

GENERAL EDUCATION NEWS

From the California State University, Sacramento Office of Academic Affairs

Roberto Pomo to Serve as New Honors Program Director

*By Catherine Gabor
Assistant Professor of
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Professor and Chair of Theatre and Dance Roberto Pomo will serve as the first Honors Program Director at California State University Sacramento. Pomo will take over the duties from the Interim Director, George Craft of the History Department. Pomo accepted the position of Honors Program Director in order to accomplish several goals. He wants:

- A. To attract a diverse student population to the Honors Program that will reflect the rich multicultural identity of our campus and region;
- B. To attract highly qualified Honors faculty eager to make a distinct difference in the academic and personal lives of our students;
- C. To bring to the Program an on-going

external support system in the form of monetary gifts and grants;

- D. To expose our Honor students to the various academic and programmatic foundations found in our rich campus community;
- E. To nurture a commitment for study-abroad initiatives;
- F. To create a distinct and viable community of young scholars that will serve as ambassadors to our campus community, region and nation;
- G. To build strong bridges with Sacramento State faculty, college deans and university administrators in asserting the importance of an Honors.

Having served as the Chair of Department of Theatre and Dance (1999-present) as well as the Interim Director of the School of the Arts (2003-2004), Pomo is well prepared to lead a demanding and diverse program. In addition to his desire to lead the Honors Program to fulfill the university mission and to work with

stimulating faculty and students, Pomo cites his "thirst for intellectual, critical and analytical inquiry" as a key reason he was attracted to this position.

Although Pomo will act as the Director of the Honors Program, he is keen to acknowledge his "faculty colleagues in the Honors Program who have diligently worked long hours in establishing the existing infrastructure of the Honors Program curricular structure." Faculty in the Honors Program will continue to work diligently as they implement the Honors curriculum for students.

Lynn Tashiro Named Faculty Coordinator for Freshman Seminar

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Professor of Physics Lynn Tashiro will expand her

leadership role for first-year programs at California State University Sacramento as she takes over leadership of the Freshman Seminar Program and continues to direct the Learning Communities Program. Tashiro stated her reasons for seeking the position: "I have enjoyed my work with the Learning Community Program and wanted to get more involved with the planning and implementation of freshman programs." As University Learning Community Faculty Coordinator, Tashiro already worked with many of the academic department chairs and faculty that she will need to collaborate with to plan, schedule, and implement the Freshman Seminars.

Tashiro has clear goals for the Freshman Seminar Program; she states, "My goals for the Freshman Seminar Program are to maintain the controlled growth that the program enjoyed in the past few years and to assess, document and disseminate the best practice teaching methods used by many of the faculty in the program. Currently I am researching assessment tools and opportunities to investigate information competence. I will be seeking internal and external resources to support this work."

Clearly, Tashiro's two roles—Faculty Coordinator of Freshman Seminar and Faculty Coordinator of

Learning Communities--will dovetail nicely with one another. Tashiro has many of the same goals for both programs which rest on her mission to provide high-quality education for first-year students. She does, however, distinguish between the programs in her goal setting: "Although these are essentially the same goals that I have for the Learning Community program I would like to focus more narrowly on best practice in collaborative teaching and learning and discipline-specific information competence." If you are interested in teaching a Freshman Seminar (and/or as part of a Learning Community), please contact Lynn Tashiro at tashirol@csus.edu.

General Education: Goals and Assessment

The following series of articles explains and updates readers on the process of assessing courses in General Education. Greg Wheeler's piece starts off the series with an overview of undergraduate education at California State University Sacramento. His article is followed by an update on the five-year General Education by Catherine Gabor. Finally, Elizabeth Strasser's article rounds out the series with a look at GE assessment from the perspective of the Anthropology Department, which has courses in

several areas of General Education.

