

### Program Assessment for Continuous Improvement

## In this issue

### **Charting the Course: Curriculum Mapping & the Literature Program**

Kristin J. Jacobson, Associate Professor of Literature; Cynthia King, Assistant Professor of Literature

### **NSSE Short: Feedback**

Sonia Gonsalves, Director of Academic Assessment, Professor of Psychology

### **2012 NSEE: An Overview**

Kris Krishnan, Associate Provost for Personnel, Programs, and Policy

### **NSSE Short: Making Use of Our Increasing Diversity**

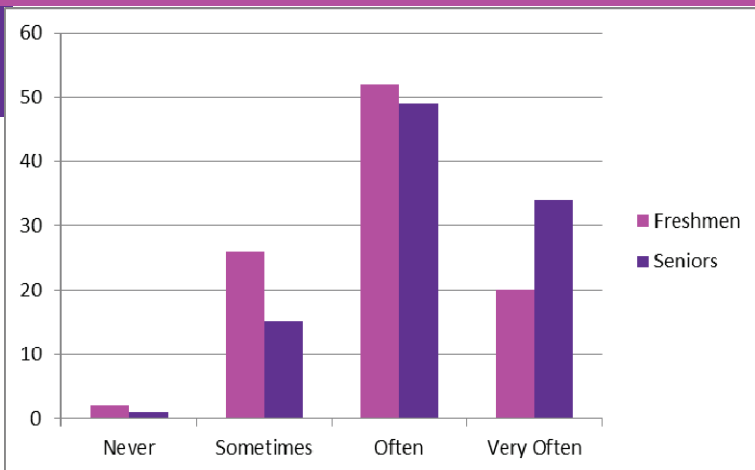
Sonia Gonsalves, Director of Academic Assessment, Professor of Psychology

### **Academic Engagement**

#### **NSSE Short: Feedback**

Prompt feedback is strongly and directly related to learning. Both seniors and freshman report that they frequently get prompt feedback from faculty.

Figure 1: Students' responses to the NSEE question: *How often have you received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance?* (% of respondents on Y-axis)



### **Charting the Course: Curriculum Mapping and the Literature Program**

Kristin J. Jacobson and Cynthia King

*"If you don't know where you are headed, you'll probably end up someplace else."*—Dr. Douglas J. Eder, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

#### **Why a Curriculum Map?**

The Literature Program, as part of its 2011/12 Five Year Program Review, identified strengths in individual assessment techniques (such as individual and program adopted rubrics and the use of outside reviewers to evaluate the capstone course and senior thesis). Yet, we also found a weakness in our ability to assess the program holistically. As a result, the program decided to incorporate a curriculum map into its assessment materials. The completed map, which will incorporate all program courses, will allow Literature to review our curriculum holistically for curriculum strengths and inconsistencies. The Literature program is in the process of drafting, revising, and implementing a curriculum map linked both to program and college learning outcomes (essential learning outcomes, ELOs, and 2020 strategic goals).



## Creating a Curriculum Map

The creation of the program curriculum map is taking place in six stages, with some of the work falling under normal, ongoing program faculty assessment duties and other activities supported by Provost Program Assessment Funds.

### STAGE ONE—Funded by Provost Program Assessment Funds—Summer 2012

In the summer of 2012 Literature faculty members Tom Kinsella and Cindy King researched and developed a draft curriculum map that charts our “shoulds”: [2020 Strategic Planning initiatives](#) linked with our [existing program goals and skills](#).

The initial pilot mapped a select few courses for not only whether or not they teach a specific learning outcome, but also for how they teach that outcome. Several indicators are used:

- whether faculty teach the learning objective implicitly or explicitly,
- whether or not the learning objective is introduced, emphasized, reinforced, or involves advanced instruction, and
- whether or not the student receives formal feedback on how well s/he met this learning outcome.

Professors Kinsella and King received a summer stipend for this work.

“Our Winter Retreat resulted in a productive, invigorating discussion about our curriculum, what we value within it, and how well we are meeting program and college goals.”

