

**Assessment Report:**  
**Summit Program Pilot,**  
**Fall 2001-Spring 2003**

**Report Submitted:**

**August 2003**

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## Assessment Report: Summit Program Pilot\*

### Executive Summary

#### Background

In 1997, the GE Review Task Force was created in response to a WASC recommendation that CSU Stanislaus reexamine its GE program. After gathering data from students, faculty, administrators, and community members, the Task Force identified seven goals for GE at CSUS. The Task Force also held forums at which faculty selected a theme-based cluster model for a pilot for upper-division GE. The Summit Program pilot was established in Fall 2000 as an alternative to traditional upper-division GE.

The seven goals for GE classes identified by the GE Review Task Force and approved by the Academic Senate are as follows: 1) Subject Knowledge, 2) Communication, 3) Inquiry and Critical Thinking, 4) Information Retrieval and Evaluation, 5) Interdisciplinary Relationships, 6) Global or Multicultural Perspectives, and 7) Social Responsibility. All lower and upper division GE courses are required to satisfy goals 1-5 and either 6 or 7. Each Summit cluster was required to satisfy all seven goals.

The Summit Program consisted of clusters with three linked classes developed around a relevant theme: one class from Math/Sciences, one class from Arts/Humanities, and one from the Social Sciences. Classes were capped at 40 students and would be offered sequentially over three terms. Students would enroll in the first class in the cluster and then would be guaranteed enrollment in the second and third classes. Students would take all three classes together as a learning community; no new students would be added to the second and third classes. Students enrolling in the program signed a learning contract that specified that they were expected to successfully complete all three classes to receive upper-division GE credit for areas F1, F2, and F3. If a student dropped out of the cluster, the student could use the completed courses for elective units but not to fulfill upper-division GE requirements. Participating faculty experimented with various time offerings and various ways to integrate their classes.

In Fall 2001, three clusters began; two additional clusters were added in Fall 2002. (For a complete list of clusters, see pp. 7-8.)

The learning goals of the Summit Program were similar to the learning goals for traditional upper-division GE courses. However, through the cluster approach, the Summit Program developed learning communities where students spent three courses with the same students and worked closely with faculty over the three courses. This was intended to develop a sense of community to help integrate students into the academic and social life of CSUS. This integration into the academic and social life of the University ultimately should assist in improving retention rates for these students. In addition, by focusing on one theme from three perspectives in an interactive environment, the goal was to increase

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student learning and to encourage a higher-order of thinking skills.

### Challenges

The two greatest challenges of the pilot were recruiting students and maintaining enrollment. Despite efforts to reach on-going CSUS students, very few enrolled in the program. Students were recruited at the summer transfer orientations, making the pilot, in actuality, a first-year experience program for junior transfers. Maintaining enrollment across three terms was also a challenge. Of the 176 students who began the Summit Program, 77% successfully completed all three classes. When students dropped out of the program, this had a negative impact on long-term groups to which the students belonged and a negative impact on the FTES of departments whose faculty taught the latter courses in the cluster.

### Assessment

To assess the program, surveys were administered to students and faculty in nine traditional upper-division GE classes and to Summit students and faculty at the end of each semester (see pp. 10-13 for quantitative results). Summit students were also asked to provide comments about the program on each survey (see pp. 13-19 for qualitative results). Finally, student work, including capstone projects, service learning projects, written portfolios, and oral reports, were assessed using a rubric developed from the seven goals of GE (see pp. 19-20 for outcomes assessment).

Conclusion: Assessment Goals of the Summit Program (For a detailed discussion, see pp. 23-26.)

1. The first assessment goal for the Summit Program was to determine whether this integrated approach improved student learning and brought students to a higher order of thinking skills. This study has indicated that both traditional upper-division GE and Summit classes were successful at meeting the goals of GE. Summit clusters, especially those in which each course built on the knowledge of the previous course, resulted in students reaching a deeper level of understanding of a subject.
2. The second assessment goal was to determine whether these upper-division learning communities improved retention of upper-division students. Although it is difficult to accurately determine retention rates so quickly after the pilot was completed, it appears that students who completed the Summit Program re-enrolled or graduated at a rate equal to or higher than junior transfers university wide (see pp. 20-22 for a discussion of retention).
3. The third assessment goal was to determine whether faculty participants felt a greater sense of community than did faculty in traditional upper-division GE courses. No faculty from traditional upper-division GE courses were surveyed as to their sense of community with other faculty teaching upper-division GE classes, but Summit faculty

indicated that they had been enriched by the collaboration and by the personal relationships that had been established.

