

Sonoma State University WASC Institutional Proposal for Accreditation Review

“Educating the Whole Student: Sustaining SSU’s Mission in a Time of Change”

1. Institutional Context

The California state legislature established Sonoma State College in 1960. The college opened in temporary quarters in Rohnert Park in fall 1961 with an enrollment of 265 upper-division students. The college’s elementary education, psychology, and counseling programs were the principal offerings. The college grew steadily, developing academic programs based in the traditional liberal arts and sciences as well as in career and professional programs, all the while emphasizing close student-faculty interaction. The college moved to its present 274 acre site in 1966. Located at the foot of the Sonoma hills in Sonoma County, the campus is approximately one hour north of San Francisco and 40 minutes away from the Pacific Ocean. New facilities have been constructed and extensive landscaping has been accomplished over the years, creating one of the most attractive, modern and well-equipped campuses in the state. In 1978, university status was granted and the name was changed to Sonoma State University. The university now enrolls more than 8,000 students and offers 43 bachelor’s degrees, 14 master’s degrees, 10 teaching, specialist and service credentials, and one joint-doctorate in Educational Administration (with CSU Sacramento and UC Davis). SSU has five academic schools – Arts and Humanities, Business and Economics, Education, Science and Technology, and Social Sciences – and the School of Extended Education and the University Library.

SSU’s mission is to prepare students to be learned men and women who:

- Have a foundation for lifelong learning,
- Have a broad cultural perspective,
- Have a keen appreciation of intellectual and aesthetic achievements,
- Will be leaders and active citizens,
- 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.

SSU is fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges since 1963. In addition, individual program accreditation has been granted by the American Chemical Society, the National Association of Schools of Music, the National League for Nursing, the National Association for Schools of Art and Design, and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. Programs in SSU’s

School of Education are approved by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the National Council for Accreditation for Teacher Education.

The University is also a member of the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC), an association of public colleges and universities whose primary mission is ensuring that a fine undergraduate liberal arts and sciences education is available to students in the public systems of higher education. SSU is the only California member of COPLAC.

In the past 40 years Sonoma State University has transitioned from a satellite of San Francisco State University that was loosely connected to the community to become a key resource for the region and the campus of destination for freshmen from throughout California. SSU is a campus with primarily a traditional age campus, and nearly one-half of the undergraduate student population lives in the residence halls on campus. As the facilities and infrastructure change with the construction of the Green Music Center, the university is poised to become a major cultural resource for the area. The current connection with the community has grown into a dynamic relationship in which students, faculty, organizations and industry benefit from their interactions with the university.

In the early 1990's SSU was primarily a transfer institution but was increasingly affected by shifting enrollment patterns. Throughout the state and particularly in the university's service region, the number of transfer students decreased. Additionally, because of its location and its local demographics, SSU was unable to recruit a sufficiently large freshman class from its immediate six county region. The university, under the leadership and vision of a new president, shifted to a statewide freshman recruitment effort and began to develop its image as a destination campus with a strong liberal arts and sciences identity. At the same time, the university embarked on an ambitious effort to build new student housing and to enhance the co-curricular activities for student residents. The campus now houses over 2,600 residents, which is one of the CSU's highest percentages of students living on campus. Because SSU is located in a suburban, bedroom community, students have long complained that there are limited activities available to them in the local region. Thus, increased efforts to develop activities on the campus have been made, including the opening of a new recreation center, but clearly the university recognizes that additional efforts are needed.

While the university has placed emphasis and focus on the undergraduate mission of the university, the professional and graduate programs of SSU continue to serve an important function, providing professional degrees, certificates, credentials, and master's degrees to individuals throughout the region. SSU's mission statement acknowledges the key role the university plays in providing these programs, which respond to regional and state needs within the academic, business, education, and professional communities.

In some respects, the curriculum and academic programs have been challenged to keep pace with the changing nature of the SSU student body. In the early 1990's the Educational Mentoring Team Program and a freshman seminar course were developed to address the needs of the lower division entry level freshman. However, the general

education program has remained relatively unchanged from its original role of primarily serving upper division transfer students and a small freshman student population. Of primary importance to the university at this point in its history is maintaining its excellent tradition of a strong liberal arts and sciences education, while addressing the emerging needs of an expanding, younger student body. General education and its reform are currently primary topics of interest and dialogue on the campus.

