

WASC INTERIM REPORT DRAFT

List of Topics or Concerns (from issues identified in the Action Letter).

The following issues were identified in the WASC Commission Action Letter:

1. undergraduate retention and graduation, including copies of the annual data submitted to the CSU and analysis of those data in the context of SSU's efforts to improve rates and decrease gaps (per the CSU's initiative on closing the achievement gap);
2. progress toward completing the "accountability loop" in the university's assessment of student learning and program review process;
3. and progress in rejuvenating and assessing general education.

Institutional Context.

Description of the University

Founded in 1960 as a teacher education center for the North Bay, Sonoma State University (SSU) now provides high-quality undergraduate education and selected professional graduate programs. Centering on the liberal arts and sciences, the SSU educational experience fosters intellectual, cognitive, social and personal growth. The faculty and staff of SSU provide close mentoring relationships for students and an education that fosters ethical exploration, civic engagement, social responsibility, and global awareness combined with a solid foundation in an academic discipline. The university also serves as an educational and cultural resource for the region by offering courses, lectures, workshops and programs that are open to the public and by entering into partnerships with local businesses, industries, and cultural and educational institutions to enhance the quality of life in the North Bay and beyond. SSU has a commitment to graduating students who have the ability to think critically and ethically and can effectively use information technology.

While SSU accepts all qualified students who apply from high schools in its service area, over 80 percent of the freshmen and 55 percent of the junior transfer students come from outside the North Bay region. With 35 percent of its student body living on campus, SSU is one of the most residential campuses within the CSU system. SSU is comprised of five academic schools: Arts and Humanities, Business and Economics, Education, Social Sciences, and Science and Technology. Degrees are offered in 45 majors at the bachelor's level and 15 at the master's level. The University offers a joint doctorate in educational leadership with the University of California, Davis. There are nine credential programs and eight undergraduate and graduate certificate programs. SSU also offers one of the few Wine Business programs in the country and initiated an executive MBA Program in the spring of 2010.

This fall semester SSU enrollment reached a total of 9,021 headcount, for a total FTE of 8,129. Students are enrolled in an average unit load of 13.38, down slightly from previous semesters but reflective of the CSU's recent mandate that fulltime students be limited to a maximum of 16 units.

Institutional Context

Since the Educational Effectiveness Visit (October 2009), SSU's executive, financial, academic, and development areas have all remained relatively stable. In July of 2011, SSU selected a new, permanent Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs after a national search. Prior to the selection, SSU had a one-year interim Provost, the former Dean of the School of Science and Technology, who was selected to replace the permanent Provost, who became the Assistant Secretary of Postsecondary Education in the US Department of Education. In Spring 2012 the University hired a permanent Dean of the School of Science and Technology after

servicing an interim year in the position. Two additional School Dean positions, Education and Arts and Humanities, currently have interim appointments, filling positions vacated within the past two years. Planning is underway to do a national search for these positions in the 2012-2013 academic year. Additionally, as of July 1, 2012, the positions of Directors of Research and Sponsored Programs and Institutional Research have been filled after vacancies of one year and eight months, respectively. Finally, a new position in Academic Affairs, created as a result of the work done during the Educational Effectiveness review, the Director of Undergraduate Studies, has now become a full time position in the Office of the Provost. It began as a half-time faculty release position, but after one year became full time, reflecting SSU's focus on undergraduate education, particularly first year experiences and General Education, to assist in efforts to improve retention and graduation rates.

More recently, in July 2012, the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management (SAEM) was merged with the Division of Academic Affairs (AA). The acting Vice President of SAEM has become the University's Chief Student Affairs Officer with oversight of judicial affairs and a variety of Student Affairs offices and activities, including the Student Union, Associated Students, Inc, the Student Health Center, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), and Disability Services for Students (DSS). The enrollment management area, including Recruitment, Admissions and Records, has been moved under the AVP for Academic Programs. Additionally, the Advising, EOP and Career Centers are now under the leadership of the Director of Undergraduate Studies. The vacant positions of Director of Institutional Research and Director of Research and Sponsored Programs were filled by administrators in SAEM, who had significant experience in the areas of data collection, research, and grant sponsored programs. The merger was prompted by several significant needs:

- Align academic advising, EOP, Career, and Orientation under the Director of Undergraduate Studies in order to provide coherent, consistent, and appropriate advising to all students;
- Coordinate recruitment and admissions efforts with the goals of Academic Affairs, the Academic Schools, and Departments to begin strategic efforts at recruiting and enrollment management;
- Support the efforts of Institutional Research by filling the vacant position of Director of Institutional Research with a strong candidate from SAEM, as well as developing a team approach to data collection and analysis with the addition of staff from SAEM and AA working together;
- Enhance the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and faculty development by the addition of a senior administrator from SAEM with significant experience in grant development and administration;
- Consolidate Student Affairs and judicial affairs under the Chief Student Affairs Officer;
- Realize cost savings.

In terms of campus buildings and infrastructure, the Donald and Maureen Green Music Center (GMC) and the Joan and Sanford I. Weill Hall and Lawn opened its inaugural season in the Fall of 2012. Currently the major construction project on the campus is a multi-use Student Center, funded by student fees, which will open in the Fall of 2013, providing SSU's growing residential community and lower division students with cafeteria services, as well as a venue for student activities.

Statement on Report Preparation.

The WASC Interim Report was written by a team of faculty and administrators, including

the Associate Vice President for Academic Programs and WASC ALO; the Director of Undergraduate Studies; a University Librarian; the Chair and Professor of Biology; the Chair and Professor of Geography and former Chair of the GE Subcommittee; an Assistant Professor of Geology and current Chair of the GE Subcommittee; the Dean of the School of Science and Technology and Co-Chair of the Graduation Initiative Group (GIG); the Director of Institutional Research; and the Chair and Professor of History

The WASC Interim Report was posted on the University website on October 5, 2012 and various committees, as well as all individual faculty, staff or student were invited to provide suggestions and comments on the report. The report was then edited and a final draft distributed to the University Cabinet for final review and submission to WASC on November 1, 2012.

Response to Issues Identified by the Commission.

- 1. Undergraduate retention and graduation, including copies of the annual data submitted to the CSU and analysis of those data in the context of SSU's efforts to improve rates and decrease gaps (per the CSU's initiative on closing the achievement gap).*

The California State University (CSU) launched its Graduation Initiative in January 2010, after the WASC Educational Effectiveness Visit in Fall of 2009. At the time, the visiting team asked that SSU report on the graduation initiative in the 2012 Interim Report.

SSU's baseline graduation rate, based on a 5 year average is 50.8%, while the top quartile of comparable institutions is 50.7%. Thus, SSU was among the campuses in the CSU already in the top quartile of national six-year graduation rates for full time freshman. However, these campuses, including SSU, have committed to increasing their graduation rates by six percentage points to the top quartile of national averages on each campus; and cut in half the existing

achievement gap between under-represented CSU students (URMs) and non-underrepresented CSU students (non-URMs). SSU's target graduation rate is 56.8%, which includes a 6% overall graduation rate increase and a 7% graduation rate increase for URM. SSU is on target to achieve this graduation rate improvement. In each of the past two years, the FTF cohort has increased its retention rates. These data are attached at the end of this report and reflect the most current IPEDs data for FTF for all categories. Attached as well are longitudinal data of SSU Retention and Graduation rates from 2000-2009 for first time freshmen and transfer students, disaggregated by ethnicity. These data are available at the CSU website:

<http://www.asd.calstate.edu/csrde/index.shtml>.

