



Progress Report

August 2008

*Prepared for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education*

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Southern Connecticut State University
Progress Report
Submitted to the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
August 2008

Institutional Overview

Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) is a comprehensive public institution residing in the metropolitan area of greater New Haven, CT. Founded as New Haven State Normal School in 1893, the school evolved into a four-year college in 1937, and in 1954 became the New Haven State Teachers College, with added responsibility for a program of graduate studies. The school expanded its degree-granting powers to liberal arts and other professional fields as Southern Connecticut State College in 1959. In 1983, the institution was granted university status within the Connecticut State University System. In 2002, Southern began offering its first doctoral program, the doctor of education (Ed.D.) degree in educational leadership. Today, SCSU is a comprehensive university offering undergraduates 44 majors, 92 specializations, and 51 minors and concentrations. SCSU offers graduate programs in over 50 areas of study in the fields of education, library science and information technology, business, health and human services, and arts and sciences. In 2001, SCSU was reaccredited for a ten-year period by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

SCSU has six academic schools: the School of Arts and Sciences; the School of Business; the School of Communication, Information and Library Science; the School of Education; the School of Health and Human Services; and the School of Graduate Studies.

In fall 2007, the university served 11,930 students. Of those, 8,515 were undergraduate students and 3,415 were graduate students. Approximately 2,600 students live on campus. Approximately 75% of the students are in the 18 to 29 age group, with almost 39% falling in the 20 to 24 age bracket. More than 71% of the university's students classify themselves as Caucasian, 10.6% as African-American, 5.7% as Hispanic, and 2.4% as Asian (nearly 9% chose not to identify their ethnicity). More than 65% of the students are female, and 93% are Connecticut residents. Once primarily a local school, SCSU today has students from virtually every town in Connecticut, 30 other states, and 33 countries. SCSU serves a diverse student population, approximately half of whom are the first in their families to graduate from college, and almost 20% are students of color. More than 30% of the undergraduate students and most of the graduate students work more than 20 hours per week. The university also provides a range of educational support services to more than 600 students with disabilities, one of the largest such populations at any Connecticut campus, and SCSU's regionally-known Disabilities Resource Center attracts both in-state and out-of-state students.

The university awarded 2,296 degrees in 2006-07, including 1,356 bachelor's degrees, 747 master's degrees, and five doctoral degrees. Among the largest majors at SCSU are psychology,

sociology, history, English, education, business administration, communication, nursing and social work. The university also awarded one associate degree and 187 sixth-year diplomas.

The university employs a workforce of approximately 999 individuals full-time, including 226 professional non-faculty employees; 140 secretarial/clerical staff; 29 executive employees; and 169 technical, crafts, and maintenance staff. Virtually all of the employees of the university belong to collective bargaining units. The 438 full-time and 615 part-time teaching faculty are all represented by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

University facilities include 43 buildings on a 168-acre campus. SCSU is now in the midst of the largest building construction program in its 115-year history. An updated master plan has been developed which will guide construction of new facilities for the next ten years. Most recent developments have focused on three buildings that form the core of the university: Hilton C. Buley Library (currently under renovation); Engleman Hall, the main academic building (renovations completed); and the new Adanti Student Center (completed fall 2005). Also recently completed were a 600-car parking garage, a new energy center, a facilities operations and planning building, and a new residence complex with adjoining parking garage.

SCSU is one of four universities that make up the Connecticut State University System. The other universities are: Central Connecticut State University, Eastern Connecticut State University, and Western Connecticut State University. Combined, the four universities serve more than 36,000 graduate and undergraduate students. The governance of the CSU System is the responsibility of a single, 18-member Board of Trustees. Fourteen members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the General Assembly. Four members are students, elected by their peers.

Progress Report on Areas Identified for Special Emphasis

...Implementing its vision to achieve the appropriate balance between teaching and scholarship as well as resolving aspirations to achieve "preeminence"

As described in our 2006 five-year interim report to the Commission, SCSU embarked on a university-wide strategic planning process in fall 2005 with the intent of re-examining and sharpening our mission and crafting a vision for the university's future. The 18-month process was led by Provost Selase Williams with a 25-member Steering Committee. The Steering Committee was supported by ten working groups, involving more than 150 faculty, staff, and students who assisted in identifying issues, collecting and analyzing data, and submitting ideas for consideration. In addition, feedback was gathered from the university community, alumni, and interested public through focus groups, e-surveys, and various public forums including town hall meetings. The plan, "Pursuing Excellence, Fostering Leadership, Empowering

Communities,” was formally unveiled in spring 2008. However, several major priorities had already been identified and considered in the AY 2007-2008 budget so that these projects were already underway. The AY 2008-2009 budget planning process was driven by the plan.

As part of the strategic planning process, new mission and vision statements emerged that clarify who we are and who we want to become. Southern’s new mission statement has been approved by the Chancellor of the Connecticut State University System following review by the Council of Academic Vice-Presidents of CSUS. (Please see Appendix A for complete mission and vision statements and selected excerpts from the strategic plan.)

Southern Connecticut State University provides exemplary graduate and undergraduate education in the liberal arts and professional disciplines. As an intentionally diverse and comprehensive university, Southern is committed to academic excellence, access, social justice, and service for the public good.

The revised mission and vision statements build upon key concepts articulated in the earlier Academic Strategic Plan (2004-2009) and incorporate the institution’s core values of excellence, access, diversity, student success, life-long learning, and community involvement. The final versions are a result of many extended, thoughtful and spirited discussions within the campus community and reflect broad consensus. There was overwhelming agreement that the term “preeminence” in the former mission statement did not accurately portray the university’s current status or its aspirations for the future.

A related topic that received a great deal of scrutiny was achieving an appropriate balance between teaching and scholarship. The role of Southern faculty as “teacher-scholar” emerged following in-depth discussions. The following excerpts, the first from the mission and the second from the vision statement, summarize the university community’s consensus:

...Our students receive exemplary professional training and are inspired by the research, scholarship, and creative activity of our teacher-scholars....

Southern Connecticut State University, a student-centered institution, will become nationally recognized as a model center for teaching and learning where faculty engage in outstanding research and creative activity and challenge students to reach their full potential....

The university continues to provide numerous resources, many of which were described in our 2006 report, to develop and support faculty as both teachers and scholars. For example, SCSU increased monetary awards for outstanding scholarship (Faculty Scholar Award awarded annually) and outstanding teaching (J. Philip Smith Award for Outstanding Teaching awarded

annually to one full-time faculty member and one part-time faculty member) from \$500 to \$2,500. The CSUS Board of Trustees established a Trustees' Award for Outstanding Research in 2006 and one for Outstanding Teaching in 2007. In addition, the new strategic plan includes a series of initiatives to further enhance both the teaching and scholarship of our faculty. (Please see Appendix A for "Overarching Goals and Strategic Initiatives.")

The strategic planning process was an extremely open and inclusive one. The resulting strategic plan has been distributed widely. It is intended that the plan will be a living document that evolves with changing conditions while continuing to advance the mission of Southern Connecticut State University. A university-wide committee established by President Norton to monitor implementation of the strategic plan, the University Strategic Plan Review Committee (USPaRC) was constituted in spring 2008 and has begun its work. The committee is charged with reviewing the progress made on the implementation of the plan.

...Developing a systematic, coordinated, and comprehensive program to assess student engagement, satisfaction, and learning and integrating the use of institutional effectiveness evidence into the process of planning and budgeting

The university continues to make strides in the development and implementation of a systematic, coordinated, and comprehensive assessment program. SCSU's assessment processes target course, program, and institutional level student learning outcomes.

Assessment activities are coordinated through the university's Office of Assessment and Planning established in 2004. To reinforce the importance of assessment at Southern, in January 2008, the position of coordinator (a faculty member on 75% reassigned time) was elevated to a full-time Associate Vice-President for Assessment, Planning, and Academic Programs.

A culture of assessment is being firmly rooted at Southern. For example, during the past two years, assessment data informed a number of major university initiatives, including new student orientation, the development of a First-Year Experience program, faculty development, and strategic planning. Assessment of student learning is an integral part of our recently approved 5-year academic program review process and our new general education program which is soon to have its final review by the faculty. At the program level, an increasing number of academic departments are actively collecting program-level data about student learning in the major and beginning to use program-level data analyses to make curricular and other departmental changes to better serve our students.

Institutional Level Assessment

National Survey of Student Engagement.

SCSU has participated in the Beginning College Student Survey of Engagement (BCSSE) since fall 2004 and in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) since spring 2005. The BCSSE, administered to incoming freshmen at New Student Orientation, provides us with important baseline information about the precollege experiences of our students as well as their perceptions about college and their expectations for their first year. The NSSE, administered to second semester first-year students and seniors, provides data about students' actual experiences and their perceptions about their college experience. Use of BCSSE and NSSE allows us to track students' expectations and perceptions over time during their college years as well as to match their survey results with their academic records. Results are also analyzed by major (if there are at least 20 respondents) so that departments can see how their students respond compared to all SCSU student respondents.