Since the last WASC accreditation visit in 1999, executive and financial administration leadership has remained relatively stable, but academic, student affairs, and development leadership have experienced significant change and restructuring. Dr. Eduardo M. Ochoa became the Provost, Chief Academic Officer and Vice President for Academic Affairs in the summer of 2003. Dr. Rand Link, Vice President for Student Affairs, retired after 35 years of service to SSU in August 2005. He has been replaced by Dr. Katharyn Crabbe, who previously managed the Enrollment and Student Academic Services area (ESAS). ESAS and Student Affairs have merged into a new division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. Two new school deans have been selected: Dr. James Robertson, Business and Economics, in 2004, and Dr. Mary Gendernalik-Cooper, Education, in July 2005. Upon the retirement of Associate Vice President of Faculty Affairs Judith Hunt, a new position, Vice Provost of Academic Affairs, was created, merging faculty affairs, academic programs and graduate studies under the leadership of Dr. Carol Blackshire-Belay, who assumed the position on July 1, 2005. Finally, a new Vice President of University Affairs, Mr. Dan Condron, was selected after the retirement of Ms. Lynn McIntyre, and Mr. Bucky Peterson became interim Vice President of Development after the resignation of Mr. Stuart Jones. Both began their new positions in July 2005.

The university has had to cope with cutbacks in state funding to the CSU over the past two years. This has impacted all areas of the university and challenged us to increase efficiency while minimizing the adverse impact on student learning. Additionally, SSU is slated to grow by 1,830 full-time equivalent students (FTES) over the next five years. This growth plan will require additional resources, physical plant capabilities, and affect recruitment efforts of students and faculty. The Governor's compact with the CSU promises a lean but predictable level of funding for the additional growth based on a marginal cost formula for operating expenses. New facilities are funded by the state through bond measures; SSU has been effective in securing funding for its capital needs through this program, and this pattern is expected to continue. There will be need for more residence halls, expanded residential life, co-curricular activities, student development efforts, and recreation. To address the latter, the new state-of-the-art student recreation center opened its doors in the fall of 2004, fully funded by student fees.

The challenges facing SSU are being addressed in the university-wide strategic planning process, begun in the fall of 2004. The University Strategic Planning Committee (USPC) plays a key role in addressing the challenges and insuring that SSU's plan for the future embraces the mission and goals of the university by strategically aligning resources to meet the challenges ahead. The USPC has completed its review of the external environment and the internal resources and structure of SSU, for the purpose of

assessing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the university. Ten key macro issues have been identified that SSU will need to address in the coming two to five years.

SSU's last re-accreditation visit was in 1999, followed by a 5th year focused visit in 2004. The issues raised by both visits in the commission letters and how SSU has addressed those issues are as follows.

Assessment of Educational Effectiveness

SSU is engaged in assessment of student learning in order to achieve educational effectiveness. The 5th year WASC letter clearly stated the Commission's expectation that the university "build its capacity to integrate results and actions from program review into the design of academic programs and the development of student learning outcomes." To meet that expectation, all academic programs have developed student learning outcomes for the major as well as assessment mechanisms that measure achievement of these outcomes. In the fall of 2004 all departments submitted an annual assessment report. From the data gathered, the Faculty Assessment Coordinator and the Associate Vice Provost for Academic Programs developed a rubric that placed departments in one of three categories: beginning, developing, or competent. The initial review placed 25 departments in the beginning category; 14 in the developing category; and 15 in the competent stage. The university Faculty Assessment Coordinator and the Associate Vice Provost for Academic programs met with the deans and department chairs of the schools to discuss the assessment reports, the rubric and how departments could move forward in their assessment activities. Departments were then asked to submit 3-year assessment plans, as well as their second annual assessment report to the Provost. These plans were due in the fall 2005 term and form the basis for assessment activities to support academic program review. The new program review protocol, which focuses on educational effectiveness and student learning, was developed and reviewed by the Academic Senate and the Educational Policies Committee and was implemented in the spring of 2006. Working in consultation with the School Deans, a schedule of program review has been developed that assures that all departments will undergo program review between 2005 and 2009. The Faculty Assessment Coordinator position, which the 5th year WASC team noted was slated to be eliminated, has been renewed and continues to support departments and schools in their assessment efforts.

