

A WINDOW ON ASSESSMENT



SACRAMENTO STATE
Leadership begins here.

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

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Moving In and On

By Terry Underwood, University Faculty Assessment Coordinator

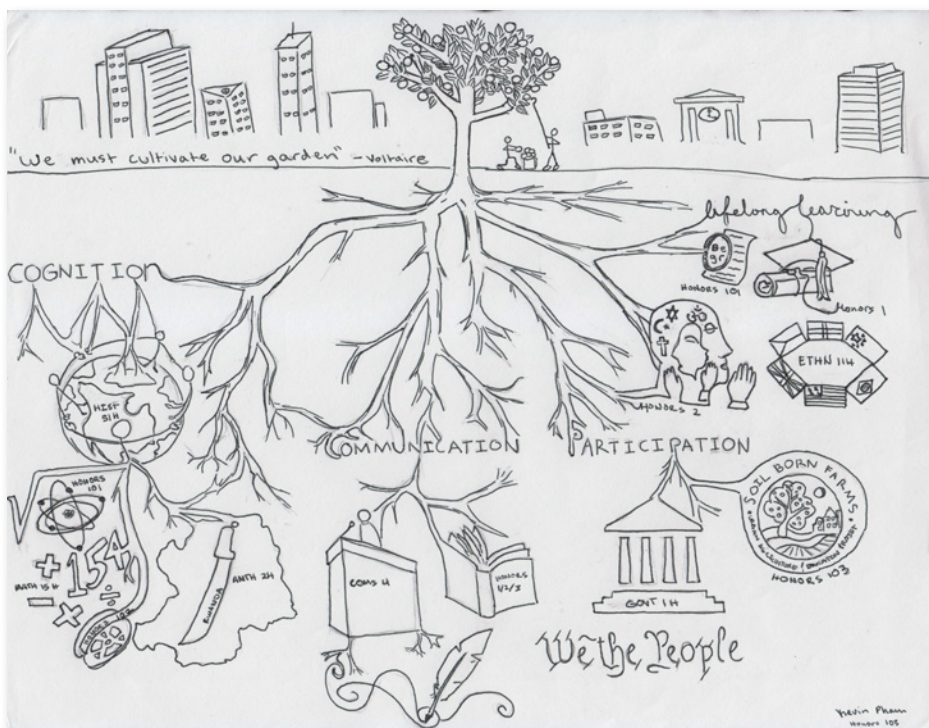
This issue of A Window on Assessment offers a glimpse into where we are as a campus community on our journey toward assessment practices with potential meaning and use to us and to our students spanning the undergraduate degree, including General Education experiences and work in a Major. A central aspect of this work involves WASC, our partner in accreditation, and so it begins with a report by Jackie Donath detailing the status of our upcoming WASC Interim Report, an update we were asked to provide WASC in their Action Letter of July, 2009.

It moves to a reflective analysis of the consequences of recent political action taken by our Faculty Senate when it revised our Baccalaureate Learning Goals (BALGs) in November 2009, written by Sheree Meyer and Janet Hecsh.

Given WASC's directive that we attend to assessment in GE and report on our progress in Spring 2012, the analysis Sheree and Janet offers is good news. Assessment in GE is moving forward.

It concludes with information about an electronic portfolio project undertaken by our Honors program faculty to give Honors students a clear path to self-awareness and what Barbara Baxter-Magolda has called "self-authorship." Written by Vanessa Arnaud and her student Charles Dickey, this piece focuses on a development with potential practical significance for any program on campus interested in moving from the challenges of paper portfolio practices to the relative ease and efficiencies of online folios. Organized around the new BALGs, the Honors design holds promise for all of GE.

Once the BALGs take hold in our collective thinking about teaching and learning, once the campus takes advantage of the efficiencies and potentials of technological assessment tools, once we enlist students in their own self-assessment work in relation to their own identities and life goals, it may be that as a campus we will have little to do beyond our ordinary business to gain accreditation. Vibrant, interesting evidence of lifelong and lifewide learning will be visible for all to see on any day of the week with a few clicks of a mouse.