At SSU, the Graduation Initiative is led by a university wide committee, the Graduation Initiative Group (GIG). The committee, co-chaired by the Dean of Science and Technology and the Associate Vice President for Academic Programs, has representatives from all the divisions on campus: Academic Affairs and the newly merged Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, Administration and Finance, and the Development Office. Several faculty members, administrators, staff and students serve on the GIG, and the committee meets monthly during the academic year to oversee progress on the graduation initiative, to review data and information about initiatives and programs, and to provide updates in the form of bimonthly reports to the Chancellor's Office. The GIG website provides an overview of the work of the GIG, committee membership, and agendas and bimonthly reports (see www.sonoma.edu/aa/grad_initiative/grad_initiative.shtml).

A number of initiatives have been launched to support retention and graduation, across the university, including the following:

- Early Start

- Freshman Learning Communities (FLCs)
- Academic Requirements Reports (Formerly Degree Progress Reports)
- Advising Summits
- Sophomore Year Experiences
- Improved Scheduling

Early Start. The CSU Board of Trustees enacted a policy, known as Early Start, which now requires incoming first time freshmen, who do not demonstrate readiness for college-level English and/or math, to begin remediation during the summer before coming to any of the CSU campuses. The goal of Early Start is to better prepare students requiring remediation in English and math before their first semester, thereby improving their chances of completing a college degree. The summer of 2012 was the first implementation of Early Start across the system. All remedial math students and the lowest quartile of English students were required to participate. Following an intensive year of preparation, SSU launched its Early Start Program in the Summer of 2012 through the School of Extended Education.

SSU enrolled 123 students in the Early Start English (ESE), a one-unit, fully on-line course to prepare students to go into the SSU English 100A/B “stretch” English Composition program (one year, 6 units of college credit). The ESE course emphasized reading and writing assignments that prepared students for SSU coursework; featured small class size and daily interaction with the instructor (15 to 1 ratio); and required students to log on daily during the week of instruction. Multiple sections were offered, and students received either credit or no credit for the course (110 students received credit; 10 students received no credit). Students who did not participate or who received no credit have been notified that they must pass their English 100A “stretch” English composition course in order to be eligible to enroll at SSU in the Spring

2013 semester. They are also required to receive tutoring support in the SSU Writing Center and have been notified of additional support available to them. Through the Office of Institutional Research, SSU will continue to track these students to determine if ESE supported their successful completion of English 100A/B.

Early Start Math (ESM), a one-unit, fully on-line course, enrolled 451 students, with 449 receiving credit for the course. ESM utilized an online tutorial (ALEKs) that helps students review for the Entry Level Math Exam (ELM), which is an exam used by the CSU to determine appropriate placement in various mathematics courses. The self-paced tutorial was available to students anytime between July 6th -August 6th. Students spent between 30-45 hours on ALEKs with access to faculty on-line. Student were encouraged (but not required) to retake the ELM after completing the tutorial. **NUMBER** students retook the ELM on August 18, with **NUMBER** improving their placement from elementary algebra to intermediate algebra; **NUMBER** students improved their placement from intermediate algebra to general education level math. **NUMBER** did not improve their placement. The remaining students chose not to repeat the ELM, which was not required, but will be tracked through their remedial mathematics courses to determine if the ALEKs tutorial was successful in supporting successful remediation of these students.

The campus Early Start Planning Team will reconvene in early November to review the 2012 Early Start Program and to make needed improvements based on lessons learned from the first implementation of the Program. Additionally, the campus will receive guidance from the CSU Chancellor's Office on implementation of the 2013 Early Start. Preliminary evidence indicates that the ESM was successful for students who engaged diligently in the on-line ALEKs program and chose to retake the ELM. Because ESE was never intended to allow students to move from the "stretch" English 100A/B into the accelerated one-semester English 101

composition, the success of ESE will be determined only after students have completed the “stretch” program. Additionally, issues and concerns that have already been identified include: how to handle students with late ELM/EPT scores; what sanction to impose on students who either do not enroll in ESE/ESM or fail to successfully complete the classes; how to test the ESM students more expeditiously so that they are able to change placements and classes prior to the first day of instruction; ways to improve communication with high school counselors, parents, and students about the requirements of Early Start; how to collect and distribute data about enrollments and completions in a more timely fashion; whether to increase the number of units of the ESE/ESM courses; and how to continue implementation without CSU system monetary support.

Freshman Learning Communities. SSU has a rich history of academic programming to help first-year students transition from home and high school life to the new and sometimes daunting world of the university. In the late 1980s, the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) pioneered the idea of linking General Education (GE) courses to a class (UNIV 102) designed to help students establish a strong connection to and understanding of the university; help students recognize that "this university is a place for me, a place where I can be successful"; and provide students with tools to achieve success as they embark on their academic career. UNIV 102 was unusual not only for its content but also its structure: in each section a peer mentor, trained through a leadership course and weekly workshops, worked with the UNIV 102 instructor to mentor and support the students. In 1994, the UNIV 102 course became the underpinning of the Educational Mentoring Team (EMT) Program, which was offered to over 70% of SSU's first year students.

The Office of Residential Life, building on the success of the EMT Program, developed

Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs), ten clusters of GE courses, with each cohort focusing on a particular area of study (business, education, health, etc.) and anchored by a UNIV 102 section. And, more recently, MOSAIC, a similar cluster of courses with a multicultural focus, was established.

Several elements of these programs contributed to their success: they linked academic requirements with the “homeroom” of UNIV 102 that provided the safety and support that helped students learn how to succeed in the university; they created small learning communities in which students connect with each other and their instructor(s); and they were yearlong, rather than lasting just one semester, so that students had an entire school year to get to know one another and acclimate to the University.

This combination of factors became the basis for the establishment of Freshman Year Experience (FYE) in 2006. Highly praised by the WASC visiting team in 2009, FYE integrated the qualities of EOP, FIG, and MOSAIC into a new course, UNIV 150 (Identity and Global Challenges), which seamlessly encompasses GE Areas A3 (critical thinking) and C3 (comparative perspectives), plus a transition-to-college curriculum into one 9-unit yearlong course.

The success of FYE, as well as the University’s commitment to retention of its first-year students, was one of several reasons why the position of Director of Undergraduate Studies was established beginning in Fall 2010. Reporting directly to the Provost, the Director of Undergraduate Studies was charged with building on the success of SSU’s existing freshman programs so that the university would be able to offer a transition course or program to every first-time freshman that matriculates at Sonoma State. The University was well aware that it needed to find a way to provide high quality, first year and general education experiences to all

of its students, rather than, as noted by the WASC visiting team, “the paradox of exemplary general education programs that serve only a small percentage of SSU students.” With this goal in mind, the Director convened an ad-hoc group that called itself the Transition Team and included coordinators of each transition program, plus the Director of Residential Life and a professional advisor. The team, which has met every other week since Fall 2010, first compared the various existing transition programs and then teased out a list of common goals, activities, and learning outcomes that characterize all programs.

The Transition Team considered these commonalities in light of AAC&U’s list of High Impact Practices (HIPs) and found that the first three HIPs (First Year Seminars and Experiences, Common Intellectual Experiences, and Learning Communities) comprise the foundation for all our transition courses and programs; in addition, each addresses at least two of the next five on AAC&U’s list (Writing Intensive, Undergraduate Research, Collaborative Assignments and Projects, Diversity/Global Learning, and Service Learning/Community-Based Learning). With support from Academic Affairs and the CSU, SSU sent a team to the 2011 AAC&U High Impact Practices Summer Institute at the University of Vermont to develop a plan to scale up our first-year transition offerings.