4. The fourth assessment goal was to determine whether the clusters had increased and improved student-student interaction and student-faculty interaction. Results indicated that increased student-student interaction and student-faculty interaction were highly valued by students, with increased student-student interaction being a highlight of the program. (This data was reflected in student qualitative comments. See pp. 14-19 and 29-35.)
5. The fifth assessment goal was to determine whether students in the pilot felt more motivated and more satisfied about their education. The quantitative results indicated that traditional upper-division GE students were more satisfied with their GE courses than were Summit students. However, Summit students, although their ratings were lower than those of traditional upper-division GE students, indicated a high degree of satisfaction with their courses (4.03 on a 5-point scale as compared to 4.33 for traditional upper-division GE students). The satisfaction scores must be interpreted in light of the different expectations students experienced in the Summit Program. Summit faculty indicated they had higher expectations for student study time, and Summit students reported that they had studied more and worked more hours outside of class with classmates than did traditional upper-division GE students. Motivation can be seen in the extra hours studied and in the student responses that indicated the courses encouraged life-long learning.
6. The sixth assessment goal was to determine whether the benefits of the program are such that expanding and institutionalizing the program are worth the money and effort that will need to be expended. The Summit Program offers a unique experience, especially in terms of building a sense of community among students, between students and faculty, and among faculty members. Learning was affected in that students reported achieving a deeper level of understanding as a result of the integrated courses. To build on these strengths but also to add flexibility to scheduling so that more students can take advantage of the Summit Program and to address the difficulty with maintaining enrollments in the courses, it is recommended that the Summit Program continue as an alternative to traditional upper-division GE but with some changes. To replace the linking of three courses over three terms, faculty should be encouraged to develop paired courses to be offered in Fall-Winter combinations. Students could enroll in a Fall course that meets their schedule and plan on a Winter course without having the difficulty of having a set time for the Summit class in their Spring schedule. This should allow student enrollment numbers to remain more consistent, helping department FTES. With the paired courses, students should experience most of the benefits of belonging to a learning community.

Because of these changes, it is recommended that the program be reassessed after three additional years. At that point, if the program is successfully meeting the goals of GE while providing a valuable learning and community-building experience, the

program should be fully institutionalized with budgetary support for faculty who participate in the program and for departments that offer courses in the program.

To administer the Summit Program and to work with faculty to develop the paired classes, it is recommended that the faculty coordinator receive 6 units of release time per year and a budget of \$6,000 per year.

## Assessment Report: Summit Program Pilot

### Background

In 1997, in response to a WASC recommendation that CSU Stanislaus reexamine its General Education program, the Provost established the General Education Review Task Force. The charge of this Task Force was to review the current GE program and suggest changes that would help the university become more learning-centered. For over two years, the Task Force discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the current program, requested information from students, faculty, and community members, reviewed innovative ideas from other campuses, and held campus forums. At the first forum, approximately 65 faculty participants agreed that the campus should focus on an innovative program for upper-division GE. At the second forum, the Task Force presented three curricular models. Faculty participants supported a theme-based cluster model as an alternative to the current smorgasbord approach to upper-division GE.

The following seven goals for GE were identified by the GE Review Task Force: 1) Subject Knowledge, 2) Communication, 3) Inquiry and Critical Thinking, 4) Information Retrieval and Evaluation, 5) Interdisciplinary Relationships, 6) Global or Multicultural Perspectives, and 7) Social Responsibility. It was recommended that all lower and upper division GE courses be required to satisfy goals 1-5 and either 6 or 7. Each cluster in the new pilot would be required to satisfy all seven goals.

In 1999-2000, the Task Force presented a report to the Provost and the Academic Senate. In January 2000, the Academic Senate approved both the goals for General Education and a pilot program for a theme-based cluster approach to courses in the upper-division GE program. This pilot was to run from Fall 2001 through Spring 2003.

In July 2000, the Provost sent a team composed of CSU Stanislaus faculty and administrators to attend the AAHE Summer Academy in Utah. The team goals were to develop the characteristics and criteria for the cluster program and develop an assessment procedure for the pilot.

The vision of the AAHE team was ultimately to ensure that the pilot would become a permanent option for those students who did not want a smorgasbord approach to upper-division GE. The cluster program, named the Summit Program, would be founded on values of academic excellence and a commitment to students working with faculty and with other students to explore and share ideas as a community of scholars. It was hoped that a learning community with relatively small classes would encourage interaction among students and between students and faculty, thus helping integrate students into the academic and social life of the University, increase student learning, and encourage a higher order of thinking skills. A pragmatic goal was to assist in retaining and graduating upper-division transfer students since approximately 14% of upper-division transfer students were not being retained to the second year and only about 70% were graduating after completing three years at CSUS.

A number of large, longitudinal research studies show that learning communities and clustered or linked classes not only increase student satisfaction and enhance long-term learning but also substantially increase retention in colleges and universities of all types and sizes. (For a review of these studies, see: Shapiro, N. S., & Levine, J. H. (1999). Creating learning communities. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.) It was hoped that linking upper-division GE courses, limiting enrollment in those courses, and providing a sense of community for students and faculty would bring significant rewards to the students and faculty and to the campus as a whole, rewards in terms of learning, interaction, community-building, and retention of students.