Trends from NSSE. We currently have three years of NSSE data. (We concluded our fourth administration in spring 2008; these results will be available shortly.) *Overall, results have been quite stable, providing us with a baseline to evaluate in future years the effect of recently implemented major initiatives.* For example, over the past three years, more than two-thirds of second-semester seniors evaluated Southern's impact on their learning as substantial in nine of 16 general areas of knowledge, skills, and personal development. Seniors reported higher levels of impact than freshmen respondents.

Longitudinal Data – Cohort Study. We are tracking the experiences of a cohort of students who participated in the 2004 BCSSE pilot at orientation (our first year of participation). The following spring (2005), 354 of these students completed the NSSE. In the end, 67% persisted at SCSU to their senior year. The study revealed that the non-returning students scored significantly lower than the currently enrolled students on items which asked about their relationships with faculty members, peers, and administrative personnel and offices. The other predictor of whether students in the cohort persisted to their junior year was their score on the Supportive Campus Environment cluster. Students who continue at Southern tended to rate these items higher than the students who have left. The two most important predictors of whether students persist to their senior year are cumulative GPA and their scores on NSSE items that measure Supportive Campus Environment.

These results have been extremely useful in educating the campus about our students' experiences and in guiding the development, implementation, and refinement of our First-Year Experience and the redesign of New Student Orientation. For example, advisement for first-year students has been completely revamped as part of the revised First-Year program. Those faculty teaching INQ 101, "Intellectual and Creative Inquiry," serve as academic advisors for their

students. This relationship is continued into the spring semester; seminar instructors assure that students make connections with faculty in the department of their chosen major. Faculty receive specific training in academic advisement, and a manual has been created to guide them in advising students. During New Student Orientation, teams of faculty and professional advising staff worked together to plan appropriate programs for incoming students. We will be assessing the impact of this new model.

Assessing the Effectiveness of the First-Year Experience Pilot Program

Assessment has been an integral part of the pilot First-Year Experience program implemented in fall 2007. First-year students were part of a learning community. Cohorts of 20 students shared at least two courses in common (clusters), one of which was an English composition class. Approximately one-half of the students participated in a first-year seminar class as part of their learning community. The First-Year Experience program also included a series of workshops especially designed for first-year students; attendance at these was not mandatory, but highly encouraged.

All first-year students were asked to complete a series of three surveys over the course of the 2007 fall semester to gauge adjustment to college and the development of strategies needed to be successful in college. The BCSSE was administered at the New Student Orientation during the summer and served as the baseline measure. Students' BCSSE responses, responses to the three surveys, and academic performance were analyzed. Students were also encouraged to complete the NSSE survey during the spring 2008. NSSE results will be available in fall 2008 and will be compared with baseline information and academic performance. In addition to the student data, informal feedback and anecdotal data from faculty teaching in the FYEP were also collected.

Based on the data collected, the FYE program was revised for the 2008-09 year. Changes included modification of the learning outcomes for the seminars, development of a more structured co-curricular companion program, and changes in the academic advisement process. In fall 2008, all first year students will be part of a learning community that includes a first-year seminar. What we learned from our pilot was also used as part of the foundation for an enhanced faculty development program that included a 3-day Teaching Academy in June 2008 with a 2-day follow-up planned for August.

Academic histories of students who entered in fall 2007 show some very positive results compared to students entering the past five years: an increase in persistence, fewer students on academic probation and more students in good standing. We will continue to monitor and assess our First-Year programs.

Student Satisfaction

Undergraduate Students. Over the past three years, an average of 79% percent of first-year students and 77% of seniors rated the quality of their overall SCSU experience as “good” or “excellent.” Seventy-six percent of first-year students and 68% of seniors indicated that they would “probably” or “definitely” choose SCSU again if they were starting over (Figure 1). Moreover, SCSU students rated their relationships with other students and faculty similar to students at peer institutions. Students rated their relationships with administrative personnel and offices significantly lower than students from selected peer schools as well as all other NSSE participating schools. These findings informed the strategic planning process and will provide a baseline for measuring the impact of new initiatives.

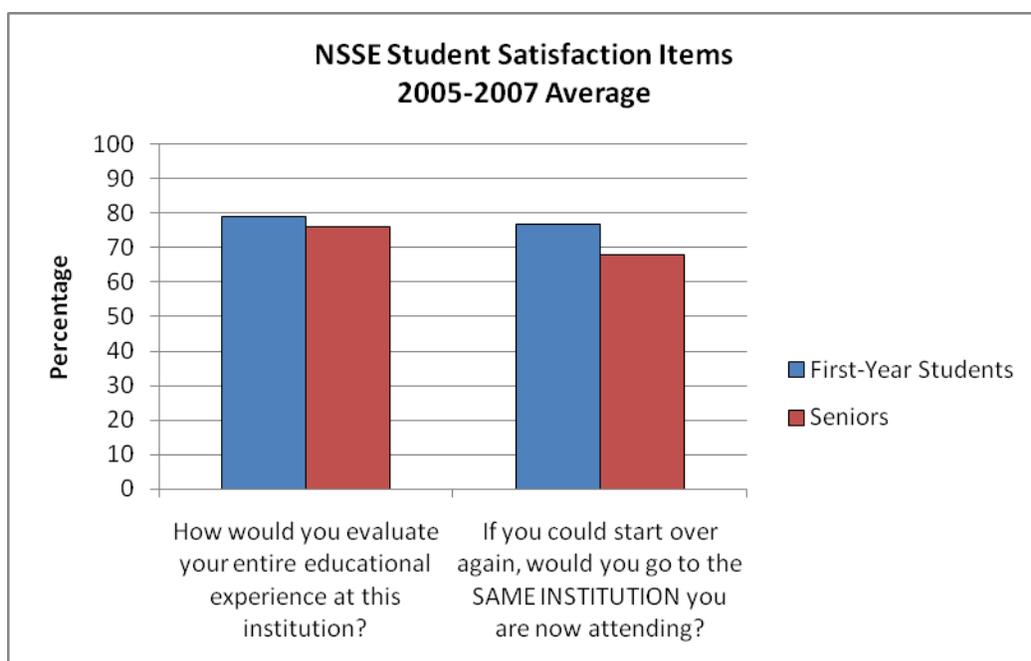


Figure 1. *NSSE 2005-2007 Student Satisfaction Item.* Average responses for First-Year students and seniors compare two satisfaction items among SCSU students over time.

Graduate Students. The Noel-Levitz Adult Priorities Survey has been administered to graduate students annually since 2003. The most recent results available are from the 2007 administration which included students who received degrees in January, May, and August 2007. (The 2008 administration has recently concluded; these results will be available in the fall.)

Graduate students identified the following areas of strength:

- The content of courses within my major is valuable.
- The quality of instruction I receive in most classes is excellent.

- My academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major.
- Classes are scheduled at times that are convenient for me.

Three major themes were identified as challenges: parking, safety and security (primarily as related to parking), and the registration process. Students also reported course availability as a challenge (“My courses are available when I need them in order to graduate on schedule.”) While results have been mostly stable over the past five years, there has been an increase in satisfaction with registration services. Findings have been reported to the President’s cabinet, faculty, staff, and student constituencies. Focus groups with graduate students have been conducted as a follow-up to understand the results better.

Several steps have been taken (and are planned) that will address student concerns, including enhanced lighting in parking areas, increased police patrols, and addition of food service to Davis Hall (where many graduate students have evening classes). Plans for construction of a new parking garage are underway. Departments are examining course offerings and scheduling to better meet the needs of adult learners. For example, the Department of Social Work will inaugurate a weekend program. In addition, the number of online course offerings have increased from 45 sections in fall 2006 to 63 fully online sections scheduled for fall 2008.

Faculty Development

Activities to increase campus awareness about assessment and the participation of faculty in the assessment of student learning have continued. A sample of activities during the 2007-2008 academic year is provided as illustration.

- Provost Williams and the Faculty Senate co-sponsored a Faculty Forum on Assessment in November 2007. The forum included presentations by four panelists and was followed by a discussion. Approximately 50 faculty were in attendance.
- Results from 10 assessment projects were presented by 19 faculty members at the 2008 annual CSUS Assessment Conference which was hosted by Southern this year. Seventy-one faculty and staff from Southern participated in the conference
- Southern has continued to support training for faculty in the area of assessment. During the 2007-08 academic year, faculty attended various regional and national conferences related to assessment issues, for example, the annual Assessment Institute at IUPUI (October 2007); the New England Educational Assessment Network Assessment Forum (November 2007) and Dialogues in the Disciplines (March 2008). These professional development experiences are serving two purposes: (1) to provide support for those faculty with limited experience and expertise in assessment; and (2) to develop a cadre of faculty trained in institutional assessment who provide support and peer mentoring to their colleagues in this important area.

