Innovations in General Education

Giving California Students a Compass

Final report of "Give Students a Compass" in California, May, 2015

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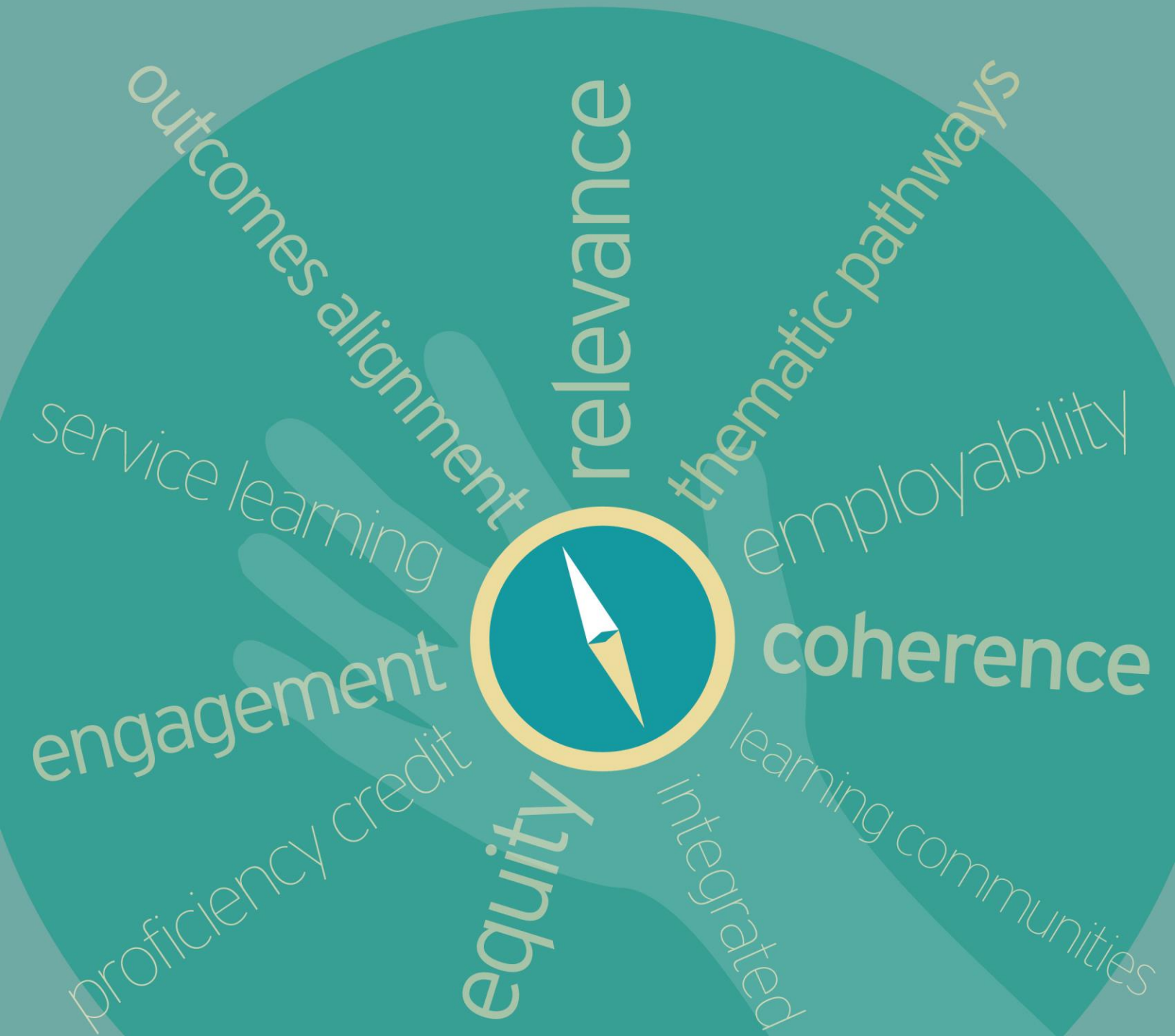

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Introduction

Too many students who begin college in the California State University (CSU) or California Community College (CCC) systems with the goal of earning a bachelor's degree don't make it. Of degree-seeking students who entered a CSU in 2007, just over half graduated six years later (California State University, 2013). Of students who entered a CCC the same year and demonstrated intent to transfer—that is, completed at least 12 units and attempted transfer-level math or English—just over one-third had transferred after six years (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2013).

In California and across the United States, there is growing interest in how colleges and universities can improve student success, not only by increasing rates of bachelor's degree completion but also ensuring high-quality learning for all students. General Education (GE)—the part of the curriculum that all students must take in order to graduate—offers a growing area of experimentation and reform designed to achieve this goal. The CSU and CCC systems have been leaders in exploring innovative ways to make GE more engaging, relevant and coherent to advance the achievement of those learners working toward a baccalaureate.

This report aims to encourage readers to pursue GE innovation on their own campuses based on the learning generated by the "Give Students a Compass" (Compass) initiative in California (2008-2015), led by the CSU Office of the Chancellor. In turn, this report summarizes practical findings from Compass, as well as other related efforts in development across the state. Fifteen CSUs and 26 CCCs received funding from Compass to pilot-test GE innovations and explore how these changes impacted their students' success. We share a range of strategies that have emerged from this reform movement, focusing on those with the potential for expansion and/or replication. We highlight lessons learned over the past seven years of pioneering work among the state's postsecondary institutions and systems, and we offer considerations for all those seeking to improve student learning and achievement through innovative and effective GE.

Reader's Guide

The Compass team in the CSU Office of the Chancellor designed this report primarily for faculty, administrators and staff at public community colleges and universities in California and beyond. Although the subject is the GE curriculum, especially in the first two years, we hope that it will be read by educators across all campus divisions. It may also be of interest to policymakers, employers, foundations and others who share a commitment to student success.

We first lay a foundation for GE innovation by explaining the rationale for changing GE and describing the Compass initiative. We then turn to the heart of the report—profiles of eight efforts that show GE innovation in action. We include three that began on individual campuses, three that involve CSU-CCC partnerships and two that showcase GE redesign at a CSU. These eight approaches show promise for wider adoption and offer educators concrete examples that they may adapt on their own campuses or in partnership with other institutions in their regions. We also preview five Compass "legacy" projects currently in development.

We then look to the future of GE innovation, distilling key lessons learned from these efforts to improve GE and concluding with a set of critical recommendations for those interested in strengthening GE at the institutional, system and intersegmental levels.

A Foundation for GE Innovation

Before launching in to a discussion of emerging models and approaches to GE, we want to ensure a common understanding of GE in California's higher education systems and consider why we should pursue GE innovation in the first place. After all, it has been an integral part of the higher education system in California for decades.

This section:

1. Provides a definition for GE
2. Outlines how it is structured across postsecondary segments in the state
3. Explores why GE is important to achievement
4. Makes the case for why it needs to change to strengthen student success
5. Introduces the Compass initiative's work to achieve this goal

> *At present, most students in most institutions of higher learning experience general education programs ill-designed to accomplish their stated purposes and ill-suited to assure the wide range of learning outcomes that define degrees.*
>
> (Gaston, 2015, p. 1)

What is GE?

GE is the learning that we expect of any college graduate, regardless of major. Students are required to take courses distributed across the humanities and arts, social sciences and natural sciences—offerings intended to provide "breadth" and to prepare them to be responsible citizens. At the same time, they are expected to complete foundational skills courses in communication, math and critical thinking. The underlying premise is that GE, together with depth in a major, will help to prepare them for their professional, personal and civic goals. However, as Paul Gaston notes (see text box on this page), **the connections between GE and those purposes are seldom clear**. Students usually select from a seemingly random collection of courses that have little to do with each other, particular majors or the current concerns of the outside world. It is not surprising that **students often question the relevance of GE to their personal and professional goals**.

How is GE structured in California's public colleges and universities?

The California Master Plan for Higher Education sets different functions for the three public systems of higher education. In this plan, the University of California (UC) is the primary academic research and doctorate-granting institution; the CSU is the primary education institution for undergraduate and graduate degrees through the master's level; and the CCC is charged with providing academic and career and technical education through the first two years of college. One of the key provisions of the

Master Plan is that students should be able to complete the first two years of a baccalaureate degree at a CCC and be able to transfer smoothly to any UC or CSU.

The California Code of Regulations specifies GE requirements for the CSU for both students who begin in that system and for transfer students (5 CA ADC §40405). More detailed directives for implementing those requirements are provided by the CSU Chancellor through an Executive Order (E.O. 1100).

In California, transfer students take most or all of their lower division GE courses at a CCC, so it is important to align these courses across systems. **To be admitted as an upper division transfer student in the CSU, students need to have completed at least 60 credits, including at least 30 credits in GE.** The GE credits must include courses in critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, oral communication and written communication—often referred to as "the Golden Four."

The CSU and CCC systems began coordinating GE in the 1960s, with the CSU statewide Academic Senate overseeing GE course approval. In 1991, the Academic Senates of all three systems agreed on an Intersegmental GE Transfer Curriculum (IGETC). CCC students applying to a CSU can follow either IGETC or the slightly different CSU Breadth Transfer Pattern. If a CCC seeks GE approval for a course, it must submit the course outline to the CSU and UC for review. Approved courses are listed at www.assist.org, an online student transfer information system. In addition, the CSU requires nine units of upper division GE, which must be completed at a CSU campus. **While these statewide transfer curricula are designed to facilitate transfer, access and affordability, they can also make innovation more challenging.**

Why does GE matter for student success?

The importance of GE for successful learning has not been directly studied. Despite this lack of evidence, educators at virtually all US higher education institutions share the conviction that GE is an essential component in helping students to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions of an educated person. This view is demonstrated by the strong emphasis on GE for learners pursuing a bachelor's degree.

In their first 60 college units, California students in a CCC, CSU or UC who plan to earn a baccalaureate degree take almost two-thirds of their coursework in GE. It is an entry point for connecting to college, and it sets the foundation for subsequent academic work. Students who are placed in developmental English and/or math courses face an extra hurdle to even *begin* GE in those areas. In short, GE can make or break success, both in terms of persistence and learning.

However, **evidence show that students are at the highest risk of dropping out before they complete those first 60 units.** According to ACT (2014), almost half (45%) of first-time, full-time degree-seeking students in the US who began at a public community college in fall 2012 did not return in fall 2013. Almost one-third (32%) who began at a public university that offers baccalaureate and master's degrees (like the CSUs) did not return the next year.[1] Notably, the National Center for Education Statistics (2012) found that attrition rates for African-American and Hispanic students are worse than for Whites and Asians. While students drop out for many reasons, **GE can be a key factor for students deciding whether to stay or leave**.

[1] These figures do not count those who attend part-time, transfer to another school or are re-entering.

Why does GE need to change?

California's institutions of higher education boast many good GE courses, capable GE instructors and well-designed GE programs. At the same time, there are also signs that GE falls short of excellence in many cases.

Students often ask, "Why do I have to take this course?" Advisors sometimes tell students, "Get your GE over." Many full-time faculty prefer to teach courses to students majoring in their disciplines. Departments frequently assign GE courses to adjunct faculty, who may have less time to interact with students and may hesitate to try innovative teaching practices that could negatively affect student evaluations. GE programs rarely have their own budgets, faculty or administrative homes. Further, policy-makers sometimes propose reducing GE requirements in order to graduate students more quickly. **The message is clear: GE is less important than preparation for one's career**.

However, **there are at least five reasons why GE should change**: engagement, relevance, coherence, equity and employability.

- Engagement: There is an extensive body of literature that demonstrates that student engagement in purposeful educational experiences, both in and out of the classroom, has a significant positive impact on persistence and learning (Kuh, et al., 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Since GE courses are typically among the first ones that students take, they offer an excellent opportunity to make the most of their first impressions of college through high-impact educational practices (for more information, see the *High-Impact Practices* text box on page 6).

- Relevance: Few students would rate "becoming an educated person" as their main reason for coming to college. Most want to know how GE can help them reach their life goals—not just the chance for better employment, but also to participate more fully in the world, take charge of their lives, adapt to change and make a difference in their communities. Research on teaching and learning shows that contextualizing content in "real world" situations improves student success (Baker, Hope & Karandjeff, 2009). GE programs need to clarify how their requirements are relevant to student goals and how they apply to "real world" issues.

- Coherence: By design, GE courses are distributed across multiple disciplines. The connections between courses and disciplines (including students' major disciplines) are rarely spelled out. But in an increasingly complex world, the ability to locate, use and integrate knowledge and understanding from different fields is essential (Bransford, 2000). Students need guidance and practice in how to put the pieces together. GE programs are a logical place to provide this support.

- Equity: California's GE transfer curriculum was intended to promote equity for students, regardless of educational background or where they begin college, by giving first priority to seamless articulation. The modular structure supports equal access, but equity for student success means developing strategies to achieve equal *outcomes* (Bensimon, et al., 2012). Equity-focused GE likely needs to be more flexible in order to accommodate differences in student learning contexts.

- Employability: In a survey of private sector and nonprofit organizations, Hart Research Associates found that more than 90% employer respondents said that "demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than [a candidate's] major (p. 4, 2013)." They wanted colleges to place more emphasis on these skills, information literacy, innovation and broad knowledge of liberal arts and sciences. In short, they valued the kinds of learning central to GE.

What is "Give Students a Compass?"

Motivated by the commitment to GE as critical component of students' preparation and driven by the change rationale outlined above, the CSU sought out ways to begin promoting innovation in GE starting in 2008. It joined the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) signature "Liberal Education and America's Promise" (LEAP) initiative, an advocacy, action and research effort designed to promote a set of "essential learning outcomes" (ELOs; www.aacu.org/leap/essential-learning-outcomes) for all college students, regardless of major (for more information, see *The Essential Learning Outcomes* text box on right). The ELOs were adopted as a framework for the CSU GE policy.

LEAP emphasizes the value of engaging, high-impact practices and the importance of "inclusive excellence" – the principle that institutions of higher education should assure that all students receive the benefits of a high-quality liberal education (for more information, see the *High Impact Practices (HIPs)* text box on page 6).

From 2008 to 2011, the AAC&U sponsored "Give Students a Compass: A Tri-State LEAP Partnership for College Learning, General Education and Underserved Student Success." The CSU joined with university systems in Oregon and Wisconsin to explore how "systems [can] collaborate with campuses to bring about transformational change in the undergraduate experience" (Albertine, 2011, p. 7).

