ends
Jan. 4, 2021 Fall Grades Due from Faculty (note SSP incomplete deadline below)

Spring Semester 2021

Jan. 7 Incomplete Grades for 2020 Scribner Seminars must be resolved (see p. 23)
Jan. 10 SSP Course Proposals due to FYE for Review (for 2020 FYE Seminars)
Jan. 25 Deadline for Candace Carlucci Backus Prize submissions
Feb. (TBA) Advising Meeting for Fall 2020 SSP Instructors (on issues related to advising rising sophomores) – ONLY for faculty teaching FYE for first time in F’20
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 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.

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 upper-class 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.

How many seminars do we offer each year?

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

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 as 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 petition the Director for additional funds if a proposed event exceeds the seminar budget. 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 his or her own. Funds may only be used when the seminar is active (fall semester) and receipts must be submitted by Dec. 15th.

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. 15th 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 or her?**

You are encouraged to identify and secure a peer mentor on your own. (The FYE Director is happy to discuss how to go about this.) The FYE Office also accepts independent applications from interested students, thereby 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) enrollment in your Scribner seminar; 2) enrollment in a one-credit Peer Mentor Workshop that meets once a week throughout the fall; 3) attendance at Peer Mentor Orientation (several days prior to fall classes); 4) participation in New Student Orientation.

**What is the RAP?**

The RAP (Reflection and Projection) is an electronic document that may be expanded upon over time and is used as an advising tool. In the summer prior to their arrival at Skidmore, first-year students respond to a broad question (typically about liberal arts education) that helps them begin the process of formulating academic and co-curricular goals. Advisors have access to the RAP through the Advising/Student Records portal and often use it to initiate the advising and mentoring relationship.

**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 will include 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 will be 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 intense mentoring; 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 assumption cannot be farther from the truth. Ideally, Scribner Seminars offer an intense intellectual experience.

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 don’t hesitate to 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. The enrollment cap is 16. 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 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 introduce students to interdisciplinary perspectives as well as disciplinary ones. This means that it should alert the student to the interconnections among disciplines by providing more than a single discipline-specific perspective. Ideally, students will learn to distinguish among, and formulate, the types of questions asked by different disciplines as well as learn to use the evidence and methodologies appropriate to different disciplines.

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 should 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 should 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. 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 support them with evidence.
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 Curriculog system (accessed via the Registrar’s web page) by the first week of January. 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
- 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 might want to keep in mind a few things:

- Curriculum Committee has guidelines that apply to any catalog description. However, please remember that 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 by early December 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 with 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

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL ON DEVELOPING RESEARCH ASSIGNMENTS IS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE FYE OFFICE.
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 first-year students to explore some of the curricular and co-curricular issues that often do not emerge 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 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 address 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
- Sexual 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 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, Career Services, the Writing Center, the Library, and so on. 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. (When appropriate, however, we ask that you please work with your designated Scribner Seminar Team member; see below.) Representatives of these offices are eager to work with you; a directory of contacts will be sent to you in August.

**Scribner Seminar Teams**

The Scribner Seminar Team concept helps us connect our newest students with many of the most critical offices/resources on campus. Each seminar has an individualized "team" of contacts. These teams are made up of six people, including the peer mentor, a member of residential life staff, and one each from the Library, the Writing Center, the Tang, and IT.

Your "team" offers you a collective resource; feel free to contact any of these individuals for help with academic and co-curricular mentoring. Of course, how (or even whether) you use members of your team for the seminar is entirely up to you. The goal here is simply to provide a direct, personal link to some of the most critical offices on campus.

Members of the Scribner Seminar Teams can be quite helpful in your 4th credit hour planning; indeed, they could be its centerpiece. For example, you might explore technological advances in your particular field by scheduling a group session with your designated IT representative. Alternatively, if your seminar has a research component, you might want to arrange for a group session with your designated Team member from the Library.

*(A minor request: we ask that you and your students use the individual members of the team only for seminar business. One could imagine, for example, a student who has trouble with her Skidmore email account turning to the IT member of the team for help. That, of course, is what the Helpdesk is for. Similarly, when it comes to the Library, try to limit the use of the appointed team member to group sessions involving all—or at least a significant portion—of your class; the Reference Desk is the primary resource for students seeking immediate, one-on-one attention. In other words, please remind the students that they should use the proper channels and that the team is there to support students within the parameters of the seminar itself.)*

**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. 15th 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 try to 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 Allie Taylor 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. Allie will also keep track of your budget and will let you know if you are approaching your limit.

Please be advised that all trips require the submission of a "Field Trip Request Form" (available on the FYE website). Major trips (e.g., to NYC) require advance approval; the form must be submitted by July 31st. For local trips, 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-years 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.