Alignment of Institutional Priorities with Mission

In the 5th year WASC visit letter, the Commission noted an on-going concern: "Will Sonoma State engage in ongoing institution-wide planning and devise ways to measure effectiveness in fulfilling its planning goals?" The Commission was encouraged that the campus was receptive to institutional planning for the purposes of informed decision-making and that Academic Affairs had made progress on developing a division-wide planning process, including a mission, goals and vision statement with accompanying strategic initiatives. After the 5th year WASC visit and receipt of the

Commission letter, President Armiñana began a university-wide strategic planning effort and formed the University Strategic Planning Committee (USPC). It initiated a serious institution-wide effort to focus on institutional purposes, educational objectives, and appropriate alignment of fiscal and physical resources with long-range planning. The USPC is a university-wide steering committee, co-chaired by the Provost and the Chief Financial Officer. Membership includes the President; the Cabinet; and key academic, fiscal, student affairs, faculty, and student leaders. Under the expert guidance of an outside facilitator and using the mission statement of the university as a guide, the USPC has identified ten key issues that face the university, which have been circulated widely to the university community for input and feedback. Briefly, these macro issues are: enrollment growth and management; the Green Music Center; human resources; the budget; residential campus life; technology; communication and transparency; academic quality; external relations; and diversity. From an assessment of these ten issues, a strategic plan and initiatives will be developed, which will then be aligned appropriately with resource allocation.

Concurrently, strategic planning activities are underway in each of the five academic schools (Arts and Humanities, Business and Economics, Education, Science and Technology, and Social Sciences), as well as in the University Library, the School of Extended Education, and the newly constituted Student Affairs and Enrollment Management (SAEM) Division.

Improving the Climate for Diversity

As the Commission's 5th year letter notes, SSU "has taken seriously the issue of creating a more welcoming and inclusive community." The work of Enrollment and Student Academic Services and the Campus Climate Committee continues to be pivotal in addressing recruitment, retention, and the campus climate for underrepresented students. One example is the CAMP program that supports the recruitment of nontraditional students from migrant camps. The Commission verified that SSU's commitment and practices in increasing and promoting diversity are compliant with the WASC standards. However, SSU continues to work on ways to further support underrepresented students in both their curricular and co-curricular activities. SSU held the first Queer Studies Student Research Conference in June 2005. Activities such as SSU's involvement with the Roseland University Preparatory charter school located in the most highly diverse community of Sonoma County and SSU's partnership with Solano Community College are initiatives that continue SSU's commitment to diversity and to sustained involvement in the diverse communities of our region. Finally, this fall a Diversity Vision Statement poster was put up in every classroom to provide a visible reminder of the commitment of the university to the concepts of diversity and inclusivity. These initiatives provide opportunities to outreach to the community and to enhance SSU's diversity recruitment efforts. Additionally, SSU actively seeks to enhance the diversity of its faculty, administration, and staff. One effort that will support SSU's ability to attract a more diverse faculty pool is the faculty housing initiative, which will offer moderately priced housing to new faculty and staff in an increasingly high cost

market. This housing incentive can make SSU more competitive in recruiting excellent faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds.

General Education and the “Marks” of the SSU Student Experience

The 5th year WASC visiting team expressed concern about assessment efforts in General Education (GE) but acknowledged the difficult work that SSU has undertaken in the reform effort in GE. SSU’s attention has been focused on the reform of General Education and the implementation of a six point plan for full GE reform. The first point of the plan, the development of a first year experience (FYE), will be implemented as a pilot project in fall 2006. This multidisciplinary course combines general education foundation skills courses in critical thinking and written communication with the student development, advising, mentoring, and co-curricular components of the freshman seminar. Students will attend weekly large lectures on topics that cover a range of disciplines under an “umbrella” theme and then break into small seminar classes of 15 to reflect, write, and critically evaluate the lectures and readings. A faculty coordinator, Dr. Sascha Von Meier, Environmental Studies and a past recipient of SSU’s Excellence in Teaching Award, and a team of 12 faculty members have been selected for the pilot and are currently developing the curriculum for the course. In the spring of 2006, they will receive training in seminar skills, cross-training in writing and critical thinking instruction, and in the area of student development. The FYE Pilot team members are also developing assessment strategies and exploring the use of electronic portfolio for assessment of student learning outcomes. The FYE Pilot structure will also be evaluated, and the assessment data and evaluation analysis will be utilized to determine the future FYE program.