At this Institute, the Freshman Learning Community (FLC) program was sketched out. FLCs capitalize on the grass-roots culture at SSU, whereby individuals and small groups of faculty and staff implement outstanding ideas for curriculum and programming that benefit and inspire our students. At the same time, the FLC program establishes common agreed-upon goals that support freshmen as they adapt to college life. The Institute team brought back a proposal, quickly endorsed by the Transition Team, the Academic Affairs Team, and the Deans’ Council, designed to encourage faculty and Schools to develop new FLCs to be added to those already in

existence. New FLCs could be integrated courses (like FYE) or clusters of courses (like EOP, FIG, and MOSAIC); or they could follow a new format. But whatever its structure, any new FLC must be yearlong and incorporate GE academic requirements, transition-to-college goals, and at least the three HIPs that all existing FLCs address. Any new courses or programs would, of course, have to go through the usual levels of faculty governance to attain permanent status; plus, to be labeled an FLC, faculty teaching in the program would need to participate in workshops (for which they would be compensated) that help them learn how to work with a peer mentor and integrate transition elements into the course's academic goals.

Response to this call was enthusiastic, in large part because faculty members were being encouraged to develop curriculum for freshmen in the areas of study that they enjoy teaching. For example, the School of Science and Technology developed an FYE-like 12-unit integrated STEM course, supported by an NSF grant; meanwhile, the Chemistry Department developed a FIG-like FLC designed for its majors and intended to increase their enthusiasm and success; and the School of Arts and Humanities faculty developed Humanities Learning Communities (HLCs), eight sections (each focused on a different topic) that combined the plenary lecture-plus-small seminar format that FYE pioneered. These HLCs were designed for all students, regardless of major, and meet two GE areas that have historically been difficult for students to complete in their freshman year.

This year, nearly 1600 of the 1800 freshmen were enrolled in an FLC; it is our intention that by Fall 2013, every first-year student will participate. The complete list of HLCs offered in Fall 2012 is attached. Assessment efforts in 2012 are linked to the assessment plan of the GE Subcommittee, which plans to evaluate the oral communication component in Area A3 (critical thinking) and Area C3 (comparative perspectives). A team of faculty attended the CSU Institute

for Teaching and Learning (ITL) Summer Institute in 2012 to further develop the GE Subcommittee's assessment plans. The faculty coordinator of the FYE Program agreed to work with her team of faculty members to develop a rubric and signature assignments for oral communication assessment. The team is producing the rubric and assignments this Fall and will do the assessment of oral communication in the Spring in the FYE Program, as well as in the new HLCs created by Arts and Humanities. See the section below under general education for further information about this assessment effort.

For more information, visit the FLC webpage at <https://www.sonoma.edu/aa/flc/>.

Academic Requirements Report (ARR, formerly the Degree Progress Report or DPR). A task force was convened in 2010, at the request of the University's President, to work on full implementation of the Academic Requirements Report (ARR), a functionality available in the university's common management system's (CMS) student administration component. This task force has worked on various initiatives to improve the accuracy of the ARR, to provide training to faculty and students in utilizing the ARR as an advising tool, and to ultimately utilize the ARR for graduation clearance.

- Accuracy of the ARR: At this time, all degree requirements and all GE patterns have been built and are accurately reflected in the ARR. The University has spent considerable time and effort in improving the way that course substitutions and waivers are granted and are reflected in the ARR. At this time, students can be assured that the ARR accurately reflects their progress towards the degree and can support them in making appropriate decisions about course work to complete the degree in a timely manner.
- Training for Faculty: Faculty trainings are conducted each semester on any changes in the ARR. This past summer 2012, CMS underwent an upgrade to version 9.0, resulting in

changes to the navigation to the ARR, the renaming of the ARR (from the DPR), and differences in the appearance and navigation within the ARR. Training sessions were held for faculty in the Fall, and the Registrar and CMS Student Administration representatives are available for individual faculty department meetings.

- Training for Students: Students receive their first exposure to the ARR during Summer Orientations for first time freshmen or during Transfer Orientations. Instruction in the ARR is enhanced through the various Freshman Learning Communities. Additionally, peer advisors in the Advising Center are prepared to help train students in the use of the ARR. The Advising Center is preparing a month-long program in October 2012 to encourage students to access, understand, and use the ARR effectively to achieve their educational goals.

Advising Summits. Under the leadership of the Director of Undergraduate Studies, an Advising Summit was held in February 2012. The summit included the members of the Academic Senate's Advising Subcommittee, department and school advisors, professional advisors from the university's Advising Center, administrators, and Summer Orientation leaders. The goal of the meeting was to explore ways to improve communications and consistency among advisors across campus. The Director of Undergraduate Studies framed the discussion by discussing "the new normal," in part necessitated by current budgetary constraints, but also reflecting the need to assess and evaluate how we are insuring student success, retention and graduation.

The New Normal includes 15-16 unit limits per semester, while still allowing graduation within four years for most majors; encourages students to declare a major by the end of freshman year; anticipates fewer course choices for students; and necessitates the development of clearer pathways to graduation. The first Advising Summit was devoted to identifying the questions that

the “new normal” raises and steps that can be taken:

- What should be done about majors that require more than 16 units in some semesters?
- What can we do about high-demand majors?
- As course choices narrow, to what extent will we need to modify four year graduation plans as indicated in the University Catalog?
- How can we successfully guide our students to a major that is most suited to their abilities and aspirations?
- How should we define advising? What constitutes good academic advising? Should we try to develop a consistent model for advising? What are the advising needs of our particular students?
- Whose responsibility is advising our students? In an era of dwindling resources and increased workloads, what are the benefits and drawbacks of providing non-faculty, professional advising support?
- How can we help faculty, staff, students, and parents to embrace the New Normal, which will require a new way of thinking about undergraduate education?
- How can we successfully communicate to all constituents the many changes as they occur?
- How can we ensure that the flow of information proceeds not only from Academic Affairs to advisors and programs, but also from advisors and programs to Academic Affairs?

The necessary steps in improving communication and establishing consistency include educating faculty in using the ARR; advertising the existence of the advising webpage and keeping it up-to-date; developing a way for all pertinent changes to GE, majors, scheduling,

registration, etc. to be communicated to one central location; providing a means for students and faculty to get their questions answered quickly, using available social media resources; embracing 5-8 guiding principles and advertising them campus-wide; creating an advising “map” that shows the constellation of advising opportunities that students encounter while at SSU; tracking the formal advising that students receive; providing parents and students consistent message at orientation and in Freshman Learning Communities (FLCs); utilizing the FLCs as the primary venue for GE advising and choosing a major; providing a consistent message in training of Peer Mentors, Peer Advisors, CSAs, Summer Orientation leaders, and all other student leaders; and working with Associated Students to help communicate with students.

Social Science Sophomore Year Experience. As part of SSU’s efforts to increase retention and graduation, as well as rejuvenation of General Education, the School of Social Sciences is in the process of developing a Sophomore Year Experience program. SSU now has a variety of first-year programs, but continues to see a problem with retention at the end of the freshman year. Faculty in the School of Social Sciences felt that the School was particularly well-placed to look at sophomore year programming for two reasons. First, while the School of Social Sciences has general education courses geared to freshmen, many courses in the school are targeted to students later in their academic trajectory. Second, limited resources in the School restrict the number of faculty available to teach specialized freshmen courses and have placed a damper on faculty interest in developing a school-wide first-year program. These concerns prompted school faculty to begin looking at developing the Sophomore Year Experience.

This program, targeted primarily at sophomores, seeks to organize and make sense of GE courses taught in the departments that make up the School of Social Sciences. In this program, students would choose a broad, interdisciplinary topic that interests them, explore it from

different perspectives as they choose from a menu of courses that complete general education requirements, meet other students and faculty who share a common interest, and learn about what they can do with their interest (including collaborative undergraduate research, majors, majors, careers, and/or community involvement).