### **Characteristics of the Summit Program Pilot**

- Clusters composed of three courses, one from Math/Sciences, one from Arts/Humanities, and one from the Social Sciences, would be developed around a compelling and relevant theme that reflected the mission and goals of GE at CSU Stanislaus. These courses would be offered sequentially over three terms.
- Classes within the cluster would have the option of also meeting the multicultural GE requirement (Area G).
- There would be no more than three 3-course clusters in 2001-2002; these clusters would be offered again in 2002-2003, at which time no more than two new clusters would be added.
- Each course in a cluster must be able to accommodate up to 40 students. Students would take all three classes in the cluster together as a learning community; no new students would be added to the second and third classes. If a student dropped out of the cluster, the student could use the completed courses for elective units but not to fulfill upper-division GE requirements.
- For the pilot, at least one cluster would be offered in Fall-Winter-Spring terms. Fall-Spring-Fall proposals would also be considered. To facilitate scheduling, it was recommended that cluster courses be offered at the same time each semester so students could plan their time for the entire year.
- In order to participate in the pilot, a department could offer three upper-division GE courses (as opposed to the traditional limit of two courses).

### **Assessment Goals of the Summit Program**

The assessment goals were as follows:

1. To determine whether this integrated approach has improved student learning and brought students to a higher order of thinking skills;
2. To determine whether this upper-division learning community has improved retention of upper-division students;
3. To determine whether faculty participants feel a greater sense of community than do faculty in traditional upper-division GE classes;
4. To determine whether these clusters have increased and improved student/student interaction and student/faculty interaction;
5. To determine whether students in the pilot feel more motivated and more satisfied about their education;

6. To determine whether the benefits of the program are such that expanding and institutionalizing the program are worth the money and effort that will need to be expended.

### **Development of the Summit Program**

In Fall 2000, a request for proposals was sent to all faculty. In addition, two informational meetings were held so interested faculty could meet colleagues from across campus who were also interested in developing courses.

The following three clusters were proposed and accepted by the GE Subcommittee:

1. Waking Up to Nature: Ethics, Ecology, and Restoration  
 PHIL 4050: Environmental Ethics, Dr. Andy Young  
 BIOL 4050: Ecosystem Case Studies, Ms. Tommi Lou Carosella  
 GEOG 4050: Restorative Human Ecology, Dr. Ida Bowers
2. The Real World: A Theatrical Work in Progress  
 CHEM 3170: Real World Chemistry, Dr. Koni Stone  
 ACCT 3170: Real World Accounting, Dr. Steven Filling  
 DRAM 3170: Real World Theatre: Comic Improvisation, Dr. John Mayer
3. War & Peace  
 ENGL 3550: Years of War, Days of Peace: Post-1945 Literature and Film, Dr. Renny Christopher  
 COMM 3550: News from the Front: Media and Public Perception, Dr. John Sumser  
 PHYS 3550: Physics for War, Physics for Peace, Dr. Ian Littlewood

In January 2001, Summit faculty met for a two-day workshop with Dr. Marie Eaton of Western Washington University. Dr. Eaton was hired as a consultant through a grant secured from the Chancellor's Office. Dr. Eaton worked with faculty to develop their courses and integrate them around their theme. To provide the diversity of times indicated in the pilot proposal, one cluster was a Monday-Wednesday-Friday cluster meeting Fall-Winter-Spring, one cluster was a Tuesday-Thursday cluster also meeting Fall-Winter-Spring, and the third cluster was an evening cluster meeting Fall-Spring-Fall.

Faculty not only experimented with various time configurations but also with various models of integration. The faculty in Waking Up to Nature decided to integrate their cluster with a group project that extended across all three terms, culminating in a presentation or poster session. The faculty in The Real World decided to all participate in each other's classes. One professor would be the primary instructor for the semester, but the others would also teach several sessions in that semester. Students would be graded on all that was taught that semester, including material from all three subjects. The culminating project was a theatre production. The faculty in War & Peace decided to all teach 3-4 weeks in each semester. One professor would be the professor of record, and the course would be listed in his/her department. The grade for each semester would be given by the professor of record but would include grades achieved in all three parts of

the course. Therefore, students were exposed to all three subjects and graded on all three subjects in each semester. Students were to complete a portfolio over the three semesters. If a student dropped out of the Summit Program after one semester, the course successfully completed could be used as elective units, not to fulfill upper-division GE requirements.

These three clusters began in Fall 2001. In Fall 2001 a second request for proposals went out to faculty. As a result, two additional clusters were accepted for the second year of the pilot. Those faculty attended a workshop in January 2002. Two clusters, one consisting of courses in the Honors Program and the other meeting the needs of Liberal Studies students, were added:

1. Humans in the Information Age  
 BIOL 4350: DNA: The Code of Life, Dr. Janey Youngbloom  
 COGS 4350: The Information of Meaning, Dr. Tom Carter  
 PHIL 4350: Human Interest and the Power of Information, Dr. Chris Nagel
2. Perceptions: How We See the World  
 HUM 4740: Perceptions of Culture, Dr. Arnold Schmidt  
 HIST 4740: Comparative World Women: Perceptions of Gender, Dr. Marjorie Sanchez-Walker  
 PHYS 4740/4743 (Activity Course): Physics of Perception, Dr. Marvin Johnson

In Fall 2002, the War & Peace cluster was finishing its Fall-Spring-Fall cycle, Waking Up to Nature and The Real World began their second offering, and the above two clusters began for the first time.

