

Appendix to WASC Report – GE at SJSU

A Brief History

In 1998, SJSU undertook a major restructuring of its GE program. The program had become very complex with double counting of requirements that made it difficult for advisors, let alone students, to understand the requirements and the best way to choose a pathway that might possibly align and integrate knowledge. Learning outcomes were defined though assessment was done exclusively at the department level on the GE Area to which the course belonged. All existing GE courses were re-evaluated, a process that involved a review of content and learning outcomes to recertify under the new system. Comprehensive assessments of all sections of every GE course were summarized in Continuing Assessment Reports that occurred every 4 years for most courses. Some small, but significant changes were made in 2005, most notably the inclusion of information literacy outcomes in many of the GE courses.

done, despite the fact

in 2009 (S09 2). The assessment based GE program in place since 1998 was viewed as excessively burdensome. Every section of every GE course had needed to assess every student learning outcome (SLO) every time it was taught. University Policy S09 2 reduced assessment to one SLO per year per GE course based on a (usually) five year cycle aligned with each department's Program Planning Self Study of its degree program(s). Limiting assessment in this fashion was intended to permit a more in depth, reflective assessment process. Alignment with departmental program planning allows departments to review GE holistically and simultaneously as part of the department's reflection on resource allocation among the needs for major courses, service courses, and general education courses.

Program Assessment

At our last WASC review, the lack of program level assessment of GE was noted. Since 1998, there had been nine program outcomes for the GE program, but none had been directly assessed at that time. Mapping Learning Outcomes for the individual GE Areas with the nine program outcomes showed “coverage” of all program outcomes, however many of the outcomes were assessed at the lower division. There was no summative assessment at the upper division level. For example, most students take their Oral Communications GE course as freshmen and are not required to demonstrate or develop their oral communication skills and abilities at any later point in their GE education. Many upper division GE courses (instructors) have oral presentations, but these are included optionally and not as a requirement of the entire GE program.

In April of 2005, A Sense of the Senate Resolution (SS S05 5; [http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/SS S05 5.pdf](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/SS_S05_5.pdf)) embraced the AAC&U vision for Liberal Education and directed the administration to sign a letter of commitment to become a “LEAP Partner Campus.” The entire CSU followed suit in June 2008 when the Chancellor Charles Reed issued Executive Order 1033, specifying that “Each CSU campus shall define its GE student learning outcomes, to fit within the framework of the four “Essential Learning Outcomes” drawn from the Liberal Education and American Promise (LEAP) campaign, an initiative of the Association of American Colleges and Universities.” Executive Order 1065, issued in September 2011, replaced EO 1033 but maintained the AAC&U LEAP Outcomes as the required outcomes for GE programs in the CSU. Informally, the Board of General Studies (BOGS), which oversees the GE Program, adopted the LEAP outcomes and associated VALUE rubrics in 2010. The formal adoption of the LEAP outcomes came with the campus adoption of a revised GE Policy in Spring 2014.

In 2010 11, a pilot project (GE Program Assessment; GEPA) to assess GE program outcomes for the first time directly assessed the LEAP outcomes, as operationalized through VALUE Rubrics. Teams of 4 6 faculty evaluated anonymous student work from each other’s classes using the appropriate VALUE Rubrics. As with most pilots, this one led to many adjustments in methodology when a second round of GEPA was undertaken in 2012 13. The results were not surprising with the majority of students rated 2 or 3 on a 4 point Likert scale (1 = benchmark; 2 & 3 = milestones; and 4 = capstone) with trending toward ratings of “2” averages for nearly all rubric items assessed. The unanticipated benefit of these projects came from the extended conversations among the faculty teams regarding the interpretation of the Learning Outcomes and the types of assignments each had chosen to demonstrate learning. There was a sharing of best practices and a better understanding of how the individual courses were really part of a program. In both pilot studies, faculty were given one course of assigned (release) time for their participation. The pilots were intended to be exploratory to establish a viable process. The sampling was very valuable, but far from a comprehensive assessment of the GE program. A commitment of resources will be needed to establish and expand the GEPA process as an on going summative assessment of the GE program.

Recent Changes

A significant revision to the GE Guidelines was adopted as campus policy in Spring 2014 (S14 5; http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S14_5.pdf). Some of the most significant changes are listed.

Formal adoption of the AAC&U LEAP Learning Outcomes and VALUE Rubrics as the GE Program Outcomes.

Establishing clear guidelines setting criteria for meeting GE requirements within major degree programs. (This enabled many degree programs to reduce to the CSU mandated 120 units.)

Major revisions to the writing intensive GE Areas (lower division composition courses and the upper division junior level writing in the discipline). Changes to learning outcomes and content objectives at the lower division include required critical reading and an emphasis on drafts and revisions as part of the writing process.

Redefining the CSU GE Area A3 (Critical Thinking) as Critical Thinking and Writing. Learning Outcomes were modified significantly to align with the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics for Critical Thinking and Writing. GE Area A1 (Oral Communication) and GE Area A2 (Written Communication I), both with grades of C or better, are now prerequisites to the newly defined GE Area A3. Integrating second semester composition with critical thinking aligns our campus with the requirements of the UC system and will assist most transfer students in taking community college courses that already teach integrated critical thinking and second semester composition courses.

Significantly revising the student learning outcomes for the upper division disciplinary writing course that meets the CSU Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) at SJSU. The new outcomes emphasize communicating with technical, professional audiences as well as general audiences. They also more explicitly emphasize information literacy at the upper division.

Creating a process for review of writing intensive courses with established recommended enrollment caps. Maintaining effective class sizes and pedagogies for writing intensive GE Areas has been very difficult with recent significant pressure to increase class sizes. Many courses are now running at two to three times the sizes recommended within the GE Guidelines since 1998. Effective andas has beex g

Table of Assessment Review GE Courses by department

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