The Sophomore Year Experience program would differ from a first-year program in several respects: it would be menu-driven rather than cohort-based; it would use existing general education classes rather than requiring the creation of new courses; it would have ties to Residential Life programming but would not involve learning communities for all participants; and it would focus on transitions to the major and connections to careers and community, rather than on the transition to college.

The Sophomore Year Experience in the School of Social Sciences is currently under development. The development team consists of members of nearly every department in the School of Social Sciences as well as representatives from the library, residential life, and Academic Affairs, Office of the Director of Undergraduate Education. The team has been conducting research, using student focus groups and campus student data, about student needs and interests.

In addition, the team piloted a program linking Social Sciences courses with sophomore-level writing courses (taught in the English department) that is currently assessing the feasibility of using linked writing courses as a component of the sophomore year program. The primary work of the development team is to create a pilot Sophomore Year Experience program for Fall 2013 that would include an interdisciplinary theme with a menu of general education course options for interested students and a 1-unit course on Social Sciences methods and practices as part of a broader program of connective programming to bring together the students in the

theme-related courses.

Improved Scheduling. SSU reviews the scheduling of classes each semester with an eye to providing appropriate course offerings in order to allow students access to courses and to timely progress towards graduation. The "new normal" described above, however, has prompted the University to utilize data in better ways to help Schools and Departments schedule appropriate course offerings at the lower division, upper division, in majors and in General Education. The staff in the Office of Academic Resources, including the Director and the Scheduler, work closely with the Schools and Departments in providing real time data about student enrollments and needs in courses. Additionally, the Office of Institutional Research provides information as needed to help the Schools schedule to student demand and need. One data tool that has proved especially effective is a spreadsheet produced each semester after census that extracts data from the ARR and informs the campus of how many students need GE courses in every area and subarea by class level. Thus, in any given semester a department or school knows precisely how many freshmen, sophomore, juniors and seniors need a particular area of GE in order to make progress towards the degree. This is serving to identify and reduce bottlenecks that may impede timely completion. The Director of Academic Resources is also able to work with the Schools in determining the appropriate distribution of seats between upper and lower division by providing data to show the enrollment trends and the distribution of seats and students. This supports the Schools in achieving an appropriate balance.

An additional useful tool is the wait list functionality available in CMS. After piloting the wait list with five selected departments, SSU now utilizes the wait list for all departments and classes, which allows departments and schools to see in real time enrollment patterns in particular courses. This has resulted in schools opening additional sections or seats (as resources

allow) to alleviate demand. On-going training on wait list features continues for faculty, staff, and students. The university has also experimented with “rationing” of seats during the different enrollment periods in order to equitably insure that students at all class levels receive a minimum of 12 semester units and a maximum of 16. Each semester the successes and failures of the registration period are evaluated by the Academic Affairs Team and other committees and adjustments are made as recommended. Finally, appropriate use of various requisites and pre-requisites allows for better management of registration and equitable allotment of seats to students. These are important tools in assisting the Schools in providing the appropriate distribution of courses to help retain and graduate students in a timely manner.

2. progress toward completing the “accountability loop” in the university’s assessment of student learning and program review process.

Program review is a vital and required process for all academic programs at the University. At the time of the Educational Effectiveness Review, SSU had aggressively moved to have all of its academic programs undergo a program review, necessitating completion of the program review process for all programs in a timeframe of three years. At the time of the 2009 team visit, SSU had achieved the goal of all programs completing a self-study and external review. However, the visiting team noted that the University “should continue its broad movement toward completing the “accountability loop” through the development...of memoranda of understanding that specify action items and necessary support.” These memoranda of understanding were intended to provide closure to the Program Review process by giving departments a clear sense of what actions needed to be taken and the kind of support, generally through additional revenue (e.g., resources for facilities, offices, operating expenses, hiring of new faculty, etc.) , that the program could expect to receive. However, at that time

(early 2010), the CSU began to experience systematic cuts to its budgets, resulting in severe and persistent budgetary constraints in all areas of the university, including academics. Additionally, between the WASC visiting team's review and this report, SSU has had three different Provosts, each with a different perspective on Program Review and, indeed, the necessity of an MOU process, such as the one originally outlined. Finally, the Program Review Process as originally envisioned and implemented involved a very long time frame: departments engaged in a self-study and external review in one academic year; took the review through full committee reviews, including School Curriculum Committee, Dean review, and the Educational Policies Committee, which often took an additional year; and then were expected to produce the MOU and consult with the Dean and Provost. By the time the MOU occurred, in some cases, almost three years had passed and the original action items had already been acted upon or were no longer relevant or possible. Many programs took immediate action on recommendations in the program review and made significant additions and revisions to their curriculum well before any MOU was even prepared. Examples of some of these results of program review are illustrated below.

Clearly, the Program Review Process needed to be refined and reconsidered and the Educational Policies Committee (EPC) of the Academic Senate was tasked with reviewing the Program Review Process and making recommendations for improvement. One of the first concerns addressed was the length of time it took to get through the several levels of review: external reviewer, departmental review, school curriculum committee review, Dean's review, EPC review, and final MOU. As stated earlier, this process took a minimum of two academic years, with departments appropriately implementing action items and changes well before the process was completed, calling into question the value of an end product MOU. Another issue was that at each level of review it was unclear what the outcomes should be. What was the role

of each group or committee in the process? Lacking clarity, what resulted was generally an endorsement of the review and the findings of the external reviewer at each level, yielding little additional value to the process, other than the value of many individuals across Schools and disciplines being able to read each review. Clearly, establishing goals and outcomes at the beginning of the process would yield better results and action.

Among the resulting recommendations of EPC were the following:

- Reinstitute a University Program Review Subcommittee (URPS) of EPC to provide guidance and support of the program review process going forward with Cycle 2.
- Through UPRS, develop a process for Cycle 2 that will allow for timely review of the self-studies and opportunity to provide value to the review process.
- Focus Cycle 2 program reviews on student learning and improving the educational experience, while building on the prior Cycle 1 program reviews.
- Link the self study process more directly to the goals and planning of the Department and School.
- Change EPCs process from producing individual commentary on each program review to providing the Schools and Academic Affairs with a summary each year of the major commendations, issues, and concerns raised by the program reviews overall.

The UPRS met for its first organizational meeting in late Fall 2010 and worked on developing a process for Cycle 2 program review. The UPRS determined that the current template for program review was consistent with the overall goals of program review and did not need major revision. Wisely, the UPRS chose not to engage in the lengthy process of policy review and revision. Instead, the UPRS developed the following additional guidelines to help departments develop their program review in Cycle 2. Meanwhile, the AVP for

Academic Programs, in consultation with the School Deans, developed a new schedule of Program Reviews (see attached). Several programs underwent accreditation review in 2011-2012 and will come forward this academic year to the UPRS under the new structure and guidelines. An additional six-seven programs will undertake their self-study and external review in 2012-2013. The AVP for Academic Program has met with each principal author (or department chair) to go over the Program Review Policy, the external review guidelines, and the new procedures to answer questions and concerns.

The following describes the process for Cycle 2 as envisioned by UPRS:

The Program Review is used by several groups: the programs themselves, Schools and Academic Affairs, and the University. Periodic self-study allows programs to re-examine their learning outcomes and goals and assess how well these are being attained. The Program Review is a vital tool for the planning processes of Schools and Academic Affairs, allowing for a deep insight into the strengths of programs as well as their needs. The Program Review is also used by the University to insure the high quality of our degrees and to demonstrate that quality to oversight and accreditation agencies such as WASC and fulfill a system wide mandate to engage in periodic program review.