- As part of the Teaching Innovation Program (TIP), funded by a 3-year Davis Educational Foundation grant, faculty have developed and presented workshops around successful strategies that involve assessment of student learning as well as innovative use of technology and other innovative pedagogies.
- More than 100 faculty participated in an intensive 3-day Teaching Academy in June 2008. Although all faculty were welcome, the focus of the academy was on working successfully with first-year students and implementing writing across the curriculum. Several follow-up events are planned to continue the momentum. A two-day event is planned for August 2008 to coincide with orientation for our incoming new faculty, and a one-day “reunion” is planned for October. The faculty were asked to rate their knowledge prior to their participation in the academy and afterwards. In all cases, mean scores increased, and the difference was statistically significant. We will be following up in the fall to ascertain the long term effectiveness of this model of faculty development.

Program Level Assessment

All departments have identified an assessment coordinator or liaison, and many departments are establishing assessment committees. Our goal is that assessment work be integrated into the normal business of the department in the same way as curriculum implementation and revision function. Assessment activities are monitored and technical assistance is provided to departments by the Office of Assessment and Planning.

The current status of program-level assessment of student learning is summarized here. Figure 2 shows the changes in departmental assessment activities from 2003-04 to 2007-08.

- 98% of academic programs (44 of 45) have identified program-based student learning outcomes for their majors (including undergraduate and graduate) or have commenced work to identify program-based student outcomes.
- 89% of programs (40 of 45) have clearly identified assessment measures at the program level or have commenced work on identifying program level measures. Most of these programs are now collecting and analyzing program level data.
- 56% of programs (25 of 45) have provided evidence that they are actively using assessment data to inform departmental decision making and program improvement or have provided plans for doing so.

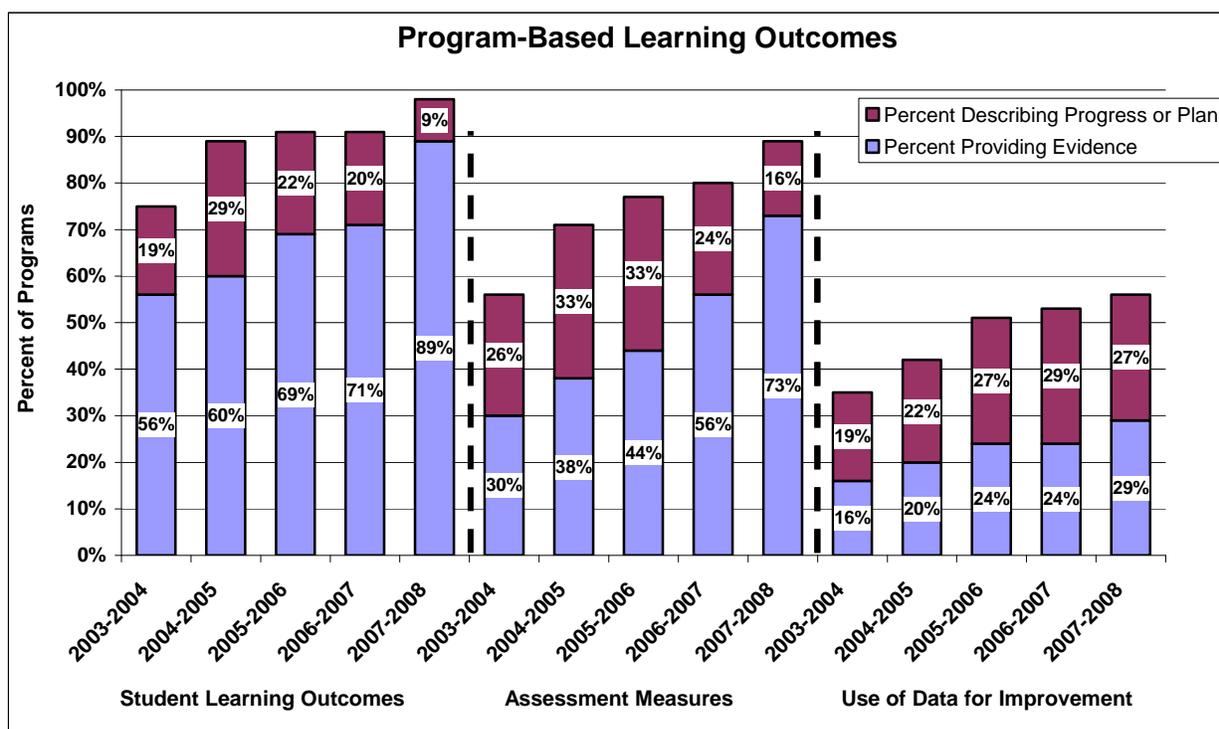


Figure 2. Change in assessment activities, 2004-2008.

Closing the Assessment “Loop”

Although we have made significant gains over the past several years, it is clear that much work remains to be done, particularly in “closing the assessment loop,” in the active use of student learning data for program improvement. The following case examples illustrate some of the good work being done by departments in using program-level student learning data.

Communication. During the past two years, senior communication students in the capstone course have participated in presentations to the faculty for assessment purposes. The department has developed an assessment rubric that faculty use to evaluate the critical thinking outcomes for the major. This rubric was piloted last spring. After feedback from faculty and students, the rubric was modified for the 2008 capstone presentations. Results will now be re-evaluated and the tool will undergo further refinement. In addition, the department’s assessment committee is working on a curriculum map to identify in which course each learning outcome is introduced, reinforced, emphasized and evaluated.

School Health Education. The School Health Education program has made several changes as a result of student assessments and feedback. Course scheduling and course offerings have been modified. For example, the program added online components to several courses in order to

accommodate students that must travel long distances. In addition, they added more courses during the summer so students can take 12 credits, and they will rotate summer offerings so students can enroll in a full graduate load. In addition, they have increased the field experience requirements in three courses, SHE 302, SHE 552, and SHE 558 and have added a graduate course in Methods of Teaching Health Education for the upcoming academic year.

English. Grading a representative sample of papers randomly selected from English majors in upper division courses and equally weighted among sophomores, juniors, and seniors provided significant data about students' analytical reading and writing skills. These data are helping us make informed decisions about improving student learning as we both overhaul the curriculum in our major and reconsider instructional methods we can share to maximize the effects of pedagogical unity and diversity.

We learned two things: First, we discovered that our English majors do not read and write as well as we expect. We are not sure how much this is due to students' capacities and how much is due to departmental curriculum or instruction. Second, and just as significantly, we learned the difficulties of developing a strong and valid assessment program. We spent about eight months developing and refining the rubrics we used in the project. Part of the difficulty in developing the rubric was deciding on wording that would allow us to accurately assess writing from classes taught by instructors with different styles. We consider this pedagogical diversity an asset to the department, and continue to strive for an assessment program that will preserve this diversity.

Comparing the mean scores of each group, we primarily considered the similarities and differences (if any) between essays in the three groups. We asked:

- Are students improving as they progress through the program?
- Are there identifiable weaknesses that seem to be department wide?
- Are there identifiable strengths that seem to be department wide?
- At what levels are students when they start the major?
- At what levels are students when they graduate?
- Have students shown any significant improvement in their reading and writing?

Given the discrepancies among the groups, we proposed to the department that our current course English 301, "Introduction to Literary Analysis and Critical Theory," be required before students can take any further courses in the major. While we now strongly recommend that students do so, it is clear that the foundation provided by this course (which is informally known as the "introduction to the major" course) will benefit students in their more advanced literary study. This change to the curriculum has been discussed by the department, and we believe this study provides evidence to persuade our colleagues to see it through.

History. The department is assessing the ability of their senior majors to demonstrate effective research and writing skills by producing a significant research paper that makes extensive use of

primary source material. Instructors applied a 4-point rubric to students' research papers in HIS485. Results showed that while the mean score was 2.2, (slightly above adequate), approximately one third of the students had deficiencies in at least one area identified as important by the faculty. The department is now examining its curriculum sequence in depth and will be undertaking a self-study in the fall of 2008.

Assessment of Student Learning in Teacher Certification Programs

The university's undergraduate and graduate teacher certification programs are accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The *Candidate Information Management and Assessment System (CIMAS)*, a web-based tool developed at SCSU, is used to track students' academic progress. Since the certification programs include programs outside the School of Education, NCATE refers to all the programs collectively as the "Unit." The Unit Assessment Board (UAB) has developed an assessment system which demonstrates that all certification programs are in compliance with the NCATE standards.

Five-Year Academic Program Review

Undergraduate Programs. Following a two year effort by a Program Review Task Force and the Program Review and Assessment Committee (PRAC) of the Undergraduate Curriculum Forum (UCF), the UCF approved a new process for the review of academic programs on a 5-year rotation. The undergraduate program review process is modeled after the successful process at the graduate level. Each department will complete a self-study and provide evidence that it meets the 17 standards. Assessment of student learning and the use of data-based decision making are emphasized throughout the process. The program review includes a site visit by external reviewers in order to provide external perspectives about the program. The process will be phased in over the next three years. PRAC will implement the program reviews with technical assistance from the Office of Assessment and Planning.

