## First-Term Seminar Program

### Program Description:

First-year Gustavus Adolphus College students that enter the Challenge Curriculum enroll in a fall semester course designated FTS-100: First-Term Seminar (FTS). These small, discussion-based courses introduce students to skills and habits of mind central to the liberal arts: critical thinking, writing, and speaking. While practicing these skills and habits, students explore and develop values as they consider enduring and contemporary questions or challenges. Thus, FTS promotes empathetically examining the values of others and reflecting upon, developing, and articulating one’s own values. This focus on values permeates the FTS Program, shaping all of its goals. In addition, the FTS professor serves as the academic advisor until students declare a major or are admitted into a certification program (e.g., Athletic Training, Education, Exercise Physiology, Nursing). Each FTS carries a WRIT designation; FTS courses do not carry a general education core area designation. A full list and description of FTS offerings is published for entering students before registration.

1. **Programmatic SLO:** FTS students will
   1. Articulate their values, communicate them to others, and reflect on how values shape decisions in an ethically complex world.

### Critical Thinking:

* 1. **Description:** Critical Thinking involves applying reason to ideas, a willingness to consider the perspectives and values of others, and an awareness of the limits of any given epistemology.
  2. **Criteria:** FTS courses will
     1. Provide frequent opportunities to identify the purpose of a text, identify concepts that shape an argument, and assess the evidence used to support an argument.
     2. Provide frequent opportunities to participate in classroom discussions as a way to learn to articulate ideas, actively listen to others, and consider alternative positions.
     3. Provide frequent opportunities to identify how contexts and assumptions influence arguments, identify the implications and consequences of arguments, and to identify and evaluate alternative perspectives.
     4. Allow students to reflect upon and articulate their own perspective, identifying the influences that shape it, and to present relevant evidence to support their own arguments.
  3. **SLO:** FTS students will
     1. Evaluate arguments and their underlying assumptions from multiple perspectives.

### Writing and Speaking:

* 1. **Description:** Writing and speaking are creative and critical processes that students use to engage with others. Good writers and speakers accommodate different purposes, contexts, and audiences. These rhetorical choices help communicators make their cases in the most effective ways possible.
  2. **Criteria:** FTS courses will
     1. Provide frequent opportunities to write and speak informally as a way to engage unfamiliar concepts, explore ideas, and practice techniques for communicating effectively.
     2. Guide students through at least two formal argumentative writing assignments for specific audiences that utilize a process-based approach that provides opportunities for students to plan, draft, revise, and edit their work with instructor and peer feedback.
     3. Guide students through at least two short (2-5 minute) oral presentations for specific audiences, with instructor and/or peer feedback, that prepare students for or rehearse arguments made in written assignments.
     4. Invite students to reflect, in writing and when speaking, on who they are and what they learn during the course.
  3. **SLOs:** FTS students will
     1. Consider purpose, audience, and context when writing and speaking.
     2. Make and support claims when writing and speaking.

### Advising:

* 1. **Description:** Advising emphasizes an introduction to College resources and the College curriculum, encourages students to explore their values, and fosters a mentoring community on campus. FTS professors work alongside students to plan their liberal arts education, refer them to campus resources, and help them think about possibilities for their college career and beyond.
  2. **Criteria:** FTS courses will
     1. Introduce students to the process of academic planning, searching for classes, using the

College’s systems for registration and advising, and reading degree audits.

* + 1. Introduce students to College policies, procedures, and deadlines.
    2. Encourage students to advocate for themselves, take ownership for their learning, become responsible and accountable as independent learners, and ultimately become their own best advisors.
    3. Introduce students to campus resources and out-of-classroom learning opportunities with the goal of engaging in a community of lifelong learners.
  1. **SLO:** FTS students will
     1. Demonstrate familiarity with the College curriculum and campus resources related to advising.