### STAGE TWO—Unfunded Fall 2012

During the Fall 2012 term, all Literature program faculty tested the draft curriculum map by mapping a sample set of their courses. Each faculty member mapped each of the following:

- two program core courses (Senior seminar and one other core LITT course)
- two program 2K-level courses
- two program 3K-level courses.

The nine individual faculty members’ completed draft maps were uploaded to our program Blackboard site in November.

### STAGE THREE—Unfunded Fall 2012

Tom Kinsella, Cindy King, and Kristin Jacobson (Fall 2012 Program Assessment Committee) reviewed the maps in Blackboard. The committee presented recommendations and discussion points about program goals and the map at a Dec. 2012 retreat.

### STAGE FOUR—Funded by Provost Program Assessment Funds—Fall 2012

The December 2012 Winter Retreat (9:30-5:30) brought all Literature program faculty together to focus on the results of our draft maps. We discussed the Assessment committee’s recommendations and implemented necessary revisions to the curriculum map and/or program goals and skills. Key prompts and consensus from our discussion included the following (A-C):

#### *A) Curriculum Map and Course Norming*

What did we learn from the process of mapping our courses? LITT faculty discussed the process of completing the map and accounting for differences that appeared among versions of the same course when taught by more than one professor.

Initial Consensus: differences reflect distinct approaches to completing the map, not significant differences in pedagogy/content

Work to Complete: norm required courses (Literary Research, Senior Seminar, Introduction to Creative Writing, and the Creative Writing Workshop) in the Literary Studies and Creative Writing Tracks for the final curriculum map

#### *B) Qualitative Data from Curriculum Map*

What can we ultimately learn from the map?

Initial Consensus: need to distill patterns and gaps based on the curriculum map

Work to Complete: conduct initial data extraction from the map

Work to Complete: consider seeking funding/support for additional data crunching of the final draft (outside reviewer; staff/faculty member compensated to crunch the numbers; assistance from institutional research)

Work to Complete: address gaps in curriculum and goals/skills/learning outcomes regarding “professionalization” and/or “application” courses and/or goals/skills/learning outcomes, especially: How can the curriculum map be used to highlight the following aspects of the program’s curriculum: service learning; technologically enhanced courses; internships; SIRE?

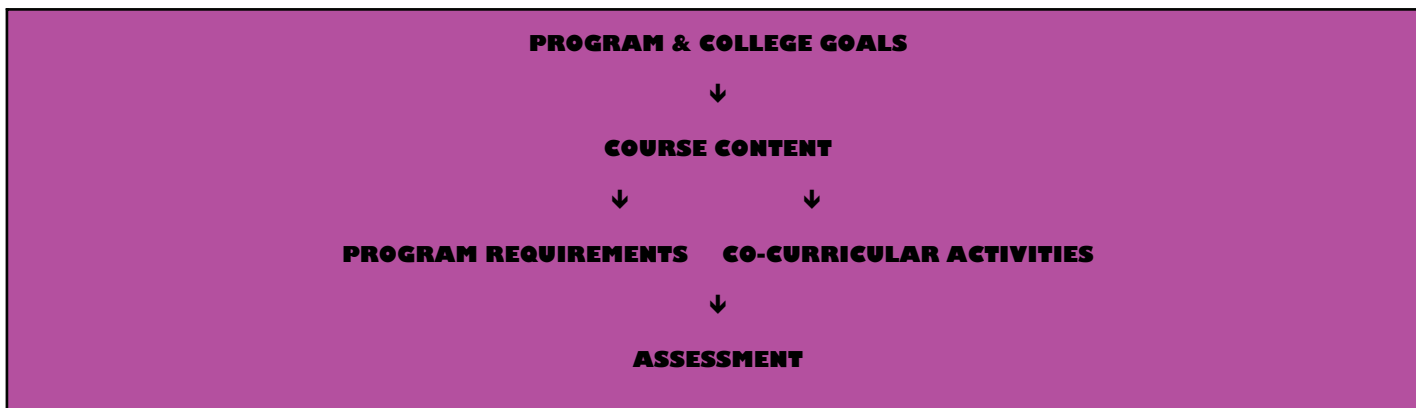
### C) Curriculum—Program Goals/Skills

In looking at the maps, we had some concerns about the process. Did the map contain too many program goals/skills to be useful to a wide audience? Do the number of goals/skills enhance or deflect from our assessment of and marketing to current and potential students? What are the 3-4 fundamental learning outcomes for our majors? How might we link to the College's ELO's?