SSU has received a \$10,000 stipend from the Ford Foundation’s *Difficult Dialogues: Promoting Pluralism and Academic Freedom on Campus* grant initiative in support of the FYE Pilot. The funding will be used to assist the FYE Pilot faculty members in developing an assessment and evaluation process and to provide travel stipends to regional and national conferences, where faculty members can meet and share their experiences in FYE with some of the other 40 institutions that are part of this initiative. The university believes that the Ford Foundation’s *Difficult Dialogues* initiative clearly matches the mission, goals and objectives of SSU’s GE Program and supports the work that SSU has begun in GE reform to develop an appropriate first year experience course for incoming freshmen.

Dialogue has also begun on the important work of defining the “mark” or “signature” of an SSU undergraduate liberal arts and sciences education. A team of faculty and administrators attended the AAHE/WASC workshop on institutional assessment in January 2005 and returned with a plan for the dialogue and discussion on the outcomes of an SSU education. A large team of 20 faculty and administrators, funded by the Division of Academic Affairs, attended the annual AAC&U conference in San Francisco in January 2005. This cohort of faculty attendees will help facilitate the dialogue and discussion around the aims and mission of a liberal education. An academic

affairs council retreat in the summer of 2005 centered on a discussion of the AAC&U's publication, *Taking Responsibility for the Quality of the Baccalaureate*, in order to begin a dialogue about the mark of an SSU education in the academic schools under the leadership of the school deans. Finally, the Office of Institutional Research piloted the Rand Corporation's Collegial Learning Assessment (CLA) in the fall of 2004 and spring of 2005. The CLA is an authentic assessment of student writing, critical thinking, and analytical reasoning. Freshmen and seniors were sampled.

Institutional Commitment to Sustained Follow-Up

The Commission's 5th year letter expressed concern that insufficient progress had been made in the vital areas of student learning and educational effectiveness. The preceding discussion addresses progress that has been made since the 5th year WASC team visit in these key areas. Clearly, SSU is demonstrating a strong institutional commitment to sustained follow-up through the implementation of permanent institutional structures that ensure on-going strategic planning, program review, GE reform, and commitment to the core mission of the university through the development of a signature liberal arts and sciences undergraduate education. Assessment of student learning has become a key component of academic program review and of the work of the GE reform initiative. Analysis of data, benchmarking and development of key indicators of institutional effectiveness are increasingly a part of informed decision-making at all levels of the university. Some examples include using student-faculty ratios by department at SSU compared to CSU averages, the 2004 National Study of Instructional Cost and Productivity report, the 80% tenure track to 20% temporary faculty goal for each department, and using CIRP and YFCY data compared to that of other public 4-year colleges and universities.

2. Description of Institutional Outcomes

SSU's primary institutional goal for the re-accreditation process is to become an intentional, reflective and evidence-based learning organization. SSU is intent on achieving its core mission of being a premier public liberal arts and sciences university. The university is engaging in strategic planning that is intentional, consistent, and mission-driven, and will result in aligning priorities with resources. The university is utilizing a program review protocol that allows for self-study through student learning outcomes assessment and provides departments with data for making informed decisions about educational effectiveness. The university is engaging the faculty in fulfillment of SSU's mission through all phases of a faculty member's academic life: recruitment, hiring, orientation, RTP, and on-going faculty development that sustains excellence and fosters innovation. The university is using assessment and evidence for reflection and improvement. The university is developing and providing effective means of communication to enhance dialogue, reflection, and understanding of the core values that underlies SSU's educational objectives. Specific institutional outcomes of the accreditation review process include:

Institutional Outcome One

Develop and utilize indicators of performance, such as a set of functional categories for budgetary purposes; analysis of student-faculty ratio (SFR) longitudinal data to aid in alignment of resource allocations; administrative, faculty and student performance indicators; and benchmarking of financial and other data from other CSU campuses and other similar institutions (COPLAC).

Institutional Outcome Two

Define the signature of an SSU education, including the roles of GE and the major, by engaging the campus community in conversation that takes as its initial texts for discussion AAC&U's *Greater Expectations Report* and *Taking Responsibility for the Quality of the Baccalaureate*.

