

MEMORANDUM

To: Academic Deans, Faculty and Staff

From: Elizabeth Garrett
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Gene Bickers
Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs

Date: April 7, 2006

Subject: New Academic Programs for Welcome Week 2006

The aim of the First Contact Initiative, announced on February 16, is to enhance interactions between our faculty and students, particularly during a student's first years at USC. A particularly important time for promoting interactions and fostering a sense of academic engagement is the first week of campus life for our newly arrived freshmen. For this reason, the Office of Undergraduate Programs, in partnership with the Division of Student Affairs, will pilot **two new academic programs** during Welcome Week 2006, which precedes the first day of fall classes on August 21.

We are writing to invite you to participate as a faculty member in either (or both) of these new ventures, the **Welcome Week Micro-Seminars Program** and the **SCitizen Program**. Participating faculty will receive a **stipend of \$500** as compensation for their work.

These programs are described below, and simple one-page application forms are included as an attachment. These programs have the potential to establish relationships between students and faculty which extend beyond the critical first week, and they should also contribute to the continuing development of a stimulating academic culture across campus.

Welcome Week Micro-Seminars Program

During this pilot year, new students will be asked during their summer orientation programs to consider enrolling in a three-hour non-credit "micro-seminar," to be presented in two ninety-minute sessions. This year's Welcome Week schedule has been modified to allow these sessions to take place from 10—11:30 AM on **Thursday, August 17**, and **Friday, August 18**.

The purpose of these micro-seminars is two-fold:

- To introduce students to new subject matter in a field of interest to both them and the participating faculty member; and
- To promote discussions between students and faculty in an informal, small-group setting before the official start of classes.

The enrollment in each micro-seminar will be limited to **fifteen students**. In order to enroll, students will be asked to submit a one-paragraph on-line statement of interest. These statements will be forwarded to participating faculty by Friday, August 11.

Micro-seminar topics may be proposed from the full range of humanities, sciences, arts, and professions, as well as pop culture. **All full-time faculty are invited to participate**, including both those who routinely teach

undergraduates and those who teach in graduate and professional programs across all of our eighteen schools. This is a unique opportunity for faculty in our graduate programs to interact with our first-year undergraduates.

To submit a micro-seminar topic for consideration, please complete the attached form, which requires a title and short topic description. Keep in mind that the scheduled contact time is three hours spread out over two sessions. It is necessary to commit to teaching on both Thursday, August 17, and Friday, August 18. Forms may be submitted by e-mail to Gene Bickers (bickers@usc.edu) or as a hardcopy to the Office of Undergraduate Programs, GFS 227, MC 1695. The due date for receipt of submissions is **Monday, April 24**. Notifications of approval and additional information will be provided in early May.

SCitizen Program

USC's service learning programs benefit our students and encourage a lifetime interest in civic engagement. Service learning also allows students to interact closely with faculty, staff members, and community leaders, establishing bonds based on a shared purpose. It is natural to incorporate USC's commitment to service learning as an important component in our First Contact Initiative.

The **SCitizen Program** has been designed with this goal in mind, and it will be piloted during Welcome Week 2006. SCitizen is an immersion experience which will allow students to explore the unique opportunities for service in the city of Los Angeles during their initial week on campus. Within a small-group setting, students will be transported off-campus to explore a particular social, cultural, or ethnic community in an intensive day-long session led by a team consisting of a faculty member, a community liaison, and a graduate student or staff member. The format for the day might include an introduction to issues in the community, a visit to a neighborhood center, lunch at a local restaurant, or a targeted off-campus service project.

During this pilot year, the day identified for SCitizen programming is **Saturday, August 19**. It is planned that all participating students, faculty, staff, and community members will also take part in a banquet to be held during the first two weeks of classes. At this banquet each group will be asked to make a short presentation to share their experiences, and students will be presented with a certificate acknowledging their involvement.

As with the micro-seminar program, students will be asked to consider enrolling in an SCitizen group during their summer orientation. Participation in each group will be limited to **twelve students**, and a short on-line statement of interest will be required.

Our hope is to have in place at least five to six SCitizen groups in which students may elect to participate this year. Groups may be proposed by faculty, staff, or community members, but at least one full-time faculty member must be a participant in each group.

Each faculty participant will receive a \$500 stipend, and the community liaisons and staff members will also receive an honorarium.

To submit a proposal to form an SCitizen group please use the attached form. Note that it is not necessary to identify all group leaders (i.e., faculty, community liaison, and graduate student or staff) at this time. SCitizen proposal forms should be submitted by e-mail to Gene Bickers (bickers@usc.edu) or as a hardcopy to the Office of Undergraduate Programs, GFS 227, MC 1695. As with the micro-seminars program, the due date for receipt of submissions is **Monday, April 24**.