While the assessment report is being considered by faculty governance in Fall 2003, three clusters elected to continue for 2003-2004: Waking Up to Nature, Humans in the Information Age, and War & Peace. War & Peace moved to a Fall-Winter-Spring schedule because the Fall-Spring-Fall schedule proved problematic in maintaining enrollment. That cluster is offered at night once again to accommodate evening students. Dr. Scott Davis replaced Dr. Renny Christopher for the English course.

The Summit Program budget was as follows:

- 2000-2001: \$14,588, including 6 units of release time for the coordinator
- 2001-2002: 18,893, including 6 units of release time for the coordinator
- 2002-2003: 5,000. (The coordinator received 3 units of release time from the Dean of ALS, which is not included in these budget figures)

## Challenges

### Recruiting Students

Recruiting students was the biggest challenge for the Summit Program Coordinator. For the first year of the pilot, a brochure was developed and mailed to all currently enrolled students at CSU Stanislaus who had earned between 35 and 50 credit hours. In addition, articles about the program were featured in The Signal, The Turlock Journal, and The Modesto Bee. Students were instructed to go to First-Year Programs to receive an add form and sign a learning contract. The learning contract indicated their commitment to a learning community and their knowledge of the rule that if a student did not complete all three courses in the cluster, the courses completed could be used as electives but not to fulfill upper-division GE requirements.

Very few on-going students enrolled in the program. Most students were recruited from the new student transfer orientations, making this program in actuality a first-year experience for transfer students. Recruiting for transfer students was done at the summer transfer orientations. Each student at the orientations received a brochure, the coordinator or a faculty member spoke to all students about the program, and the coordinator, faculty members, and staff circulated among the students as they were being advised and selecting their schedules. Having students available at an orientation session in which they could receive an in-person explanation of the program proved crucial to encouraging enrollment. No such opportunity currently exists to speak to on-going students, making it difficult to acquaint them with a new program and encourage enrollment in it.

For the second year of the program, a brochure was again developed. Since mailing brochures to currently-enrolled students had not been successful, the Summit faculty spoke to their colleagues and the coordinator met with other faculty and advisors. Each was given brochures and an advising worksheet that identified the nature of the program and the specific courses in the program. To facilitate registration, students could register on the STAN line and the coordinator would attend the first class of the semester with the learning contracts. This method also was unsuccessful since very few on-going students enrolled. Consequently, almost all the students were recruited from the new student transfer orientations using the same method as the previous year.

In September 2002, Summit faculty met to discuss the difficulty recruiting students. It was recommended that a survey about the program be administered to students and faculty. A brief survey was completed by 184 students in traditional upper-division GE classes and by 23 faculty members. When faculty were asked if they advised students to enroll in the Summit Program, 70% indicated that they did not advise students to enroll in Summit Program. Of that 70%, 12% said they did not know about the Summit Program and 56% said they did not advise enrollment in the Summit Program because of the lack of flexibility in the program.

When students were asked why they had not enrolled in the Summit Program, 64% indicated that they were unaware of the program. Students who knew about the program but chose not to enroll in it cited these as reasons:

The courses in the Summit Program did not interest me—25%

The times the courses were offered conflicted with courses in the major—25%

My work or other responsibilities conflicted with the times—19%

I did not want to commit to 3 courses—15%

My advisor recommended I take other GE courses—13%

(No distinction was made in this survey between on-going students and transfer students.)

### **Maintaining Enrollment**

Maintaining enrollment across three terms was the second challenge of the Summit Program. A total of 176 students enrolled in the 7 clusters over the 2-year pilot. The students who successfully completed the program with passing grades in all three courses totaled 135 (77%).

Since faculty had experimented with various types of integration and time blocks, the evening cluster proved to be especially problematic. It was scheduled for Fall-Spring-Fall, requiring students to commit to three semesters over two school years. Furthermore, the cluster had integrated by having each faculty member teach 1/3 of each semester. Having a large amount of material from three different disciplines in short blocks proved difficult for students. For example, they had difficulty transitioning from reading several books for the English portion in the first few weeks to doing Physics calculations in the next few weeks. Faculty restructured the cluster and are offering it again in evenings during Fall 2003 on the Fall-Winter-Spring format. (When this cluster is eliminated from the student completion statistics, successful completion rates for students in all other clusters total 84%.)

The difficulty maintaining enrollments across the three semesters resulted in the latter courses in the cluster have low enrollments. This presented a hardship to departments in meeting their FTES targets.

## **Assessment**

### **Quantitative Results**

A survey was administered to students in 9 traditional upper-division GE courses, 3 from Math/Sciences, 3 from Arts/Humanities, and 3 from the Social Sciences, for a total of 291 students. Summit students completed the same survey with an additional request for comments at the conclusion of each of their courses. Summit responses totaled 395. Students were asked about their reason for taking the course, the amount they had studied outside of class, their perceptions about how the class had met each of the goals of GE, and their satisfaction with the course. Student responses were analyzed using a One-way ANOVA, with a .05 significance level.