Institutional Outcome Three

Conduct program review for all academic programs and begin development of a comprehensive process for review of co-curricular and other non-academic programs.

Institutional Outcome Four

Use assessment data and evidence as a basis for reflection and improvement.

3. Constituency Involvement

In January 2005 SSU sent a team of faculty leaders, administrators, and academic deans to the WASC Workshop for Institutions with Upcoming Reviews. At the opening spring semester university convocation in late January, the Academic Senate Chair, who had attended the workshop, directed her opening remarks to the importance of the accreditation process. At the Convocation, attendees were asked to engage in the "What Really Matters" exercise and their responses were collected, collated and shared with the Accreditation Review Steering Committee (ARSC), which was created in the spring 2005 semester.

The ARSC is co-chaired by Dr. Eduardo M. Ochoa, Provost, and Dr. Andy Merrifield, professor of Political Science. Also on the committee are two students, five faculty members, the Chief Financial Officer and Vice President for Administration and Finance, three administrators, and one staff member. Faculty members interested in serving on the ARSC were invited to submit applications and selection was made by the Provost based upon recommendations made by the Executive Committee of the

Academic Senate. The student positions were selected by the Associated Students, and the staff and administrative members were appointed by the Provost and the Vice President for Administration and Finance. The ARSC met six times during the spring semester 2005 in two-three hour meetings and continued to work throughout the summer via email communications. The ARSC received the following charge:

1. Develop a process for community input into the institutional proposal;
2. Select a format for the proposal and the themes of the proposal;
3. Formulate expected outcomes of the review process for SSU;
4. Delegate work on tasks to others and monitor its progress;
5. Complete the proposal and meet the submission deadline of October 15, 2005.

The Provost informs the President regularly on progress on the accreditation process. The President also kept the ARSC aware of his primary focus on educating the whole student through retention, graduation, and student satisfaction. The SSU Portfolio, linked directly to the SSU homepage was designed during the spring 2005 semester to be an interactive on-line forum and data repository. It is linked directly to the SSU homepage. It will reflect the entire WASC process from the proposal through the Preparatory and Capacity Review and the Educational Effectiveness Review.

The Co-Chairs sent an email in early April to the entire campus community updating them on the progress made to date by the ARSC. The university community was invited to a public forum on April 28, 2005, facilitated by the ARSC Co-Chairs. Over 100 faculty, students, and staff attended the public forum and provided input and comment on the potential themes for the WASC self-study. Updates of the WASC preparations were reported at each spring 2005 meeting of the Academic Senate, and the Senate continues to receive a report on the accreditation process at each Senate meeting. The ARSC incorporated the comments from the public forum and selected the theme of "Educating the Whole Student: Sustaining SSU's Mission in a Time of Change." There are four sub-themes that include the signature of an SSU education; the curriculum; the co-curriculum and residential life; the faculty; and the role of diversity. Over the summer of 2005 two writers selected by the ARSC, the Associate Vice President of Institutional Research, and the Associate Vice Provost for Academic Programs and WASC Accreditation Liaison Officer, were assigned the task of preparing an outline for the institutional proposal and then writing a first draft. The draft of the institutional proposal was commented upon by the ARSC, and then a revised draft was posted to the SSU Portfolio for dissemination to the entire campus community.

Attendees at the Fall 2005 University Convocation received an abstract of the proposal and information on accessing the full proposal draft on the SSU Portfolio website. The ARSC also solicited comments on the draft from the Academic Senate and its standing committees and subcommittees; the President's Budget Advisory Committee; the Academic Affairs Budget Advisory Committee; the Presidents' Cabinet; the University Strategic Planning Committee; the Campus Reengineering Committee, the Student Affairs and Enrollment Management Division; and the Associated Students.

Individuals were invited to submit comments and suggestions directly through the on-line interactive forum on the SSU Portfolio website. The comment period ended on September 15, 2005, and comments were reviewed and incorporated into the second draft of the institutional proposal by September 23, 2005. The ARSC reviewed the second draft and the final version of the institutional proposal was submitted to WASC by October 15, 2005.