AAC&U
Essential Learning Outcomes
(ELOs)

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

Focused by engagement with big questions, both enduring and contemporary

Intellectual and Practical Skills

Practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects and standards for performance

Personal and Social Responsibility

Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges

Integrative and Applied Learning

Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems

Each Compass state selected three institutions or "beta sites" to model new approaches in GE. The three California beta sites were as follows:

- **CSU Chico**: engaged in an overhaul of the institution's GE program, centered around ten student learning outcomes (SLOs) that aligned with LEAP; restructured CSU breadth requirements around ten interdisciplinary thematic pathways
- **CSU Sacramento**: defined new baccalaureate learning goals, unanimously approved by their Academic Senate, and new GE SLOs; experimented with "academic learning collaboratives"—a collection of three thematically linked courses for freshmen
- **San José State University**: partnered with a nearby community college, Evergreen Valley College, to create a "Transfer Year Experience" based in a second-level English composition course with a service-learning component, peer mentors and advising

With guidance from a steering committee (see Appendix A), the CSU system also hosted two statewide conferences to share insights from the beta sites with colleagues from across the state. A central question animating both conferences was, "How can we scale promising models to reach all undergraduate students in California public institutions of higher education, regardless of where they begin?" The campus

projects and conferences generated considerable interest, encouraging leadership in the CSU system office to seek funding for a second phase of Compass, but with a twist: a focus on partnerships with CCCs.

A second phase of Compass began in 2011, based only in California. Since about three in five CSU graduates begin elsewhere—mostly at a CCC—we realized that real meaningful change in GE needed to include that system. The Compass initiative expanded its steering committee to include members from the statewide CCC Academic Senate and CCC Chancellor's Office.

The initiative sought projects that would continue an emphasis on HIPs and inclusive excellence, but focusing on the transfer GE curriculum at a CSU and at least one local CCC. Teams of educators from CSUs and a nearby CCC were invited to attend a supplemental meeting held in conjunction with AAC&U's annual meeting in San Francisco to generate ideas for how they could collaborate to strengthen lower division GE.

Ultimately, the second phase of Compass supported five CSU-CCC pilot projects. A sixth pilot project was added as part of AAC&U's multi-state "Quality Collaboratives" initiative to clarify, map and assess SLOs in the context of transfer and explore the usefulness of the Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualification Profile (DQP) (www.aacu.org/qc). We also offered support for up to 12 "networking partnerships" to become part of statewide community of practice by attending Compass events, providing feedback on emerging models and experimenting locally on a smaller scale. Find a brief description of the pilot projects and networking partnerships in Appendix B.

High-Impact Practices (HIPs)

Based on research from the National Student Survey of Engagement, George Kuh (2008, 2013) has identified a variety of teaching and learning practices that are correlated with student persistence and engagement and are beneficial for all students. These include:

- First-Year Seminars and Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Service Learning and Community-Based Learning
- Undergraduate Research
- Capstone Courses and Projects
- Study Abroad
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- Internships
- Diversity and Global Learning Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Writing-Intensive Courses

They work because they involve many of the following conditions:

- High performance standards
- Investment of time and effort
- Interaction with faculty and peers around substantive matters
- Experiences with diversity
- Frequent, timely, constructive feedback
- Structured reflection and integration
- Real-world application
- Public demonstration of competence

Additionally, the initiative hosted statewide inter-system Compass conferences in phase two, bringing together teams from the pilot projects and networking partnerships at CSU Los Angeles ("Engaging from the Start") and Cañada College ("The Future of GE"). Each was a working meeting, combining plenary presentations from leaders in GE reform with focused conversations among CSU and CCC faculty, staff and administrators.[2]

As the Compass initiative comes to a close in spring 2015, these seven years of innovation, assessment and reflection offer significant learning about how to design GE in a way that promotes student success. We now turn to a discussion of what this innovation looks like in action.

[2] Materials from each conference can be found at http://teachingcommons.cdl.edu/geengage/compass_initiative/).

GE Innovation in Action

Educators around the country are experimenting with a range of innovative practices to improve GE, including many that are reflected in projects linked to the Compass initiative in California. These efforts can offer practical inspiration for other educators interested in innovative programmatic and institutional approaches to how GE is delivered.

This section:

1. Provides a context for the eight specific GE innovations shared in this report, including a brief description of "developing trends" in GE reform and background on how we selected these examples

2. Profiles five "featured innovations" implemented, sustained and/or expanded in California community colleges and CSUs over the past eight years

3. Highlights three "emerging innovations" recently launched by two CSU campuses and one CCC

4. Previews five "legacy projects" currently evolving out of the Compass initiative

What are some new strategies for GE?

As we noted in the section on "A Foundation for GE Innovation," there is growing recognition of the need for change in current models, which typically involve a checklist of unrelated courses across broad disciplinary and skills areas. Colleges around the country are seeking new ways to help all students to receive a high-quality liberal education, often based on the LEAP framework (for more information, see page 5). As a backdrop to the innovations featured in this section, here we describe several developing strategies for GE reform. As readers will discover, the GE innovations profiled in this report show the opportunity for integrating and testing multiple strategies in one programmatic approach.

- High-impact practices (HIPs): Educators have increasingly incorporated HIPs in a wide range of contexts (Kuh, 2013), but there is increasing interest in building them systematically into GE. Some HIPs such as learning communities and first-year seminars are clear "fits" for lower division GE classes. Others, such as undergraduate research and service learning, are less commonly used. Most of the initiatives profiled here use one or more HIPs in lower division GE and/or in upper division GE capstone courses.

- Thematic GE pathways: The idea of linking three or more GE breadth areas through a common focus on complex ("wicked") problems or big questions over more than one year, with shared SLOs and faculty coordination, is drawing considerable attention in California and beyond. AAC&U's LEAP

Challenge (http://www.aacu.org/leap/challenge) and GE Maps and Markers (GEMs, http://www.aacu.org/gems) project both emphasize the value of integrative pathways in GE to prepare students to deal with "unscripted problems" that they are likely to face in their professional, civic and personal lives. The profiles of CSU Chico's GE Pathways Program and Pierce College and CSU Northridge's aligned GE Paths illustrate two approaches to implementing thematic GE pathways.

- Public sphere pedagogy: Though not formally identified as a HIP and unfamiliar to most educators beyond California, this innovative strategy pioneered at CSU Chico has generated enthusiastic responses at professional meetings. As profiled in this report, it is particularly well-suited to introductory GE courses in areas such as oral and written communication and political science and can reach large numbers of students.

- ePortfolios: Integrative ePortfolio initiatives that bridge the full spectrum of curricular and co-curricular learning experiences have been gaining momentum across the US, but have not yet been widely adopted in California. However, there is evidence that they have a positive impact on student learning and persistence (Eynon, Gambino, and Torok, 2014). As noted in their profiles, the Metro Academies, CSU Sacramento and Cosumnes River College have all experimented with ePortfolios. At CSU Sacramento, transfer students have begun to use ePortfolios demonstrating proficiency in written communication as an alternative to a required writing examination.

- Credit based on proficiency: The AAC&U ELOs and VALUE (http://www.aacu.org/value) rubrics along with the efforts of organizations like the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org) have encouraged educators to pay more attention to the knowledge and skills that GE is intended to enable students to develop. The concept of awarding credit based on evidence of student learning, regardless of pace or place of learning, is gaining momentum. The new iPath program at Santa Barbara City College is testing the feasibility of infusing learning outcomes in oral communication and lifelong learning across multiple linked courses and assessing proficiency as the basis for meeting GE requirements in those areas.

- Outcomes alignment: Alignment involves assuring that the outcomes students achieve in a particular course or program are consistent with what they need in order to be successful in subsequent courses or programs, both within and across institutions. CSU Bakersfield is building a process for aligning proficiencies in the foundational "Golden Four" skills areas, requiring most other GE courses to include substantial reinforcement of at least one skill and collaborating with nearby community colleges on SLOs. GE Paths at Pierce and CSU Northridge and Metro Academies at City College of San Francisco and San Francisco State University have aligned learning outcomes across institutions.

- Integrated support services: Because students often do not seek assistance outside the classroom, many colleges are building services such as peer mentoring advising, and tutoring into GE and other lower division courses. The Metro Academies and Santa Barbara City College offer examples of this trend.

What innovations are profiled in this report?

We profile five "featured innovations" and highlight three "emerging innovations," based on their stage of development.

Featured Innovations

Innovation	*Institution(s)*	*GE Strategies Addressed*	*Page*
GE Pathways Program	CSU Chico	Thematic Pathways Capstones	13
GE Paths	CSU Northridge, Los Angeles Piece College	Thematic Pathways Service -Learning and Community-Based Learning Outcomes Alignment	17
Metro Academies	City College of San Francisco, San Francisco State University	Learning Community First-Year Experience Thematic Pathways Integrated Support Services Outcomes Alignment	22
ePortfolios	Sacramento State University, Cosumnes River College	ePortfolios First-Year Experience Integrated Support Services	27
Public Sphere Pedagogy	CSU Chico	Public Sphere Pedagogy First-Year Experience Service-Learning and Community-Based learning	31

Emerging Innovations

Innovation	*Institution(s)*	*GE Strategies Addressed*	*Page*
iPath Program	Santa Barbara City College	Learning Community Thematic Pathways Integrated Support Services Credit Based on Proficiency	34
GE Reform	CSU Bakersfield	Thematic Pathways First-Year Seminar Outcomes Alignment Capstones	37
GE Redesign	CSU Los Angeles	Service Learning and Community-Based Experiences Diversity and Global Learning Experiences Writing-Intensive Courses Thematic Pathways	40

We conclude the section with a preview of "legacy" projects that are now emerging from the Compass initiative and that invite interested educators to join their efforts.

How did we select the innovations to profile?

The featured innovations here have been operational for three to eight years and have shown promise for improving student success. They also have potential to be scaled to reach most or all students and to be adapted at other CCCs and CSUs. The other emerging innovations highlight new approaches that have been influenced by Compass. They have not yet been tested, but they offer creative innovations based on best practices.

The profiles were prepared by educators from the participating institution(s). In turn, they vary in their tone and areas of emphasis and reflect the unique perspectives and experience of those individuals. We did not conduct rigorous research on the innovations highlighted to collect data or verify their impact. Some practices have concrete data demonstrating their outcomes, while others offer more anecdotal evidence about how they strengthen student success.

In turn, **we offer these examples as practices worth sharing because they concretely demonstrate the goals of the Compass initiative.** We intend for them to provoke personal reflection, encourage dialog within your institution and/or promote outreach to the individuals implementing these practices at colleges across the state.

What do the profiles include?

Each "featured innovation" includes the following information:

- **Background and purpose:** description of how the practice began, what issue it intends to address and who it aims to serve
- **Design:** basic overview of how the practice is structured
- **Staffing:** information regarding who is responsible for designing, directing and delivering the practice and what partners are engaged for implementation
- **Student experience:** explanation of how students experience the practice
- **Student impact:** summary of any data available on practice's impact on student outcomes
- **Implementation supports and challenges:** insight into the factors that facilitate and impede the implementation of the practice
- **Scalability and replicability:** advice and lessons learned for those interested in expanding and/or adopting the practice at their own institution
- **For more information:** additional resources and/or a contact person to learn more about the practice

Three of the featured practices involve a partnership between a CCC and a CSU. That relationship is described in a section on "**cross-institutional collaboration**."

The profiles of the "emerging innovations" are shorter in length and offer a brief summary of the effort's purpose, development process and the initial implementation experience.

How can you use these profiles?

We hope that these examples will inspire other CCCs and CSUs to improve their own GE programs, on their own or in partnerships within or across systems. **To jumpstart discussions at your college, you can also screen the companion video, "Innovations in General Education: Preparing Students for the Future," available on YouTube at: https://youtu.be/WtaSG9tDMMg.**

As you and your institution consider change, keep the following in mind.

- **Local context:** It is important to reflect on your own campus culture when looking at change models. Keep in mind issues such as what improvement efforts are already in progress (GE or otherwise), which student groups on your campus are most in need of support as they work their way through GE and where in your institution you may have educators interested in innovation. Also consider who might resist change and what case you might need to make to those individuals or groups. Ultimately, participation is key to any GE innovation initiative. The more extensive and comprehensive your innovation effort, the broader the conversations will need to be.

- **Resources:** Realistic conversations about funding early in your change effort will help determine what type and scope of innovation is possible, now and in the future. In some cases, a small infusion of funds can serve to catalyze change while, in others, a more significant and long-term investment of resources may be required. Consider dialoging about what funds could be repurposed, exploring grant opportunities and digging into a broader conversation about how funding is allocated and how those formulas might need to evolve in order to support your desired change.
- **Scalability and sustainability:** Many profiles offered in this report show how large-scale change can be achieved to impact all GE students. While a GE innovation may need to be tested with a small group of learners, consider strategies that can move beyond a "boutique" effort to serve significant numbers of students at your institutions. Moreover, keep in mind from the early stages of development and implementation what support will be required to sustain this innovation over time including what funding and resources will be necessary, what organizational processes and structures will need to change and what cultural shifts will need to occur.

Reflection Questions

We encourage you to reflect on the following questions as you review the innovations profiled in this report:

- What student success issues are of the highest priority in your institution's GE program?
- Which student populations need the most support to achieve their educational goals?
- What are you thinking about doing (or are already doing) related to these priorities and populations? Where in the institution are you most likely to get traction for change?
- Which of the innovations shared in this report may be appropriate to replicate in your own institution?
- What questions do you have about these innovations and/or what more do you want to learn?
- What is one step you will take after reading this report to explore GE reform at your institution and/or with your inter-segmental partners?

- **Evidence and assessment:** Given the nascent nature of many GE reform strategies and the need to continue building an understanding of which GE innovations are most effective for different settings and student groups, research and evaluation is a critical component of any reform effort. Develop an evaluation plan before implementing any new initiative that helps you define what success will look like and how it will be measured over time. Consider not only capturing data and evidence on participant outcomes but also the perspectives and experiences of students and educators involved in the effort. Utilize that research to strengthen the approach over time.

Featured Innovations

GE Pathways Program

CSU Chico

PREPARED BY:
WILLIAM LOKER, DEAN, UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION, CSU CHICO

Background and Purpose

The motivation to engage in redesign of the General Education program was simple: a desire to improve. Through many conversations on our campus, it was clear that almost no one among faculty, staff and students felt that our GE program was the best it could be. Based on assessment results accumulated over the years (including a big push to assess GE leading up to a WASC visit) and a strong desire to do better by our students, we embarked on GE redesign in fall 2008. The redesign attempted to address the problems of intellectual coherence (the balance between breadth and depth, exploration and connected learning); programmatic assessment (versus course assessment); clear statements of program learning outcomes; and a re-engagement of faculty, staff and students in thoughtful dialog around the goals of general education. The development of the revised GE Pathways program was accomplished over a 14-month period by a design team of nine individuals: five faculty, two staff and two administrators. The redesign was reviewed, extensively debated and approved (unanimously) by our university's Academic Senate in February 2010. At that time, a nine-person implementation team was formed (seven faculty, one staff and one administrator) supplemented by the campus's nine-member General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC) (six faculty, one staff, one student and one administrator). This combined implementation team worked from spring 2010 until full implementation of the program in fall 2012. Both the design and implementation teams engaged the campus in a broadly consultative, participatory process to move the campus from the "old" GE program to the new GE Pathways program.