Peer mentors are required to

- Enroll in and attend all class meetings of a Scribner Seminar;
- Enroll in and attend ID201 ("Peer Mentoring Workshop");
- Attend a week-long pre-orientation training session in late August;
- Accompany the seminar students in all orientation activities;
- 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 tutoring; 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, 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 role and duties (see FYE website for a sample contract);
- Meet with the peer mentor regularly so that his/her 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, s/he is 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 Allie Taylor (x8111 or ataylor1@skidmore.edu). Allie will notify you of any integrity violations. No other action is necessary.

Please note that it is in your advantage to ask a potential peer mentor if s/he has an integrity violation before submitting his/her 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 s/he will have to arrange his/her fall schedule around your seminar and ID201 (Peer Mentor Workshop).

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 receives 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. 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, cultivating a robust living-learning community, helping the instructor with fourth-credit hour programming, and so on. Peer Mentors are not expected to undergo major assessments (test, papers), nor are they graded for such work. The grade assigned should reflect the quality of their mentoring inside and outside the classroom.

**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 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.

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 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 late August before new students arrive, and another in the February following the Scribner seminar—to prepare FYE instructors/advisors for the specific advising needs of this population at these two important moments in their curricular journeys.

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 provides 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 advisor.

Summer Reading

The 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 common reading for his/her 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 for activities hosted by him/her. (Please notify the FYE office if you choose to do so.) The peer mentor may contact the FYE Office for a cash advance or bring receipts to the Office for reimbursement. If a cash advance is given, receipts and/or change must be returned to the FYE Office no later than one week after the event. If the cash advance process is not properly "closed," the amount of the advance will be treated as income.

For pedagogical funds:

Itemized receipts must be received by the FYE Office by December 15th 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.

For co-curricular funds:

Field trips. See p. 20.

Refreshments. Please bring itemized receipts to the FYE Office. You may also speak with Allie about ordering refreshments from dining services for an on-campus site; however, please note that dining services requires two weeks' notice.

Meals. Bring itemized receipts to the FYE Office for reimbursement. 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.

(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.)

Again, please remember that taxes will not be reimbursed; a tax-exempt card should be procured from the FYE Office before making any purchases.

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 must use the college’s tax-exempt card/form when you make your purchases (available in the FYE Office); otherwise, you will be reimbursed for the item(s) but not the tax. This also applies to purchases made by your peer mentor.

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. Receipts received by Monday of each week will be reimbursed at the end of the week.

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

Field Trips

**IMPORTANT:** Local trips (Saratoga Springs area) must be approved two weeks in advance; trips beyond the local area (e.g., NYC) must be approved in the summer before your seminar (July 31st deadline). In all cases, please submit the "Field Trip Request Form" (available on the website) to Allie Taylor in the FYE Office. If we do not receive your form in a timely manner, we may not be able to approve your trip.

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.

Box lunches are available from dining services and are free for all students on the meal plan. You may use your seminar funds to purchase additional lunches for yourself and any student not on the meal plan. Dining services requires two weeks' notice; please contact Allie well in advance to make arrangements.
Waivers
For trips to destinations outside the immediate Saratoga vicinity, all students must fill out a waiver: you or your peer mentor may pick these up in the FYE Office. Students under 18 years of age will also require a confirmation email from a parent; please forward such emails to the FYE Director.

Transportation
For local excursions (e.g., Saratoga Springs area, trips to your home):

- 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 vehicle or college van. 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 21 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 for approximately $65 a day; you will need to submit the Enterprise Rental Insurance Form. If you wish to use another agency, please contact the FYE Office.

**IMPORTANT: College policy prohibits faculty members and students from driving (other) students in privately owned vehicles.** The College's driving policy is available at: http://www.skidmore.edu/safety_committee/motor-vehicle-policy.php

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 $250 (for 4-hour trips within the radius of Glens Falls and Clifton Park) to $1600 or more (for day trips to New York City). For more expensive trips, the FYE may ask several seminars to join together and share the cost. TRIPS BEYOND THE LOCAL AREA MUST BE ARRANGED IN THE SUMMER PRECEDING YOUR SEMINAR.
Tickets, Reservations, Food Arrangements

Please contact the FYE Office so Allie 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. 15th.

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 or her academic program.

1) Leaves of Absence:

First-year students who initiate a leave of absence within the first third of the fall semester are required to take a full-year leave. Students in this situation have few if any Skidmore credits on their academic transcript and are considered first-year students upon their return. These students are required to enroll in a Scribner Seminar.

First-year students who initiate a leave of absence after the first third of the fall semester may petition the FYE Director and CAS to return in the spring. Petitions should describe the student’s academic progress and transition to Skidmore. Students who are allowed to return in the spring semester 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.

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 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 June. In most cases, the CAS will grant a one-semester waiver of minimal standards so that the student may improve his or her 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 or her 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 may have to take the one-credit follow-up course in the spring, all Incompletes for Scribner Seminars must be resolved by January 7th. 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 receive via email a brief questionnaire from the FYE Office about your experiences teaching in the program. 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. The FYE Office will contact all nominees and ask them to submit appropriate samples; 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 early 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.