4. Approach for the Capacity and Preparatory Review

The Capacity and Preparatory Review will demonstrate how SSU fulfills the Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity, that is, that the institution functions with clear purposes, high levels of institutional integrity, fiscal stability, and organizational structures and processes to fulfill its purposes. This is an opportunity to identify and display the university's culture of evidence through the SSU portfolio, an electronic data base that has been designed to not only fulfill the requirements of accreditation, but to also continue to provide the university community with data and evidence that will support decision-making processes. It is through the capacity and preparatory review that SSU will demonstrate the primary outcome of its accreditation process – that of becoming a reflective, evidence-based, and intentional organization.

To begin the review process, the university community completed the exercise, “Worksheet for Preliminary Self-Review under the Standards,” during the fall 2005 semester. Using existing university committees and faculty governance structures, the following groups responded to the standards, paying particular attention to those that appropriately fall within their purview, as illustrated below:

- ARSC, Cabinet, Senate Executive Committee, USPC (ALL)
- Campus Reengineering Committee (CFRs 1.8, 3.5)
- Educational Policies Committee (CFRs 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 4.4, 4.8)
- Faculty Standards and Affairs Committee (CFRs 2.2, 2.3, 2.8, 2.9)
- General Education Sub-Committee (CFRs 2.2, 2.5)
- Graduate Studies Sub-Committee (CFRs 2.2, 2.5)
- Professional Development Sub-Committee (CFR 3.4)
- Academic Planning Committee (CFR 4.1)
- Campus Climate Committee (CFR 1.1, 1.5, 2.2, 2.13, 3.2)
- Associated Students (CFR 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13, 2.14)
- Academic Advising Subcommittee (CRF 2.3, 2.12, 2.13)

The ARSC will identify key areas of concern for improvement in order to develop a work plan that allows the campus community to address these issues before the Capacity and Preparatory Review. The electronic data portfolio – SSU Portfolio – will include all required data exhibits, the Capacity and Preparatory Review Report, elective data exhibits, and appropriate links to data, documents, policies and procedures for each

of the Criteria for Review under the four WASC Standards. The SSU Portfolio will illustrate SSU's compliance with the WASC Standards, as well as how the institution utilizes data for continuous improvement and educational effectiveness.

In the Fall of 2006, teams will begin the process of writing reflective essays addressing each of the four standards. This process will be monitored by the ARSC and these essays will form the foundation of the Capacity and Preparatory Review, which will be submitted to WASC in late 2007, prior to the spring 2008 Capacity and Preparatory Review team visit.

5. Approach for the Educational Effectiveness Review

Sonoma State University has selected a thematic approach to the educational effectiveness review. The theme of "Educating the Whole Student: Sustaining SSU's Mission in a Time of Change" provides the university with a compelling lens through which to view the institution. SSU places the student at the core of its mission, and the thematic approach allows SSU to engage the entire university community in the primary enterprise of the institution. The Accreditation Review Steering Committee (ARSC) articulated five areas that need to be addressed in educating the "whole" SSU student, including (1) the distinctive nature of an SSU education and the signature or "mark" of an SSU graduate; (2) the curriculum and student learning outcomes of GE and the major, which will form the foundation of SSU's distinctive liberal arts and sciences programs; (3) the co-curriculum and residential life, both key components in creating the mark of an SSU graduate; (4) the faculty's roles and responsibilities in teaching, scholarship, mentoring and advising; and (5) the value of diversity in educating the whole student.

These components of educating the whole student provide an ambitious base for a strategic plan for the academic mission of the university. For the purposes of the WASC reaccreditation effort, the first two areas are the most closely associated with the overall theme of educating the whole student and of the standards of WASC Accreditation, which require a thorough examination of student learning. For this reason, the educational effectiveness self-study will focus on these two major outcomes.

Each of these outcomes is measurable and achievable in the time frame of the WASC reaccreditation process. They are also outcomes that the university is committed to achieving in pursuit of its intention of fulfilling the goal of becoming a premier public liberal arts and sciences university.

Before selecting a thematic approach to the educational effectiveness review, the steering committee explored all four of the WASC recommended strategies for self-study. The special themes format

- enables the university to explore a major topic that addresses our primary needs;
- focuses on a comprehensive evaluation and review, involving all sectors of the university;

- provides a rich topic for evidence gathering, analysis, reflection, dialogue, and intentional improvement;
- engages in a theme that resonates with the commitment and passion of members of the university community; and
- provides a theme that is of vital importance to the university at a time of change, growth and renewal.