FEATURED INNOVATION AT A GLANCE

Name: GE Pathways Program

Location: CSU Chico

Description: offers 10 GE pathways that include 48 units each (39 lower division, 9 upper division); incorporates four writing intensive courses as well as thematic pathways and capstones; offers students the option to complete a minor in the pathway

Target population: Any student pursuing a degree

Start date: fall 2012

Design

The GE Pathways program is designed to address the AAC&U's LEAP outcomes (for more information, see page 5), as well as maintain compatibility with CSU system-wide mandates for GE coverage and breadth, in an intellectually coherent manner. The GE Pathways program is entirely portable and transferable between California community colleges and the CSU, posing no barriers to completion for transfer students. The program has three components: (1) Foundations (Area A, including oral and written communication and critical thinking, and Area B, including science and math), (2) American Institutions (US History, American Political Institutions) and (3) the Pathways (lower division and upper division breadth). There are 48 units in the program (39 lower division, 9 upper division). The pathways organize lower and upper division courses in arts and humanities, social sciences, lifelong learning and (upper division) natural science (see the ten GE Pathways listed in the text box to the right).

CSU Chico's GE Pathways

- Diversity
- Ethics, Justice and Policy
- Food Studies
- Gender and Sexuality
- Global Development
- Great Books and Ideas
- Health and Wellness
- International Studies
- Science, Technology and Values
- Sustainability Studies

If students take at least 18 units, including 9 upper division units, in a pathway, they earn a minor in that area of focus (e.g., Sustainability Studies). Students are *not* required to pursue a minor and can explore the lower division courses at will. Students *are* required to take the three upper division courses in a single Pathway, regardless of their intention to earn a minor.

The Pathways program topic areas were defined by a campus-wide consultative process during implementation. Courses for the Pathways (and Foundations) were also chosen during implementation. The program includes a requirement that students take four writing intensive courses, including a capstone class. Courses fulfilling these requirements were also determined during implementation.

Staffing

In addition to the design and implementation teams mentioned above, upon launch of the Pathways program, two new bodies were created: the GE Curriculum Advisory Board (CAB), which replaced GEAC, and the GE Curriculum Oversight Board (COB). CAB meets regularly and is composed of the faculty coordinators of the ten pathways, faculty college representatives, the Director of Academic Advising Services, a student and the Provost's designee (currently the Dean of Undergraduate Education). Staff from Evaluations, Curriculum Services and Catalogue Services/Scheduling sit in on CAB meetings. Pathway coordinators receive one course release per semester to oversee the coherence of their pathway and lead programmatic assessment. The Dean of Undergraduate Education has general administrative oversight of the GE program. Scheduling and staffing of classes are in the hands of the departments and colleges that offer the courses. COB is comprised of the college deans, the chair of CAB and the Dean of Undergraduate Education; this group meets on an as needed basis to deal with program administration.

Because staffing and scheduling of classes in the program are in the hands of the departments and colleges that teach the courses, there is no centralized management of these vital dimensions of

program delivery. During the design phase, some thought was given to administrative restructuring that would centralize GE in a university college; however, this structure was not adopted.

Student Experience

The goal of the GE Pathways program is to provide *meaning* to students' general education experience. Through the Pathway minors, we hope to address the question, "Why do I have to take these courses? What good is GE?" Students routinely complain that general education requirements interfere with their desire to pursue their major and their careers—they do not perceive the *value add* of GE. The Pathway minors may seem, well, a *minor* addition to the program and to students' education. However, it bears mentioning that the idea for minors associated with the GE Pathways program originally came from a student. While it may be largely symbolic to faculty, the minor is a tangible benefit to our learners. Pathway minors are also a tangible reminder to faculty of the importance of maintaining the intellectual coherence of the pathway. Each pathway also forms a (somewhat loose) learning community. The pathway supports student learning and provide a coherent *context* for student learning across courses and disciplines. Faculty teaching in each pathway have developed scaffolded assignments that examine particular issues from varied perspectives. For example, the Sustainability faculty have developed a set of linked assignments across courses that examine the concept of resilience from the perspectives of different disciplines. Similar linked assignments were proposed in the Diversity, Ethics, Justice and Policy, and Food Studies pathways.

Student Impact

We are still very much in the early stages of program assessment. We have assessed writing, oral communication, critical thinking and are embarking on assessment of mathematical reasoning, active inquiry/information literacy, creativity, and personal and social responsibility. All of these assessments are carried out with students who have only begun to experience the new program. For example, when we collected writing samples from upper division students in 2012-2013, these students experienced the "old" GE program. It will take another year or two before we can begin to detect any changes in learning outcomes attributable to the new program.

Implementation Supports and Challenges

The biggest challenge for the CSU Chico GE Pathways Program has been to deliver writing intensive and capstone classes, with enrollments capped at 30 students. We committed to delivering four writing intensive classes to each student (including the first-year writing course and the capstone). Despite agreeing to offer the writing intensive courses during the implementation phase, before the program went live, department chairs and college deans immediately balked at the cost and impact of offering lower enrolled classes. Even after raising the caps on these classes to 30 (from an initial cap of 20), departments have been reluctant partners. This has necessitated several work-arounds that are confusing to students and faculty alike. Our biggest challenge going forward, and one that transcends our GE reform efforts, is determining how to deliver quality writing instruction on our campus and GE's role in that task.

A second unintended consequence is that enrollment in foreign language courses has been negatively affected by the new program. Despite allowing students to take any foreign language for GE credit in Area C (Humanities), the inclusion of the US History American Institutions course as one of three lower

division Area C courses has “crowded out” the foreign languages. The humanities in general seem to have suffered a decline in GE enrollments under the new program, compounded by a decline in majors. Again, this is partially due to incorporating the US History requirement within the GE program.

The pathway structure—the organization of general education courses into thematic concentrations—has not occasioned excessive problems. Student interest and enrollment varies widely across each pathway, which makes for some administrative challenges (e.g. providing sufficient seats in highly popular pathways, of which Health and Wellness is by far the most popular). The establishment of GE minors has been embraced by students. We also face the issue of refreshing the curriculum and responding to declines in interest or the emergence of new concepts for a given pathway. The policy governing GE limits the number of pathways to ten. How will the campus handle the termination of a pathway and the inclusion of a new one? It is always harder to discontinue an academic program—and minors are programs—that to establish them. Refreshing the curriculum will be a challenge.

Scalability and Replicability

The GE Pathways program at CSU Chico reaches *all* students. It is not a boutique or specialized program. There are approximately 15,000 FTES at CSU Chico. The Pathways program is clearly scalable.

For more information…

Visit www.csuchico.edu/ge.

GE Paths Program

CSU Northridge | Los Angeles Pierce College

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Background and Purpose

Academic leaders at CSU Northridge (CSUN) were inspired by CSU Chico's GE Pathways program (see previous profile beginning on page 13), following its development with considerable interest after hearing about it through Compass meetings. We found the idea of creating coherent, but flexible, interdisciplinary themes across GE breadth areas a promising way to promote student engagement and persistence, help students understand core questions from multiple perspectives and foster civic responsibility. When Compass leadership convened a meeting for CSU and CCC teams to generate ideas for collaborative pilot projects, CSUN invited Los Angeles Pierce College (Pierce) as a partner CCC. We collectively explored the idea of thematic GE pathways that students could begin on either campus and complete at CSUN.

Unlike CSU Chico, which had developed pathways as part of a comprehensive GE program redesign, both CSUN and Pierce wanted to maintain our existing GE program frameworks. CSUN had completed a major revision of GE in 2006 and the campus was not interested in going through that process again. At the same time, we knew that students perceived GE as a barrier to the "substance" of their education. We also recognized that we were losing lower division students at much higher rates than upper division ones. The Paths idea was designed to make GE more relevant and meaningful to students by highlighting already extant connections between and among subject areas. Educators on both campuses immediately saw the value of the project.

FEATURED INNOVATION AT A GLANCE

Name: GE Paths Program

Location: CSU Northridge and Pierce College

Description: Offers six paths at CSUN and five paths at Pierce; students take four lower division in a path on either campus and can continue on to upper division coursework to earn a minor in some paths; aligns SLO outcomes for each path across campuses and incorporates outcomes alignment, service-learning and community-based learning.

Target population: Any interested student on either campus

Start date: fall, 2012

An opportunity to jumpstart thematic pathways at CSUN and Pierce came in fall 2011. At that time, AAC&U launched its Quality Collaboratives (QC, http://www.aacu.org/qc) project. It was seeking partnerships between community colleges and universities in states that had adopted the LEAP framework (see text box on page 5) and/or had worked with the Lumina Foundation's Tuning initiative (http://degreeprofile.org/press_four/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/What-is-Tuning.pdf)

to design ways to assess student learning outcomes as the basis for transfer. Discussions between AAC&U and the CSU Chancellor's Office resulted in the recommendation that the CSUN/Pierce partnership take part in the QC initiative. In turn, the GE Paths project began.

Design

Given the tight grant timeframe for planning and implementation (fall 2011 through summer 2014), the two campuses had to gear up quickly. CSUN and Pierce jointly identified three initial themes for path development: social justice, global studies and sustainability. They also established SLOs for each path, with some differences across the campuses. Courses in each path had to meet a GE requirement and include at least two of the path's SLOs. At both schools, a faculty coordinator was selected for each path.

The colleges differed in how they chose courses for each path. At Pierce, a faculty leader who was also serving as psychology department chair (at the time) asked other department chairs to discuss with their faculty what courses could fit into a path. Faculty were motivated to participate in this process for two reasons. Taking part in the GE Paths initiative could possibly provide an additional layer of protection for courses during times of cutting classes. Additionally, the creation of a cross-disciplinary professional learning community around each path theme appealed to many instructors. Once a course was approved for a path, all sections were required to address the common learning outcomes. We did this for two reasons: (1) each course uses a common course outline, regardless of instructor; and (2) it was difficult to flag individual sections on student transcripts.

GE Paths at CSUN and Pierce

Both Campuses:

- Social Justice
- Global Studies
- Sustainability
- Health and Wellness

CSUN Only:

- Arts, Media and Culture
- Evolutionary Thinking

Pierce Only:

- Aesthetics and Culture

At CSUN, a GE Paths team consisting of a history professor, the path coordinators and the associate vice president for undergraduate studies invited faculty to apply to have their individual course sections included. While faculty at the university had to include the GE and path learning outcomes as part of the process, they had autonomy in developing their own course outlines. Identifying specific sections of a course on student transcripts was not an issue for CSUN. Faculty were offered modest stipends for course redesign.

The CSUN/Pierce project plan called for students in each GE path to be able to complete four lower division courses on either campus. They could then subsequently achieve a minor in sustainability (for the sustainability path) through completion of three upper division courses at CSUN *or* a minor in civic engagement (for the other paths) through completion of two upper division courses. The sustainability minor already existed. However, the civic engagement minor needed development and faculty approval, and CSUN delayed its start until the 2015-2016 academic year. Until the implementation of the minor, CSUN's Undergraduate Studies division is issuing certificates to students completing any path. CSUN also plans to add an integrative capstone experience for each minor in upper division GE.

In 2013, both campuses added new GE paths to the existing three. Both institutions adopted a health and wellness path. Additionally, two different paths related to humanities and arts were also

incorporated at each campus. However, these pathways were quickly combined into a single arts, media and culture path (at CSUN) and an aesthetics and culture path (at Pierce) as it became apparent that the original two overlapped and that student interest was not sufficient to continue separately. In 2014, CSUN alone added a path on evolutionary thinking.

As of the fall 2014 semester, Pierce offered about 50 different courses as part of their GE Paths program, many with multiple sections. CSUN offered about 70 different courses in any given term and over 100 overall. Because individual faculty decide whether to participate, most of those courses at CSUN involve one or two sections.

As the GE Paths program has evolved, both institutions have begun organizing co-curricular campus events like films, lectures, performances and discussions related to the path themes. These additional out-of-class activities provide students opportunities for further engagement with their pathway theme. At Pierce, one aim is that these activities offer students an experience more like what they would experience at a university.

Staffing

Each institution has identified an administrator, a faculty leader, one (CSUN) or two (Pierce) assessment leader(s) and path coordinators. Each hosts faculty development programs once or twice a semester for all instructors who are part of the program. At CSUN, about 80 faculty are involved. CSUN professional staff advisors are also updated twice a year on the project and have been instrumental in encouraging students to take path classes to meet GE requirements. At Pierce, about 50 faculty teach a GE Paths course each semester. The Pierce GE Paths team invites path faculty to meet to debrief, discuss assessment results, plan paths activities and explore best practices and teaching strategies to use while teaching path classes. In some cases, professional development opportunities and GE Paths activities are opened up to the broader Pierce campus. For example, one GE Paths event focused on diversity training was well attended by students, faculty and staff members alike.

Student Experience

Participating in GE Paths is voluntary and open to any student. When the GE Paths initiative began, both institutions focused mainly on identifying courses to be part of one of the paths; outreach to students was secondary. Students usually learned about the opportunity when they happened to enroll in a GE path class and an instructor mentioned the possibility of taking other GE courses in the same path. At CSUN, the paths were also publicized through first-year writing classes. Student awareness was limited.

Both Pierce and CSUN have expanded student outreach efforts. Path courses are identified in the schedule of classes, course syllabi and websites. The paths are also publicized at co-curricular events. Since enrollments are not restricted to students who elect to follow a path, it is difficult to know how many are actively involved. At each institution, students are encouraged to identify themselves as part of a path, but are not required to do so. As of fall 2014, CSUN had over 800 students who had indicated that they are pursuing a path and have taken at least two courses in the same path. Hundreds more may be doing the paths but have not yet told the faculty. At Pierce, approximately 100 students have signed up to participate in GE Paths. Since at this time, all sections of a GE path course are considered participating courses, many students are involved, though relatively few have taken the step of formally signing up for participation in a path. The GE Paths leadership is working toward encouraging more students to take that active step to enhance their intentionality to participate in the path.

Students at CSUN have also established a GE Paths Student Association to promote connections with peers and faculty around theme-related interests. Members are also encouraged to become "ambassadors," to promote the program around campus, recruit others and mentor incoming freshmen.

Cross-institutional Collaboration

Pierce and CSUN benefit from strong, long-standing connections. Situated less than six miles apart in the western San Fernando Valley, Pierce students are more likely to transfer to CSUN than to any other four-year institution; in turn, CSUN receives more transfer students from Pierce than from any other CCC. Also, Pierce is an active participant in CSUN's Tri-Valley Alliance for Higher Education, a committee that fosters academic and administrative cooperation between CSUN and nearby community colleges and private institutions. These existing linkages offered a strong foundation for the GE Paths program. The initiative was jointly designed, with both institutions agreeing on the initial themes. Moreover, CSUN faculty developed SLOs for each path, and Pierce faculty adopted these outcomes (with some modifications). Pierce has worked to make their transcripts clear when student have completed the lower division portion of the path by noting GE Paths recognition in the memorandum section of the transcript. CSUN advisors know to look for that designation so the students can finish the path (and soon the minor).

