

Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs) Request for Proposals

LeaRN is seeking proposals for FIGs to be offered in the fall of 2010. If you, your department, or program are interested in creating or renewing a FIG, please submit a FIG Proposal (attached). FIG Proposals for fall 2010 are **due on October 16, 2009** to LeaRN, located in Coe Library, Room 219. Booklets will be ready for mailing to students and advisors in late December. A FIG may be cancelled if fewer than ten students are enrolled in it.

What is a FIG?

A FIG is a living and learning community, organized around a theme or major, of about twenty first-year students who enroll in the same set of three or four courses (classes which first-year students are likely to take) and live on the same floor of the residence halls.

How do FIGs benefit UW first-year students?

FIGs offer students increased opportunities to make new friends and get to know faculty and staff. While FIG students entry characteristics are almost identical to the general student body, statistics show a higher retention rate for students in FIGs and a slightly higher first semester grade point average. Surveys of our FIG students are very positive; they appreciate the ways in which their FIG made the transition to college life easier.

	In-State	Out-of-State
Fall Retention	%	%
2007 FIGS	92%	78%
2007 Others	74%	66%

How can FIGs benefit UW faculty, departments, and colleges?

In addition to increased engagement in the classroom, a major goal of learning communities is to cultivate student scholarship and stimulate intellectual curiosity. A FIG can offer opportunities for instructors to draw upon or reinforce materials covered in other courses in the same FIG and explore ways in which students' learning can be integrated. In this way, instructors work collaboratively to create stronger courses. Through the LeaRN program, FIG instructors have opportunities to participate in professional development activities, including grant projects, faculty seminars and national conferences, and book discussions.

How do FIG courses develop connections among themes and assignments?

A course with a set low enrollment (roughly 20 students) serves as the central focus or "anchor" of each FIG. Ideally, this is an Intellectual Community ("I") course. Each FIG must include a designated section of such an anchor course, **with enrollment for this section restricted to FIG students**. Through collaboration with the other FIG teachers, the instructor of this course will function as the academic anchor of the FIG, helping students identify key concepts and ways of thinking in and across the courses in a FIG and through the theme of the FIG.

Students in a particular FIG are housed on the same floor of the residence halls, and a Resident Assistant (RA) is designated for each FIG. The RAs receive special training in supporting learning communities. The anchor instructor and the RA share responsibility for coordinating the FIG and its programs and activities. In addition, FIG RAs are given the opportunity to increase their academic involvement in the FIG with our new SEEDs program (Supplemental Education & Enhancing Dynamics), which pays RAs to attend class and/or hold study sessions for FIG students.

When do FIGs close?

FIGs that have reached critical mass by May 15th, 2010, may be closed at that time. **You are your FIG's strongest supporter. If you encourage your incoming students to join your FIG, you will have significant participation.** Some FIGs that tend to have substantial enrollment during Orientation may be left open until the end of June.

What are the responsibilities of instructors teaching courses in a FIG?

In spring 2009, LeaRN will host a colloquium for FIG instructors dedicated to providing instructors an opportunity to discuss syllabi, plan for possible connections and thematic links, and develop a plan for RA involvement.