Once the steering committee determined that SSU would use the thematic approach, it systematically began to evaluate several possible themes. At the Public Forum held to solicit campus wide input on the themes, it became apparent that the theme of educating the whole student resonated strongly with the attendees. And, in the final review of the possible thematic approaches, many of the concerns elicited regarding other themes could readily be subsumed under the sub-themes of educating the whole student. The Accreditation Review Steering Committee embraced the theme of educating the whole student and developed a series of sub-themes that address the core components of an SSU education. It is a vitally important time in the history of the university, as SSU is poised for substantial growth in our student population in the next 5-10 years. The question that guides the development of this themed approach for the educational effectiveness review is how does SSU sustain – indeed, enhance – its mission of providing a liberal arts and sciences education in this changing environment?

SSU believes that the thematic approach and the selected theme best suit the university at this juncture in its history and will provide a rich, invigorating process for university-wide engagement.

Outcome One - The Distinctive Qualities of a Sonoma State University Education

Engage in campus-wide dialogue regarding the meaning of a liberal arts and sciences education. The Academic Affairs Division in partnership with the Academic Senate will engage in focused discussions throughout the 2005-2006 academic year. Utilizing the work of AAC&U's *Greater Expectations* and *Taking Responsibility for the Quality of the Baccalaureate*, the university will engage in a year long discussion regarding the goals and outcomes of an SSU education. To begin the discussion and to provide information to the University Strategic Planning process, the theme of the Spring 2006 University Convocation was "What is Distinctive about SSU?" *Questions for reflection*: What does it mean to be a liberally educated graduate in the 21st Century? What are the hallmarks of that education? What should be the primary educational outcomes and how should they be measured? What is the role of general education? What is the role of the major? How do general education and the major complement one another? What are the roles of our professional and graduate programs?

Outcome Two – Curriculum and the Roles of General Education and the Major

Implement, assess and evaluate the FYE Pilot 2006-2007. *Questions for reflection:* What are appropriate themes for the freshman year experience? What should the curriculum include? How can we train and mentor faculty who will teach in FYE? What are the student learning outcomes for FYE? How can these outcomes best be assessed? How will the FYE Pilot be evaluated? What measures and criteria will be used? What are the results of the assessment data? What are the results of the program evaluation? Should the FYE be improved, modified, or changed to assure successful student learning outcomes?

Develop a GE Plan, which may include expanded choice in the breadth portion of GE; writing across the curriculum; development of a capstone experience; faculty development; information competency; and development and implementation of an assessment plan for GE. *Questions for reflection:* How does the GE program align with the signature of an SSU education? What assessment strategies will be used to assess the student learning outcomes for the GE Program? What kind of on-going faculty development, mentoring, and training needs to occur to assure a successful GE Program? What structures are in place to ensure appropriate oversight and review of GE courses and the GE Program? What will be the structure of a GE Program Review Protocol? How will the assessment results of the FYE Pilot 2006-2007 be incorporated into the GE plan?

Complete an academic program review cycle by the time of the educational effectiveness visit in fall of 2009. *Questions for reflection:* How are departments assessing their student learning outcomes? What kind of feedback are they providing to faculty and students? How are they utilizing assessment data in on-going improvement of educational effectiveness? How is academic program review being utilized in the strategic planning process of Academic Affairs and the Schools? How can Program Review be improved to provide departments and schools with appropriate evidence to support decision-making?

Support departments in assessing diversity efforts (hiring, student recruitment, curriculum, pedagogy, etc.) and promote cross constituency conversations and critique. *Questions for reflection:* What are the measurable outcomes for evaluation of diversity efforts in departments? Where does diversity play a role in the curriculum of the major and general education? How are the learning outcomes regarding diversity aligned within the department and GE curricular offerings? How are faculty recruited, hired, and trained to work with a diverse student population? Does the structure and content of the curriculum encourage student diversity? What impediments to increasing diversity are present? How can they be overcome?