Implementation Supports and Challenges

On the Pierce side of the collaborative, the college has experienced a number of implementation hurdles. Identifying students on transcripts who have completed the four-course requirement of a GE path has proved difficult. The college has addressed this issue by including a sentence in the memorandum section of the transcript that identifies student achievement of this milestone in the same way that honors student contracts or AP scores are noted. Pierce also did not initially involve Student Services or Associated Students in recruitment, outreach and advising efforts, but has subsequently worked with both.

The Pierce team has also faced some challenges with administrative support, such as not moving forward in providing a link to the GE Paths page at a prominent place on the Pierce College web page. This is mostly due to staffing issues and the fact that like any prime real estate, web space is limited. The GE Paths leadership had hoped to be just a one click away from the home page in an effort to get the word out to students. Not all college leaders initially saw the potential of the GE Paths project, but fortunately, this has changed. Release time for the spring was just approved to continue the work of refining and institutionalizing the best practices of the project. To date, most faculty leaders have volunteered their time for participation in the initiative. Continued support with release time for these individuals would be extremely helpful, especially considering the potential number of students impacted by the effort.

Pierce College is working on a "Freshmen Academy," which will be an extension of our already highly successful "Summer Bridge" program. The Freshmen Academy counsellor will be working with the GE Paths faculty leadership to connect students with the program's activities and courses early on in their academic careers.

At CSUN, the main challenges have been two-fold. Initially, some faculty expressed concern that the creation of a GE Paths minor might take enrollment away from some of the minors in smaller programs. These concerns mostly came from the very well established ethnic studies programs at CSUN. Faculty

from these programs have been working within a number of paths, and those concerns have largely dissipated.

Additionally, the length of time it has taken to develop the civic engagement minor has been less than ideal. While CSUN students currently participating in the GE Paths program will be able to complete it, we cannot advertise it to Pierce students until it has final CSUN approval. This slowness of process has hurt Pierce's ability to recruit through no fault of its own.

Sustainability and Scalability

CSUN has made an institutional commitment to sustaining the GE Paths initiative. Currently, the university has dedicated permanent funding for roughly half of the initiative in its base budget. The remaining funds are presently coming from one-time dollars generated by the CSU Early Start program.

On the Pierce side, future funding for the program is uncertain. Pierce faculty hope to offer at least one student event and one professional learning event for faculty per semester, per path. To encourage continued student interest, the college is considering the possibility of offering a GE Paths Certificate when students complete four courses, to provide a stepping stone along the way to transfer.

There is growing student interest on both campuses as the GE Paths program has become more visible.

The GE Paths project has also generated considerable attention from other CCCs and CSUs around the state. A mini-conference that we co-hosted in March 2014 drew more than 125 educators from at least ten CCCs and 14 CSUs. Other nearby CCCs and CSUs have approached the partners about participating, prompting some discussion of regional or statewide GE paths. Faculty learning communities, both within and across institutions, could also strengthen this model.

We believe that GE Paths has the potential to reach significant numbers of students in both systems, improve student learning and persistence, and promote increased collaboration among faculty.

For more information…

Visit Pierce College's GE Paths website at http://faculty.piercecollege.edu/gepaths and/or CSUN's GE Paths website at www.csun.edu/undergraduate-studies/ge-paths.

Metro Academies

City College of San Francisco | San Francisco State University

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Background and Purpose

In 2007, City College of San Francisco (CCSF) and San Francisco State University (SFSU), two large, urban public postsecondary institutions, launched the Metro Academies College Success Program (Metro). Their goals were to boost rates of graduation and university transfer among groups with historically low completion rates: low-income, underrepresented and first-generation students.

The impetus for the program came from a joint faculty meeting of CCSF and SFSU in 2006, during which faculty reviewed 20 years of their collaborative work, mainly on developing career-oriented certificates intended to be transfer-friendly or "stackable." Faculty members were concerned about the large numbers of students who had high attrition rates, very low transfer rates and weak academic foundation skills. The instructors committed to finding solutions that were replicable and scalable within public postsecondary institutions with limited resources. They sought ideas and advice from institutional leaders, carried out an extensive literature review and synthesized evidence-based methods into the "Metro" approach.

Metro Academies are 'schools within schools,' each serving up to 140 students who spend four semesters studying together in a cohort-style pathway of two linked general education classes each semester. Each academy has a broad career or topical theme, such as health, science, engineering or ethnic studies.

Based on strong student outcomes to date, both institutions continue to scale up Metro Academies. As of 2014, there are nine Metros: seven at SFSU and two at CCSF. With permanent new funding from the CSU Chancellor's Office, SFSU is building toward 13 Metros, which will serve two-thirds of low-income freshmen—one quarter of all freshmen. CCSF is founding a third Metro Academy

FEATURED INNOVATION AT A GLANCE

Name: Metro Academies

Location: City College of San Francisco, San Francisco State University

Description: Redesigns the first two years of college into a four-semester academy focused on a theme; each academy includes two linked general education courses each semester, integrates wrap-around student support services aimed to increase retention and persistence, and focuses on faculty development; incorporates several high-impact practices (e.g., first-year seminars, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments) and outcomes alignment.

Target population: recent high school graduates who are low-income, first-generation, and/or historically underrepresented students

Start date: 2007

at one of its neighborhood centers, an expansion from the two existing academies at the main campus, one focused on health, and the other on early childhood education.

With each expansion, Metro staff have honed start-up processes and documented them in a detailed toolkit. They have also built a network of potential adoption partners, with the intention of spurring statewide and national adoption.

Design

Metro is a redesign of the first two years of college, a critical time of the heaviest attrition for students. The program has three main elements: (1) a four-semester GE pathway of two linked classes per semester, already described; (2) integrated student services based in these pathway classes, such as academic counseling and tutoring; and (3) an intensive 45-hour faculty development process.

Metro differs from many community college-based transfer programs, in that it concurrently provides nearly identical programs for the first two years at both the community college and university levels, with both streams of students coming together as juniors at SFSU. This close alignment between the community college and university segments is one of Metro's most important strengths.

Metro is designed for new high school graduates. CCSF students need to meet Metro's placement threshold, typically two to three semesters below college-ready; SFSU students must be in the top third of their high school class, and they generally place at one to two semesters below college-ready. Students must be able to carry 12 units or more per semester. With these criteria satisfied, Metro has open enrollment, with entrance on a first-come, first-served basis. The program's outreach staff has established permanent recruitment pipelines with high schools and community-based organizations in low-income urban communities, resulting in Metro reliably reaching its target populations. Virtually all Metro students are low-income (Pell-eligible), first-generation and/or underrepresented.

Staffing

Each Metro Academy has a .4 faculty instructor/coordinator and a .25 academic counselor who follow students over time. An umbrella "Metro Central" team from both institutions manages cross-institutional functions such as outreach and recruitment, faculty development and overall program evaluation. Co-executive directors—one from CCSF and one from SFSU—oversee the Metro initiative. Biweekly leadership meetings have faculty and staff from both institutions.

Student Experience

In many traditional college programs, the deck is stacked against students who arrive from poorly resourced public high schools with weak academic skills. Because of limited academic counseling resources, students may receive little guidance on course selection, and—particularly in the community college setting—too often spend time and money on courses that do not count toward graduation. Students may experience required GE courses such as English and math as dry—something to "get out of the way" before beginning the more exciting work in their fields of interest. Students who need tutoring or financial aid must seek these out. If students falter, the odds are against anyone being able to intervene with real support.

In contrast, Metro students are welcomed into a personalized educational home. Each semester, one of the linked GE courses focuses on that Metro's broad career or topic theme—such as community health. This Metro course is paired with a second GE course that teaches one of the "Golden Four" academic foundation skills—writing, critical thinking, oral communication or quantitative reasoning. The linked courses share an overarching social justice theme. Students learn by addressing real-world questions. For example, Metro Health students learn to build and interpret bar graphs using real public health databases with information about their own neighborhoods.

Based on a competency matrix covering the four semesters, Metro's curriculum systematically builds foundation skills with increasingly challenging assignments, within and between courses. For example, over time students move from writing a two-page paper, to writing a 15-page research paper with citations.

All Metro's pathway courses meet graduation/transfer requirements for all 289 majors in the CSU system, whether taken at the community college or university level. For example, Metro Health's course pathway counts for students going into a wide range of majors, including public health, social services and administration of justice.

In their first semester, Metro students complete a first-year seminar that provides an orientation to college and the broad career field. Students learn about educational inequities and gain insight about why they've often arrived at college lacking confidence that they are "college material." They also learn college study skills. Each academy's site coordinator always teaches this course, setting up a relationship that continues as students progress through the program.

Metro brings student services into the classroom, including proactive academic counseling, mandatory tutoring for students struggling in difficult gatekeeper courses, personalized access to financial aid advisors and in-class reminders about deadlines. To earn course credit, students are required to meet with a Metro academic counselor each semester, who helps them set up an educational plan and then follows them over time. Community college students participate in a hands-on application workshop to the university, led by a university admissions counselor who meets them in the computer lab during class time.

Student Impact

Metro assesses program results by measuring student outcomes and cost efficiency. Over eight out of ten of Metro students are ethnically underrepresented, and over eight out of ten begin college requiring developmental work.

Nonetheless, at CCSF, after two years, students in the 2010 and 2011 cohorts of Metro Health, our most mature program, were almost three times more likely to be transfer-prepared than a comparison group matched on many variables by the college's Institutional Research office (transfer-prepared means that students had completed 60 transferable units including college-level English and math, with a GPA of C or better.) After three years, 54% of Metro Health students were transfer-prepared, compared to just 21% of the comparison group.

Students in CCSF's 2010 and 2011 Metro Health cohorts were almost four times more likely to complete in three years versus a comparison group (63% Metro students vs. 13% comparison group), with completion defined as graduation with an associate's degree or transfer to a four-year institution

At SFSU, using the most recent institutional data, we looked at persistence for all first-time full-time freshmen (FTFTF) in the Metro Academies of Health and Child and Adolescent Development for the cohorts entering in 2009 thru 2011. On average, as they entered their senior year, Metro students outperformed their more advantaged peers—all first-time full-time freshmen—on persistence, by 19 percentage points (81% for Metro students vs. 62% retention for all FTFTF).

Graduation data is available for the 2009 cohort of SFSU's Metro Health students. Compared to others in this same cohort, these Metro students graduated in four years at a six-percentage point higher rate than FTFTF historically underrepresented students,[3] and three percentage points higher rate than their more advantaged peers, all FTFTF at SFSU. Looking more specifically at institutional data for historically underrepresented students by ethnicity in the 2009 cohort, those in Metro have a 21% four-year graduation rate versus a 15% rate for university-wide historically underrepresented FTFTF, and versus an 18% four-year graduation rate for all FTFTF.

To assess Metro's cost efficiency, we completed an initial cost study with Dr. Robert Johnstone (2013), a researcher from the National Center for Inquiry and Improvement (previously with the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges). The study showed that by sharply lowering attrition and excess units, Metro produces a cost reduction of $17,879 per graduate at SFSU, and $22,714 per completer at CCSF.

Cross-Institutional Collaboration

The main structural elements of Metro—its GE course pathway, student services and faculty development—are very similar at CCSF and at SFSU. Faculty from both institutions participate in 45 hours of structured professional development, learning high-impact educational practices that have been found to produce quantifiable effects for students from low-income and underrepresented communities, and meeting monthly to check on student progress. Metro sharply reduces the cost of attrition, and creates a uniquely collaborative relationship between the community college and the university.

Implementation Supports and Challenges

Metro is not a small add-on program, but an institutional-level system change that works across many departments and offices. Initiating the program requires a strong, hands-on leadership team, and start-up funding as well as technical assistance for a one-year set-up period. Support from senior institutional leaders is essential to the redeployment of resources required to earmark courses and institutionalize the program. Evidence of strong student outcomes is paramount to making a compelling argument for scaling up. Finally, selection of faculty and staff is critical. The Metro team looks for diverse instructors who are strongly committed to social justice and educational equity, and who are enthused about learning new pedagogies. It is important that faculty volunteer to work with Metro, rather than being assigned by their department chairs.

A major challenge has been that Metro's early development coincided with five years of deep state budget cutbacks. We were able to navigate this challenge because of strong support from our

[3] Data sets refer to these students as URMs or "underrepresented minorities," but we prefer the term "historically underrepresented," given that over 73% of youth under 18 in California are from communities of color—a large majority.

institutions, which re-deployed existing courses as Metro sections, and because of external support from the James Irvine Foundation and the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE, US Department of Education). External funds supported start-up work such as planning, training, pathway development and curriculum design, along with wrap-around services in our early years. Most importantly, the external support gave us the time to pilot, make adjustments and demonstrate strong results.

In 2013, California's governor announced a four-year program to rebuild enrollment in the state's university systems, and in 2015 proposed a two-percent budget augment to rebuild enrollment in the California community colleges. Because of Metro's strong results, the CSU Chancellor's Office awarded $675,000 annually on a permanent basis to scale up Metro at SFSU. Now, with state funds beginning to be restored in the California's community college system, we are to working to prepare for a larger scale-up at CCSF.

Scalability and Replicability

As of 2014, there are 714 Metro students across both institutions, and we are on track to serve 2,240 students by 2015. Metro is sustainable and scalable for three reasons. First, the primary expense of the program is the linked required general education classes, which are funded by our institutions simply re-designating existing classes as Metro sections. Second, Metro produces cost efficiencies for institutions because dropout rates and "excess units" (i.e. off-path units) decline sharply. Third, with the California budget rebounding, leaders want to invest new funds in efficient programs with a strong track record.

For more information…

Visit the Metro Academies website at http://metroacademies.org.

ePortfolios

CSU Sacramento | Cosumnes River College

PREPARED BY:
JANET HECSH, PROFESSOR, TEACHER EDUCATION, CSU SACRAMENTO
DEBRA DAVID, PROJECT DIRECTOR, GIVE STUDENTS A COMPASS, CSU CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

Background and Purpose

To build a culture of transfer among students from Cosumnes River College (CRC) who planned to transfer to CSU Sacramento (Sac State), the two institutions collaborated to plan a transfer seminar project—named "COSA" for the first two letters of their names. Sac State participated in the first phase of Compass, defining Baccalaureate Learning Goals (BaLGs) aligned with the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes (see text box, page 5) and creating themed learning communities for freshmen called Academic Learning Collaboratives to introduce students to those new goals. Janet Hecsh, a professor of education, spearheaded that initial project.

