To: Integrated Curriculum Committee

From: Enrollment Management Working Group

Re: Developing a General Education Area E freshman seminar\*

Date: October 2011

This fall, as part of the effort to improve student success, a one-unit first-year seminar is being piloted. The population selected for participation in the pilot comprises students who placed into math remediation, composition remediation, or both. Because this population is the one with the lowest retention rate, it was important to involve them in this program first, even though the seminar is not a remedial course.

First-year seminars have been successful in improving student success, with the positive effects lasting throughout the students’ time at the university. These effects are particularly significant for, though not limited to, underrepresented minority students. As you may recall from our discussions with George Kuh last spring, it is not enough to provide services that improve student success and then allow students to choose to participate in them or not; instead, the role of the institution is to require students to do the things that we know will enhance their chances for success. In the case of the first-year seminar, the results are so consistent as to support making it a requirement for all incoming freshmen.

However, if a course is to be required, then it should satisfy a university-wide academic requirement. Accordingly, we propose developing a mandatory, three-unit first-year seminar that would satisfy General Education Area E.

**From CSU Executive Order 1065, September 2011 (supersedes EO 1033)**

**Area E Lifelong Learning and Self-Development**  
**Minimum of 3 semester units or 4 quarter units**

A minimum of three semester units or four quarter units in study designed to equip learners for lifelong understanding and development of themselves as integrated physiological, social, and psychological beings.

Student learning in this area shall include selective consideration of content such as human behavior, sexuality, nutrition, physical and mental health, stress management, financial literacy, social relationships and relationships with the environment, as well as implications of death and dying and avenues for lifelong learning.  Physical activity may be included, provided that it is an integral part of the study elements described herein.

HSU has traditionally referred to Area E as a “human integration” requirement and defined it as an upper division course, with the goal of supporting students in integrating their university experience as preparation for post-university living. But this approach reaches fewer than half of our students, given that most of our transfer students enter the university having already satisfied the requirement with a freshman-level course prior to transfer. Moreover, we miss the opportunity of supporting our freshman students – half of whom are now first-generation college students -- as they leave the high school environment and enter the community of learners at HSU. The goals of the freshman seminar are in alignment with the focus of General Education Area E. The one -unit pilot version is described as follows, and the three-unit version will be developed from this foundation:

This seminar is designed to support students in their first year at Humboldt State University through the exploration of self, college/career path, the Humboldt State community and the world around them.

Students will be supported in the crafting of guiding questions, gathering relevant information and the creation of pathways that link responses/answers to questions to guide future actions.

The seminar will be framed through activities and reflective assignments, active research and community service culminating in a final project to be shared with the campus community in a public colloquium.

The Enrollment Management Working Group requests that the ICC indicate whether it is in favor of this concept: a three-unit freshman-experience seminar satisfying Area E, to be required for all incoming freshmen. This would not be interpreted as an approval of the course itself; that has yet to be planned and proposed. But we would like to address questions and concerns about the concept itself before developing the course. If the concept is approved, the course can be developed and then reviewed on its own merits rather than having its review conflated with discussion of the whole idea.