The value to the program itself should be considered by all as paramount. A Program Review entails substantial work, and it needs to be focused on the program itself. The process of self-study should be primarily directed toward examination and articulation of program wide student learning outcomes (SLOs), the system in place for delivering those SLOs and the plans to sustain, improve and/or change that system. The Program Review is also an essential tool in the planning process at the School and Unit level. It should provide a very clear picture of what the program is, its goals and how they are reached, and the challenges to reaching those goals. To

make this work well, it is necessary that Deans and Programs communicate clearly about how Programs should address issues of current concern in that School prior to embarking on the self-study.

The Cycle 2 Program Review builds upon the findings and recommendations of the last Program Review cycle and incorporates the annual assessment reports of the last five years. Summarizing the declarations of the previous Program Review and describing responses to the previous action plan may be appropriate, allowing Reviewers to focus their efforts on Student Learning Outcomes, curriculum and any particular issues of concern to the Program or the Dean.

All faculty and relevant staff are involved in the self-study process. The faculty members need to describe the goals and student outcomes of their classes and work together to show how they align with the goals and outcomes for the program. Input from all faculty in the program is needed to develop and perform appropriate assessment of those program goals. Staff will not only assist in the administrative side of the review, their input describing and assessing how they contribute to the program is an important part of a clear and thorough picture. Beyond the great effort by all of the faculty as a team, there is typically one primary coordinator/writer, the Program Review Coordinator, who will steer the self-study effort, and insure that all of the pieces are complete and assemble them into one document. In order for the document to segue well with the planning systems at the School and Unit level, the Dean works with the Program Review Coordinator, insuring that elements important to the school are included in the document

As per the policy, the program faculty nominate several candidates for this position to their Dean. The candidates should be independent of the program and SSU, experienced in the management of a similar program, knowledgeable about SLOs and assessment, and of high academic caliber.

The commitment required by the Program Review Coordinator should be compensated through course release or other means, as agreed between the Program Review Coordinator and his/her Dean and the External Reviewer shall be paid a \$1500.00 honorarium for his/her services. The program will need institutional support in order to complete the Program Review. In particular, orientation (and training) should be provided to the Program Review Coordinator, and statistical data maintained by the University should be made available as necessary through the Office of Institutional Research.

Closing the accountability loop in program review. Despite the difficulties encountered in the Cycle 1 Program Review process, many programs implemented action items that were recommended during the program review self-study and by the external reviewer. While departments had difficulty accessing new resources, such as tenure line faculty hires and much needed infrastructure needs, they were often able to modify curriculum in order to better meet the SLOs and goals of the department. Below is a detailed example of how one program, Biology, was able to close the loop on SLO assessment and make curricular improvement. It is followed by shorter examples, illustrating how programs closed the loop and made needed improvements to their programs.

Biology. The department underwent two cycles of curricular revision when a cohort of new faculty members arrived in the late 1990s. The curricular revision was driven by a desire to strengthen the focus on scientific developments in genetics, evolution, ecology and molecular biology in the lower division and to offer a wider variety of courses in different disciplines of Biology in the upper division. It positioned the department to obtain funding for curricular improvement and equipment renewal from NSF. By 2008 however, problems became evident as increasing enrollments were not matched by enrollment capacity, especially in the upper

division. The Department decided to use the program review process to assess its options and set priorities. The process continued during the chairship of three faculty members representing different curricular areas in the department.

Timeline

2008-2009 Preliminary enrollment and course assessment data gathered in preparation for the review

2009-2010 Completion of the graduate program review, an essential step as graduate students play an instrumental role in the lower division as teaching assistants.

2010 Completion of undergraduate program review

2010-2011 Biology faculty retreats on curricular revision

2011-2012 Fine tuning of curricular revisions and approval through university governance.

Data gathered:

The department gathered information on how faculty members assess student learning for each Biology course, and then in a series of workshops the faculty developed learning objectives for lower division courses and for curricular areas in the lower and upper division. It also completed data on capstone projects (then only available as written senior theses in the upper division) and on service learning.

Role of external program reviewers

Two external reviewers visited campus. Both were selected because of their strong commitment to undergraduate education and familiarity with the California public university system. Both external reviewers noted problems with the SSU undergraduate curriculum. One of the reviewers stated that Biology curriculum was ‘overly elaborate,’ and he pointedly

compared the units required for the Biology degree (81 or more) to the unit requirements for other local CSU campuses (67-72). The second reviewer noted that faculty members have demonstrated excellence as teacher-scholars, yet the workload calculation typically used at SSU incentivizes a proliferation of low enrollment courses. He recommended that the department provide workload credit for participation in high enrollment courses and increase flexibility in meeting degree requirements to facilitate student progress towards graduation. Additionally, he recommended that we reduce the number of concentrations from five to two.

Curricular revision

In response to these recommendations and the self-study, the Department undertook a comprehensive curricular revision. The principles behind the revision were to facilitate student progress towards graduation by decreasing the number of required units and reducing the complexity of the curriculum. The Department recognized that simplification was most urgently needed for the BS degree, as some faculty members were being overwhelmed with senior thesis student projects. Often these students were insufficiently prepared, especially in the area of writing, for a two-semester written thesis. Holding them to Department standards often required giving incompletes and delaying graduation. This problem has been compounded by a steady increase in the proportion of graduates with the BS degree from a third to half of all Biology majors.

The curricular revision proposals simplified the BA degree by removing two concentrations and by taking advantage of a reduction in required units from Chemistry courses. The Department also introduced a new research experience course to allow students to take advantage of opportunities for faculty research earlier in their educational program than was previously possible. The Department revised the BS degree by removing three concentrations,

restructuring the two remaining concentrations with fewer required courses, and adding a ‘no concentration’ option. The number of courses required for the BS degree was also reduced, and the total unit number required now falls within the 120 CSU normative requirement. Finally, the Department developed capstone-learning objectives and reconfigured options for a capstone experience. To recognize differences in the level of preparation among students, it now offers a one-semester non-thesis option that still requires that students complete an independent research projects and present their results in a written form or as an oral presentation. For more advanced students, the Department also offer an ‘Honors Thesis’ option that requires two semesters and requires that students develop a research proposal to be considered by a committee of faculty members before they initiate their thesis work. Finally, the Department offers the possibility for faculty members to develop a research course that satisfies capstone learning objectives, which should also facilitate student progress towards graduation.

These changes were forwarded through University governance in the Spring 2012 semester and the increases in efficiency were recognized, speeding approval for Fall 2012.

Further steps

The Biology department has begun to track student progress towards graduation more systematically than in the past. The Department is considering the implications of admissions and grading policies on student retention and progression towards graduation and will continue to refer to program review recommendations as it completes further assessments and revisions.

Global Studies: The Global Studies Program review and follow up MOU reported the following.

The Global Studies steering committee uses several assessment instruments to evaluate the alignment of the curriculum with the learning objectives, including student surveys, university teaching evaluations, and senior exit survey given to all Global Studies majors. As a result of

these assessments, the program results included: learning objectives were too vague, not well aligned with the program, and difficult to assess; the major's foundational requirement, Global 200, was not a good fit in GE Area A1; and students can graduate in a timely manner at the 120 unit minimum, yet commonly take longer and at a higher unit load because they discover the major late in their career, decide to develop new language skills, and/or join a study abroad program late, which is common with transfer students. The action plan results included revamping the learning objectives, revising the curriculum, including a new position in the GE pattern for Global 200, and a strengthening of the program's assessment plan, with a systematic assessment of the curriculum occurring every 4 years.