Initial Consensus: need to simplify but not eliminate the depth our current goals/skills express

Work to Complete: (1) draft revised learning outcomes for further discussion, and (2) incorporate revised learning outcomes into the revised curriculum map

This discussion prompted the development of a flow chart representing relationships among elements that comprise our program:



We also established task-specific Spring 2013 assessment committees that involve all LITT faculty:

- 1) *Revise/Streamline Goals*: Deb Gussman, Lisa Honaker, Marion Hussong
  - o Charge: revise/streamline program goals
- 2) *Application Course/Requirement*: Addie Holton, Deb Gussman, Lisa Honaker
  - o Charge: brainstorm about how to encourage/require “practical” applications and experiences
- 3) *Curriculum Map II*: Nathan Long, Cindy King, Tom Kinsella
  - o Charge: identify patterns/gaps in current draft; suggest revisions
- 4) *Curriculum Futures*: Tom Kinsella, Kristin Jacobson, Adam Miyashiro
  - o Charge: identify areas to “stay the course” and/or ways to rework or re-imagine the LITT requirements (especially in the Literary Studies and CW tracks) to address what our majors need now and will need in 2020 and beyond

All program faculty are completing individual assessment duties related to the curriculum map to prepare for our Spring retreat. The curriculum committees will submit initial findings to the program at our April meeting.

### STAGE SIX—Funded by Provost Program Assessment Funds—Spring 2013

At the Spring Retreat the LITT faculty will focus on finalizing the curriculum map and setting assessment goals upon the completion of the map. Assessment goals for the retreat include:

- Finalize revisions to the curriculum map, including linking key [College ELO's](#)
- Finalize revisions/approvals (as needed) to program goals and skills
- Finalize distribution format for the curriculum map
- Set Assessment plan for 2013/14 AY

### What LITT has Learned So Far

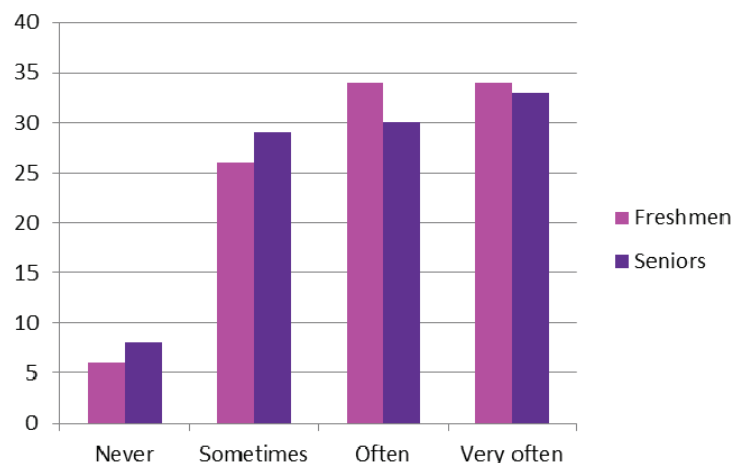
*“The most important thing about assessment is that it promotes dialogue among faculty.”—Dr. Mary Senter, Central Michigan State University*

The holistic nature of the curriculum map provides a valuable assessment tool to measure and (re-)evaluate the Literature program's goals and learning outcomes in relation to the College's ELO's and 2020 strategic initiatives. In the midst of this six-stage process, the Literature Program is finding the creation of the curriculum map is an assessment tool in itself: faculty simply sitting down to see how a particular course does or does not meet curricular and college-wide goals on the map is instructive. Our Winter Retreat resulted in a productive, invigorating discussion about our curriculum, what we value within it, and how well we are meeting program and college goals. We are looking forward to continuing the conversation at our Spring retreat.

