

**Sonoma State University
Graduation Initiative
Bi-Monthly Report
June 30, 2011**

Academics:

SSU sent a team of five (John Kornfeld – Director of Undergraduate Studies, Thaine Stearns – Arts & Humanities, Daniel Malpica – Social Sciences, Jennifer Lillig – Science & Technology, and Cyndie Morozumi – Residential Life) to the AAC&U High Impact Practices Institute at the University of Vermont, June 14-18, 2011. The team worked on developing an action plan for SSU’s transition year courses. Below is the action plan that resulted:

SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

BACKGROUND

Over the past 15 years, several Freshman Year Experience courses and programs have evolved from the ground up. Currently we serve 1100 out of 1900 freshmen with an array of FYE choices, all of which incorporate at least three HIPs, and all of which seek to meet common transition curriculum learning outcomes developed by the Transition Group, a committee constituted this past year and comprised of faculty and staff who represent the various FYEs.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

- Content goal: to provide a structure and action plan for growing (bottom-up) our menu of FYE offerings, and, within 5 years, to offer enough FYE programs to serve every freshman. All sections will intentionally combine HIPs, GE credit, and transition learning outcomes. Each new FYE section will be supported with a

- peer mentor trained in a leadership course (which is already in place). Faculty will be awarded a stipend for summer preparation (to teach them how to integrate transition learning outcomes and advising into their courses, and how to utilize the skills of their peer mentors) and to participate in assessment of their programs.
- Process goals: to inform all constituencies (faculty, staff, SSPs, administration, students) of the tentative plan that we are proposing, and to bring them into the process of refining and implementing this plan. And, over the course of the next three years, to implement the plan and begin to assess the success of the FYEs that are developed.

BARRIERS TO ACCOMPLISHMENT

- Budget concerns
- Faculty who do not believe in the value of transition programs
- Faculty and staff who developed the original FYE, the structure and delivery of which will evolve as more new FYE offerings are added.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUPPORT

- Our new Provost and Academic Affairs team
- Faculty who are motivated to teach their favorite courses to freshmen
- Departments seeking opportunities to entice more students into their major
- Faculty seeking professional development opportunities for learning how to implement HIPs

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

- Shuttle diplomacy: Engaging in discussion, strategic planning, and information meetings with constituencies.

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS

- A steady increase of HIP-rich FYE offerings in a variety of departments and schools
- Robust involvement of tenured/tenure-track faculty in FYE programs
- Steady reduction of the overall numbers of undeclared students (because of improved academic, personal, and career advising in FYE classes)
- Steady increase in persistence, retention, and graduation rates for all students
- Positive student responses in newly developed Transition Survey (definition of “positive responses” to be determined)
- Steady reduction of the equity gap (in areas to be determined) for high risk students

Academic Logistics:

Block Registration: Sonoma State University successfully block registered new first time freshmen into their English developmental stretch course (English 100A) with an added one unit freshman seminar (Univ 102) component. All students who had EPT scores and were not in another first year experience program, such as FIG, MOSAIC, EOP Academy, were pre-registered through the block registration/student group cms process. 292 students were block registered into English 100A. Then 388 students were block registered into remedial math (either Math 35 (160) or Math 45 (228)). Additionally, all students coming to Summer Orientation who were in a freshmen transition experience were given their schedules in advance and instructed to register for those classes. We are now midway through Summer Orientation and are registering the largest freshmen class in Sonoma’s history (approximately 1,920 students). We continue to refine the block

registration process but until students can take the EPT/ELM earlier and have scores available by May, we will continue to not be able to fully block register all of our remedial students. We hope that the Chancellor's Office will move the scheduled EPT/ELM test dates earlier so that all students complete the test in time to be block registered in May.

Large Lecture Sections (LLS): Because of the serious budget constraints faced by the university, the Academic Schools developed large General Education lecture sections (LLS) at the lower division level that were reserved exclusively for first time freshmen. These sections have been opened during Summer Orientation and seats have been released at each session in order to accommodate all of the students. Students are advised to take a freshman transition course or program; remedial math or GE math; developmental English or freshmen composition or critical thinking; and one LLS GE. (Students with vertical majors, of course, are being advised to take their first level major courses, as well.) The goal is for each student to achieve a course load of 12 units (with a maximum of 14) when they leave Summer Orientation. We are halfway through Summer Orientation, and we are achieving that goal. All available seats in GE, major, and elective courses will be opened during Open Registration in August. We hope to achieve at a minimum a 13.24 Average Unit Load for all students. Given the current budget constraints, we are utilizing every opportunity to optimize enrollment for students in available classes. However, we believe that we will be at a lower average unit load than we have been in the past and this can affect progress on the retention and graduation initiative.