## Student Responses

Reason for selecting the course. Concerning the students' reasons for selecting the course, the number one response from students in traditional upper-division GE courses was because it complemented their major (45%). The second choice was that it fit their schedule (25.4%). The number one response for Summit students was because they found the subject interesting (41%), followed by the answer that the subject complemented their major (26%).

Amount of study time. Another difference in the perceptions of traditional upper-division GE students and Summit students was in their study habits. When asked how many hours outside of class they studied for the course, the top two answers for traditional upper-division GE students were that they studied 1-3 hours per week (69%) and less than 1 hour per week (26%). Summit students indicated that they studied 1-3 hours per week (53%) and 3-6 hours per week (26%). When students were asked how many hours they spent working with classmates outside the class for this course, traditional upper-division GE students indicated none (38%) and 1-5 hours (31%). Summit students indicated that they spent 1-5 hours (43%) and 5-10 hours (25%).

Degree of challenge. A review of the results indicates a statistically significant difference in student perceptions of the degree of challenge the courses provided. Summit students perceived the courses to be more challenging than did traditional upper-division GE students (see Appendix A).

Amount of in-class participation. Another statistically significant difference is that Summit students perceived they had participated more in class than had traditional upper-division GE students (see Appendix A). This finding is not surprising given the small class size of Summit classes and the emphasis faculty placed on providing opportunities for interaction.

Expected grade. Students differed slightly in the grades expected from the classes. Traditional upper-division GE students indicated that they expected the following: A (53%); B (33%); and C (9.6%). Summit students indicated they expected the following: A (45%); B (44%); and C (8%).

In-class interactions with faculty. Summit students indicated that they participated significantly more with their instructors in class than did traditional upper-division GE students (see Appendix A). Again, this finding can be explained by the small class size and emphasis on interaction in Summit classes.

Goals of GE. Only one goal of GE resulted in a statistically significant result. Traditional upper-division GE students perceived they had a greater knowledge of the subject matter than did Summit students. Traditional upper-division GE and Summit students found their courses to be similar in meeting the other goals of GE (see Appendix A). Student qualitative comments shed some light on the finding that traditional upper-division GE students perceived that they had a greater knowledge of the subject matter

than did Summit students. It appears that students perceived “subject knowledge” in terms of breadth of information rather than depth of information. Integration of three classes on one theme may lead students to perceive that they have acquired less subject knowledge. However, qualitative comments revealed that integration of courses led to a deeper understanding of the theme for many students and an increased desire to continue learning about the topic (see pp. 15-16 and 30-32 for student comments).

Satisfaction. Traditional upper-division GE students did rate their courses as more satisfying than did Summit students (see Appendix A). An examination of the data indicate that the average satisfaction rating for tradition upper-division GE students was 4.33 out of 5 points whereas Summit students rated their satisfaction at 4.06. These lower satisfaction scores for Summit classes may reflect the increased degree of challenge reported by students and the increased amount of work students indicated doing in Summit classes. In addition, faculty found that classes needed to be refined after the first year of the pilot, which could have affected student satisfaction the first year.

### Faculty Responses

Faculty from the traditional upper-division GE classes used for the student survey were asked to complete a similar survey to that which the students completed. Summit faculty were also asked to complete the survey at the end of each class. All Summit faculty members in the cluster present on the day questionnaires were administered completed the questionnaire. Traditional upper-division GE faculty completed 8 surveys, and Summit faculty completed 27 surveys. (The small sample size must be considered when interpreting these results.)

Class size. One difference between traditional upper-division GE courses and Summit courses was in class size. Of the traditional upper-division GE faculty, 63% said their class was over 40 students. Summit classes were capped at 40 students but realistically had about 20-25 students per class. When asked to assess how the class size contributed to learning, traditional upper-division GE faculty indicated that it was too large (63%) and Summit faculty indicated that it was about right (82%).

Study expectations. Summit faculty expected students to study more hours outside of class than did traditional upper-division GE faculty. The top two amounts of time indicated by Summit faculty were 1-3 hours per week (41%) and 3-6 hours per week (41%). Traditional upper-division GE faculty indicated they expected 1-3 hours per week (63%) and 3-6 hours per week (38%). Summit faculty also expected students to spend more time working with classmates outside of class: 10-20 hours over the semester (30%); 1-5 hours over the semester (26%). Traditional upper-division GE faculty expected no hours over the semester (50%) or 1-5 hours (25%).

Degree of challenge. A statistically significant difference found between the responses of Summit faculty and traditional upper-division GE faculty was that Summit faculty perceived their courses to be more challenging than did traditional upper-division GE faculty (see Appendix A).

Goals of GE. Tradition upper-division GE and Summit faculty were very similar in their perceptions as to how their classes met the goals of GE, except for how their classes met GE goal 5, Interdisciplinary Relationships. Summit faculty perceived their courses to meet this goal to a greater extent than did traditional upper-division GE faculty (see Appendix A). This finding is logical given the integration required in Summit classes.

## **Qualitative Results**

During the last week of each semester, students in the Summit Program not only completed the quantitative survey, but they also were asked for qualitative comments based on the following prompt: Please share your ideas about the Summit Program—anything you liked, found helpful, etc., and anything you think should be altered. Should we continue the program in future years? Why or why not?