Graduate Programs. Graduate programs undergo program review on a 5-year rotation. This process is coordinated by the Academic Standards Committee of the Graduate Council and has proven to be an effective vehicle for maintaining high quality in graduate degree programs.

As part of the graduate program review, programs administer student and alumni surveys. A meta-analysis of alumni and student surveys was conducted to observe trends that occur across programs and to identify key areas in which improvement is necessary. Overall, the scores are very positive. The meta-analysis revealed that programs are improving over time, especially in terms of advisement. For example, a marked improvement was observed over time on the scores of the following three items: (1) "I had opportunities to talk with my advisor about my experiences in this program;" (2) "I felt that my advisor understood and considered my background and prior experiences;" and (3) "My advisor was knowledgeable and provided accurate guidance."

Reviewing and revising the general education program, including developing an institutional plan for understanding what students have learned as a result of the program

In the fall of 1999, the Undergraduate Curriculum Forum (UCF) charged the University-Wide Impact Committee (UWIC) to review general education at Southern Connecticut State University. After three years of extensive research, a UWIC subcommittee produced a report entitled “General Education Review” (<http://www.southernct.edu/committees/ucf/GETF/>), recommending that UCF form a General Education Task Force and charge it with “proposing a coherent general education program based on current thinking and practices . . . [for] a UCF vote and faculty referendum.”

In 2005, after much research and university-wide debate, the General Education Task Force submitted a document entitled “The Liberal Education Program, Southern Connecticut State University” to a general faculty referendum. This document laid the philosophical groundwork of a new approach to general education by advocating a rigorous program of active learning centered on 24 goals: 9 *Competencies*, 9 *Areas of Knowledge and Experience*, and 6 *Values Discussions*. It promised to create an integrated learning experience transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries while also respecting academic traditions of basic skills proficiency, intellectual rigor, and the value and methods of critical inquiry. Over 70% of all full-time faculty voted in favor of adopting these goals for general education at Southern.

Since our interim report to the Commission in 2006, the Liberal Education Program conceptual framework has been operationally defined, student competencies have been identified, and assessment strategies for students as well as the program have been articulated. Two key elements of the Liberal Education Program, the First-Year Experience program and the Writing Across the Curriculum program have been piloted and are now in full implementation.

The 48-credit revised program is prepared for final review and approval by the faculty undergraduate curriculum committee (UCF) in fall 2008 and is slated for faculty referendum in November 2008. The efforts of the General Education Task Force (composed of 9 members elected by the faculty at large) are, at this time, focused on faculty outreach and education to ensure vigorous faculty support.

Program Characteristics

The basic characteristics of the new program that distinguish it from the previous All University Requirements include the following:

Concretely articulated goals – Specific goals and purposes are spelled out for each curricular element of the program. For example, the natural science component of the program has a stated purpose of familiarizing students with science as a method of inquiry and raising their awareness

of the role science plays in critical societal concerns. Specific elements of any course proposed to satisfy the natural science requirements will include understanding scientific inquiry (including the scientific method); learning scientific principles and a coherent body of scientific knowledge; collecting data in a laboratory or field setting and making reasonable scientific interpretations; understanding and using quantitative methods in data analysis; and exploring the relevance of science to understanding and responding to important world issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, genetic engineering, nanotechnology applications, or production and use of energy. The education students receive in natural science should inspire and empower them as individual thinkers and as citizens of an increasingly interconnected world.

Curricular coherence – The curriculum of the new general education program is both sequential and recursive. Academic skills such as written communication, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and technological and information literacy are emphasized in the first year. Areas of knowledge are taught in the second year with reinforcement of written communication and critical thinking as well as other skills. The third year features a capstone founded in one of the areas of knowledge that focuses on discussion of values. Skills are again reinforced. The capstone is designed to integrate learning acquired in the first two years.

Assessment and review – One of the most important characteristics of the new general education program is the commitment to finding out how well the program is working. Are students learning what we think they are? Assessment of student achievement and of the effectiveness of the various components of the general education program takes place on a yearly basis and uses a variety of tools such as competency demonstrations and electronic portfolios.

Dynamic and amendable – The new program is designed to accommodate continuous development. As the results of assessment become available, and as new ideas are generated, the program will evolve in order to make it as effective and as engaging as possible. Faculty teaching in the various components of the program will meet yearly to review and assess the success of their efforts. Action items will be developed and instituted the following year.

Oversight – A faculty committee (elected) and an appointed director will oversee the program. Their basic job is to keep the program on track and in a state of continuous improvement. They will be responsible for seeing that assessment data are collected and that assessment occurs yearly. They will oversee the development of new courses for the program and provide guidance to faculty. And they will recommend changes to the program so that aspects of the program that do not work well are not perpetuated and those that do are.

Flexibility - In dealing with the unique needs of students, including transfer students, and with the special needs of departmental programs, the program will be flexible so that reasonable solutions can be found without undermining the integrity of the students' education. The program should not pose roadblocks to student matriculation.

Curricular Structure

The new curriculum is comprised of three basic groupings.

Competencies – What should an educated citizen be able to do?

Areas of Knowledge and Experience – What should an educated citizen know?

Values Discussions – With what values should an educated citizen be conversant?

In the 2005 referendum, the faculty approved specific subjects for each of these three groups. The new general education program addresses all these throughout the program, intertwining elements from each of these three groups within each individual course. Every course in the program has at least one *Area of Knowledge and Experience*, attends to at least one major *Competency*, and presents at least one *Value Discussion*.

The program progresses through three tiers, each focusing primarily on one of the three groups, while addressing the other two groups as well. The strategy is to begin with the sharpening of basic intellectual skills needed for academic discourse, then to progress to exploration of content areas, and finally to end with a capstone which unites both skills and knowledge in a capstone experience that allows the integration of general education learning.

The new general education program is writing intensive. All Tier 2 courses and the Tier 3 capstone will emphasize written communication as well as critical thinking. In addition, students must take three designated *Writing Across the Curriculum* (W) courses which require a minimum of 5,000 words of student writing, detailed response on the part of faculty, substantial revision, and that the writing be critical or analytical in nature.

Students will begin their first year as part of a learning community associated with a First Year Experience program. There are three pathways available to incoming students: *Inquiry*, which is composed of a seminar (INQ 101)¹ clustered with a composition course (ENG 110, 111, or 112) and a quantitative reasoning course (MAT 95, 100, or 103 etc.), *LINKS*², composed of a cluster of two or three general education courses in which content among the courses is linked, and *Honors*, which consists of the first year requirements of the Honors College taken as part of a learning community.

The program has twenty-four curricular goals addressed within the three tiers. The students pursue each tier in a sequential manner. The summary of how the tiers relate to the curricular goals and a separate summary of how the 48 credits are distributed can be found in the appendix.

¹ INQ 101 is designed to assist first-year students in becoming engaged members of the SCSU community. The seminar explores topics related to the meanings of higher education through a focus on the process of learning how to learn and cultivating the habits of mind for life-long achievement and success. Students practice the process of academic inquiry common to all university disciplines, while exploring their reasons for seeking a university education and the choices they make as first-year students.

² LINKS is a long-standing general education option for students.

Assessment

In the new general education program, assessment is used in an ongoing way to improve the program. Assessment methods are dictated by content and pedagogy, not the other way around. Assessment may take many forms and, as a system, is also susceptible to reform. Assessment methods are to be user-friendly and effective.

Both student achievement and program effectiveness are assessed throughout the three tiers. An electronic portfolio, in which students place their best work at each tier, represents their progression through the entire program and demonstrates their successes vis-a-vis the general education goals; students' selection and justification of material for this portfolio allow them to reflect on their progress and to draw connections among their courses. Competency demonstrations mark the transition from Tier 1 to Tier 2. Papers, presentations, and performances represent student command of content in Tier 2. Final projects in Tier 3 demonstrate student abilities to examine an area of knowledge in light of values discussions. A list of the assessment tools is given below.

- Competency Demonstrations – Tier 1
- Papers, presentations, and performances – Tier 2
- Student Portfolios (electronic) – Tiers 1, 2 and 3
- Final Projects – Tier 3

Competency demonstrations will be either inside or outside courses focusing on the particular competency, and will be assessed by a committee of Tier 1 instructors (fairly compensated) teaching that competency. The English, mathematics, and foreign language departments will design the written communication, quantitative reasoning, and foreign language competency demonstration content respectively. In the program's first few years, the competency demonstration results will be used to calibrate program achievements and expectations; later, a student proficiency level will be a prerequisite for admission into Tier 2 courses to ensure that students have mastered these competencies at an acceptable level. The latter method places responsibility for learning the competencies on the students and helps make the instructor their ally.