Baccalaureate Learning Goals and General Education

By Greg Wheeler, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies

No single department is able to give students all that we expect to be part of a student's university learning experience. The constant good efforts of our faculty allow us to produce a program woven from many parts. We depend on our colleagues to complement our efforts to produce the overall program that distinguishes our students. At California State University Sacramento, the Baccalaureate Learning Goals, approved by the Faculty Senate in 2002, guide our educational programs. These goals are explained in detail at <http://www.csus.edu/acaf/Portfolios/GE/lrngls.stm> and are summarized below. The 17 areas of our General Education Program each have learning outcomes specified at <http://www.csus.edu/acaf/Portfolios/GE/geareacriteria.stm>. The Learning Goals Matrix shows how the General Education Program in conjunction with the disciplinary information derived in majors satisfy the Baccalaureate Learning Goals.

EXPECTATIONS OF UNDERGRADUATE LEARNING

COMPETENCE IN THE DISCIPLINES

Definition: The ability to demonstrate the competencies and values listed below in at least one major field of study. Additionally, this learning goal requires students to demonstrate informed understandings of other fields, drawing on the knowledge and skills of disciplines outside the major.

ANALYSIS AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Definition: The ability of students to identify and diagnose problems; organize and critically evaluate relevant information of a qualitative and quantitative nature; develop reasonable arguments and effective solutions.

COMMUNICATION

Definition: The ability to read, write, speak and listen effectively. The ability to respond, with understanding and appreciation to a wide variety of communicative acts.

INFORMATION COMPETENCE

Definition: The ability to make effective and ethical use of information resources and technology

for personal and professional needs.

CULTURAL LEGACIES

Definition: Acquisition of knowledge of human accomplishments in the creative and performing arts and the achievements of human thought.

VALUES AND PLURALISM

Definition: The ability to apply ethical standards in order to make moral judgments with respect to individual conduct and citizenship, and to recognize the diversity of human experiences and cultures, both within the United States and internationally. The development of positive social attitudes, values and behaviors.

Improving Teaching and Learning, Faculty

Consultant's Main Goal

*By Catherine Gabor,
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For the past year and a half, I have had the pleasure of meeting my colleagues from across the university to talk about maximizing student learning. In other words, I have served as a faculty consultant for General Education Assessment. In this role, I help my colleagues explain how their GE courses deliver what is promised to students according to the GE Learning Outcomes. To

do this, I review all submitted assessment plans developed by faculty who teach courses in General Education, and I meet with faculty one-on-one, in small groups, and in larger presentations, such as the ones held in early April for faculty and department chairs who have courses in Area C.

We are now entering the fifth and final year of GE Assessment Plan development, as we embark on Area C in 2006-2007. Area C Assessment Plans are due on September 22, and will be reviewed by the General Education Committee during the Fall 2006 semester. Prior to the GE Committee deciding on approval, I will consult with Area C faculty to help them craft the best possible assessment plans.

I have now worked with faculty who teach courses in Area A, Area B, and Area C (see the GE Chart for specifics). It has been gratifying for me, a fairly new junior faculty member, to talk with so many dedicated teachers who see (or come to see) that assessment can be an opportunity to recognize what departments are doing well and identify issues that warrant conversations that can lead to more focused articulation of student outcomes and therefore lead to better learning, as Elizabeth Strasser exemplifies in her article below.

GE AREA	LEARNING EXPECTATIONS					
	Competencies in the Disciplines	Analysis and Problem Solving	Communication	Information Competence	Cultural Legacies	Values & Pluralism
AREA A						
A 1 Oral Communication			X	X		
A 2 Written Communication			X			
A3 Critical Thinking		X	X	X		
AREA B						
Area B 1 Physical Science		X				
Area B 2 Life Forms		X				
Area B 3 Lab		X				
Area B 4 Mathematical Quantitative Reasoning		X				
Area B 5 Further Studies in the above, B1, 2, & 4		X				
AREA C						
C 1 World Civilizations					X	X
C 2 Introduction to the Arts					X	X
C 3 Introduction to the Humanities					X	
C 4 Further Studies in the Arts and Humanities					X	X
AREA D						
D 1 A Foundations in Social and Behavioral Sciences						X
D 1 B World Cultures					X	X
D 2 Major Social Issues of the Contemporary Era						X
D 3 American Institutions					X	X
AREA E						
E Understanding Personal Development		X				

GE Assessment: A Departmental View

*By Elizabeth Strasser,
Professor of Anthropology*

The Anthropology faculty have produced GE assessment plans fairly efficiently in recent years. What has streamlined the process for us was recognizing the relationship among the three main GE components of GE assessment plans: the GE Area-specific learning goals, the specific GE Expectations, and the GE Outcomes. All three are available at various web sites, which also simplified our work.