Other methods used to gather qualitative data included focus groups of Summit students and open forums for the University community.

Student comments were divided up into segments that reflected different ideas. From these comments, nine categories emerged:

- Good Idea
- Student-Student and Student-Faculty Interaction
- In-depth Study/Higher-level Thinking
- Integration
- Nature of Instruction
- Scheduling
- Adjustment to CSUS
- Relevance
- Amount of work

Because the prompt asked if the program should be continued, most students began their comments addressing this issue. Most comments were positive, however students who disliked the program probably had dropped before the questionnaire was administered. The exception to this was the Honors Program students. One Summit cluster was embedded in the Honors Program curriculum. Therefore, Honors students were required to complete that particular Summit cluster if they wanted to complete the Honors Program curriculum. Several of these students were very critical of the Summit Program. For the most part, however, students were positive, and if they had a recommendation for change, that recommendation was usually accompanied by a positive comment to continue the program. The suggestions for improvement mostly concerned how the courses were integrated and the scheduling. Below is a description of each of the nine categories with student comments for each category and subcategory. Additional student examples can be found in Appendix B.

## Good Idea

Student comments in the Good Idea category reflected two themes. The first was that classes were interesting and enjoyable. The second was that the Summit Program was an easy way to complete upper-division GE.

Classes interesting and enjoyable. One student expressed that classes were interesting in this way: “I’ve enjoyed the experience. Found it entertaining, enlightening, and the beginning for building other skills.”

Easy way to complete upper-division GE. Because the Summit Program provided three classes to complete all of upper-division GE, some students pointed to this as an easy way to complete the requirement: “I think the program should definitely be offered in future years. As a transfer student, I was really worried about what classes to take as my upper GE. This class made it simple and easy.”

## Student-Student and Student-Faculty Interaction

With this second category, Student-Student and Student-Faculty Interaction, student comments emphasized four themes. Students felt that they experienced increased class participation and diversity of perspectives, they reported increased interaction with faculty, they pointed to increased comfort in asking questions and working with peers, and they felt that the learning community increased their learning and success in their classes.

Increased class participation and diversity of perspectives. An example of a response that pointed to increased class participation is as follows: “I love the Summit Program. It’s great to have the same classmates as the previous semester. I feel more comfortable sharing my comments and ideas. We get great discussions going and we hear different perspectives.”

Increased interaction with faculty. Summit students reported that they had increased interaction with faculty, as stated by this student: “I liked the increase in teacher-student activity as compared with other courses I have taken. The presence of multiple teachers with various viewpoints helped me see things from different angles.”

Increased comfort in asking questions/working with peers. Being in a learning community with the same students made it easier for some students to interact with their peers, as can be seen from the following comment: “Being with the same students makes you feel comfortable working outside of class and asking for help because you’ve really gotten to know them.”

Increased learning/success in class: Some students reported that the learning-community environment also enabled them to learn more easily: “I like the personal relationships between the students and faculty that are formed. The small size and with

the same people throughout the year is a good way to get people involved and learning more.”

### In-depth Study/Higher-level Thinking

Student comments in the category of In-depth Study/Higher-level Thinking reflected two themes. The first is that students reported studying topics in depth, and the second is that they felt the Summit classes had an influence on their critical thinking ability.

Study topics in depth. Students in the Summit Program appreciated the opportunity to study topics in depth, pointing to the value of such study in promoting lifelong learning: “The Summit Program is extremely helpful in reaching students at a level that will stay with them even after the program is over. What I and the rest of us learned was so much more in depth than any other class. I will continue my interest and learning in this area lifelong. The program really opened my eyes to perspectives I never would have realized on my own.”

Influence on critical thinking. Some Summit students felt they had learned to think about issues in different ways: “The professor did a very good job. He has taught me completely new ways to think. I think this group of courses is so important that it should be a requirement for all students.”

### Integration

In the category of Integration, student comments reflected five themes. Many felt that integration of subjects promoted learning, was interesting, and allowed them to view multiple perspectives. In contrast, some students felt that the integration was repetitive, and others felt that classes were not integrated enough.

Integration of subjects promoted learning. Students commented that having classes build on one another promoted learning: “I think the Summit Program is terrific for various reasons, one is that the course subjects are related to one another so the knowledge one gains in one course, you can apply it on the next one. Great Success!!”

Integration was interesting. Students mentioned that having courses integrated led them to study things they might not have chosen: “I like having a common idea that connects all of the upper GE classes. I really dreaded taking all of my upper level GE separately, but with a common ground/link the courses were interesting and made me want to learn fields that I had no previous interest in. I think that the program should be continued as an option for the students who may want a common ground.”

Integration allowed for multiple perspectives. Looking at a subject from three perspectives was a benefit for students, as explained by this student: “The Summit Program has been an interesting way to evaluate the theme. It was nice getting three different perspectives and having these integrate. I feel that I have been well informed.”

Integration was repetitive. There were students who thought that looking at a topic for three semesters was too repetitive, for example, “In my opinion, once you take any class or subject, why should we have to see it again for the next two semesters?”

