

**HOLLINS UNIVERSITY QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN  
FIRST-YEAR SEMINARS: SHAPING WOMEN'S VOICES  
FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

Hollins University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), The Hollins First-Year Seminars: Shaping Women's Voices for the Twenty-First Century, seeks to improve student learning at a critical early stage in the undergraduate experience.

The need for a first-year seminar program evolved from two related realizations. First, faculty and administrators share a growing perception that many of Hollins' current students arrive on campus inadequately prepared for the rigors of a challenging higher education. Glaringly absent is an appreciation of the complexity of learning and the ability to apply classroom lessons to real world situations. Second, as the faculty leadership team evaluated the ideas in the university's strategic plan in light of current strengths and weaknesses, the team realized that most of Hollins' signature programs—internships, capstone experiences, and travel opportunities—only apply to upper-level students. This new program, therefore, aims to correct both problems by giving first-year students the skills to thrive and the desire to use those skills.

The Hollins University program of first-year seminars is based on a clearly defined set of characteristics and pedagogical goals, including the following:

- First-year students will be required to complete one first-year seminar during the fall.
- The seminars will be limited to fifteen first-year students.
- The seminar instructors will be the students' advisors for the first year.
- The seminars will tie in with one or more of the four broad themes of the university's strategic plan: environmental and cultural sustainability, global and intercultural understanding, creativity, and leadership development.
- Each seminar will satisfy the Applied Research Techniques skill and at least one other skill as defined in the Hollins general education program, Education through Skills and Perspectives (ESP).
- Seminars will be department/discipline based and capable of counting toward either a general education perspective or a major requirement.
- Student peer mentors will be available to assist seminar instructors.
- Each seminar will seek to instill a passion for learning.
- Each seminar will create a collaborative learning environment.
- Each seminar will attempt to teach students to make connections among ideas and share information with each other.
- Each seminar will encourage active learning.
- Each seminar will encourage creative problem solving.
- Each seminar will create a peer mentor relationship.
- Each seminar will fulfill the applied research skill and at least one additional skill in the university's general education curriculum.

For information on the development and implementation of the QEP, please contact Dr. Alison Ridley ([aridley@hollins.edu](mailto:aridley@hollins.edu)), Dean of Academic Services.