The papers, presentations, and performances produced by students in Tier 2 courses will be assessed by the respective instructors. The final projects will be assessed by a committee of Tier 3 instructors (fairly compensated). Yearly assessment of a random sampling of student portfolios, which students could start during their FYE seminar, will yield data on the effectiveness of the program as a whole to allow for program changes and improvement.

Another strategy for program improvement will be for faculty members participating in each goal area to meet annually to compare successes and failures, and to agree on at least one action item that would strengthen student success in that goal area.

Competency Completion Deadlines

To help students become better prepared for, and thus more able to profit from, instruction in Tier 2 courses and in their majors, the preferred model is that students satisfy all of their competency requirements in their first year. However, programs that entail a heavy credit load and students that have developmental issues may require greater flexibility. In light of this caveat, students should satisfy their written communication, critical thinking, and technological fluency requirements by the end of their first year and should not take any Tier 2 courses until those requirements are met. Students should satisfy their quantitative reasoning requirement before the second semester of their sophomore year and before taking any course that includes reinforcement of quantitative reasoning skill. The multilingual requirement should be satisfied by the end of the junior year.

Implementation

Two key components of the new general education program have been implemented: the Writing Across the Curriculum program and the First-Year Experience program. In addition, several projects to enhance the skills of incoming students have been instituted, including a pilot summer math academy and a collaborative program with four local feeder high schools.

The Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) requirement was the first component to be put in place. The new program's structure was initially approved by the Undergraduate Curriculum Forum in 2002. Following a 3-semester pilot program, faculty training workshops, and procedural revisions, the WAC program was fully implemented during the 2007-2008 academic year. After a period of transition from an early L-course requirement, it currently has a sufficient number of faculty and courses certified to meet student need. Sixty-six sections of W courses were taught during spring 2008, and 108 sections are scheduled for fall 2008. Faculty development is available and highly recommended for faculty teaching W-courses. To insure consistency, W-courses are approved solely for the faculty member who authors them. A separate subcommittee of UCF (Writing Across the Curriculum Committee) reviews all W-course proposals. A position of director for the Writing Across the Curriculum program has been developed. Currently, an interim director is in place.

A pilot First-Year Experience program was implemented in fall 2007. All first-year students were part of a learning community, with approximately half of the students participating in a first-year seminar (FYE 101) as part of their learning community. As described in an earlier section, preliminary results suggest that the pilot was successful, and based on extensive formal and informal assessments of the pilot program, several important changes were made for fall 2008, including development of a shared agenda with Student Affairs for co-curricular events, workshops, and discussions; development of an early warning system for students-at-risk; and

distinguishing the outcomes of the FYE program from those of the INQ 101 course. These changes have been approved by the UCF. The FYE program is administered by a director.

In June 2008, we offered an intensive 3-day faculty development program for more than 100 of our faculty, the majority of them teaching in our FYE and WAC programs, with a focus on this type of creative-curriculum-building. We also purposely recruited very visible senior and junior faculty to teach in the FYE program, so that they could begin to bring this competency-based thinking back to other faculty in their departments and other venues (such as the faculty senate and UCF). We are in our second year of the FYE program, and we are offering twice as many learning communities as last year, which means we have recruited twice the number of faculty to teach in these communities. This represents the beginning, perhaps, of a culture change toward thinking of curriculum as competency-based and collaborative.

Implementation Time Table – The new general education program will be fully implemented according to the following time table. An overlap of the All University Requirements and the new general education program will be necessary for several years.

Fall 2008 – Full implementation of the First-Year Experience with INQ101 seminars and learning communities for all entering first-year students. Begin assessment of Writing Across the Curriculum program. Faculty referendum on the complete general education program; continued work on fleshing out implementation details; constitution of general education oversight and monitoring committee.

Spring 2009 – Summer 2009: Curriculum development to meet the new general education program course requirements; Assessment preparations begin. Ongoing assessment of FYE and WAC programs.

Fall 2009 – Courses submitted to approval process (department curriculum committees, school curriculum committees, and Undergraduate Curriculum Forum)

Fall 2009 – Spring 2010 – Courses approved for Tier 1 and Tier 2.

Fall 2010 – Full implementation of Tier 1. Entering cohort of 1200 students will have enough sections of Tier I courses to meet the demand. Curriculum development continues with focus on Tier 3 courses.

Spring 2011 – Assessment of student success in Tier 1 courses. Meetings of Tier 1 faculty to review assessment results and formulate action plan. Results and recommended action plan reviewed by General Education Committee. Proposals for revision forwarded to UCF.

Fall 2011 – Fall 2011 – First cohort enters Tier 2 courses. Sufficient sections will be available to meet student needs. Tier 3 courses submitted for approval.

Spring 2012 – Assessment of student success in Tier 2 courses. Meetings of Tier 2 faculty to review assessment results and formulate action plan. Meetings of Tier 1 faculty to review second year of Tier 1 courses. Results and recommended action plans reviewed by the General Education Committee. Proposals for program revision forwarded to UCF for approval.

Fall 2012 – Cohort enters Tier 3 capstone seminars. Sufficient seminars will be available to meet student needs.

Spring 2013 – Assessment of all three Tiers. Faculty meet to review assessment results and to formulate action plans. General Education Committee reviews assessment results and recommended action plans; forwards any proposals for program revision to UCF.

Continuing to resolve the relationship between the institution and the Online CSU system as it relates to planning, budgeting, and technical support for the growing online programs

Since our 2006 interim report to the Commission, there have been a number of key changes in the technical infrastructure and the administration of online education at SCSU. Most significantly, the administration of online courses has undergone a transition from total control by the Connecticut State University System Office to local control by each of the four universities in the CSUS system. Furthermore, the term “OnlineCSU” is no longer used; rather, each of the four universities and the System Office refer to the entire process as “eLearning” and the course management system as “eLearning Vista.”

Administration and Staff. The system-wide OnlineCSU eLearning Operations Team, which provided oversight of the eLearning enterprise since 2003, has been replaced by the eLearning Leadership Team (eLT), the eLearning Advisory Committee, and eLearning Platform Study Committee to explore and select the next generation of course management tools to be used by the CSUS universities. These teams and committees are composed of Provosts/Vice-Presidents for Academic Affairs, system-wide representatives of the faculty, and system-wide representatives from IT. Dr. Edward Harris, the Dean of the School of Communication, Information, and Library Science and Provost Williams are our primary representatives to the System Office for eLearning.

The eLT, chaired by Provost Williams, has developed a mission, vision, and preliminary plan for expanding the distance learning opportunities available through the four CSUS universities and for developing system-wide policies to guide this development.

The eLearning Vista servers are located at Central Connecticut State University but are managed by personnel reporting to the System Office in Hartford. To support the eLearning Vista Enterprise platform, the System Office employs a database administrator, a UNIX system

administrator, an eLearning Vista administrator, and an applications programmer. However, all implementation takes place locally.

To ensure effective coordination and support of all eLearning paradigms within SCSU, an eLearning Technology Administrator has been in place since the start of the spring 2007 semester. This person is responsible for ensuring that course sections and student registrations are properly uploaded from SCSU's Banner database to eLearning Vista and also serves as the faculty's on-campus point-of-contact for eLearning issues and training. The eLearning Technical Administrator reports to the Coordinator of Instructional Technology.

In July, 2008, a new position called Coordinator of Instructional Technology was created and filled. This position currently reports to the CIO and is responsible for both online and on-ground instructional design, course and materials development, and implementation.

Strategic Planning. The former OnlineCSU had been implemented through a series of Board of Trustee resolutions. With the transfer of authority for online education to SCSU, several major technology and e-Learning initiatives have been identified in the new SCSU University Strategic Plan.

Technical Infrastructure. The following table shows the evolution to more advanced generations of product since 2003.

Object	2003	2006	2007	2008
Database	Banner	Banner	Banner	Banner
Signal Brokering	Mercury Message Broker	Luminis Data Integration Suite	LDIS	LDIS
Portal	Campus Pipeline	Luminis III	Luminis III	Luminis III
eCourse Management	WebCT Campus Edition	WebCT Vista III	Blackboard Vista 4	Blackboard Vista 8 ³

Fees for Online Education. The system fee for online courses for part-time students was eliminated in fall 2007. Since that time, all online course and program development costs have been borne by the individual campuses. The Master of Library Science (MLS)⁴ program continues to charge differential tuition. Although these fees have not yet been allocated back to the program for reinvestment into course improvements, this is a model being contemplated.

Programs and Instruction. The number of faculty teaching online courses continues to increase, even though SCSU does not provide additional compensation for faculty to develop new online courses, as it once did.

³ An update to Service Pack 1 will be completed in Fall '08.

⁴ The MLS continues to be the only degree program available online.

During the 2007-2008 year, 389 SCSU faculty had a Vista course shell, suggesting that they were using Vista as part of their pedagogy in some fashion, as a supplement to on-ground courses, as a hybrid, or fully online courses.