# NSSE Short: Making Use of Our Increasing Diversity

Both seniors and freshmen have very similar profiles in their interactions with students of different ethnicities than theirs.

Figure 1: Students' responses to the question: *How often have you had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own?* (% of respondents on the Y-axis)



## NSSE 2012: An Overview

Kris Krishnan

Colleges and universities constantly strive to best assess and present evidence of student learning. Theories of involvement and socialization of undergraduate students tell us that student engagement in academic activities is critical to their success. As far back as 1984, Alexander Astin (Astin, 1984) asserted that the theory of student involvement could be utilized by college administrators and faculty in designing more effective learning environments for improving student-learning outcomes.

To this end, Stockton has invested substantial resources in activities and facilities to encourage student involvement. One of the College's first steps to gain a better sense of student involvement on campus was to participate in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE); the College has been participating in NSSE for over ten years.

NSSE has five benchmark areas of effective educational practices for focusing attention on the importance of student engagement and guiding institutional efforts in the improvement student outcomes. These benchmarks are [Level of Academic Challenge \(LAC\)](#), [Active and Collaborative Learning \(ACL\)](#), [Student-Faculty Interaction \(SFI\)](#), [Enriching Educational Experiences \(EEE\)](#), and [Supportive Campus Environment \(SCE\)](#). The benchmarks are based on 42 key questions that capture important aspects of student experience and engagement.

In the 2012 administration of NSSE, 946 first-year students and 1,529 seniors were invited to participate in the survey. Two hundred and thirty-four first-year and 541 seniors completed the survey. The response rates of 25% (first-year) and 35% (senior year) were higher than those of peer and Carnegie Class comparison groups.

### Benchmark Comparisons

Table 1 compares Stockton's scores for all five benchmark areas for first-year and senior students to NSSE selected peer group institutions and Carnegie Class institutions. For every benchmark area, for both first-year and senior students, Stockton's scores exceeded the scores of both comparison groups. In fact, seniors at Stockton reported significantly higher scores (italicized, purple) on all five benchmarks compared to the Carnegie Class institutions and on four compared to peer institutions. First-year students scored significantly higher on four compared to peer institutions and two compared to Carnegie Class institutions.

Table 1: NSSE 2012 Benchmark Comparisons

		First-Year	Senior
L A C	Stockton	55.3	59.6
	Peer Group	54.1	<i>57.2</i>
	Carnegie Class	54.4	<i>58.4</i>
A C L	Stockton	47.5	55.2
	Peer Group	<i>41.9</i>	<i>50.5</i>
	Carnegie Class	45.4	<i>53.5</i>
S F I	Stockton	40.5	50.8
	Peer Group	<i>34.1</i>	<i>42.4</i>
	Carnegie Class	<i>37.2</i>	<i>44.0</i>
E E E	Stockton	29.6	41.8
	Peer Group	<i>27.6</i>	40.2
	Carnegie Class	<i>27.8</i>	<i>39.3</i>
S C E	Stockton	64.7	66.2
	Peer Group	<i>60.6</i>	<i>57.4</i>
	Carnegie Class	64.4	<i>61.9</i>

Despite the strong performance on the benchmarks, there are questions within three benchmark areas that need some attention. The percentage of first-year students at Stockton who indicated that they read more than 10 assigned books or spend more than 10 hours/week preparing for class is lower than that of the comparison groups (Table 2). Similarly, self-reports on the same two questions were evident in the responses from senior students at Stockton. First-year student responses to institutional emphasis on academic work and completion of foreign language coursework also lagged behind counterparts. Responses from seniors at Stockton who completed a foreign language coursework or had a study abroad experience were relatively lower than the comparison groups.

