

Definitions —First Year Intensive Learning Experiences¹

Background and goals:

1. Clark’s *Task Force on Undergraduate Education* adopted a developmental model consisting of three phases: A) the transition phase; B) the growth and exploration phase; and C) the synthesis and demonstration phase. *First Year Intensive* learning experiences target the first phase, but seek to lay the groundwork for the subsequent phases of educational development. These experiences will serve as a model for other experiences in the other phases, and should be viewed as setting the stage for the continuum of impactful learning at Clark.
2. In a student-centered approach, our goal is to provide challenging experiences that make a difference to students’ engagement and to improve their learning. The following criteria for First Year Intensives at Clark are proposed as characteristics of courses that are likely to produce such experiences. But the map is not the territory.
3. First Year intensives will be **fall semester, full-credit** and fulfill criteria a-d:

| | Qualities | Experiences | Outcomes | Which we will accomplish by |
|---|--------------------------------|--|---|---|
| a | Be small in size | Interactional intensity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acculturation (know what college is about) • Connection with faculty | Restricting them to 20 or fewer first year students. Ideally 16. ² |
| b | Provide frequent feedback | Practice creating knowledge | Reflective/deliberate agent in own learning | Giving regular feedback throughout the term. (Feedback can include face-to-face review meetings, papers with detailed comments, peer evaluation, or other comparable events.) |
| c | Have rich intellectual content | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking actively about large, important matters. • The course will introduce students to foundational knowledge in a discipline or with respect to an established cross-disciplinary concern. (TF, page 6, #1) | Fundamental disciplinary or problem-centered knowledge | Insuring that courses maintain high standards and speak to big questions. |

¹ This description of the first year high-impact learning experiences was directly informed by the statement on Liberal Education at Clark (Task Force Report p.6). This statement was recently endorsed by the faculty. In addition, the teaching experiences of UAB members and others were used to characterize the learning experiences we seek.

² This may be the entire class, or alternatively it may be a group within a class (i.e. a laboratory group).

Attachment 2

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| d | Develop foundational skills | Intellectual and practical skills include: inquiry and analysis, the generation and evaluation of evidence and argument, critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, quantitative literacy, information literacy, teamwork and problem solving (TF page 6, #2) | Basic intellectual and practical skills | Introducing students to college-level expectations regarding skills, and allowing opportunities to practice in discipline-specific settings. |
|---|-----------------------------|--|---|--|

4. Such courses should also do **one** of the following:

| | It May | Experiences | Outcomes | Which we will accomplish by |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| E | Involve collaborative learning / research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing knowledge/skills with each other. • Small group activities and coursework. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciate peers as sources of learning. • Understand fundamentals of group dynamics. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigning group projects and activities. • Teaching skills of collaboration, allowing practice, and offering feedback. |
| | OR | | | |
| F | Incorporate community-based learning or field experiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct exposure to issues being studied in class. • Opportunity to connect academic knowledge with ongoing community endeavors. • Reflection about learning and action outside of the classroom. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic knowledge pertinent to personal and social responsibility. • Comfort with ambiguity. • Awareness of values and different cultures. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assuring that community projects, placements and field work experiences are prearranged and suited to first year students. • Accompanying community experiences with structured self-reflection, orally or in writing. • Including cultural competency in orientation to community-based learning. • Highlighting the ethical implications of working in the community/field. |
| | OR | | | |
| G | Feature pedagogies of dialogue | Use dialogic techniques to explore complex meanings and multiple perspectives on big questions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates greater ownership of classroom experiences. • Fosters recognition of peers as sources of learning. • Develops active listening skills. | Creating full credit versions of the current dialogue seminars, adding substantive content and maintaining the focused dialogic pedagogy. |