Identifying GE Area-specific learning goals involves visiting the web-site with the Learning Goals Matrix¹. Once the appropriate learning goals are in hand, one then visits the CSUS Baccalaureate Learning Goals site², where a list of specific GE Expectations is provided that derive from the GE Area learning goals. We then identify the GE Outcomes for a GE area by visiting the GE Criteria and Outcomes site³ and following the link to where the information is retrieved under the header "Students will:". This gives us what we need on the GE side of the equation, but what about the Anthropology side?

We develop course specific Anthropological learning outcomes to match up with each of the GE area expectations and outcomes.

We refer to the example referenced on Form A (course proposal form) for appropriate verbs to be used in writing our learning outcomes⁴. We then develop examples of course specific questions or activities that assess our course specific outcomes. Finally, based on the examination of sample rubrics⁵, we develop ones for evaluating writing assignments.

We construct our assessment plans in outline format as well as in a matrix, explicitly linking each step to the relevant one preceding it. In the outline, at the end of each course outcome there is, in parentheses, the GE expectation or GE outcome to which it is related. The same applies to GE expectations and the GE learning goals from which they are derived. In the matrix we have three columns, the first containing the GE expectations or outcomes, the second the course-specific learning outcomes and the third with sample questions/activities. The key to successfully developing a plan is to clearly and explicitly identify the relationships among all the components.

While I was initially skeptical about the effectiveness of outcomes assessment, I've been pleased with the results obtained for our Area B courses, for which I am the course coordinator. I have

been analyzing the outcomes data for these courses each term since fall 2002. As a result of this analysis, we identified topics early on that needed more attention or a change in teaching strategy and have seen a steady improvement in the outcomes scores for those conceptually difficult topics. In our second year of collecting data we added some additional topics for assessment and I expect we will continue to modify our instrument to reflect our needs. For instance, the data show that for certain topics we are consistently successful in getting the ideas across, so we plan to replace those topics with others about which we know less. Because of my experience, I have to say that I am a convert to limited outcomes assessment.

1

<http://www.csus.edu/acaf/portfolios/ge/matrixgoals.pdf>

2

<http://www.csus.edu/acaf/portfolios/ge/lrngls.stm>

3

<http://www.csus.edu/acaf/portfolios/ge/geareacriteria.stm>

4

<http://www.csus.edu/acaf/example.htm>

5

<http://www.csus.edu/acaf/Assessment/holscor.htm>

Eyes Wide Open: GE and Outcomes that Matter in a Changing World

By Janet Hecsh, Associate Professor of Teacher Education

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) held its annual academic revival in Phoenix, AZ from March 9-11. I must admit that my main interest in attending was the potential to be in a warm climate and away from the rain, and some interest in gaining a better understanding of the convoluted world of General Education, since I have served on the Sacramento State GE Committee for the past several years. Two surprises: it rained---for the first time in 260 days---and my sense of the purpose and the possibilities of GE increased dramatically.

About five hundred people from more than one hundred institutions in the US gathered to discuss, inquire into and share best practices related to General Education in liberal arts colleges and public and private colleges and universities. Keynote speakers including former Harvard President Derek Bok as well as workshops and round tables provided participants with opportunities to discuss issues related to program evaluation, student learning outcomes, and institutional transformations with respect to General Education, global perspectives, and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Among the workshops I attended, I was most interested in the activities undertaken at San Jose State University as they

engaged faculty and students at all levels of the institution in a re-conceptualization and re-framing of General Education. It was at once exciting and validating to meet colleagues who are committed to student engagement, inclusion and achievement and to hear about their successes and challenges. I was impressed by the conference both in terms of the content and the structures to support collaboration and collegiality and look forward to attending again, this time without the rain!

GE NEWSLETTER

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