Sociology: The Sociology Department assessment includes both direct assessment (analysis of senior seminar research papers) and indirect assessment (analysis of exit surveys of graduating seniors). The department has been in the process of self-reflective and responsive assessment work for several years. They have revised surveys and expanded assessment to include direct assessment of senior seminar papers. They will continue administering and analyzing results from the Senior Exit Survey. After exploring primary trait analysis for this round of program review, the department has decided to utilize content analysis to evaluate senior seminar papers in the future. The Department recognizes the value of using assessment to support educational effectiveness and has embraced the philosophy of "closing the loop." In response to recognition that learning goals need to be distributed to students in multiple ways, the department will disseminate information on departmental webpages and in advising materials. The assessment outlines concern with the instruction of quantitative methods. While two quantitative courses exist, they are not taught on a regular basis and are not required. With the addition of two tenure hires with quantitative hiring, the department has the goal of requiring Statistics for Sociologists

for the major. Additionally, the department hopes to offer courses on global issues, contemporary sociological theory, and quantitative research design and analysis on a regular basis

Physics: As a result of its program review and external review the department addressed the following recommendations:

- Recommendation: find ways to get LD physics majors involved earlier with the department. The Department changed the LD requirement to include Physics 100 as a way of getting an earlier start on including majors in the department. The Department also increased emphasis on students taking Physics 494 What Physicists Do, the Physics Colloquium. This semester has a record enrollment of 30 students. This has led to a growth in majors from 38 in 2008 to 56 in 2012, and additionally, 17 physics or astronomy minors (compared to less than 5 in 2008).
- Recommendation: Engage "junior faculty" in the governance of the department. Since the department has only three faculty and one department chair, all faculty are involved in all aspects of governing the department. While none are currently junior faculty, in the future, all faculty will play a role in faculty governance of the department.
- Recommendation: Increase marketing efforts to attract physics students nationally. The Department redid their website and updated their recruitment brochure, but have not had the time or personnel to do any type of recruiting.
- Recommendation: Provide IDC to encourage new grant proposals. Given inconsistently, but when IDC was given, it resulted in the ability to get a \$550K NASA grant to develop a curriculum for middle and high school students to learn how to build small satellites for high-powered rocket launches.

- Recommendations not implemented because of lack of funding: hire two more tenure track faculty, and provide released time for faculty to do research and write proposals.

Mathematics: As a result of its self-study and external review, the Mathematics Department added two new degree programs, a BA in Applied Statistics and a BS in Statistics, as well as new concentration, bi-disciplinary mathematics. This allows students to earn a bachelor's degree in mathematics with a concentration in another discipline within or outside of the School of Science and Technology. These recommendations emerged from an extensive review of the curriculum, focus groups with students, and the recommendation of the external reviewer.

3. progress in rejuvenating and assessing general education.

At the time of the 2009 WASC team visit, the GE Subcommittee had just completed a major initiative to develop specific learning objectives for each of the GE Areas and Sub Areas. As well, the School of Arts and Humanities had just begun discussing a reform initiative that would reorganize GE Areas in A (Communication and Critical Thinking) and C (Arts and Humanities). The WASC visiting team encouraged the GE Subcommittee to support the reform effort.

Initiative #1: Reform of GE Areas A and C

The School of Arts and Humanities submitted a proposal to the University to reorganize GE Areas A and C in the following way:

FROM:

TO:

A1: Oral and Written Analysis	3 units		
A2: Fundamentals of Commun.	3 units	A2: Fundamentals of Comm.	4 units
A3: Critical Thinking	3 units	A3: Critical Thinking	4 units

C1: Fine Arts	3 units	C1: Fine Arts	4 units
C2: World Literature,	3 units	C2: Lit., Philos. & Values	4 units
C3: Philosophy and Values	3 units	C3: Comp. Persp. & F.L.	4 units
C4: Comparative Persp. & F.L.	<u>3 units</u>		_____
	21 units		20 units

After approval was given, the GE Subcommittee worked with the School to implement the changes. First, the GE Subcommittee committee sponsored a series of workshops during which Arts and Humanities faculty reorganized the GE learning objectives into the new structure. The most critical change required deciding how the A1 Oral and Written Communication objectives would be re-distributed. The Arts and Humanities faculty decided to spread them across three of the new GE Subareas: A2, A3 and C3. A2 would take on the written analysis components, while areas A3 and C3 would share the oral objectives. Thus, both A3 and C3 courses would have to build pedagogy that developed oral skills.

Faculty from the School of Arts and Humanities then submitted Course Modification Proposals that explained and provided evidence to show how they intended to revise their curriculum to meet the new learning objectives in their GE courses. These proposals were first reviewed by the Arts and Humanities School Curriculum Committee and then by the GE Subcommittee. It should be noted that the GE subcommittee reviewed all of the courses within Areas A and C during this time (not just Subareas A2, A3 and C3 courses). This was necessary for two reasons: (1) most of the courses were shifting from 3 to 4 units and (2) this would be the first time that faculty were asked to provide evidence that their courses met the newly developed learning objectives. The GE Subcommittee paid particularly close attention to Area A2, A3 and

C3 courses, reviewing how they would incorporate the new oral and written learning objectives.

Some Proposals required revision, but all eventually were accepted and the reform was implemented for incoming freshmen in Fall of 2011.

During this process, a number of issues surfaced that are still being addressed:

- The GE Subcommittee was made more aware of the fact that A2 and A3 courses are run with large numbers of sections that are taught by many different faculty. Some Departments have developed formal guidelines that provide some consistency in what is taught in all of the sections. The GE Subcommittee was able to review this single document, and it has some assurance that all of the sections will meet the learning objectives. Other courses do not have those guidelines. The GE subcommittee asked that those Departments to adopt such guidelines, but it remains an outstanding issue and one that the committee will address.
- SSU is now unique within the CSU and Community College Systems in how it handles Area A1 learning objectives. SSU students who decide to take GE courses at another college other than SSU cannot transfer A2, A3 or C3 courses because they will not get the full oral and written analysis component. This may become a point of confusion and frustration for students if they are not properly informed and advised. But, as of now, the current strategy is to address this issue through advising for “native” SSU students.

Transfer students continue to follow the 48-unit GE pattern.

There remains a structural mismatch between 3 unit courses and the new 4 unit structure in Areas A and C. A few SSU courses in Area C1 remain at 3 units. And, SSU students who take C1 or C2 courses at a Community College will transfer in 3 units instead of 4.

In these cases, students will end up with only 11 units. Because they will not have completed their required 12 units in Area C, the GE Subcommittee has requested that the School of Arts and Humanities mount 1-unit Area C courses. The school has begun to address this problem in interesting ways. This semester, the Art Department has obtained GE status for its 1-unit Art Lecture Series. The Music Department has expressed interest in developing a 1-unit course to accompany its 3-unit course that will encourage students to participate in instrumental or choral ensembles, or attend a concert series. The School is also discussing collaborative opportunities through Associated Student Productions that would allow a student to attend a series of performances, submit reviews or response papers to the performances, and earn a unit of credit.

The GE subcommittee is concerned with the class sizes being mounted in the C3 Subarea, some classes being taught with over 50 students. At this size, faculty will have a difficult time addressing their new oral communication learning objectives.

The School of Arts and Humanities has developed a creative new course model to address this issue, called learning communities, which have been discussed above in the section above on Freshman Learning Communities. These are year-long 8-unit courses that combine small-sized A2 and large-sized C3 classes into a single class. This class has a large lecture component, which captures economies of scale, and small breakout sections that provide an opportunity for students to discuss issues and practice oral communication in small groups.

Initiative #2: Assessment

After having developed the new learning objectives for all of the GE Subareas, the GE Subcommittee developed and received approval for an Assessment Plan. The Plan described a process by which all of the learning objectives across the GE curriculum would be assessed

within a 5-year period. The committee then conducted a Pilot Assessment of one learning objective within one GE Subarea: B1 (Physical Sciences). This Pilot Assessment went through the whole process – from beginning to end -- in order for the committee to experience and understand the assessment process better, and in order to fine-tune its plan.