One hundred forty nine (149) fully online courses were delivered during the fall 2007 through the summer 2008 semesters. Sixty-three (63) courses will be offered fully online in the fall 2008 semester.

Faculty Training for Teaching Online Courses. SCSU currently has three staff persons who provide Vista training, supplemented by online tutorials and user guides. SCSU provides workshops on instructional design for all full-time and part-time faculty who teach online.

Ensuring that the doctoral program in educational leadership has adequate numbers of faculty engaged in scholarly activity including research, grant writing, and publishing, has adequate provision for faculty and program development, and has an appropriate level of student selectivity and retention.

The university has offered a doctoral program in Educational Leadership since 2002. The NEASC Commission on Institutions of Higher Education approved the extension of SCSU's accreditation to include the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership in 2003. SCSU submitted a progress report to NEASC in October 2005 that included an institutional overview, the background of the program, its developments since 2003, and its future program plans. Within our Fifth Year Interim Report (August 2006), we highlighted further improvements in the doctoral program. Additionally the Connecticut Department of Higher Education approved the program in February 2006. Finally, the Southern Connecticut State University Graduate Council conducted its first full review of the doctoral program in 2007 and granted continuing approval of the program.

Updated information on areas for special attention regarding the doctoral program are provided in the following section. Additionally, plans for strengthening the program in the future are included.

1- "...ensuring that the doctoral program in educational leadership has adequate numbers of faculty engaged in scholarly activity including research, grant writing and publishing"

Many faculty members who teach in the doctoral program participate in national and international research studies and conferences, and have been active within their fields for years. Eleven of the Department's thirteen current faculty members have taught within the Ed.D. program. Scholarly productivity (2006-2008) of those eleven faculty members includes 15 publications, 25 conference presentations, and 4 grants. The faculty are committed strengthening

their record of scholarship and will make active scholarship an essential criterion for the selection of new faculty in their 2008-09 recruitment efforts. With the program on solid foundation, it will be able to attract teacher-scholars who will add to the scholarly productivity of the department.

2- *“...has adequate provision for faculty and program development”*

The Ed.D. program functions through several strong mechanisms at the departmental level. Direct program oversight is handled by the coordinator of doctoral education, with the provision of six credits of release time per semester. The coordinator works closely with the department chair for organizational management (e.g., scheduling) and both the chair and the dean of the School of Education for strategic leadership (e.g., major decision-making). For day-to-day operations and program development, the coordinator works through committees comprised of department faculty including the Curriculum Committee, Admissions Committee, Standards and Appeals Committee, and ad hoc temporary committees such as the Comprehensive Exam Committee which was assembled in fall 2007 to review and revise the doctoral comprehensive examination for its summer 2008 administration.

At this stage in the program’s life, all basic policies and procedures have been put into place for the smooth functioning of the program (see 2007-2008 Doctoral Policies at www.southernct.edu/departments/edl). Plans for future faculty and program development are included below.

3- *“...has an appropriate level of student selectivity and retention”*

The Ed.D. faculty members have revised admissions procedures since the program’s inception. Three major changes occurred in 2004 and have been implemented during the past two admissions cycles (2006 and 2007):

- Elimination of the Professional Seminar in Educational Dynamics (“Proseminar”)
- Inclusion of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test and elimination of the Miller Analogy Test (MAT). Faculty decided to require the GRE for three years. At the close of those three years, data regarding student performance will be assessed to determine which test best predicts student performance in the Ed.D. program as well as minimum cut-off scores.
- Inclusion of an individual interview with the Admissions Committee. Faculty feel strongly that personal interaction with candidates is essential to determine the following:
 - applicant’s level of intellectual curiosity and reasons for desiring the Ed.D.
 - applicant’s ability to express him/herself verbally
 - applicant’s interpersonal skill level

As of Spring 2006, the Ed.D. program admissions requirements are as follows:

- **Departmental application form** which includes contact information as well as educational and professional background (applicants must demonstrate ability to do academic work as is typically proven by attaining a master's degree, or other equivalent forms of scholarship) including all university transcripts
- **Personal essay** explaining why the applicant is interested in pursuing the Ed.D. and how it fits into the applicant's personal and professional goals
- **Three professional references** from persons who can attest to the applicant's leadership skills and/or potential
- **GRE General Test** which includes verbal, analytical, and written composition sections
- **Interview** with Admissions Committee to assess verbal and interpersonal skills, as well as rationale for applying to the program. An **in-person writing exercise**, completed at the time of the campus interview, was added in Spring 2008 to assess applicant's writing skills, as this was noted as an area of particular weakness in the first four cohorts.

Each of the admissions criteria are ranked for each applicant by each of the four members of the Departmental Admissions Committee individually then collectively. Holistic scoring (a three point scale) is used to assess each criterion. The scores are added together, and the applicants are ranked by total score. Admissions decisions are made by committee consensus.

Faculty recognize the need to attract greater numbers of qualified applicants in order to assist in selecting outstanding candidates. A significant recruitment and public relations campaign is included in future program planning.

Student retention, a serious concern in the first and third years of the program, in particular, has improved in the past two years. A retention rate of 63% over the first three years has increased to 80% in the last two years.

The doctoral program currently has an enrollment of 38 (plus an incoming cohort of 10 in September 2008). There have been 10 degrees conferred in the past three years, with an additional four students in the final stages of dissertation approval. The following table shows the numbers of students currently in each of the three major stages of the program.

Doctoral student (pre-comprehensive exam; completing coursework)	Pre-Candidate (post-comprehensive exam; pre-proposal)	Candidate (post-exam and post- proposal; pre-dissertation)
16	12	10

Numerous initiatives have been undertaken to improve student retention in the past two years, including the following:

- An **increase in the number of electives** in the program, thus allowing students to obtain Intermediate Administrator Certification or Superintendent Certification en route to the doctorate.
- **Individual meetings** are held with each student at the end of each semester in the first two years to discuss strengths, weaknesses, and future dissertation plans.
- The program is designed with a **cohort model**; student survey data results indicate that students have found this model to be of great benefit academically and emotionally, as the groups form supportive peer networks.
- A strong emphasis is placed on **guided experiential learning**. Field experiences are included in several courses, including EDL 702-*Applications in Leadership and Organizational Development*, EDL 708-*Leadership for Social Equity*, EDL 663-*Educational Planning*, and EDL 705-*Qualitative Research Methods*.
- The first annual **doctoral colloquium** was held in Fall 2007. Several doctoral graduates presented their scholarly work as well as “survival tips” to members of subsequent cohorts. This was the first cross-cohort event of its kind, and will continue as an annual opportunity for students to build community, an area of need noted in student feedback.
- A **Doctoral Student Advisory Committee** was formed in Spring 2008 to provide a crucial mechanism for student voice in the program, also a former student concern.
- Each Spring since 2003, a nationally-renowned scholar is invited to present his or her work at a **Doctoral Speaker Series** event on campus.
- Doctoral students will edit and publish research papers they wrote on the topic of equity in education in an **online journal**, with oversight by the Program Coordinator.

Future program planning includes continued efforts toward retention activities based largely on student and faculty feedback.

Strengthening the program in the future

Now entering its seventh year, the Doctoral Program at SCSU has established its basic structural and procedural processes. The next years will consist of a transition phase from “start up” to “institutionalization” in order to ensure program sustainability.

The internal program review conducted in Fall 2007 for the University’s Graduate Council included student surveys, faculty surveys, and data analysis regarding institutional support of the

program. Overall satisfaction with the program is very high among students and faculty, with the major concern of both groups being effective communication among all stakeholders.

Institutional concerns rest in selectivity and retention of qualified students. In Fall 2008, department faculty will continue to engage in conversations with university administration regarding a broader institutional assessment and strategic plan to successfully grow the doctoral program and positively impact the communities we serve in the next decade and beyond. The following action plan for “institutionalization” has been created by doctoral program faculty:

Governance

- Establish mechanisms of institutionalization through SCSU’s Academic Strategic Plan
- Conduct annual student- and faculty-centered evaluation of the program

Communication

- Offer an open forum for student feedback and questions

Academic support

- Establish more extensive public relations, marketing, and recruitment plan to improve quality of applicant pool
- Review GRE scores and academic performance to set appropriate cut-offs
- Implement and assess a revised comprehensive examination
- Offer a greater number of electives within the department and offer electives outside of the department in students’ areas of interest
- Establish increased support for doctoral-level writing through university-wide structures
- Increase library database in the field of educational leadership
- Increase co-teaching among faculty and with doctoral students

Intellectual atmosphere

- Establish funding to support doctoral student participation in regional conferences.
- Increase number of Graduate Assistantships in order to support faculty and student research, etc.
- Establish a doctoral dissertation award
- Organize a “Doctoral Research Colloquium”
- Increase faculty efforts to co-author presentations and co-publish research with students

Faculty development

- Increase professional development for faculty in the area of grantwriting and increase number of grants written
- Develop benchmarks for faculty creative activity and interim indicators of success toward meeting benchmark goals
- Hold professional development workshops regarding criteria for high quality dissertations and how to advise students to meet those criteria for faculty members outside of the department who are serving on dissertation committees as second and third readers.