ART BY KEVIN PHAN, HONORS SENIOR
KEVIN'S VISION OF AN EDUCATED MIND: THE
FOUR VALUE FOOD GROUPS

GE/GR and the Baccalaureate Learning Goals

Dr. Sheree Meyer, Dr. Janet Hechs



DR. SHEREE MEYER &
DR. JANET HECSCH

Both external and internal forces are driving us out of our comfort zones. Demands for accountability in times of dwindling resources make it necessary to review what we do and what we value both in higher education and in the world in which our students will live and work following college. Chang-

es on our own campus—such as the shift to serving greater numbers of first time freshmen with varying levels of preparation or the region's need for intellectual and technical entrepreneurs who can apply critical and creative thinking to our society's contemporary and enduring problems—disrupt our deeply habituated curricular and pedagogical structures. Even if we were to begin with consensus about the primary purpose of a broad-based liberal arts education, we would still need to re-examine and retune our existing General Education program to more fully engage our freshmen, our transfer students and our entire campus community. To that end, as Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies and Chair of the GE/GR Committee, we are committed to working together towards our common goals.

The good news: In Fall 2009, Sacramento State adopted a new set of Baccalaureate Learning Goals (BALGs) based on the system-wide Student Learning Outcomes (Executive Order 1033) which were drawn from the LEAP (Liberal Education and America's Promise) Initiative.

The questions remain: What do these learning goals look like in practice? How do we know if students are achieving them? How do we measure “knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world”;

“intellectual and practical skills”; “personal and social responsibility” and “integrative learning”? How can we instantiate them in the creation, review and assessment of General Education courses so that the program as a whole is informed by the BALG's?

Luckily, we do not have to re-invent the proverbial wheel. The LEAP initiative that provided the framework for our Baccalaureate Learning Goals also has provided us with snapshots, i.e. “value rubrics,” that can be adapted to our institutional goals and needs. First, the goals we have articulated are organized into four domains—or the food groups: Motivated and Sustained Learning; Cognition; Communication; and Democratic Participation and Engagement. Motivated and Sustained Learning, for example, includes “lifelong learning” and “intercultural competence”: outcomes included in our “Personal and Social Responsibility” Learning Goal. It also includes “information literacy,” an outcome articulated under “Intellectual and Practical Skills,” as well as “integrative thinking” which refers us to our goal of “Integrative Learning.” Cognition includes “Critical Thinking,” “Creative Thinking,” “Inquiry and Analysis,” “Problem Solving,” “Ethical Reasoning” and “Quantitative Reasoning.” It is important to point out that these domains are not unique to one GE Area or another, even if they are foregrounded more fully in some than in others. While the kind of problems or the methods whereby one reaches solutions may differ from one discipline to another, problem solving as a domain is applicable to all disciplines and fields. The VALUE rubrics take each of the more discrete outcomes in each domain and allow faculty and students to gauge student work along a continuum from novice or benchmark to higher levels of achievement or capstone experiences.

The better news: On our campus, we have initiated efforts to reframe and assess what we are already doing within the context of the BALGs and these domains.

“ Demands for accountability in times of dwindling resources make it necessary to review what we do and what we value both in higher education and in the world in which our students will live and work following college. ”

We have also begun to design new programs that are directly predicated on curricula and pedagogy that provide practice in and evidence of the LEAP domains and our BALGs.

First Year Seminars which fulfill GE Area E and focus on the “outcomes of becoming an educated person” already share common learning outcomes that echo our BALGs. This Fall 2010, some sections of the First Year Seminar piloted an approach to learning in which they incorporated tasks and activities that introduced the concept of a “liberal education” within the framework of the LEAP domains. Through inquiry involving interviews with faculty, an examination of the Sacramento State GE Program and other research, students developed an “academic plan” and a diagram of a liberally educated mind providing evidence of development in the domains ---those 4 food groups!

The Community Engagement Center and the First Year Program Committee are also investigating ways of incorporating the four domains in their assessment plans. Typically, quantitative data in both programs has focused more on numbers of participants, retention and GPA as a measure of student success. This data, however, does not address student learning outcomes. To that end, the Community Engagement Center, under the direction of Ms. Sheila Macias, is developing an assessment plan that will examine evidence of achievement in the fourth domain: Democratic Participation and Engagement and specifically Civic Engagement which is defined as “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities; [combining] knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. . .; promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.” More and more funding sources require that such evidence be provided in grant proposals; so not only will the CEC assessment plan facilitate improvement

in programming, but it will also make our program more competitive for external funding.

Additionally, the suites of courses—Academic Learning Collaboratives—that make up the new GE Pilot, slated to begin in Fall 2011, are being designed with inquiry problems or projects addressing aspects of the domains. Each proposal for an Academic Learning Collaborative explicitly requires a mapping of opportunities for students to develop the BALGs, as

well as an assessment plan and methodology. Further suggestions for developing ALC proposals encourage faculty to “examine the sequence of learning activities with an eye toward identifying with BALG’s can be developed by way of the activities” and to “map the activities onto the VALUE rubrics to produce an assessment matrix.”