When the CSU Chancellor's Office invited CSUs to partner with nearby CCCs to attend a meeting in San Francisco about possible collaborative projects to improve the GE transfer curriculum, Hecsh asked her colleague and former graduate student, Robert (BJ) Snowden, professor of radio, television and film production at CRC, to join her and three other Sac State educators—education professor Terry Underwood, philosophy professor Christine Bellon and associate dean (now dean) of undergraduate studies, Sheree Meyer. The primary aims of their project were to introduce CRC transfer students to Sac State's GE requirements and BaLGs and clear a roadblock that often slowed their progress—the Writing Placement for Juniors (WPJ) test. In some cases, transfer students did not hear about the WPJ requirement until it was too late to take it for their first semester at Sac State. Even if they knew about it, they might opt to take an extra course to avoid the pressures of a timed test. Ultimately, they were barred from taking some upper division courses until the requirement was met.

A key strategy was to introduce GE, BaLGs and the WPJ requirement to CRC students the semester *before* transfer and to provide an alternate to the timed test. Additionally, students would begin an ePortfolio in a transfer seminar at CRC, including a writing section that could be used to meet the WPJ.

FEATURED INNOVATION AT A GLANCE

Name: ePortfolios

Location: CSU Sacramento and Cosumnes River College

Description: Students begin an ePortfolio in a first-year seminar. Transfer students may complete a writing ePortfolio in place of an exam to qualify for junior-level writing; transfer students may also enroll in an upper-division GE seminar with peer mentoring and integrated support services. Strategies include ePortfolio, first-year seminar, and integrated support services.

Target population: students in first-year seminars at either institution and transfer students interested in an alternative to the Writing Placement for Juniors exam

Start date: fall 2012

Design

COSA planning began in fall 2011, with the first cohort of transfer students enrolling in fall 2012. The original design had three main components: (1) the transfer seminar at CRC, (2) a three-course "Transfer Learning Collaborative" and (3) the three-part ePortfolio system.

The transfer seminar was never implemented due to institutional constraints at the community college. This seminar was intended to meet a GE requirement ("Lifelong Learning and Self-Development"), focus on strengthening skills in the "Golden Four" areas (see page 3) plus information literacy, and to help prepare students for the culture, resources and expectations of Sac State. The centerpiece of the course was to begin a base ePortfolio that they would add to over the remainder of their Sac State career and a writing folio that could be used to satisfy the WPJ. Influenced in part by the San José State-Evergreen Valley College transfer year experience project, the design included peer ambassadors who were successful CRC transfer students.

CRC's curriculum committee rejected the proposed course because it was determined to duplicate an existing pre-transfer counseling course. In its place, the COSA team created a transfer club using peer ambassadors that help students complete the writing folio.

Additionally, the three-course, transfer learning collaborative proved unviable due to complexity of scheduling and the funding formula for course sections. Designed for transfer students' first two semesters at Sac State, the proposed collaborative would have covered participants' upper division GE requirements and also enable them to document their mastery of any breadth areas that they had not completed before transfer. Scheduling issues for students and faculty as well as conflicts with specific GE courses required by many majors made it very difficult to continue. Instead, Sac State now offers a one-semester, transfer learning collaborative (TLC) course that is geared toward the specific needs of transfer learners and that allows them to meet a requirement for an upper division writing intensive GE course.

The ePortfolio system proved to be the most robust component of the original design. The system was intended to have three "nested" pieces: (1) a base folio for first-year students to reflect analytically, self-assess, set goals and build their identities as students, learners, collaborators and citizens; (2) a transfer folio to examine their progress in the "Golden Four" areas plus information literacy; and (3) a summative folio on the same four areas. The base folio and the written communication component of the transfer folio were developed and field-tested.

The platform used was eFolio, a system originally developed by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and the University of Minnesota for all Minnesota residents. A public version can be licensed for institutional or individual use (see www.myefolio.com). Students control their ePortfolio and can choose to continue it after graduation for an annual subscription fee.

Staffing

The core COSA team included Hecsh, Snowden and Underwood. At Sac State, Hecsh worked with staff in admissions and advising to identify CRC students. Beginning in spring, 2014 the writing folio component was expanded to Sacramento City College (SCC) students who were accepted for transfer for the fall semester. She also took the lead in recruiting peer ambassadors. Snowden, at CRC, and Hecsh and Underwood, at Sac State, all taught first-year seminars that field-tested the base folio. Underwood designed and assessed the ePortfolio system, with assistance from two doctoral students in the Sac

State EdD program in educational leadership, Scott Kirchner and Cesar Castaneda. Dean Meyer provided administrative support.

As of fall 2014, Hecsh and Snowden continue to be involved with the COSA project. Sherri Carinci, an Associate Professor of Teacher Education at Sac State, has also joined the team, teaching the transfer learning collaborative course at Sac State and also teaches as an adjunct faculty member at CRC. A graduate assistant helps to manage the transfer club that prepares CRC students to complete writing folios. Those folios are assessed by Sac State faculty who also score the WPJ tests.

Student Experience

Students in first-year seminars at CRC and Sac State that use base folios learn from their instructors how to design their folios, examine prior experiences, identify what they have learned and set educational goals. Student guidelines for creating base folios are posted online at http://learningcsus.myefolio.com/COSABASE/Home .

Transfer students who choose to complete a writing folio rather than take the timed WPJ receive guidance from faculty and/or graduate students and also interact with peer ambassadors through club activities. The folio process involves selecting sample materials produced for CRC or SCC classes and reflecting on their work. It also enables them to move directly into required upper division GE courses. If students in the transfer club enroll in a TLC during their initial year at Sac State, they receive support in adapting, including peer mentoring and academic advising.

Student Impact

According to observations and interviews conducted by Kirchner and Castaneda, many students in the first-year seminars were initially confused about how to use the base folios, despite instruction and feedback. Kirchner investigated this challenge further in his doctoral dissertation and found that the folios helped students develop academic identities, a sense of agency and self-assessment skills (Kirchner, 2014). As the semester progressed, they also began to understand the value of their courses for building awareness of their "human capital," including economic, cultural, social and symbolic assets.

Anecdotal evidence from transfer students who have completed writing folios has been positive, according to Hecsh. Students express appreciation for the opportunity to meet the WPJ while still at the community college and having an alternative to a timed test.

Students who participated in a TLC during the first two years (2012-13 and 2013-14) of the project were tracked by Hecsh. Retention in the initial cohorts (N=25) was 96%, the majority (60%) completed their upper division GE requirements within a year. Many graduated (35%) or were on track to graduate more quickly than average for transfer students. Two-thirds (66%) earned a grade of A- or higher in their writing intensive course. These outcomes are encouraging, but without a matched comparison group, inconclusive.

Cross-institutional Collaboration

The collaboration between Sac State and CRC was initiated largely based on a strong prior connection between Hecsh and Snowden. They had worked together previously, and Hecsh served as Snowden's CSU Chancellor's Office doctoral incentive program mentor. Faculty who taught at both institutions also supported the relationship. However, the Sac State team found it difficult to develop ties with other CRC

faculty and staff. A new Memorandum of Understanding between CRC, SCC, Sac State and a local high school district offers hope for stronger ties in the future. The stakeholders have agreed to discuss how they can align learning outcomes for the Common Core, Golden Four and Sac State's BaLGs.

Implementation Supports and Challenges

The strong relationship between Hecsh and Snowden, Underwood's deep knowledge of ePortfolios and administrative leadership from Meyer have been consistent supports for the project. Staff from admissions, advising and other student affairs offices at Sac State assist in identifying CRC and SCC students who were accepted for transfer and in guiding the club. Funding for both phases of Compass and for the two research fellows was also helpful, but has since ended.

Design challenges that resulted in dropping the transfer seminar and downsizing the transfer learning collaboratives have already been described. Also, the use of base folios by the CRC students was initially delayed because a community college firewall blocked their access. This issue was subsequently resolved by allowing CRC students in the club and in first-year seminars sign up through Sac State.

There are ongoing challenges in gaining more involvement from CRC faculty. Also, Hecsh identified gaps and inconsistencies in Sac State's outreach and communication to transfer students, who are accustomed to more personalized services at the community college than Sac State generally provides. For example, many transfer students don't learn about graduation requirements such as a course on race and ethnicity and proficiency in a world language and writing until after they have begun at Sac State. Also, some students reported receiving erroneous information from outreach staff. Better communication, coordination across departments and staff training could reduce these gaps.

Scalability and Replicability

Twenty students from each of the first two cohorts of CRC transfer students who participated in the club successfully completed writing folios. With the expansion to Sacramento City College in 2014, the number increased to 30 students. The COSA team expect this growth to continue and for the club to expand to the other two community colleges in the Los Rios District—American River College and Folsom Lake. Building on the success of this alternative to the timed WPJ, Sac State's Academic Senate is considering approving a resolution to offer it to "native," as well as transfer, students.

There is also interest in wider use of ePortfolios at Sac State. A "teach-in" held in summer 2014 drew more than 20 faculty who are considering adopting parts of the system in their own courses. The campus purchased 1,500 licenses for the eFolio platform for the 2015-2016 academic year. The COSA team believes that using ePortfolios to enhance learning and to document proficiency is promising and could be replicated by other colleges and universities.

For more information…

Contact Janet Hecsh at jhecsh@csus.edu.

A monograph on the history, rationale and design of ePortfolios written by Terry Underwood to guide faculty interested in developing learner-centered ePortfolios is available on MERLOT at http://www.merlot.org/merlot/viewMaterial.htm?id=927477.

Public Sphere Pedagogy

CSU Chico

PREPARED BY:
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Background and Purpose

CSU Chico—a mid-sized public university with 16,000+ students and a freshman population of between 2,300 and 2,700 students each year—launched a first-year experience (FYE) program in 2005. The program initially consisted of a first-year seminar that reached between 500 and 600 students each year. A large FYE Task Force guided the effort; a director taught a section of the seminar, provided pedagogical training for faculty also teaching the seminar and participated in the Task Force.

By early 2006, the director and the dean of Undergraduate Education agreed to new, more far-reaching aims for the program. Following the lead of the campus president, who argued strongly for the university's responsibility for providing civic education in multiple forms, they redesigned FYE to include a civic focus and began collaborating with faculty colleagues in imagining courses where students would act as engaged participants in a democracy. As a result, public sphere pedagogy (PSP) began in fall 2006.

PSP is a teaching approach that provides students In GE and other courses with a public audience and a public purpose for their work. Using theoretical insights from education reformer John Dewey (1916) and from learning ethnographers Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991; 2000), PSP adheres to this central assertion: **participation motivates learning.** Dewey, for instance, argues that there is a clear "difference in the attitude of a spectator and of an agent or participant. The former is indifferent to what is going on . . . . The latter is bound up with what is going on . . . ." (146). PSP courses re-cast students, moving them from passive classroom roles to active roles in communities that need their work, their commitment and their developing expertise.

FEATURED INNOVATION AT A GLANCE

Name: Public Sphere Pedagogy

Location: CSU Chico

Description: Teaching approach that provides students in GE courses with a public audience and purpose for their work; takes many forms at CSU Chico including a large-scale Town Hall, a Great Debate, a Sense of Place exhibit and first-year "U-Courses" that include civic projects; strategies include first-year experience and community-based experiences.

Target population: first-year students

Start date: fall 2006

Design

PSP takes many forms on the CSU Chico campus. For example, students plan and deliver a large-scale Town Hall embedded in the required first-year GE political science course, American Government. A large-scale "Great Debate" is conducted by the university and by partner community college Butte

College and embedded in the required GE oral communication courses. Students deliver a large-scale "Sense of Place" exhibit in a variety of sustainability-focused GE courses. Freshmen can also take a series of redesigned first-year courses merged into integrated, interdisciplinary experiences called "U-Courses" that include civic projects of use to the Chico community.

Staffing

Faculty drive the work of PSP. In some instances, such as the Town Hall and Great Debate, faculty may make relatively small adjustments to traditional courses such as focusing students' research on current issues of public importance; reminding students as they read, write and discuss their findings that they will use their coursework for important matters beyond the classroom; and encouraging students to make connections between school subjects and participation in public life. In U-Courses, faculty engage in major redesign work, both merging separate courses (such as political science and English, or multicultural and gender studies and small group communication) and constructing civic assignments that show students how to use research for public purposes. Assignments include forming interest groups that can sway policy, participating in citizen-scientist information-gathering for public websites and investigating and reporting on trail damage and use in a local park that has lost funding for its own research.

Knowledgeable sophomore, junior and senior student mentors assist with planning and implementation of PSP events and support the civic projects of first-year students.

Student Experience

The oldest PSP offering, the CSU Chico Town Hall, provides students with a clear purpose for their studies in Political Science. Near the end of the term, students must take their research on a critical current issue and "go public" at a Town Hall that begins as a meeting of 800 or more participants. Breakout sessions then form, with about 25 people discussing their research on similar public problems, guided by a moderator who is often a more senior student or a local K-12 teacher. Expert consultants from the campus and community lead even smaller discussion sessions during the last hour of the Town Hall, working with roughly ten students on action plans connected to their research.

The Public Speaking classes share a consistent theme for the semester, such as mental health or education reform, which is embedded in course readings and assignments. Students participate in the "Great Debate" in a variety of ways – speaking, participating in a discussion or helping with feedback. Regardless of their role, all students are required to attend the event and complete a civic reflection paper.

Student Impact

All PSP work includes ongoing embedded and external assessment. This single intervention has proven over years of quantitative and qualitative assessments to make a difference. All but our newest endeavor, the U-Course, for which analysis of data is pending, has been shown to improve one or more of the following: retention, academic engagement, civic engagement, well-being, pro-sustainability attitudes and behaviors. For example, students in the Town Hall are more likely to be retained from first to second year. In surveys sent out to all seniors, Town Hall students evidence a distinct profile, with higher levels of civic engagement and a stronger belief in their own civic efficacy than their counterparts. Individual writing collected shortly after the event reveals a widespread pattern among Town Hall students. They frequently (>60%) describe their experience in terms of change events—"before and after" statements that indicate they see themselves, their process of becoming educated

and their capacity for connecting to civically-committed others as permanently changed for the better (Swiencicki, Fosen, Burton, Gonder, & Wolf, 2011).

Implementation Supports and Challenges

Lessons we have learned that may help others interested in replicating this work include the following:

- **Don't start from scratch:** Look at courses and programs you already have on campus and consider who your most likely partners in this enterprise could be. For instance, when we wanted to develop a public event focused on sustainability (our "Sense of Place" exhibit), we reached out to faculty in existing courses in our GE Sustainability Pathway.
- **Start small:** Our PSP events grew in size over time, allowing us to adjust our event protocols and our outreach to campus and community members to support this growth. This strategy kept us from becoming overwhelmed and has resulted in gradually increased capacities to produce and assess very large events
- **Build bridges with the surrounding community by starting with people that you and faculty members in each project already know.** We have found that as we add community participants to this work, they make suggestions and bring along new participants with them, allowing us to build a sizable list of interested partners in this work.

Scalability and Replicability

Growth in all PSP projects on our campus has been strong. As faculty see the impact on students and as they consider the value and pleasures of collaborating with colleagues, more join in, requesting support from the FYE program for connecting to existing PSP opportunities or developing new PSP experiences.