Southern Connecticut State University remains committed to engaging students and faculty in doctoral education. Program faculty keep abreast of national trends to improve the doctorate, are excited about aligning the program to the university's new Academic Strategic Plan, and look forward to engaging the broader university community in the program's institutionalization stage of development.

Summary

Many positive changes have occurred at Southern since our interim report was submitted to the CIHE in 2006. Many of the plans we wrote about in that report have now been implemented, and significant impact of our efforts can now be seen. Our revised mission and vision reaffirm our commitment to academic excellence, student success, and community engagement. Our ambitious strategic plan has been completed and provides focus to our planning, budgeting, and evaluation activities.

Highlights:

- Completion of the University Strategic Plan for 2007-2012 and establishment of a university-wide oversight and monitoring committee;
- Increased activities related to assessment of student learning as well as increased use of data-driven decision making;
- Construction of a coherent, dynamic liberal education program;
- Full implementation of two key aspects of the new liberal education program: First-Year Experience, Writing Across the Curriculum;
- Complete transition to local control of e-Learning courses;
- Graduation of first cohort of doctoral students and continued program enhancements.

Southern is proud of its accomplishments and anticipates future successes.

APPENDIX A

Excerpts from the Southern Connecticut State University Strategic Plan 2007-2012: Pursuing Excellence, Fostering Leadership., Empowering Communities

Mission Statement

Southern Connecticut State University provides exemplary graduate and undergraduate education in the liberal arts and professional disciplines. As an intentionally diverse and comprehensive university, Southern is committed to academic excellence, access, social justice, and service for the public good.

Fulfilling the Mission

“Pursuing Excellence, Fostering Leadership, Empowering Communities”

As a student-centered institution, Southern regards student success as its highest priority. We seek to instill in all of our students the value of the liberal arts and sciences as a foundation for professional development and life-long learning. Our students receive exemplary professional training and are inspired by the research, scholarship, and creative activity of our teacher-scholars.

Through tradition and innovation, Southern strives to empower every undergraduate and graduate student with the knowledge, skills, and perspectives essential for active participation and impassioned, ethical leadership in our rapidly changing global society. Within the Connecticut State University System, Southern leads the way in graduate education and produces the largest number of graduates in Health/Life Sciences, Education, and Social/Public Services.

Vision Statement

A Model University

Southern Connecticut State University, a student-centered institution, will become nationally recognized as a model center for teaching and learning where faculty engage in outstanding research and creative activity and challenge students to reach their full potential. Our students will be empowered with the academic skills, intellectual tools, practical experiences, and extracurricular programs for success in their chosen fields of study and their life’s work. Keys to their success will be excellence in critical thinking, problem-solving, technological literacy, oral and written communication, cross-cultural competence, global awareness, and collaborative, ethical leadership. We will expand our use of e-learning technologies to provide broader educational access and to introduce our students to technology as a tool for ongoing, interactive learning. Southern will employ best practices in energy conservation, the preservation of nature, and environmental responsibility to reflect our respect for the planet and future generations.

Building on Our Strengths

Southern takes great pride in being the second largest institution of higher education in Connecticut and the leading graduate center in the Connecticut State University System. The institution will foster and promote the important synergies between undergraduate and graduate programs. One of our hallmarks is the unique ways in which graduate programs enrich undergraduate programs and the ways in which the undergraduate liberal arts and sciences provide a foundation for more specialized study. Through careful assessments of our fiscal, human, physical, and technological resources, we will strive to meet the workforce needs of the state and nation, especially in the fields of education, nursing, social/public services, business and STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). At the same time, we will strengthen our liberal arts core and cultivate interdisciplinary programs.

Engagement with Our Community

Through a variety of curricular and extracurricular programs, Southern will become widely known for its contributions to the intellectual, artistic, cultural, and economic growth and vitality of the region. In collaboration with other organizations, we will make significant contributions to closing educational achievement gaps, reducing health disparities, achieving social justice, and preserving our environment. The university will prepare students for social responsibility and global citizenship through the provision of exciting opportunities for community internships, service learning, and expanded international education programs. Southern will also demonstrate itself to be a visible and invaluable resource to the Greater New Haven community and the region, through educational partnerships, professional development opportunities, and community service.

Core Values

- 1. Excellence:** The University values exemplary and distinguished performance in all aspects of University life by all members of the University community, especially in the areas of teaching, learning, scholarship, and service.
- 2. Access:** The University values its responsibility to provide opportunities for individuals with potential and motivation to become productive members of the University community and demonstrates that value by eliminating barriers that hinder full participation.
- 3. Diversity:** The University values an educational and work environment in which individuals and cultures are celebrated and respected for the unique talents, insights, and perspectives that they contribute.
- 4. Student Success:** The University values all students, believes in their potential to achieve, and commits to challenging, supporting, and empowering them to transform their lives.

5. *Life-Long Learning*: The University values the pursuit of knowledge and provides an environment for all individuals to intentionally learn and develop throughout the various phases of their lives.

6. *Community Involvement*: The University values community service, civic engagement, and social responsibility by all university members and encourages the integration of these principles in the learning experiences of students, invites community participation in university affairs, and promotes local, regional, national, and international collaborations.

The Core Values express the campus ideals, those concepts that we believe to be the essential pillars that support the work of Southern Connecticut State University. To sustain these ideals, all members of the campus community must take ownership in and apply these values. It is the principle of shared governance that provides for the unique and specific roles and responsibilities of faculty, staff, administrators, and students in the operation of the university. Embracing this principle makes Southern a community rather than a mere collection of individuals.

Overarching Goals and Initiatives

There are 11 overarching goals that compose our plan. They are:

A. Strengthen undergraduate and graduate academic programs.

A.1. Formulate an Academic Program Plan that establishes clear goals for the advancement of existing academic programs and sets priorities for new and existing resources.

A.2. Develop and implement a cohesive undergraduate General Educational program.

A.3. Promote the development of interdisciplinary courses and degree programs.

A.4. Increase the resources and improve the infrastructure to advance academic excellence in undergraduate majors and graduate programs.

A.5. Allocate resources to the Hilton C. Buley Library based on the needs of academic programs.

A.6. Develop and implement a plan for making the Hilton C. Buley Library the academic hub of the campus.

B. Integrate community engagement, campus activities, and student services into the academic life of students.

B.1. Establishing an Office for Community Engagement and Life-Long Learning to incorporate community activities into the life of the university and offer non-credit learning experiences for the community.

B.2. Develop and implement a plan to more fully integrate other aspects of student life into their learning experiences.

B.3. Adapt student support services to meet the changing needs of students.

B.4. Develop and implement a plan to ensure the full integration of student athletes and the Athletic Program into the fabric of the university.

C. Foster an institutional climate of excellence in teaching, scholarship, and creative activity.

C.1. Expand opportunities for faculty development.

C.2. Improve the organizational infrastructure to support ongoing faculty development throughout a faculty member's tenure.

C.3. Increase the kinds and variety of resources available to support faculty research and creative activity.

C.3.1. Increase resources to support professional leaves.

C.3.2. Increase resources available for professional travel.

C.3.3. Increase the pool of reassigned time for creative activity.

C.4. Establish a Center for Teaching and Learning.

C.5. Increase the resources allocated for the recruitment, orientation, and professional development of new faculty.

C.6. Develop and implement a plan for providing professional development for adjunct faculty and integrating them more fully into the university community.

C.7. Explore innovative ways of reducing faculty teaching load to achieve excellence.

D. Become a regional leader in the use of technology to support student learning.

D.1. Enhance the effective use of technology in the classroom.

D.2. Enhance the University's opportunities for non-place-bound education.

D.2.1. Strengthen the University's existing online programs.

D.2.2. Increase the number and/or percentage of hybrid courses.

D.2.3. Develop distance education programs for the community.

D.3. Create an ongoing program that provides faculty with the knowledge of, and ability to, utilize the various modes of technology-assisted instruction.

D.4. Expand the number of current or proven technologies available to faculty, staff, and students to enhance teaching, learning, and research.

E. Develop an effective plan for student success.

E.1. Develop and implement a First-Year Experience Program that provides students with the foundation they need to achieve their academic, professional, and personal goals.

E.2. Attract and retain a larger percentage of highly qualified students.

E.3. Create an organized and integrated process for enrollment management.

E.4. Improve the quality and integration of undergraduate advisement in the University Advising Center and in academic departments.

E.5. Develop a systematic approach to improving retention, academic achievement, and graduation rates for undergraduate students.

E.6. Manage enrollments to align with a quality educational experience for all students and appropriate workload levels for faculty and staff.

E.7. Develop and implement a plan for optimizing the graduate student experience at Southern.