The best news: The ripple effect is extending beyond individual courses or programs which is critical if we are going to realize full institutional implementation and assessment of the BALGs. The shared discourse of the BALGs, domains and VALUE

rubrics is bringing the university together as a learning community and allowing us to engage faculty from across the disciplines in conversation. This semester, the faculty who teach in Area B have begun that conversation. Their goal is a re-articulation of student learning outcomes that connect with the BALGs and cut across the sub-divided categories that comprise Area B. We will also be conducting a campus survey in April that will ask all faculty to rate the relevance of a given domain and outcome to their teaching.

Challenges and Opportunities: It is often easier to talk about change than to enact it. Furthermore, isolated oases are always endangered by the deserts that surround them and cut them off. If we are to attain full implementation and instantiation of the BALGs and actively employ them in assessment across the university, we need to move out of our comfort zones.

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E-Portfolios for Student Learning



DR. VANESSA ARNAUD

The entering cohort of first-year students in the G.E. Honors Program will create electronic portfolios to document their learning for their entire four-year curriculum beginning in Fall 2011. Students are at the heart of the design of this e-folio. The emphasis is on their learning, their emerging knowledge base, their developing skill sets, their ways of thinking, their values, what they are able to do, and how well they are actually learning.

Students will archive their learning experience in a platform called e-FolioWorld. We have designed the system to center on the Baccalaureate Learning Goals (BALGs). Students will collect and reflect on artifacts of their learning in relation to 1) motivated and sustained learning, 2) cognition, 3) communication and 4) democratic participation and engagement. Their work will further be organized according to various landing pages, including G.E., My Major, Academic Literacy, Transitions, Community Engagement, and Free Space. Students will be instructed to “tag” artifacts to the one or more of the four food groups of the BALGs as they upload them to one or more of their pages. The platform is designed to provide students with flexibility coupled with structured reflective activities in order to assist them in planning and designing their very own unique academic pathway through the university and beyond. Students may be expected to document work from a

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service learning project, research assignment, media presentation, fieldwork observation, focus group, essay, performance, public speaking, interview, etc. Or they may be asked to create a specific course portfolio to showcase their learning just for one course or a capstone experience. Such an archive further opens the door to advising, discussions with faculty across disciplines, and personal reference while promoting interdisciplinary and integrative thinking. The audience for the e-folio is the campus. However, different folios can be created by students for specialized audiences with students drawing artifacts from their larger campus archive.

We hope to create a map of the future for our students that will help them anticipate where they are going as learners. We are also creating a lens that will help them look back on where they have been to draw enlightenment from past effort. In the end, students will

have an organized, online repository along with their comments and reflections to keep forever as a portrait of their learning as an undergraduate.

Last semester, Honors student Charles Dickey, decided to pilot e-folio on his own. He discusses the impact of this platform on his own learning. For Charles, e-folio affords him the option of maintaining a learner-controlled portfolio as he prepares for his future in graduate school. **Here is Charles in his own words.**

"The culminating assignment of Honors 103 required presenting work from previous Honors courses with added reflections. My classmates elected for PowerPoint portfolios, but I opted to use the eFolio site recommended by Dr. Vanessa Arnaud. The opportunity to create a public display of my work added weight and responsibility to the assignment. Thanks to the straightforward organization of the eFolio system I was able to create a clean, functional site while remaining focused on the objective of the assignment: reflecting on my Honors experience.

The advantage of the eFolio system is in its malleability and exhibitive properties. Its portfolio creation instructions were simple and clear, requiring nothing more complex than uploading files. For a reflective portfolio, the eFolio tools were perfect in supplying an unobtrusive path from blank slate to finished product. The technical simplicity contrasts the exhilarating complexity of forming a widely viewable online portfolio. eFolio acts as an expression of my experience, an extension of personal style. It has the ability to make valuable impressions on professors, potential employers and anybody with internet access.

While completing Dr. Arnaud's assignment I imagined an audience of jaded Honors freshmen. I remember rolling my eyes at Dr. Arnaud's excited introduction to Honors 1 in 2007. By 2010 I appreciated the breadth of perspectives I had opened up to through my courses; so I formed my reflections to challenge the next Me to engage in active learning from semester one.