The Town Hall started in 2006 with about 160 students, but grew to more than 800 by 2014. The Great Debate went from about 300 in 2010 to almost 2,000 four years later, Sense of Place from 300 in 2012 to 600, and U-Courses from 95 in 2013 to 355 the following year. It reaches most Chico State students through lower-division GE courses.

As of this writing, PSP has spread to multiple sister campuses, both universities and community colleges. The rewards for students and faculty are tremendous and, depending on the type of PSP work, the costs can be kept low. Through PSP we have found that engaging students as participants in their own learning and in the communities where they live can be a joyful, entirely possible undertaking. Placing a strong emphasis on student participation is the way to begin!

For more information…

Contact 530-898-3705 for a phone consultation and/or participate in a guided tour of our work on PSP event days. If you cannot visit us, consider watching our archived webinar at http://vimeo.com/102650063 and perusing our online toolkit (which includes examples of embedded assessments) at http://www.csuchico.edu/fye/toolkit/index.shtml.

Emerging Innovations

iPath Program

Santa Barbara City College

PREPARED BY:
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Introduction

In fall 2014, Santa Barbara City College (SBCC) was awarded a five-year, $3M federal Title V Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) partnership grant with CSU Channel Islands (CSU-CI) to inaugurate an interdisciplinary learning pathways program in General Education. iPath is designed to highlight the value and relevance of general education and to enrich student academic experience at Santa Barbara City College. Additionally, iPath will increase student retention and success for its underrepresented students enrolling into the program and pursuing the educational goal of transfer from SBCC to CSU-CI or another public four-year institution.

Through the iPath framework, the program aims to achieve the following outcomes.

Short-term Performance Measures	Long-term Performance Measures
Increase persistence and reduce time to degree completion	Promote teamwork and collaborative approaches among participants
Attain general education learning outcomes	Foster students' lifelong, independent learning

Design

The iPath program is also intended to serve as a continuation to students completing SBCC's Express to Success Program (ESP)—an effort designed to accelerate participants through developmental education and basic skills requirements—to ensure successful completion of GE coursework and to prepare them for transfer. The iPath program will also be available to students enrolling at SBCC from out-of-area high schools, and other venues, who are eligible for college-level English coursework. iPath will utilize a learning community approach based on the evidence that indicates that certain learning community models can lead to improved outcomes for participants. Evidence indicates that certain types of learning communities can lead to improved student success, particularly those in which the instructors shared assignments, responded to ideas raised in their colleagues' classes and met regularly to discuss students' needs.

As SBCC works to develop iPath, we will also draw on the accomplishments of the ESP. The ESP has shown an increase in successful math and English course completion rates of 30% for participating Latino students compared with non-ESP Latino students who were enrolled in comparable English and math courses. Evidence also indicates the semester-to-semester persistence rate for ESP Latino and low-income students was on average 10% higher than those of non-ESP Latino students. The percentage of ESP Latino students who completed two English or two math courses in one semester was 49% higher than it was for non- ESP Latino students who completed the same sequence of courses in one year (Santa Barbara City College, n.d.).

The iPath program will include prescribed, structured curricular pathways to help students complete their degree and/or transfer goal within two years of enrolling in college-level courses. SBCC and CSU-CI will use this opportunity to develop programs to implement, monitor, goal-direct, goal-correct and evaluate student success through the iPath program. Incentives for students to enroll in iPath include guaranteed access to GE courses at SBCC and CSU-CI, help with scholarship and transfer applications, academic counseling and advising, use of the Strong Vocational Interests Inventory for help in occupational and discipline major selection, tutoring, faculty mentorship and peer cohort support groups.

The iPath program will serve as an entry point for students eligible for college-level English coursework. It will provide an innovative, customizable path for student success, retention and transfer. The iPath program will be comprised of two semesters of thematically-integrated learning communities incorporating additional high-impact learning practices at SBCC such as faculty mentoring, community-based and applied learning opportunities and in-class tutoring for all iPath courses. iPath aims to embrace the philosophy and pedagogical principles that support the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes and to provide students with a GE experience that promotes faculty-student intellectual engagement, collaborative learning, practical application and analysis of its relevance to the global context (AAC&U, 2011). Students finishing this program will have successfully completed most lower-division GE for transfer.

In addition to the LEAP fundamentals, iPath will address the following CSU-CI general education breadth areas: Oral Communication; Written Communication; Critical Thinking; Quantitative Reasoning; Lifelong Learning and Self-Development; and three additional general education courses in areas from Physical and Life Sciences, Arts and Humanities and/or Social Sciences. In addition, iPath students will be required to enroll in an appropriate math course, according to their assessment placement, every semester until they have successfully completed their required college-level math course for transfer admission.

Prior to each semester's pilot of new learning communities, faculty and staff will determine the shared theme, coordinate their courses and determine appropriate ways to integrate the Oral Communication

and Lifelong Learning GE skills. SBCC will regularly evaluate the iPath program and our annual reports will be available on our website.

For more information…

Contact faculty co-directors for the program, Laura Castro, castro@sbcc.edu and Tina Kistler, kistlert@sbcc.edu.

The pilot proposal approved on a limited basis by the CSU Chancellor's Office can be found at http://www.calstate.edu/App/GEAC/documents/sbccproposaltocsugeac.pdf

GE Reform: Designing a 16-Course Meal

CSU Bakersfield

PREPARED BY:
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Introduction

Buffet dining gives one the freedom to consume pot stickers and fettuccini together but it's not comparable to *haute cuisine* that progresses from one course to the next with deliberation. In such a multi-course meal, each course and beverage is designed to achieve the chef's gastronomic intentions, befitting its place in the sequence. Like a multi-course meal, the university curriculum also delivers multiple courses over time. Unfortunately, we at CSU Bakersfield (CSUB) realized that our General Education program was closer to a hodge-podge buffet than *haute cuisine*. Our buffet lacked intentionality of design and we found that many students were avoiding their vegetables—the very courses that would prepare them best. Thus, the campus embarked upon the GE reform journey that is described here, including the lessons learned along the way and the design elements of the resulting program. The Academic Senate approved a set of "Guiding Principles for GE Reform at CSUB" and appointed a task force in March 2013. The task force submitted its recommendations in March 2014, and the new policy was approved that month. It will go into effect in fall 2016.

Design

The new General Education program at CSUB provides a liberal arts education that builds a vibrant learning community connecting faculty and students across the university. It promotes student success by structuring educational activities that purposefully contextualize, reinforce and integrate knowledge. Students have opportunities throughout the curriculum to reflect upon and apply what they learn through a variety of high-impact practices. The new program continues to provide disciplinary breadth through courses in the Natural Sciences, Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, but adds the following new dimensions to these courses.

Themes: Interdisciplinary Integration
Students and faculty engage in broad, interdisciplinary themes woven throughout lower and upper division GE coursework, as well as co- and extra-curricular activities. Themes provide CSUB students with a defined cohort of peers, explicitly-designed opportunities to practice integrative learning and a concrete understanding of the role of different disciplinary perspectives on a common topic. Students are encouraged to gain a depth of knowledge by pursuing a thematic minor through GE coursework. Themes also provide a common focus of conversation among faculty, who are expected to meet together to build and deepen relationships across schools and guide development of the theme. Our plans are to begin with the following broad themes, adding new ones and gradually abandoning others as student and faculty interests change:

- Quality of Life
- Revolutionary Ideas and Innovations
- Sustainability and Social Responsibility

Foundational Skills: Contextualizing and Reinforcing
Our GE program focuses on teaching and reinforcing the foundational skills (oral and written communication, critical thinking and quantitative reasoning) that are at the heart of a liberal arts education. GE faculty will be expected to meet in Skill Reinforcement Groups to further facilitate common learning experiences for students, to connect across the curriculum and to develop shared rubrics and signature assignments. Skills courses will connect with a theme through the use of relevant examples and assignments to contextualize student learning. Meaningful reinforcement (as demonstrated by 30% of the course grade) is expected of most courses in the curriculum, with native and transfer students guaranteed to get each skill reinforced in at least one class. On average, native students will take at least two courses reinforcing each skill.

Guidepost Series: Reflecting and Applying
A series of guidepost courses in the first, junior and senior years provides touchstones throughout the students' college experience to synthesize their learning within the areas of acculturation, skill development and self-reflection. While first-year seminars and capstone courses are common across the country, our junior-year course is distinctive. It brings transfer students and native students together into one group to reflect on their lower division general education experience and how those basic skills and ways of knowing are important to their education. In addition to self-knowledge, students develop intercultural knowledge and critically explore diverse social experiences, world views, beliefs, practices and values. A pilot study will evaluate the use of ePortfolios throughout the guidepost series to help students reflect on and synthesize their learning.

Lessons Learned

Solicit advice—you are not alone.
The first of many lessons we learned, as we began the three-year-long GE redesign effort, was that there was much to learn from others and many willing to share what they know. During this period we invited an expanding cast of faculty to workshops held by AAC&U, our regional accreditor, the California State University system and peer institutions. We learned what others had to offer and joined the national dialogue. Nationally-renowned speakers were invited to campus to engage the remaining faculty. Some of the earliest sage advice that I received with respect to the amount of creativity we could exercise within CSU's seemingly restrictive structure was to "drop acid." We agreed from the outset not to let our constraints define us.

Don't heed all of the advice you're given—you are unique.
One of my favorite resources for advice is an AAC&U publication called *Revising General Education – And Avoiding the Potholes* (2009) which contains this key warning: do not expect a holistic change. While that is great advice, we roundly ignored it. We knew that our campus was moving from a quarter to semester calendar, and this was our one opportunity to wipe the slate clean and start fresh. In our new GE, no historical justification was accepted, and no grandfathering of courses was allowed.

Build on shared principles and keep student learning at the center.
Though we chose not to implement curricular change incrementally we did approach the faculty approval in incremental steps. The first of those steps was seeking consensus on the principles of GE reform. We generated the principles by gathering and tabulating feedback from faculty and students and articulating a shared vision for what the new GE would look like. The principles, by their very nature,

have student learning at their heart, not the more contentious issues that tend to divide faculty. These principles were formally endorsed by the faculty and since our current GE Program did not live up to them, there was a clear mandate to abandon calls for *status quo*—the death knell for GE reform. While we tried to keep the debate around principles we found ourselves constantly thinking of examples to concretize those abstract concepts. **Be inclusive, transparent, and over-communicative, establishing ownership at each stage.**

At each step, we learned that it was important to include students, faculty, staff, and administrators in the discussion. Consultation with our community college feeders was important as well; even more so, because half of our graduates have completed some GE prior to arriving on our campus. This inclusion took various forms including invitation to discussion forums, membership on committees, focus groups, and interest surveys. Proceedings and results were made public and broadly disseminated.

There's never enough time and you're never done.
Our time line allowed three years for design and two years for implementation but we have found ourselves working tirelessly through three summers and two breaks (with the Provost's generous support) just to meet those deadlines. Recognizing that we should adopt a model of continuous improvement, we set up certain structural features and practices, such as empowered faculty development groups, to allow for the evolution of the program over time. This relieves some of the pressure to get it perfect the first time and sets up the expectation that changes can happen incrementally to keep the new program current.

For more information…

Visit http://www.csub.edu/ge/FacultyStaff/GECCo/

or contact Paul Newberry, Faculty Director of General Education at pnewberry@csub.edu.

GE Redesign

CSU Los Angeles

PREPARED BY:
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Introduction

In 2009, faculty at CSU Los Angeles (CSULA) initiated Campus Conversations to solicit suggestions and explore options for undertaking a revision of its General Education program. A GE Revision Committee (GERC) was created to bring GE into alignment with newly identified priorities in the institutional Strategic Plan and Learning Outcomes (ILOs), address other CSU system-wide priorities (Executive Order 1065), and incorporate the outcomes expressed by the AAC&U LEAP initiative. GERC enthusiastically embraced the challenge of updating the GE program and focused its initial efforts on developing GE Learning Outcomes (GELOs) reflective of these national, state and local initiatives and mandates. Working with a consultant, the proposed GELOs were shared with the campus in several Town Hall meetings in 2012-2013, and then revised as a result of the thoughtful responses from the campus community.

The GE revision process was given even greater urgency when in spring 2013 the campus received approval to convert the campus calendar from quarters to semesters, effective fall 2016. GERC worked through the spring and summer of 2013 and drafted a GE framework designed to achieve the GE outcomes and to incorporate GE best practices, such as “core distribution areas” and “traditional liberal arts,” along with High Impact Practices (HIPs). The draft framework was shared through a series of faculty forums, and GERC incorporated responses from the campus community into the framework. In November 2013, GERC submitted its recommended “Policy on the Definition, Philosophy, Student Learning Outcomes and Criteria for General Education Breadth Requirements” to the Academic Senate. Over the following four months, extensive discussions and deliberations ensued and subsequently, with some modifications, the policy was approved. In March 2014, the Academic Senate first approved the amended proposal, which was followed shortly thereafter with approval by CSULA’s president.

Design

The new outcomes-based GE framework is defined by some distinctive and innovative features. Notably, a new civic/service learning (CL/SL) requirement asks that every first year student take two courses that feature engagement with multicultural communities nearby and in the greater Los Angeles area. An enhanced writing component requires students to complete four writing intensive (WI) courses and the framework also offer learners an integrated and interdisciplinary science lab option. Additionally, students must complete an expanded diversity requirement with two new characteristics: (1) diversity courses must explore the intersectionality between race and ethnicity with other social categories that structure inequality in society, and (2) at least one of the two diversity courses must focus on issues of race and ethnicity.

The campus has now moved to the stage of implementation, which involves three crucial elements: curriculum development and delivery, faculty development and program administration. The Office of Undergraduate Studies organized a series of faculty forums and workshops, which provided a collegial

opportunity for faculty to develop course guidelines and rubrics and to share their ideas and expertise regarding the development of GE course proposals. So far, over 500 semester-based GE courses have been proposed, reviewed and approved. A selective number of GE courses will be piloted in the coming year, particularly in those areas with substantive new requirements, including courses that fulfill the civic/service learning, writing intensive instruction, and diversity requirements.

As of fall 2014, GERC is preparing guidelines for the development of GE pathways organized around pressing societal and global problems, which provide students with opportunities to engage in a multidisciplinary approach to a specific issue and that can lead to a minor. Recognizing the critical need for professional development and faculty planning time, CSULA conducted two Civic Learning and Service Learning Institutes in summer 2014. The university will continue to host summer faculty seminars, GE faculty learning communities and other professional development opportunities to build a strong network of faculty dedicated to teaching and learning in GE. Finally, we have recently appointed a GE faculty director who will coordinate the curriculum, conduct GE assessments, organize GE faculty training and serve as a liaison between the GE advisory committee and the teaching units in colleges and departments.