E.8. Create an Integrated Student Information Center to effectively, efficiently, and respectfully guide students through the administrative processes.

F. Foster a campus climate that respects and celebrates diversity.

F.1. Actively recruit, retain, and support a diverse faculty, staff, and student population.

F.2. Conduct a study of the institution's progress toward achieving diversity and equity in all aspects of the university community.

F.3. Increase resources for new and existing programs and activities to promote diversity in its various forms.

F.4. Expand the activities of the Multicultural Center to enhance the cross-cultural competence of all members of the campus community.

G. Increase funding from external sources to support the University's mission.

- G.1. Determine the institutional priorities from the Strategic Plan that require external funding support.
- G.2. Explore innovative approaches for securing external funds to support the capital development of the University.
- G.3. Create a comprehensive and integrated marketing plan that communicates a clear image of the University's mission and vision to both internal and external constituencies.
- G.4. Define clearly the mission, roles, and goals of University offices responsible for soliciting external funding to ensure coordinated activity.
- G.5. Build stronger relationships with current University supporters and create opportunities for new relationships.
- G.6. Develop a coordinated working relationship among the University Foundation, the Alumni Association, and University Advancement in seeking external funding to support the University.
- G.7. Develop a University-wide community outreach plan.

H. Develop an effective information management system to inform decision-making in all areas of the University.

- H.1. Identify IT functions that are required to meet university needs.
- H.2. Organize IT operations into an architectural framework that facilitates planning.
- H.3. Integrate IT solutions into the business and programmatic functions of the institution to increase the efficiency and effectiveness.
- H.4. Define appropriate roles of personnel and responsibilities for each level of the University IT framework.
- H.5. Allocate appropriate levels of financial and human resources for each layer of the University IT framework to function effectively.
- H.6. Implement processes that support aligning IT solutions to user and organizational needs.
- H.7. Develop and implement a Strategic Information Technology Plan that takes full advantage of existing IT resources, better organizes the deployment of those resources, and builds a sustainable infrastructure to move Southern fully into the 21st century.

I. Strengthen organizational structures and operations to improve institutional effectiveness and communication.

Regarding Service Levels and Optimizing Limited Resources:

I.1. Clarify and redefine reporting structures, responsibilities of units, and accountability.

I.2. Improve administrative support services and reduce the complexity of administrative processes.

I.2.1. Create and disseminate widely a Southern Administrative Manual so that policies and procedures are explicit and available to all employees.

I.2.2. Improve policy and procedure development and implementation, including establishing mechanisms to formalize and regularize the creation and review of all policies.

I.3. Improve institutional effectiveness by providing professional development for all staff and administrators.

I.3.1. Increase resources to support professional leave for staff and administrators to achieve institutional effectiveness.

I.3.2. Increase resources available for professional travel for staff and administrators to achieve institutional effectiveness.

I.3.3. Explore innovative ways to reduce the workload of staff and administrators to achieve institutional effectiveness.

I.4. Review and align staffing levels across the campus in order to improve the quality of service to students, faculty, and the community.

I.5. Improve mechanisms for efficient communication within the University community and its constituent parts regarding all activities and developments at the University. Regarding On-going Strategic Planning and Assessment:

I.6. Institutionalize collaborative strategic planning for the institution in support of its mission.

I.7. Create and maintain an ongoing assessment of the Strategic Plan.

I.8. Develop thoughtful and reliable processes for periodically assessing the performance of programs, faculty, students, staff, and administrators.

J. Ensure a campus that is environmentally responsible, safe, attractive, and conducive to learning and high levels of productivity.

J.1. Develop a clear and comprehensive Facilities Use Plan to optimize space utilization.

J.2. Revise the Facilities Master Plan to reflect existing and projected campus needs.

J.3. Explore new ways to improve energy conservation, sustainability, and greening of the campus.

J.4. Conduct a systematic review of staffing levels and distribution so as to appropriately maintain existing and planned facilities.

J.5. Develop an Emergency Management Plan to ensure the continuing viability of the University in the event of emergencies affecting the institution.

K. Prepare students and faculty for life and work in a global society.

K.1. Design or revise and support curricular and extracurricular programs that enrich inquiry into global issues and broaden cross-cultural perspectives.

K.2. Establish an Office of International Education to increase study abroad opportunities for students and international faculty collaboration.

K.3. Explore new sources of funding to support student study abroad.

K.4. Develop an International Faculty Fellows Program to promote faculty research, teaching, and creative activities abroad.

K.5. Formalize a Visiting International Scholars program.

APPENDIX B

SCSU Liberal Education Program: Summary of Curricular Structure and Goals

Tier 1: Foundations – Tier 1 courses are generally capped at 20 students and focus primarily on systematically providing students with fundamental academic *Competencies* to analyze and communicate effectively about one or more topics selected from the *Areas of Knowledge and Experience* and framed by a *Values Discussion*. In addition to a First-Year Experience seminar, students complete the *Competency* courses listed below in the left-hand column. These courses may be linked, possibly through a common text. Each Tier 1 course also secondarily addresses at least one of the *Competencies* listed under the right-hand column as an embedded competency. To ensure uniformity and rigor, in this tier Written Communication, Quantitative Reasoning, and Multilingual Communication will be taught by the English, Mathematics, and Foreign Language departments respectively.

Competency Courses

Written Communication (writing & reading)
 Quantitative Reasoning
 Technological Fluency
 Critical Thinking
 Multilingual Communication

Embedded Competencies

Information Literacy
 Oral Communication (speaking & listening)
 Interpersonal Effectiveness
 Creative Thinking

Putting the focus on basic competencies first prepares students with the strengths in thinking, communicating, and using technology necessary to thrive in general education and major classes. Providing students the foundations for learning will make teaching at advanced levels more satisfying by reducing uneven levels of student preparation.

Tier 2: Explorations – Tier 2 courses focus primarily on student inquiry into specific *Areas of Knowledge and Experience* listed below, while continuing to develop critical thinking, written communication, and at least one other *competency* listed above. Each Tier 2 course also engages students in at least one *Values Discussion*. Students will take courses in all 9 categories.

American Experience
 Natural World: Physical Realm
 Natural World: Life and the Environment
 Mind and Body
 Social Structure, Conflict, and Consensus
 Creative Drive
 Cultural Expressions
 Global Awareness
 Time and Place

The other faculty-approved *Area of Knowledge and Experience* is Intellectual Foundations. For the Intellectual Foundations component, every Tier 2 knowledge-based course must include at least one primary expository text that is intellectually influential in the course subject area.

Tier 3: Connections – In Tier 3, the student’s general education culminates in a capstone seminar, a course that focuses primarily on engaging students in *Values Discussions* of all six values in the program (listed below) and the relationship among them. The capstone seminar will address one or more real-world problems, with the *Areas of Knowledge and Experience* providing a context and the academic *Competencies* providing the tools for understanding and expression. This course may involve a significant community service component.

Aesthetic Sensitivity	Ethical Judgment
Civic Engagement	Human Diversity
Environmental Awareness	Rational Thinking

Summary of Courses and Course Credits

Tier 1: Foundations (18 Credits)

Students develop facility with foundational *Competencies* necessary for analyzing and communicating about major issues derived from the *Areas of Knowledge and Experience*. *Values Discussions* are introduced. One 100-level course in each of these:

First Year Experience	3 credits
Written Communication (writing and reading)	3 credits
Quantitative Reasoning	3 credits
Multilingual Communication (200-level)	3 credits
Critical Inquiry	3 credits
Emerging Technologies	3 credits

Tier 2: Explorations (27 Credits)

Students explore *Areas of Knowledge and Experience* in depth, engaging in at least one *Value Discussion*. In every course students continue developing critical thinking and writing *Competencies*, as well as at least one other *Competency*. Each course assigns at least one primary expository text to incorporate an “Intellectual Foundations” component. One 200- or 300-level course in each of these:

American Experience	3 credits
Natural World: The Physical Realm	3 credits
Natural World: Life and the Environment	3 credits
Mind and Body	3 credits
Social Structure, Conflict, and Consensus	3 credits

Cultural Expressions	3 credits
Creative Drive	3 credits
Global Awareness	3 credits
Time and Place	3 credits

In order to maximize breadth of exposure to different disciplinary perspectives, students may take no more than one Tier 2 course from a particular department. As in the LINKS Program and the Honors College, connections among courses are encouraged.

Tier 3: Connections (3 Credits)

Students connect material from Tier 1 and Tier 2 in a capstone course designed to probe a contemporary open-ended issue. Students draw on the *Areas of Knowledge and Experience* studied in the program’s first two tiers to work and discuss collaboratively while resolving a conflict, or solving a problem, that engages the program’s six *Values Discussions*. *Competencies* developed throughout the program serve as tools for understanding and expression. The General Education Task Force encourages Tier 3 faculty to coordinate seminars such that they address a common topic but from different disciplinary perspectives.

Capstone: Current Issues in X	3 credits
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