



29 October 1997

MEMORANDUM

TO Members, University Senate

FROM University Senate Council

RE AGENDA ITEM: University Senate Meeting, Monday, 10 November 1997 at 3:00 PM. Proposal to modify the University Senate Rules to include Discovery Seminars (and a concomitant course) as part of the University Studies Program.

Proposal

The University Studies Program Committee has approved a proposal by Professor William Freehling, Singletary Distinguished Professor in Arts & Sciences, to include the Discovery Seminars (and a concomitant course) as part of the University Studies Program.

The format is quite simple. If, for example, a Discovery Seminar focuses on the area of physics, students in that seminar may take any other course in physics to satisfy the science requirement in University Studies. If a seminar focuses on a topic in history, students may take any other course in history to satisfy the humanities requirements. If a seminar focuses on the social sciences, a student may take any course in the social sciences to satisfy the Social Science requirement in USP. The reason for the broader scope of the social science seminars is that in contrast to the humanities and natural science requirement in the USP, where two courses are required in *one* discipline, the USP Social Science requirement stipulates two courses in *different* disciplines. Each seminar will have no more than 25 students and will be taught by an experienced faculty member.

Background and Rationale:

The Seminars are a new venture at the University to provide a stimulating academic experience to freshmen in order to engage their interest and set them

on the right path to life-long learning. When University Studies was instituted in 1988, Freshman Seminars were listed as one route for satisfying the humanities component of the general education program. Because of funding problems, we have not been able to incorporate seminars until this time. Professor Freehling has experimented with this format for two years, and his recent success has persuaded the USP Committee that the seminars (together with an appropriate accompanying course) are an excellent way to satisfy one of the disciplinary components of University Studies.

The USP Committee recognizes that this venture departs from the normal format for satisfying the disciplinary components of the USP. Nonetheless, because of the focus of the seminars, the small class atmosphere which characterizes them, and the quality of the faculty teaching them, the Committee believes that the educational value to freshmen is such as to warrant this innovation. The most important thing we can do for students, and especially our freshmen, is to engage them in intellectual inquiry in a challenging and attractive fashion. The Discovery Seminars achieve that goal very effectively, and the USP Committee believes that Dr. Freehling's proposal will be a significant step forward in helping our students to appreciate the purpose of a university education and to progress toward a degree in a timely fashion.

The proposal has been approved by the Senate Council and is recommended to the Senate.

Implementation: Spring Semester, 1998