Lessons Learned

We have learned some important lessons from our GE revision process. First, GE revision is complex and requires the creation of a design and review process that ensures all stakeholders have had the opportunity to participate fully in the process. Second, the process demands the thoughtful establishment of a realistic calendar and budget. Beginning the first year of a quarter-to-semester conversion, while completing the final year of GE revision presented some challenges. (Unfortunately, circumstances out of our control demanded this timing.) Third, GE reform is a huge undertaking that requires a commitment in time and resources for careful planning, creative design, stakeholder engagement and ultimately achieving faculty consensus in policy decisions and program implementation. Finally, as in any curricular reform project, one must anticipate problems, such as disciplinary tensions, ideological clashes and the highly deliberative process of faculty governance. Administrative and faculty leadership and community commitment to keep focused on the project's goals, as well as the important priority of serving today's students well, can help keep the institution on track to achieve its ultimate objectives.

For more information…

Contact the Office of Undergraduate Studies at 343-323-3830 or visit
http://web.calstatela.edu/academic/aa/ugs/index.php

Compass Legacy Projects

Several new GE reform efforts, or "legacy" projects, have sprung from efforts fostered during the Compass initiative. The projects outlined in this section build directly on relationships that were developed or strengthened as a result of Compass. While they vary in scope (e.g., national, state, or local), these projects share a focus on aligning GE learning outcomes across institutional levels and systems with the goal of improving success for all students.

Threshold Concepts and Wicked Problems (2014 – ongoing). This project is a grassroots community of practice in California that emerged from CCC and CSU discussions about connecting disciplinary perspectives with learning outcomes in GE. It grew out of the Threshold Project (http://3csn.org/2013/09/11/introducing-the-threshold-project-at-links-8/) of the CCC Success Network (3CSN, http://3csn.org/) initiated by Nika Hogan from Pasadena City College and Kim Costino from CSU San Bernardino to support what they called "courageous conversations about disciplinary knowledge." One goal was to work with high school and university partners for meaningful alignment.

Compass staff approached Hogan and Costino to explore a collaboration designed to link disciplinary knowledge and GE through interdisciplinary curricula focused on "wicked problems"—complex, contested and constantly changing dilemmas that are difficult to resolve such as climate change, poverty or immigration. With modest funding from 3CSN and Compass, these two faculty leaders organized a three-day Threshold Concepts and Wicked Problems leadership institute in 2014 for CCC and CSU faculty who teach GE. Interest was so strong that they held a second institute.

The community of practice has gained strength since the institutes, reaching new participants at Re-envisioning GE events hosted through 3CSN and Compass and regional CCC-CSU networks. Seed grants from the CSU Institute for Teaching and Learning helped to fund hospitality for some regional meetings. These activities have resulted in local plans for campuses to work together on thematic GE and joint grant proposals. While the long-term viability of this project will depend on the interest of community members, it can be sustained with minimal funding because it relies mainly on local facilitation, space provided in-kind by host campuses and low-cost catering (the only direct expense). At least one new leadership institute will be offered in summer 2015, emphasizing equity and interdisciplinary assignments.

For more information and to be added to a listserv, contact Nika Hogan at Nika@3csn.org.

Faculty Collaboratives (2014-2017). Through this AAC&U project, funded by the Lumina Foundation, California is one of ten states working to create a network of innovation and resource hubs to build the capacity of faculty to apply proficiency principles to campus-based change in GE, assessment, transfer and related student success programs. "Proficiency" in the context of higher education refers to the level of mastery of learning outcomes that students should know and be able to do to earn an associate, bachelor's, or master's degree. The initiative is also establishing a national learning community of faculty fellows. The effort intends to reach faculty across all fields, disciplines, institutional settings and contract types.

This project is leveraging several related initiatives: the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) and Tuning (http://degreeprofile.org/) initiatives, GE Maps and Markers (GEMS, http://www.aacu.org/gems), VALUE rubrics (http://www.aacu.org/value) and the Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment (http://www.sheeo.org/projects/msc-multi-state-collaborative-advance-learning-outcomes-assessment). The initiatives share a goal of moving from a system that awards credit for time spent on coursework and grades that are not based on shared meaning to one that awards credit for demonstrated performance on tasks explicitly linked to learning outcomes and assessed according to clear standards. Clearly, this complex paradigm shift involves collaboration across institutions and requires new ways to organize and reward faculty work. For more information, see the Faculty Collaboratives website. The California project team will be developing resource materials, hosting meetings around the state and creating an open-source hub.

For more information, contact Debra David at ddavid@calstate.edu or Kim Costino at kcostino@csusb.edu.

Aligning Learning and Academic Success Project (Project ALAS) (2014-2019) – CSU Channel Islands, with Moorpark, Oxnard, and Ventura Colleges, received a Title V Hispanic-Serving Institution Cooperative Development grant to increase: a) enrollment of Hispanic and other minority students at all participating institutions; b) transfer readiness of students from these primary feeder campuses; and c) success of transfer students once they arrive at CI. The project will employ faculty development and cross-campus collaborations to improve articulation and increase high-impact practices in the classroom to align learning outcomes and better prepare community college students for transfer and for the four-year university. In addition, CI will develop a robust transfer student success initiative to increase transfer student retention and successful degree completion.

For more information, contact Marie Francois at marie.francois@csuci.edu.

Cross-Institutional Global Citizenship Certificate (2015-ongoing) – San José State University and West Valley College collaborated to create a multi-disciplinary certificate program to help students understand the interconnectedness of peoples, cultures, and societies, and to celebrate the richness of human diversity in a global context. The required lower division courses also meet GE requirements. Students may complete the lower division courses on either campus, then complete upper division courses in the Global Studies Program at San José State.

For more information, contact Kathryn Davis at Kathryn.davis@sjsu.edu or Cynthia Napoli-Abella Reiss at Cynthia.reiss@westvalley.edu.

The Search for Common Ground: Culture in California's Central Valley (2014-2016) – Modesto Junior College was awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, building on its partnership with CSU Stanislaus. The project is developing curricular units that Humanities faculty and the larger academic community can integrate in GE courses. They plan to incorporate classroom content that speaks directly of their students' cultural heritages, histories, artistic production and daily living practices in the Central Valley.

For more information, contact Chad Redwing at redwingc@yosemite.edu.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Action

Over the past seven years, we have learned important lessons through the hard work and candid feedback from the Compass project grantees and others who tested innovative approaches for GE. This report has profiled projects which have the most potential for adaptation beyond the campuses where they originated. However, the results of those experiments that proved less scalable have also generated valuable insights for how to move forward.

This undertaking is likely to influence future change in how students experience GE in both the CCC and CSU systems. To that end, this section outlines seven key lessons and corresponding recommendations for institutional, system-wide and intersegmental efforts designed to make GE more relevant, engaging and coherent. We hope that they will be useful to educators, policymakers and funders interested in fostering this movement and ultimately strengthening students' learning and achievement.

→ Lesson 1: Change can't wait.

As we noted at the beginning of this report, the need for GE change is urgent. The current structure of GE in California—a common set of courses that count for transfer—works well for student mobility, but conceals serious shortcomings in coherence, equity and effectiveness. Too often, it is perceived as irrelevant and fails to engage students. These problems aren't trivial and everyone is affected. Every year that slips by represents additional cohorts of students who are inadequately served and less likely to persist.

Projects that proved especially effective drew on local evidence in developing their GE innovations. For example, CSU Chico's GE Pathways initiative grew out of a GE program self-study conducted in preparation for an accreditation visit. The impetus for revising the GE policies at both CSU Bakersfield and CSU Los Angeles was the planned transition from quarters to semesters beginning in fall 2016, necessitating major curricular changes. However, successful projects were also flexible, modifying their initial designs based on experience.

Recommendation for action: Start now.

The profiles in this publication offer excellent ideas to stimulate discussions on your own campus. However, it is important to **adapt them to fit your local context.** Student characteristics, campus culture

and available resources and programs need to be considered. There may also be promising GE innovations already percolating at home.

One reason that well-meaning colleagues have given us to explain their hesitance to experiment with GE is that evidence is often difficult to track and incomplete. We have found that evidence is *always* incomplete, but that learning accelerates as educators take action. Readers who are interested in change in their own institutions are advised to look for existing campus analyses that can provide a useful starting point, such as accreditation self-studies, strategic plans or GE program reviews.

A second reason for delay that we commonly heard is that local universities and community colleges can't lead the experimentation. To protect their GE articulation agreements, they believe that they must instead wait for the new structures to emerge at the system level. This is false. **The faculty, staff and administrators who staff the CSU Chancellor's General Education Advisory Committee ("GEAC") explicitly invite local experimentation, with approval, as a way to inform and improve state-level policy.** The growing list of authorized pilot projects is published at www.calstate.edu/app/geac.

→ Lesson 2: High-impact practices (HIPs) make a difference.

There is clear evidence that **HIPs like learning communities, service-learning, first-year experiences and undergraduate research make a difference for all student groups and may be especially beneficial for underserved populations** (Kuh, 2008; 2013; Brownell & Swaner, 2010; Finley & McNair, 2013). Those studies have found that participating in multiple HIPs is optimal. A recent study by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (2014) included an expanded range of HIPs in and beyond the classroom, such as orientation, tutoring, alert and intervention advisement programs, and accelerated or fast-track developmental education. Eynon, Gambino and Torok (2014) report findings that integrative ePortfolio initiatives are also high-impact. Some of the GE strategies featured here, such as thematic GE pathways and peer mentoring, have not yet been well-studied, so it is not clear whether they meet Kuh's criteria for HIPs.

Of the projects profiled here, Metro Academies at San Francisco State University and City College of San Francisco is the only program that systematically incorporates HIPs. While Public Sphere Pedagogy has not yet been added to HIPs lists, evidence from CSU Chico suggests that it should be. Moreover, while not required, the three thematic pathways projects encourage, HIPs

Despite the value of HIPs, they are neither required nor frequently used in lower division GE curricula in CCCs or CSUs. Several Compass grantees experimented with service learning or learning communities, but found that they were difficult to sustain without a supportive campus infrastructure and/or external funding. It is encouraging to note that the new GE programs approved at CSU Bakersfield and CSU Los Angeles and the alternative GE program at Santa Barbara City College all incorporate HIPs.

Recommendation for action: Adopt HIPs.

There are many potential ways to incorporate HIPs in the GE transfer curriculum. First-year seminars that meet a GE requirement, service learning and learning communities have all been successfully used at colleges that participated in the Compass network. Public Sphere Pedagogy, ePortfolios and peer mentoring—practices that have demonstrated positive impacts on learning and persistence but are not on AAC&U's list—are also promising. These examples are not exhaustive; common reading programs,

undergraduate research, sophomore seminars and capstones, and internships are other HIPs that have been linked to GE curriculum.

As institutions look for ways to adopt HIPs, it is important to determine which ones are the best match for the local context. Factors like existing faculty interest, current programs and existing partnerships should be considered. Resources may need to be allocated for a peer mentoring program, ePortfolio licenses, staff to facilitate community-based programs, professional development and other supports. Also, as we elaborate below, it is important to assess the impact of HIPs on student success to guide decisions about whether to sustain and expand them.

→ Lesson 3: Faculty need to lead change.

Administrative commitment, resources and supportive policies and practices are all important, but innovations must be embraced by faculty in order to be sustainable and scalable. The faculty are responsible for curriculum and are in the frontline of instruction. Moreover, faculty are the only college employees who are in regular contact with students. Tenure-track, non-tenure-track and adjunct faculty all need to be included.

At every campus visit and professional meeting, we heard from faculty that they need time, institutional encouragement and professional development to facilitate GE change. Faculty are mainly expected to focus on their classroom teaching and office hours, department and campus committee meetings, and professional activities related to their disciplines. Involvement with GE reform is often valued less by colleagues and administrators.

The GE innovations profiled here have involved strong faculty leadership. Metro Academies at San Francisco State University and City College of San Francisco prepares Metro faculty through an initial 45-hour professional development program and an ongoing faculty learning community. The three campuses with thematic GE pathways programs—CSU Chico, CSUN and Pierce—all have faculty coordinators for each theme. The ePortfolio work at Sac State and Cosumnes River College began with a small faculty team, but is actively expanding outreach efforts on both campuses. Public Sphere Pedagogy at CSU Chico has been faculty-run from the start and has relied on word-of-mouth to reach new faculty participants.

Recommendation for action: Build faculty capacity.

One way to support faculty involvement with GE reform is to make it count toward professional recognition as much as—or more than—work within the department and discipline. Release time from courses or other service commitments, stipends for committee and project work and/or professional development, and travel funds for conferences related to GE curriculum would provide attractive incentives and should be open to all faculty, regardless of contract type. Non-monetary rewards, like recognition at campus events and encouragement for scholarship of teaching and learning related to GE curriculum and HIPs, also support faculty leadership.

Colleges can also build faculty capacity to lead GE reform through expanded faculty development opportunities. Many CCC and CSU faculty members have had limited personal experience with HIPs and little or no training in pedagogy or learning theory. Faculty development professionals suggest that intensive and/or ongoing programs are more effective than one-time workshops in changing teaching

practices. As a model for the field, the CSU Bakersfield academic senate approved a requirement that faculty participate in a learning community each term that they teach in their new GE program.[4]

→ Lesson 4: Collaboration is essential.

Student success is a collective responsibility. Learning involves beliefs and attitudes as well as cognition (Duckworth & Eskreis-Winkler, 2013; Dweck, 2006). Also, the ability of a student to learn and persist depends on many factors beyond the classroom, such as advising, counseling, career services, tutoring, financial resources, reasonable scheduling, support from family and employers and access to child and health care. Students who transfer or take classes at several colleges need to be able to move smoothly between institutions. And, in order to support meaningful opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills in "real world" settings, colleges need to connect with local communities. It is critical to break down barriers between departments, divisions, institutions and outside organizations.

There are few incentives for educators to collaborate. Time and resource constraints, along with a faculty reward system that is highly individualistic and discipline-focused, encourage isolation. Our business model in higher education generates revenue based mainly on instruction, counted by credit hours and delivered by solo lecturers. Inter-system collaboration is especially challenging. Few venues exist where educators from CCCs and CSUs cross paths, and the missions, resources, governance structures and cultures of the systems differ substantially.

The practices profiled here were designed by interdisciplinary teams and depend on collaboration across divisions and, often, colleges and other organizations. Thematic GE pathways are interdisciplinary by definition. Metro Academies bring support services into the classroom. The ePortfolio project involves collaboration with admissions offices, student affairs staff and technology support across institutions. The iPaths project at SBCC and GE reform at CSU Bakersfield both were developed with inter-system partners. Public Sphere Pedagogy and the new GE program at CSULA rely on extensive relationships with the surrounding community. We found that most educators who were part of the Compass initiative welcomed the opportunity to collaborate.

Recommendation for action: Promote collaboration.

Stakeholders from ***all*** constituent groups, including students, should be invited to participate in planning, implementation, evaluation and improvement efforts. Healthy collaboration needs to begin and continue with open conversation among participants. It's important to create physical and/or virtual spaces and allow sufficient time for interaction. Transparency, respect for diverse viewpoints and consensus-building help to build trust and engagement.