The GE Subcommittee first sponsored a series of workshops for a few senior faculty members who teach courses in the B1 Subarea. In these workshops, the faculty 1) identified one learning objective to assess; and 2) developed an assessment rubric for that objective. The GE committee then developed a web interface for all faculty teaching B1 courses to review the Assessment Rubric and report their results back to the GE subcommittee. As well, the GE subcommittee sponsored a series of workshops for B1 faculty. In these workshops, it explained the purpose of the assessment, the assessment process, and how faculty would report their results. By the end of the Fall 10 semester, the B1 faculty has reported their assessment results through the web-interface.

The GE Subcommittee processed the data and developed summary statistics on the results. It reviewed and discussed the results and developed a series of issues for B1 faculty to think about. The following Spring, the GE Subcommittee sponsored a final workshop wherein B1 faculty were invited to review the results and exchange ideas for improving student learning in that area. The faculty also discussed the assessment process and provided input to the GE committee on how to improve the process in the future.

After this pilot effort members of the GE Subcommittee and administrators responsible for General Education attended a CSU assessment workshop on General Education, held in conjunction with a WASC workshop on assessment. At that time, several of the presentations revolved around campuses choosing to assess the broader, programmatic level outcomes in GE,

rather than individual sub area outcomes, such as the pilot work in Area B2 that faculty engaged in. At the same time, WASC introduced its revisions to the WASC Handbook, which included a requirement for campuses to assess five fundamental competencies: oral, written, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, and information literacy. Finally, the CSU in their latest Executive Order regarding General Education (EO 1065) endorsed within the order the inclusion of the LEAP learning outcomes, which map well to both the WASC outcomes, as well as SSU's SLOs for GE.

After these workshops, the GE subcommittee refined its thinking about assessment of GE and has moved in the direction of assessing each of these competencies at the GE level. This plan involves the creation of "Communities of Practice" around particular LEAP outcomes. The first areas of assessment are Oral Communication and Information Literacy (see below for a further discussion of these assessment efforts). For each area, the faculty will be investigating and sharing effective strategies for assessment, as well as connecting faculty to examples of best practices already in place on this campus. A primary forum for these efforts are a suite of integrated courses containing both GE curriculum and transition elements that the University is offering first and second year students (A&H, FYE, STEM). The specific steps of the plan to create and utilize Communities of Practice occur in two phases which are detailed below.

Phase I: Formation of Practice Communities

The following steps will be followed to identify the people who are most qualified to get us started, both in terms of knowledge and interest level. First-year communities (FYE, STEM, SSU Learning Communities) will strongly encouraged to participate in the first Practice Communities, one focused on oral communication and another focused on information literacy. Meanwhile, in parallel, the following three steps will facilitate forming practice communities for

the other LEAP SLOs:

- (1) Meet with Curriculum Committees from each school to describe the process and post the plan on the SSU GE website.
- (2) Conduct a survey of faculty teaching GE courses in which LEAP SLOs are addressed, and at what level (introductory, practice, capstone).
- (3) Survey data will be used by the GE Subcommittee to map courses to specific LEAP outcomes, and all faculty with courses involving an outcome will be invited to participate in a “Practice Community” composed of faculty across the curriculum, either as a member or leader.

Phase II: Assessment

Community leaders will be responsible for organizing meetings, and producing written documents describing the steps outlined below. Assessment of LEAP SLOs will be conducted by Practice Communities, which will be the locus of the assembly of a resource base available to all faculty containing advice, procedures, and pedagogical strategies.

- (1) Development of assessment tools (rubrics, signature assignments, performances, imbedded questions, etc...). These will vary depending on what is being measured.
- (2) Implementation of assessment.
- (3) Practice Community analysis of assessment products and artifacts.
- (4) Reflection, report writing, and determination of practical measures to address problems identified.

Assessment Efforts in General Education

Two major assessment efforts in General Education include (1) assessment of information literacy at the GE/freshman level; and (2) assessment of oral communication within the FYE Program and the Humanities Learning Communities (HLCs) and are described here in

detail.

Assessment of Information Literacy at the GE/freshman level:

Background/Contextual Information:

Currently, information literacy is one of five required GE learning objectives in SSU's freshman year composition (FYC) classes. In Spring of 2011, the Library participated in a holistic assessment of freshman research papers led by the English Department's Composition Coordinator. The holistic review showed that freshman composition students were focusing primarily on writing the paper, not engaging with research sources. The assessment team quickly realized that assessing information literacy with traditional research papers yields poor results. It wasn't clear that students were fully reading the outside sources, not to mention properly integrating the ideas of other authors, or evaluating websites for credibility. Too often students cited inappropriate sources or didn't cite them at all. Plagiarism or perhaps inadvertent copying from sources was widespread. The phenomenon of "looking for the right quote" is a widely known consequence of research paper assignments¹, and SSU students are no different. As a result of this initial assessment, the new Library Instruction Coordinator, decided to work closely with the Composition instructors to pilot a new approach to information literacy curriculum for these classes.

Pilot Program 2011-2012: Curriculum and Common Assignment

Beginning in Fall 2011, the team designed a new curriculum for freshman information literacy. It includes both a new way of teaching as well as a new method for assessment of student learning. In the new curriculum, information literacy is taught (and assessed) using a scaffolding process of deep engagement with sources. Students are introduced to the core concepts by meeting with a librarian. During the hands-on instruction session in the Library,

¹ I have research on this if a citation is appropriate for this document.

students engage in a critical thinking exercise addressing conceptual elements of a source (e.g., not just “identify the author” but identifying *authority*). Students are asked not only to “find” information but specifically to evaluate information sources they find. They must compare Google search results to peer-reviewed journal articles, using structured criteria we provide. This framework challenges them to understand the purpose, the audience, and the credibility/authority of source material. The Library instruction is now consistently geared toward information literacy, taking a departure from traditional bibliographic instruction sessions, where librarians mostly taught about tools such as databases and catalogs. “Finding” is no longer the priority outcome for freshmen.² Instead, instructors want to provide students with a critical approach to research and an understanding of the correct use of outside source material.

They are also asked to write an elaborate annotated bibliography, rather than a research paper. This is key: the Composition Coordinator and the Library Instruction Coordinator decided to use the annotated bibliography as a common assignment for freshman composition in order to collect artifacts for assessment that would require deeper engagement with source material. In October 2011, the Library introduced an information literacy rubric, and the Composition Coordinator asked all Freshman Year Composition (FYC) instructors to make a common assignment of the annotated bibliography. The assignment asked students to take ownership of their research selections on a deeper level than they have previously been asked to do. Instead of just “pulling a quote” they are required to demonstrate in their annotations that they can evaluate the source (according to the criteria we provided earlier such as authority, purpose, relevance, etc.). This is a departure from the traditional annotated bibliography, which focuses on summary.

Assessment Process: Challenges and Lessons Learned

² Note that we believe the use of advanced bibliographic tools is still appropriate for upper-division and discipline-specific courses.

In Spring 2012, two of the instruction librarians, who had been teaching the Library sessions, undertook the collection and review of the annotated bibliographies. They wanted to collect evidence that students were learning information literacy skills programmatically, across multiple sections of the same course. The Library instruction (by two librarians working as a team) was consistent. Students in all sections of FYC received Library instruction in critical thinking and evaluating sources. However, due to wide discrepancies in the way the FYC instructors' prompts were written, the annotated bibliography assignment was not truly "common," i.e., they were not sufficiently similar to measure them all with our rubric.