6. Work Plan and Milestones

Spring and Summer 2005

Establish Accreditation Review Steering Committee (ARSC) to:

- Identify the educational effectiveness review format;
- Draft themes and solicit input from the campus community;
- Write the Institutional Proposal;

Create the electronic portfolio: SSU Portfolio

Fall 2005

Present Institutional Proposal draft and SSU portfolio to campus community in late August 2005

Solicit comments and incorporate into the Institutional Proposal draft: September 15, 2005

Proposal submitted to WASC: October 15, 2005

Develop task-forces as needed to address Educational Effectiveness Sub-themes

Complete “Worksheet for Preliminary Self-Review under the Standards”

Spring and Summer 2006

Receive WASC comments and approval of the Institutional Proposal

Assess the self-review data and develop work plan to address issues and concerns

Add required data exhibits to the SSU portfolio

Charge to task forces on the sub-themes for the Educational Effectiveness review

Fall 2006

Begin reflective essays on Standards for the Preparatory Review – ARSC

Continue updating the SSU portfolio

Begin task force work on educational effectiveness review

Spring and Summer 2007

Complete final draft of the Capacity and Preparatory Review Report

Finish required data exhibits for the Preparatory Review and updates on the SSU portfolio

Receive updates from task forces and committees on EE Review Outcomes

Fall 2007

Review, approve, and submit Capacity and Preparatory Review Report (December 2007)

Prepare for Capacity and Preparatory Review team visit

Spring and Summer 2008

Capacity and Preparatory Review team visit

Begin writing the Educational Effectiveness Review Report

Fall 2008

Review Capacity and Preparatory team visit report

Identify areas that need improvement prior to the Educational Effectiveness Review team visit

Write draft of Educational Effectiveness Review Report

Spring and Summer 2009

Review, approve, and finalize the Educational Effectiveness Review Report

Submit Educational Effectiveness Review report to WASC (July)
Prepare for Educational Effectiveness Review team visit

Fall 2009

Educational Effectiveness Review team visit

7. Effectiveness of Data Gathering and Analysis Systems

SSU has been developing a culture of evidence for assessment of student learning outcomes in general education and the major for the past five years. Every department has identified student learning outcomes and a method for assessing these outcomes. Within the next three years, every department will also evaluate the assessment data and make recommendations, as needed, for the curriculum, and report these findings through the annual assessment report and regular program review. The general education program is currently being redesigned. During the 2005-06 academic year, the curriculum for the new Freshmen Year Experience will be determined along with appropriate assessment. The pilot of the FYE program will start in fall 2006. All of these efforts create a feedback loop using evidence for quality improvement.

Many indices are used to evaluate the overall performance of SSU. The California State University has identified nine Performance Indicators of effectiveness that have been monitored since 1998-99. These indices are monitored on an annual basis, and goals are set for future years. The areas include the quality of baccalaureate degree programs, progression to degree, persistence and graduation, areas of special State need, relationship with K-12, fully prepared new freshmen, remediation, facilities utilization, and university advancement.

The Office of Institutional Research conducts many surveys regularly to inform the campus on vital issues such as SSU's incoming freshmen profile (CIRP), the first college year experiences (YFCY), student attitudes and behaviors (NSSE, SNAPS, CSEQ, and CSS), alumni satisfaction, and faculty satisfaction (FSSE). The 2005-06 report also includes direct assessment of student learning using the Collegiate Learning Assessment, an assessment instrument developed by the Rand Corporation to evaluate general education learning outcomes, which SSU piloted in 2004-05. Each year an annual self-assessment is published that includes the reports generated during that academic year. Whenever possible, SSU compares itself to other CSU campuses and to COPLAC campuses, which share with SSU a strong liberal arts and sciences mission. The annual report is shared with the President's cabinet and the campus community. These reports and data provide a rich basis for dialogue and discussion and an opportunity to identify areas of concern that can be systematically addressed by the institution.

All of these sources of information combine to create SSU's culture of evidence and promote the primary outcome of becoming a reflective and evidence-based institution. SSU is continually trying to identify new ways to evaluate its programs, curricula, students, faculty and staff in order to promote quality improvement that is data driven and intentional in its outcomes.

8. Off-Campus and Distance Education Degree Programs

<i>Program</i>	<i>Modality</i>	<i>Location</i>
Nursing (BS)	Distance	Chico, Stanislaus
Liberal Studies – Ukiah (BA)	Off-Campus	Ukiah
Educational Administration (Ed.D.)	Blended	Sonoma State University, UC Davis, CSU Sacramento