Classes were not integrated enough. Some students appreciated the integration of the courses but wanted to see it done more effectively: “I honestly don’t think the three classes were as connected as they should have been. I would have enjoyed them more if there were common thematic qualities between the three.” Still other students wanted all three faculty members present for all the classes. When this wasn’t possible, they were disappointed: “Although one instructor went through all three classes, the absence of the other two was not because of disinterest but of scheduling conflicts. This should be addressed. I believe had these instructors been present, the overall effect would have been better.”

### Nature of Instruction

Students had mixed comments in the category titled Nature of Instruction. Their comments reflected five themes. First, they spoke about the teaching style of professors as being available and enthusiastic and creating an open atmosphere in the classes. They had mixed comments about wanting more lectures or more discussion. Summit faculty had experimented with different ways to integrate their courses. One approach was to integrate with a group project that extended across all three semesters. Another type of integration was to have all three faculty members teaching some part of each semester. Students had suggestions for improvement in both of these types of integration. Finally, reflecting that this was a new program, students had comments about unclear expectations.

Teaching style: Available, enthusiastic professors/open atmosphere. Students appreciated the enthusiasm and availability of their professors, as one student summarized: “I have found the instructors to be not only knowledgeable on the subject but very enthusiastic and supportive of one another. They have all made themselves available to the students.” The atmosphere of Summit classes was described as open, encouraging student participation: “The instructors were all so open and knowledgeable in their subjects and made the class so interesting and challenging. I was never intimidated to speak up even if I had a question.”

Teaching style: Lecture, discussion. Some students wanted more discussion: “I would have liked to have more discussion rather than lectures. Also group activities should be prompted more, perhaps.” But some students felt they could learn the material better through more lectures: “I felt sometimes the class time wasn’t used wisely and therefore resulted in lower test scores, but this was due to conversation and interaction which can be looked at as a good thing.”

Integration through a group project. Students who were involved in year-long group projects stressed the need for more in-class time to work on their projects: “The only thing I think should be altered is the amount of time given for the group project. I

strongly feel that we needed a lot more time to develop and present our topic—in order to produce quality work.” Students also were frustrated when students in their groups dropped out mid-year: “I do not think that the cumulative group projects are a good idea. My group lost two people throughout the course of this program and that was very frustrating! However, my suggestion is that people have individual projects due on different issues each semester so they can develop a better understanding of more than one issue!”

Integration through intermixing classes during each semester. Some students found that intermixing classes during a semester was difficult for them: “I do like the idea of this program but certain things should be changed. The continuous intervening of the other teachers coming in to teach another subject when you are doing one subject, it’s too difficult to completely change thinking mode and take a test for the subject matter of the previous or next semester.” Other students felt that the presence of more than one instructor in the room was distracting. One student explained it in this way: “At times I thought the other teachers distracted from the primary teacher of this semester. It was nice toward the middle and the end of the semester, but at first it was distracting because it took a while to really get into the primary subject.”

Unclear expectations. Students pointed to the need for clarifying expectations, as this student said, “The teachers need to be more organized. We weren’t always sure what was expected of us concerning some of the work. Also we weren’t kept informed of what kind of grade we were carrying.”

### Scheduling

Students had a variety of comments about scheduling. Their comments reflected five themes. Some students appreciated the guaranteed enrollment while others found it hard to schedule around the Summit classes. Some students wanted longer time blocks for classes. Students had mixed reactions to the inflexibility of the Summit contract. At the beginning of the program, all students signed a learning contract indicating their awareness that should they drop out of the program, they could count the courses they had completed as electives but not for upper-division GE credit. They would then be required to return to the menu and complete a course in areas F1, F2, and F3. Some students found this contract too inflexible while others wanted to have more stringent penalties for those who dropped out. Finally, students in the Honors Program had comments about the negative results of requiring Honors students to complete one specific Summit cluster, without any choice.

Guaranteed enrollment/simplifies scheduling. Some students appreciated having their second and third Summit courses guaranteed once they enrolled in the Fall course: “I liked the fact that we have a place reserved for us in the classes and don’t have to worry about not getting in.” They also appreciated the way that Summit classes were scheduled: “I like the fact that the Summit Program offers the classes during the same time and days per semester including the Winter term.”

Hard to schedule/lack of flexibility. Because Summit students had to commit to courses over three terms at specified times, this caused difficulty in scheduling other courses they needed that might be offered at the same time as the Summit course: “I like the program, but the time that it is offered is a little inconvenient. There are other courses that are also only offered during this time (courses in my major) and I wasn’t able to take them.”

Time block too short. Students in the cluster that met for one hour on Monday, Wednesday, Friday were frustrated with the short time blocks for discussion classes: “Classes should be at least two hours long, as soon as we start to discuss things, the class always seems to be over.”