The librarians collected and read 106 annotated bibliographies from 8 sections of ENG 100B. This represents about 22% of the students taught in freshman composition Library instruction sessions during spring semester (from 36 sections of ENG 101 and ENG 100B altogether). Of these 8 sections collected, only 3 groups had annotated bibliographies that could be accurately score with the rubric. It is worth noting that, when the semester began, 17 sections out of a possible 36 (that is 47%) were signed up and willing to participate in the assessment pilot. What this means is that several sections failed to submit annotated bibliographies at the end of the semester, either for logistical reasons or because they diverged from the project at some point along the way. It also reveals weaknesses in our collaborative process.

Nearly all FYC instructors are graduate student TAs or adjunct faculty. A lesson learned was that coordinating a programmatic assessment with such a diverse body of instructors was very challenging, especially when many of them hold more than one job, and/or are not available on campus very often, and this particular class may not be their primary focus. Given these mutual challenges, it was difficult to collect accurate data about student learning last spring. Although the first year of the pilot did not result in usable data, it did reveal several factors to

consider for the collaboration going forward.

Going Forward: Changes to the assessment for 2012/2013:

The pilot revealed the need for a “bottom up” approach to the common assignment. In particular, graduate TAs who are brand new to teaching need closer guidance. All instructors must share in the design of the prompt and all must agree on the information literacy skills we want students to demonstrate. Going forward, all FYC instructors must write their prompts with these outcomes in mind. That is the only way to ensure a truly common assignment and collect artifacts that can be compared against the same rubric. In order to achieve this goal, for the 2012/13 academic year, the instruction librarians are planning a workshop with “all hands on deck” to build this assignment together, in a truly collaborative process.

They are also considering the possibility of a more strategic alignment of information literacy within the GE pattern. It will need to be widely discussed among faculty groups, but it's possible that freshman composition is not the ideal course to attempt to achieve the information literacy objectives. Another possibility is to create “strands” of information literacy learning, which can be “woven” across the GE pattern in multiple courses. The Library Instruction Coordinator is investigating these options with the cooperation of the GE committee, of which she is a member.

FYE and Assessment of Oral Communication Student Learning Outcomes:

At the planning workshops at the beginning of the semester, the FYE Faculty discussed the need for assessment of the Oral Communication learning outcomes. All of the faculty members are committed to working together to develop a plan for assessment. Two common assignments across all nine sections will be the focus for assessment of the oral communication learning outcomes: weekly seminar discussions (both semesters) and a comprehensive

individual oral presentation (spring semester).

The seminar discussions are assessed weekly by each section's instructor through the use of a "discussion map" that tracks each student's participation in the discussion, including the kinds of contributions that are made (comments or questions), to whom the contributions are directed, and how many contributions are made. The FYE faculty are in the process of developing a rubric for seminar discussions. The intention is that each professor will complete a rubric for each student at the end of the year, using the weekly discussion maps as the "data" that informs completion of the rubric. The faculty are also in the process of developing a rubric for assessment of the spring individual oral presentation. Each section instructor will complete this rubric for each student as they deliver their spring individual presentations.

The FYE Coordinator will be responsible for leading the group in developing the rubric for seminar participation. One of the FYE Faculty members will be responsible for leading the group in developing the rubric for the individual spring presentations. In both cases, the Oral Communication VALUE rubric from the AAC&U will be used as a starting point. At the end of the year, the FYE coordinator and faculty volunteers will consolidate the data from both sets of rubrics to analyze how well the program is meeting the student learning outcomes.

Once the FYE Faculty have developed the rubric and defined the process for the assessment effort, the Director of Undergraduate Studies will be working with faculty teaching in the Humanities Learning Communities (HLC) to include those courses in the assessment of oral communication effort. These classes serve over 600 first time freshmen and under the new GE curriculum are responsible for meeting the oral communication SLOs. The GE Subcommittee.

Identification of Other Changes and Issues Currently Facing the Institution.

As indicated in the introduction to the report, SSU's key personnel remain relatively stable within the executive leadership, with the President and CFO, who have both served the university for over 20 years. A new Provost and three new Deans have been appointed, the Deans all previously faculty members in their respective schools. A national search for a new Provost was successfully completed in July 2011, following a one-year interim Provost after the departure of the previous Provost to become Assistant Secretary of Postsecondary Education in the US Department of Education. Since the WASC review, one new degree program has been added, effective Fall 2012, the Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Studies, which meets a growing need in the region for early childhood educators with a Bachelor of Arts degree. The merger of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management and Academic Affairs occurred in July 2012. The purpose of the merger was to align better Admissions, Registration, Enrollment Management, Academic Support Services, and Academic Advising with Academic Affairs, while maintaining a strong Student Affairs component under the Chief Student Affairs Officer.

In terms of challenges, clearly the most immediate is the financial climate in the state of California and the future funding levels for the CSU. At the time of this report, the November 2012 ballot measure Proposition 30 will be voted on, which, if it fails, would result in a potential additional \$250 million cut to the CSU. Clearly, the impact of further cuts to the CSU have been much publicized throughout the region. At this time, SSU is holding all applications for new students for Fall 2013 until December 1, 2012, when SSU anticipates being allowed to admit students. Potentially, SSU may be asked to reduce targets further or to increase fees. All of this will be determined by the CSU Board of Trustees, who at their September board meeting prepared several scenarios dependent on the results of the Governor's tax measure, Proposition 30.

If Proposition 30 fails and CSU's budget is cut mid-year by another \$250 million, tuition fees will increase by \$150 a semester effective January 2013. In addition, the board approved an increase in the additional per-unit tuition for nonresident students who account for approximately 4 percent of CSU's total enrollment. University officials further estimate that the outcome of Proposition 30 will determine whether or not 20,000 additional students will be admitted in Fall 2013. At this time, SSU is anticipating enrollment reductions to Fall 2011 levels. In order to begin to meet that goal, Spring 2013 admissions have been seriously curtailed. SSU will be admitting only transfer students who hold an AA-T/AS-T degree, developed under the SB 1440 legislation. SSU will likely only admit 60-70 students in the Spring.

Concluding Statement.

At SSU, the Academic Coordinating Team (ACT), an outgrowth of the old JCAP (Joint Committee on Academic Planning) created by the previous Provost, continues to tackle both long term strategic planning issues, as well as short term planning to address current budget reductions and potential further reductions. The ACT, whose membership includes the Provost's leadership team, the School Deans, and the leadership of the Academic Senate, meets monthly to address ways to preserve the goals and mission of Academic Affairs, while dealing with budget uncertainties. Advisory to the Provost, the ACT is in the process of providing a variety of recommendations on how SSU can continue to provide high quality education, both in general education and in majors, while improving retention and graduate rates for all students.

In this report, SSU has discussed the three areas the WASC visiting team asked us to reflect upon: retention and graduation, general education, and academic program review. In each area, SSU has made significant progress and has outlined a path for continued success during a time of immense uncertainty about the future of public higher education in the State of

California. Yet the report also reflects the certainty of SSU in its commitment to fulfill its mission “to prepare students to be learned men and women who have a foundation for life-long learning, have a broad cultural perspective, have a keen appreciation of intellectual and aesthetic achievements, will be active citizens and leaders in society, are capable of pursuing fulfilling careers in a changing world, and are concerned with contributing to the health and well-being of the world at large.”

Attachments and Links will include:

CSU Graduation Initiative: Graduation Targets Report:

<http://graduate.csuprojects.org/home/about/system-and-campus-graduation-targets2?noCache=62:1348702833>

CSU Retention and Graduation Rates: <http://www.asd.calstate.edu/csrde/index.shtml>

SSU Graduation Initiative website: www.sonoma.edu/aa/grad_initiative/grad_initiative.shtml

SSU Program Review Schedule

FLC webpage: <https://www.sonoma.edu/aa/flc/>

Fall 2012 FLCs Chart