Creating this catalogue of past coursework (I will be making alterations upon completing this article) keeps the spirit of

past courses alive and provides greater room for new insights. An essay on oil trade for History 51H and a paper for Anthropology 2H on the Rwandan genocide synthesized my thoughts into reflections on my increased sensitivity to the interconnectivity of global populations. After Honors 103 concluded, I have been altering my portfolio for an audience of graduate schools. In clicking one link, any institution or professor will have instant access to a rich exhibition of my undergraduate educational journey."

So there you have it. Just as Charles now can show his journey online, our Honors students will have a path to self-assessment and reflective analysis. We hope to develop this e-folio tool in such a way that other programs on campus can make use of it and will keep the campus informed as the work progresses.



HONORS SENIOR
CHARLES DICKEY

“ I imagined an audience of jaded Honors freshmen... I formed my reflections to challenge the next Me to engage in active learning from semester one. ”

Charles Dickey

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Honors 102 Essay: Examination of City Lights

[Honors102_CityLights.pdf](#)

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A PDF of an essay written for Honors 102: Pursuing the Public Good Through Film.

Reflections:

(12/13/2010)

The coursework of Honors 102: Pursuing the Public Good Through Film involved examination of film through the intersection of filmic techniques and social themes. This essay on Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights* (1931) focuses on the film's protagonist as alienated from the surrounding social structures and touches on the film's depictions of economic disparity and the emotional resonance resulting from the film's characters and themes. The exploration of art through the lens of social themes is an important element of being capable of approaching foreign situations with an open mind. Film is the new popular art form, and with the privilege of living in the time of such beautiful art comes the responsibility of examining that art for its values.

Honors 3 Night Essay

[Honors3_Night.pdf](#)

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A PDF file of an essay from the course Honors 3: Great Books in History II: from the Renaissance to the Present. The essay on the issue of collective memory within the book *Night* by Elie Wiesel. The essays makes extended outside reference to two novels from Cormac McCarthy and the 2008 documentary *Standard Operating Procedure* directed by



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The 2012 WASC Interim Report

Jackie Donath, Professor, Department of Humanities and Religious Studies

The three years I spent focused on the WASC reaccreditation process was an incredibly fulfilling period in my career. I met colleagues across the campus doing amazing things with students, improving our programs and processes, and enhancing our efforts to serve our community. Candidly, though, after the WASC team visited in 2009 and the Commission issued its findings, I breathed a sigh of relief and decided to plan to retire before the next reaccreditation cycle.

on these foundational activities. A separate group is crafting a response to the action letter's request for an update on our Ed.D program and their report will be added to the Steering Committee's effort. Even as the committee meets with campus resource people and experts in each of these areas, it is also committed to taking advantage of the knowledge and energies of the larger campus community.

The Interim Report is (happily) not intended to be as comprehensive as our previous reaccreditation

“ I met colleagues across the campus doing amazing things with students, improving our programs and processes, and enhancing our efforts to serve our community. ”

While the University did a great job of preparing its WASC Capacity and Preparatory Review Report and Educational Effectiveness Review Report and demonstrating its commitment to the core of our mission of teaching and learning, the WASC Commission's action letter of June 2009 required that Sac State prepare a mid-cycle report on three central issues: student success as evidenced by retention and graduation rates, student learning assessment, and planning and budget. (For reasons I can't quite figure out) in my role as a Provost's Fellow, I have agreed to chair the Steering Committee which has just begun to work on that report, and I want to update you on our efforts and ask for your help to ensure that our report reflects our campus efforts as completely and positively as possible.

The Steering Committee has been organized with a membership of faculty, staff, administrative representatives and students. This group has been charged with 1] the collection of data and evidence of the University's continued efforts in these three areas in order to frame the Interim Report; 2] identification of progress, gaps, weaknesses and opportunities in the campus response to these central institutional functions; and 3] preparation of short- and long-term recommendations to the campus that center

reports. Instead, in this update to the Commission, we want to focus on the issues raised by the action letter and to provide information about how we have addressed each concern by analyzing the actions we have taken and describing those we plan in the future. This report gives us a chance to reaffirm our commitment to improvement in the service of our educational mission and to demonstrate our dedication to the transformational power of higher education.

There is generally not a campus visit associated with an interim report. We will send an electronic report to the Commission's Interim Report Committee in March of 2012.

If you'd like to know more about the activities leading up to this report, please visit the campus WASC website at <http://www.csus.edu/wascaccreditation> and read the various segments of our reaccreditation reports and the WASC Commission action letter. Please don't hesitate to send any suggestions, questions or comments to me at donathjr@csus.edu

I will update you on our progress in fall 2011 and a copy of our Interim Report will be posted on the University's WASC accreditation website on March 1, 2012.