<b>First-Year</b>				
Benchmark	Question	Stockton	Peer	Carnegie
LAC	3a. Read more than 10 assigned books or book-length packs of readings	28%	33%	31%
LAC	9a. Spent more than 10 hours/week preparing for class (studying, etc.)	58%	62%	58%
LAC	10a. Said the institution emphasizes studying and academic work	77%	82%	82%
EEE	7c. Participated in a learning community	16%	17%	16%
EEE	7e. Completed foreign language coursework	12%	18%	18%
<b>Seniors</b>				
Benchmark	Question	Stockton	Peer	Carnegie
LAC	3a. Read more than 10 assigned books or book-length packs of readings	31%	33%	31%
LAC	9a. Spent more than 10 hours/week preparing for class (studying, etc.)	58%	60%	61%
ACL	1j. Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	17%	23%	22%
EEE	7e. Completed foreign language coursework	24%	41%	34%
EEE	7f. Had a study abroad experience	5%	10%	11%

### Benchmark Trend

Scores on all benchmarks for first-year and seniors have increased steadily since 2007 (Table 3). In accordance with NSSE's definitions for these benchmarks, Stockton is on track in promoting student achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and providing a supporting campus environment. However, these improvements in NSSE scores need to be sustained and improved further if we are to stay ahead of our peer comparison groups.

		2007	2008	2010	2012
LAC	First-Year	50.7	52.8	54.4	55.3
	Senior	55.2	58.0	58.7	59.6
ACL	First-Year	42.2	43.3	44.8	47.5
	Senior	50.1	51.7	53.8	55.2
SFC	First-Year	39.9	43.7	43.1	46.9
	Senior	45.4	50.4	53.3	56.2
EEC	First-Year	24.7	27.3	26.9	29.6
	Senior	36.9	36.9	38.6	41.8
SCE	First-Year	57.4	63.3	64.2	64.7
	Senior	55.7	59.7	61.6	66.2

### Conclusion

The positive long-term benchmark trends are strong indicators of Stockton's success in providing a nurturing environment for learning and personal development. By examining individual survey questions we can better understand how first-year and senior students are faring and which areas of learning experiences need attention. The faculty at Stockton deserves special recognition for their excellent work as well as for their interactions inside and outside the classroom since this is an important element of student success.

### Reference

Astin, A. W. (1984). Student Involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 25, 297-308.

# NSSE 2012: Academic Engagement and Stockton Freshmen and Seniors

Sonia Gonsalves

The NSSE questions are grouped into five benchmarks of effective educational practices. For two of those benchmarks, Level of Academic Challenge (LAC), and Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL) students report on their instructional and other experiences that are directly related to their coursework. [The news on these benchmarks that constitute the self-report of academic engagement is good.](#)

The questions that comprise LAC require students to report the hours that they spend preparing for class, the number of long and short papers that they were assigned, the extent to which their coursework emphasized higher order learning (making judgments, analysis, synthesis, and application), the frequency with which they worked harder than they thought they could in order to meet the standards for their courses, and the extent to which the institution emphasizes studying and academic work.

For ACL students reported the frequency with which their coursework required them to make presentations and to work with other students on projects in class and out of class to prepare assignments. Voluntary or paid tutoring is included in this benchmark, as is service learning and the frequency with which students discussed ideas from their classes with non-class members.

Stockton seniors reported higher levels of both LAC and ACL than the group of seniors in the NSSE database, the seniors in our chosen comparison group schools, and the seniors in the schools that belong to our Carnegie Classification. For ACL our freshmen reported higher levels of engagement than freshmen in the NSSE database and those of our selected comparison group and were equal to those in our Carnegie Classification group. For LAC our freshmen were equal in engagement to the group of freshmen in all three of the comparison groups.

[These NSSE results are our best since 2001.](#) Our students, both seniors and freshmen, are reporting levels of academic engagement that are at least on par with other similar students and in many cases Stockton students are significantly above the level of academic engagement that is reported by the student in the comparison groups. The graphs show that the changes have been gradual and for ACL have represented a steady incremental increase for both freshmen and seniors.

These results reflect the continued good work of our faculty and students. Over the past ten years we have all become more aware of the NSSE and of the inferences that important outside communities can draw from our NSSE results. The response rates from students have improved and the results are therefore better representations of the status of our students' academic engagement.

