**FSEM Course Calendars: So Much More than Due Dates!**

At minimum, the FSEM course calendar serves a basic purpose for our students—a timetable of due dates for class readings and assignments focused on specific topics and experiences.

The course calendar can also be a tool supporting student planning and organization. When students understand how course goals are organized and the connection between readings, assignments, and resources, they are more likely to make better choices for their class preparation (and long-term learning). Clear pathways support motivated and purposeful learners!

While an FSEM course calendar can take on different forms and styles, certain key features communicate the progression of learning goals and assignment scaffolding and support for students. We recommend including the following information in your proposal’s course calendar:

* **Weekly calendar with potential topics, readings, and resource visits**

A weekly calendar helps students to see how intensive class preparation and assignment development will be from week to week. While you may not know specific readings a year in advance, a tentative listing communicates the anticipated reading load for that week. Don’t forget to include visits to UMW’s academic centers (e.g. Writing Center, Speaking Center, Library, etc.)! The rationale for including the visits in your class and on your syllabus is to connect the first-year students with the campus resources for research, speaking and writing. It’s often best to stagger these visits over the first half of the semester, close to times when students may need the specific supports.

* **Clear assignment of UMW FSEM modules**

Nine modules (three in each area) must be selected for inclusion in your FSEM. One of the speaking modules should be Communication Theory. Students and past FSEM instructors report that making multiple (or all!) modules due within the first week of the semester is overwhelming and disconnected from the day-to-day life of the course. Consider assigning modules around relevant class or assignment activities. For example, in the two weeks before students begin leading class discussion, assign modules such as *Effective Visual Aids* and *Handling Communication Apprehension*. Another idea is to time module completion near visits from UMW academic centers—*What to Type in Search Boxes* and *Checking for CRAAP* are great prerequisites to a visit to the Simpson Library.

* **Highlight feedback and review processes for students as well as final due dates**

The FSEM experience reinforces to our students the importance of draft work and feedback as they tackle increasing complex speaking and writing assignments. Several calendar options remind students of the value in consistent planning and revision of their work:

* + Peer review circles or sessions assigned to specific weeks or class sessions
  + Due dates for submitting drafts to the instructor for feedback
  + Scheduled dates for ‘drop in’ visits when students can receive face-to-face feedback
  + Breaking larger assignments into smaller, draft sections with specific due dates
* **Reminder dates about registration and course status**

New UMW students will not be familiar with registration timelines and processes for adding, dropping, and withdrawing from courses. In our roles as FSEM advisors, date reminders for these important university functions keep FSEM students ‘in the loop’ and help instructors to facilitate course and program decisions. Consider also including relevant university extracurricular events—these are great reminders to embrace all UMW offers!