While is not realistic to eliminate differences in power, they should be recognized and minimized. For example, inviting one or two "token" students or scheduling important meetings at times that create hardships for part-time faculty discourage genuine involvement.

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[4] For more information, visit http://www.csub.edu/ge/FacultyStaff/GECCo/Learning%20Communities/index.html

There are pockets of collaboration scattered around most campuses, though they are often not very visible. One place to start is to identify and showcase them. They offer homegrown models and possible opportunities for expansion that build on existing strengths.

Inter-system collaboration is more challenging in the absence of formal structures to support it. It was an intentional focus of Compass. It will also be continued through several "successor projects," based on relationships fostered through Compass and other joint activities. However, it would be optimal to have a regular venue for continued collaboration. The University of California President's Transfer Action Team (2014) proposed to "strengthen partnerships to sustain statewide transfer for the long-term (p. 40)," including hosting an annual intersegmental transfer summit and creating an intersegmental enrollment management team. If implemented, these actions would help to ensure ongoing collaboration.

→ Lesson 5: Assessment of learning is critical.

Our institutions and systems assess outcomes such as credit hours earned, grades, persistence and completion and are able to analyze them by variables like race/ethnicity, gender, major and entry placement scores in math and English. We do a poorer job of measuring what students have learned and are able to do.

Compass grantees planned to evaluate the impact of their GE innovations on learning, usually by using or adapting the VALUE rubrics developed by AAC&U and/or student self-reports. In practice, they found it difficult to do for a variety of reasons, such as small sample sizes, time constraints and inconsistencies in how the innovations were implemented. The results were hard to interpret, particularly in the absence of appropriate comparison groups.

As we noted in lesson two, Metro Academies was able to assess impact on persistence, completion and cost effectiveness. PSP demonstrated impact on persistence and on measures of community efficacy, intent to be politically active, well-being, and academic engagement. Many faculty are hesitant to use common learning assessment measures and to share the outcomes with colleagues. They point to lack of consensus about learning goals, the time and effort required, and concerns that the findings will be used to evaluate their teaching. Yet until we can assess learning as reliably as credits earned and degrees completed, it is difficult to judge the success of GE innovations, engage more faculty, justify shifts in funding and change outdated policies.

Recommendation for action: Use evidence of learning to support change.

Local institutions should begin gathering evidence like PSP at CSU Chico and Metro Academies at SFSU and CCSF have done. Institutional research offices can provide guidance about how to make effective use of data that is already available, including how to disaggregate the results to examine variation by socio-demographic background, academic preparation, major and other characteristics. In order to collect meaningful data of student learning across different institutions, faculty need to establish common definitions of SLOs and agree upon proficiency criteria that they can use to evaluate student work, based on assignments like projects, papers and research which are carefully designed to enable students to demonstrate their learning.

To understand how GE innovations are related to student learning, it is also important to establish clear definitions of those innovations. The CSU Chancellor Timothy White has committed funding for an

"Academic Student Success Program" to support HIPs that deepen learning and improve graduation rates. One key element of that program is an effort to develop definitions that can be used for assessment purposes and to analyze the effect of HIPs on graduation rates through a "Student Success Dashboard."

A learning proficiency approach to assessment is different from the traditional practice of instructors operating in isolation in their own classes or, at the other end of the spectrum, standardized testing. We need to find ways to support this collaborative work and to help faculty link it to their own class activities. California has joined a multi-state project sponsored by AAC&U, Faculty Collaboratives (see page 5), which aims to develop resources and innovation hubs to mobilize faculty engagement, leadership, and creativity related to national initiatives that focus on proficiency.

→ Lesson 6: GE change takes time.

This may seem to conflict with the first lesson—that change can't wait. However, every practice and GE program change that we have featured has taken time to plan and multiple iterations to refine. Only the two practices that have been in place more than five years—PSP and Metro Academies—have been able to track impact on persistence and completion rates.

While the first offering of PSP was up and running a semester after it was conceived, other projects profiled here took a year of planning before the first student enrolled.

Major GE program revision at CSU Chico took four years from the initial design meetings in 2008 to implementation in 2012. Discussions about GE program revision at CSU Los Angeles began in 2010 and at CSU Bakersfield in 2011; both will launch the new programs in 2016. The first full program reviews won't take place at those institutions until five years after implementation.

Growth of the practices has varied. Of the practices described in this report that involve both CSUs and CCCs, growth has been more robust at the CSUs. The CSU-CCC differences may be due to many factors, such as variations in resource levels, demographics, institutional cultures, and missions. The fact that Compass was initiated and led by the CSU probably also contributed to this outcome.

Without more systematic and long-term research on GE innovation and broad dissemination of promising practices, the pace of change is likely to remain slow and uneven.

Recommendation for action: Plan for the long haul.

GE innovation has many steps, from identifying the issues that a campus or partnership wants to address, designing the intervention, implementation, formative and summative assessment, and (if it is effective) institutionalization. But development is rarely linear and it is often necessary to revisit goals and strategies. In fact, it may be more productive to begin at the end: What would "successful" GE reform look like and how would we know that we've been successful? Another way to look at this is to ask, "What would a student be able to ***do*** as a result of a good GE program?" To answer these questions would help us design better learning experiences and to figure out what kind of evidence to gather from our students, our classes and programs. It's also important to consider from the start: If a reform ***is*** successful, how will it be sustained and taken to scale so that all students will benefit?

We need more experimentation, at a variety of institutions, with better definitions and measures, over longer time spans. Working collaboratively and sharing our findings will accelerate our understanding of the best ways to make GE more engaging, relevant, and coherent in order to improve student success. Change will not happen overnight, but we need to start **now**.

→ Lesson 7: Permanent GE reform will require state-level change in funding and policy.

Most of the recommendations for action outlined above will require funding from new sources and/or reallocation of current resources. They may also need changes to Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations. While many HIPs are more expensive than lectures, they are likely to lead to lower attrition and faster progress. Professional development, collaboration within and across institutions and systems, and expanded assessment of student learning and innovative practices will also need more support. As the cost efficiency study at Metro Academies shows, the extra investment per student can produce significant reductions in cost per graduate. The current funding patterns, tied to traditional classroom instruction, constrain creativity and flexibility.

Some states have started to tie funding for higher education to graduation rates, called "performance-based funding." However, several recent reports have called into question whether such policies have produced positive outcomes ("Summary and Conclusions" 2013; Hillman, Tandberg, & Fryar, 2015; Lahr, et al., 2014), so we would not recommend that California adopt this approach at this time.

To become permanent, GE reform is also likely to need modifications to Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations. The jury is still out on the effectiveness of GE innovations, so we believe that it is premature to offer specific recommendations at that level. However, even within our current funding and regulatory environment, we can do more to encourage experimentation in to pave the way for innovative practices to support student success in a rapidly changing world.

Recommendation for action: Re-examine funding models and Title 5.

- As we look for the best ways to improve the GE transfer curriculum, our key recommendation is to encourage flexibility in funding and in the implementation of current regulations at the system and local levels. At the system level, Title 5 already permits the CSU Chancellor to grant exceptions – and he has granted one already to SBCC, as described here - and the campus authorities to make local modifications. We would encourage both CSU and CCC educators involved in curriculum matters to take full advantage of these options.

- Both the CCC and CSU systems have major initiatives to enhance student success. The Student Success Act of 2012 (SB 1456) (http://extranet.cccco.edu/Divisions/StudentServices/Matriculation/SB1456StudentSuccessActOF2012.aspx) in the CCC and the Graduation Initiative (http://graduate.csuprojects.org/) in the CSU can serve as springboards for action. Local CCCs and CSUs can also make decisions about how to deploy their resources creatively to support promising practices.

- On the near horizon, efforts to increase use of HIPs, support ongoing faculty collaboration on thematic GE pathways, provide student support services in the classroom, and expand the adoption of ePortfolios – all innovations that show promise for improving GE - will push the limits of existing

institutional arrangements. There are other major trends in higher education, such as digital education tools and credit based on proficiency rather than class time, which we should not ignore.

- To make the GE transfer curriculum more engaging, relevant, and coherent for all students will take a major overhaul in how CCCs and CSUs operate. Smaller-scale innovations, undertaken locally and right away, like the ones featured here, will inform those longer-term directions in policy. As we build our evidence base and learn which innovations are effective, we also need to identify the long-term funding and policy models that will enable them to be sustained and scaled up to reach all of our students.

Conclusion

The potential for GE innovation to deepen student learning, narrow achievement gaps, raise completion rates, and save money per degree awarded is great. The practices profiled here illustrate a range of models that we hope will encourage other educators to consider ways to adapt them or to design and assess innovations that fit their local contexts. The cost of inaction is too high for us to wait.

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Further Resources

In addition to the resources cited in this report, readers can find information related to innovations in GE on the websites listed below.

- Catalyst for Learning: ePortfolio Resources and Research, http://c2l.mcnrc.org
- GE and Student Engagement Teaching Commons, http://teachingcommons.cdl.edu/geengage
- LEAP Campus Toolkit, http://leap.aacu.org/toolkit/projects
- NILOA/DQP Assignment Library, http://www.assignmentlibrary.org

A companion video highlighting innovations from the Compass initiative, including several of the programs featured in this report, is available on YouTube and on the GE and Student Engagement Teaching Commons:

- Pina, K. (Director and Producer). (2015). *Innovations in general education: Preparing students for the future.* Available at: https://youtu.be/WtaSG9tDMMg

In fall, 2015, the Faculty Collaboratives will launch an open source "hub" focused on GE and proficiency initiatives. Check the GE and Student Engagement Teaching Commons or LEAP Campus Toolkit for the announcement.

Appendix A

Steering Committee

These individuals served on the Compass Steering Committee during at least part of its seven years:

- Kevin Baaske, Professor of Communication, CSU Los Angeles
- Joseph Bielanski, Articulation Officer, Berkeley City College
- Andrea Renwanz Boyle, Professor of Nursing, San Francisco State; currently Professor and Chair of Nursing at Dominican University of California
- Bernie Day, Articulation Officer, Foothill College
- Bettina Huber, Director of Institutional Research, CSU Northridge
- Patricia Kalayjian, Director of Interdisciplinary Studies, CSU Dominguez Hills
- Lisa Maxwell, Professor of Psychology, CSU Long Beach
- David Morse, Professor of English, Long Beach City College
- Michelle Pilati, Professor of Psychology, Rio Hondo College
- James Postma, Professor of Chemistry, CSU Chico
- Barry Russell, Associate Vice Chancellor, CCC Office of the Chancellor (to 2013); currently President, Las Positas College
- Beth Smith, Professor of Mathematics, Grossmont College
- Jeffrey Spano, Dean, Student Services, CCC Office of the Chancellor
- Jessica Taketa, Student, CSU Long Beach
- John Tarjan, Professor of Business, CSU Bakersfield
- Mark Van Selst, Professor of Psychology, San José State
- Jeremy White, Student, CSU Los Angeles

Appendix B

Projects Funded by Compass

Phase I Beta Sites

- **CSU Chico –** Funding helped to support a major overhaul their GE program around 10 student learning outcomes (SLOs) aligned with LEAP and to restructure CSU breadth requirements around 10 interdisciplinary thematic pathways.

- **CSU Sacramento** - The campus defined new Baccalaureate Learning Goals, unanimously approved by their Academic Senate, and new GE SLOs. They also experimented with "academic learning collaboratives" – a collection of three thematically linked courses for freshmen.

- **San José State University** – In partnership with a nearby community college, **Evergreen Valley College,** a "Transfer Year Experience" was created. It was based in a second-level English composition course and included a service-learning project ("Writing Partners"), peer mentors and advising.

Phase II Pilot Sites

- **CSU Channel Islands and Oxnard College** – Tandem sophomore seminars at both campuses focused on multiple student learning outcomes assessed through common assignments. Students connected through shared service-learning placements, peer mentors, and social networking. The model is being expanded at CSU Channel Islands and continued on a more limited basis at Oxnard College.

- **CSU Los Angeles and East Los Angeles College** – Learning communities on both campuses integrated coursework in chemistry, English composition, and statistics, focused on environmental issues and a community engagement project. The model was modified and continued at CSU Los Angeles as part of the First-Year Experience Program, but could not be sustained at East Los Angeles College. Participating students at CSU Los Angeles had higher persistence rates than a comparison group.

- **CSU Monterey Bay, Cabrillo College, and Hartnell College –** The three campuses aligned learning outcomes in English composition and pre-calculus courses, linked by common activities and assignments developed by an inter-segmental faculty leadership team. The model was piloted at CSU Monterey Bay and Hartnell College. There was promising evidence of the impact of participating on student retention rates. Many of the revised assignments in the pre-calculus course at CSU Monterey Bay were incorporated in all sections. The project also focused on promoting habits of mind such as curiosity, openness, flexibility, engagement, and persistence (see Fletcher, Najarro, & Yelland, 2015).

- **CSU Northridge and Pierce College** – The campuses created a "quality collaborative" to pilot test the Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualification Profile through interdisciplinary, themed GE courses on both campuses. They also developed thematic minors that could be started at either campus and

completed at CSU Northridge. The project is being sustained on both campuses and expanded elsewhere in California.

- **CSU Sacramento and Cosumnes River College** – Community college students demonstrate achievement of core learning outcomes through an ePortfolio developed in first-year experience courses. A club for students planning to transfer from Cosumnes River College to CSU Sacramento was created, with peer mentoring from successful transfer students. Students in the club were encouraged to create ePortfolios demonstrating writing proficiency as an alternate way to complete a timed writing test that is a prerequisite to a required upper division writing course. Most project components are being continued and expanded.

- **San Francisco State and City College of San Francisco (Metro Academies) –** The project expanded the Metro Academies model, a long-duration learning community in which students are co-enrolled in two general education courses per semester for 4 semesters. It developed an e-portfolio to assess student learning outcomes and infuse Compass principles into a web-based dissemination toolkit. Evidence of the model's strong positive impact on student persistence and cost- efficiency led to expansion and San Francisco State University. It may be expanded at City College of San Francisco in the future.

Phase II Networking Partnerships

Partnerships of one CSU campus and one or more CCC campuses met locally and participated in statewide conferences and online conversations to explore ways to increase student success by making GE more engaging and relevant to students. Some the partnerships received small seed grants to replicate promising models or develop local projects.

- California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, and Norco College
- California State University Bakersfield, Antelope Valley College, Bakersfield College, and Taft College
- California State University Dominguez Hills and El Camino College – Compton Center
- California State University East Bay and Cañada College
- California State University Fresno and West Hills College Lemoore
- California State University Fullerton, Coastline College, Fullerton College, Golden West College, Orange Coast College, and Santa Ana College
- California State University Northridge, College of the Canyons, Los Angeles Valley College, and Pierce College
- California State University Sacramento, College of the Canyons, Sacramento City College, and California Council of Gerontology and Geriatrics
- California State University Stanislaus and Modesto Junior College
- San Francisco State University and Cañada College
- San José State University, Foothill College, and West Valley College