

## Academic Programs: The First-Year Experience

The William Atwell Brown, Jr., and Mary Brown Vacin [First-Year Experience](#) assists students in making the transition from high school to college. Through a broad array of academic and co-curricular programs, the First-Year Experience provides a foundation for students that will sustain them throughout their undergraduate years and that will enable them to achieve their academic and personal goals. The principal features of the program are described below.

**Academic and General Advising** -- The advising process begins during new student orientation and continues in periodic meetings with faculty advisers and Student Affairs staff during the first year.

**First-Year Seminar (LA 101)** -- Designed to introduce entering students to the liberal arts tradition, the First-Year Seminars nurture academic skills, creativity and active inquiry. Small class sizes ensure constant interaction among faculty and students. The seminars often address cutting-edge topics, and most include research projects or other hands-on learning experiences. Some feature an extended field trip, to a location in the U.S. or overseas, to give students a firsthand look at the issues they are studying.

Recent seminar topics have included: Genes and Society, Justice, Art in the Environment, Water: Science and Policy, the Holocaust, and Albion and the American Dream. The class schedule, available at [www.albion.edu/registrar/](http://www.albion.edu/registrar/), lists the seminars offered for the current academic year.

**Common Reading Experience** -- In the Richard M. Smith Common Reading Experience, students and faculty discuss a book they have read during the preceding summer. Past Common Reading Experience selections have included Lorene Cary's *Black Ice*, Tamim Ansary's *West of Kabul, East of New York*, Christopher Buckley's *Thank You for Smoking* and Moises Kaufman's *The Laramie Project*. The Richard M. Smith Common Reading Experience is designed to establish the ideas of scholarship and academic expectations through a common learning experience, begin student understanding of differences in the context of the Albion College community, and provide an entry for students into the ideas of global citizenship.

**Academic Planning** -- Throughout their four years at Albion, students are encouraged to think about their career and personal goals, as well as the academic experiences that will enable them to reach those goals. After completing a self-assessment, students create a digital portfolio, which will eventually reflect their academic achievements; internship, research and other practical experiences; leadership accomplishments; and community service. Students utilize self-assessment tools to reflect their academic achievements; internship, research and other practical experiences; leadership accomplishments; and community service.

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