Inflexibility of contract. Students offered suggestions to allow students to take one or two courses for upper-division GE credit, even if they could not complete the program: “The requirement to take each course at the only offered time in order to get credit is very hard to schedule. However, I understand the necessity. Maybe it would be possible to allow UDGE credit to be given for the parts taken, even if someone could only take two-thirds, but not allow people to add later on? This might be helpful. This program seems like a good idea, but hard to implement and frustrating to schedule around.” Other students disagreed, especially those in year-long group projects who had students in their group drop out: “This was a very enjoyable experience, but would have been more enjoyable if other students, especially ones in my group, were committed to staying in the program. My original group went from three people in Fall semester to one person, myself, in the Spring. This caused major problems and hampered my ability to learn more about my project because I had to move into another group half-way through the program. Students should be under a contract to stay within this Summit Program from the beginning to the end. There should be repercussions if students break this contact and drop out of the program.”

Compulsory nature when connected to Honors. Honors Program students were upset by their lack of flexibility in scheduling and choice with having only one cluster fulfill the Honors requirements: “I think the Summit Program is great. However, having Honors require it was a bit of a hassle in trying to fit it into my schedule. Continue the program, but perhaps modify the time commitment, maybe offer the course required in two time slots instead of just one.” Because some Honors students were unhappy with the program, their negative attitude affected the entire class: “The compulsory nature of this Summit (it’s tied into HONS requirement) made for some unfavorable responses/attitudes in some of my peers. I feel this had an overall negative impact upon my fully enjoying the program.”

### Adjustment to CSUS

Almost all the students in the Summit Program were junior transfers. Being involved in a learning community provided an opportunity for them to get adjusted to CSUS. One student expressed it in this way: “I came in as a transfer in the fall and by enrolling in the Summit Program I have been able to meet people and stay in contact with them since we

take three of the same classes. The program has also enabled me to establish a rapport with my teachers since discussion plays a major role in the class. I think the program should be continued.”

### Relevance

Students commented that the Summit Program was relevant to their lives and to our world. For example, one student pointed to globalization: “With the globalization of the world economy is a need of more classes such as this one to prepare us for a realistic view of our future!”

### Amount of Work

Summit students expressed that the workload for the classes was challenging and covered too much material: “Definitely continue the program, it offers a unique chance to explore a subject. But the teachers need to adjust the curriculum to simply explore rather than trying to develop experts in the field of study.” Some students also pointed to the great amount of time they were required to invest outside of class, especially when service learning was required: “I think there needs to be a clearer understanding of how much time outside of class these courses take up. I have a very impacted schedule and do not have a lot of time going out for nature visits or community work. It’s not that I do not want to, it’s that I do not have a lot of time to do these tasks.”

### Summary of Qualitative Results

Overall, students who completed Summit courses had favorable comments, especially pointing to the value of student-student and student-faculty interaction and the value of in-depth study of subjects. However, students did have suggestions for improvement in the areas of scheduling and the nature of instruction/integration. Requiring a cluster embedded in the Honor Program generated the most negative comments, most likely because these students could not drop the cluster if they wanted to complete the Honors Program. Students unhappy with the cluster detracted from the learning environment for other students in the cluster.

### **Outcomes Assessment**

In May 2003, an assessment team attended final presentations and reviewed samples of student work to assess how each cluster met the seven goals of GE. Three researchers, one graduate student and two seniors trained in research methods, developed a rubric based on a 5-point scale for assessing the Summit work. They reviewed capstone projects, service learning projects, written portfolios, and oral presentations. The statements of each goal of GE and the scale used for the assessment are as follows:

- 1=Displays no understanding
- 2=Displays poor understanding
- 3=Displays good understanding

4=Displays excellent understanding  
 5=Displays exceptional understanding

1. Subject Knowledge: Displays an understanding of the basic principles, methodologies, and perspectives.
2. Communication: Displays student participation in communication skills.
3. Inquiry and Critical Thinking: Displays critical thinking.
4. Information Retrieval and Evaluation: Displays a representation and understanding of a variety of sources through evaluation.
5. Interdisciplinary Relationships: Displays an understanding of all three relationships.
6. Global or Multicultural Perspectives: Displays an understanding of multiple perspectives and/or describes the discipline's impact on or connection to global issues.
7. Social Responsibility: Displays an understanding of the complexity of ethical judgment and social responsibility and/or shows the disciplines impact on or connection to social and ethical issues.

The conclusion of the assessment team was that all clusters satisfied the university-wide GE requirements. Clusters that had year-long group projects or portfolios containing work from all three semesters rated extremely well on all the goals of GE [excellent (4) or exceptional (5) on all goals]. For some clusters, only work from the final course was available for review. The scores these clusters received, although very good, were not based on a representative sample of the work across the cluster. For example, one cluster had a large research project in the first course. Since that information was not available for review, the cluster did not score as high on the Information Retrieval goal as it would have if student work from that research project had been available for review.

The outcomes assessment did show that the Summit clusters met all the goals of GE at a good to exceptional rating. But to do a fair assessment of all clusters, data would have had to be collected for each of the courses in the clusters, and this was not accomplished for this report.

## **Retention**

Approximately 86% of the upper-division transfer students re-enroll for their second year at CSUS. After three years, only about 70% graduate (see table on p. 21). Because of the enrollment patterns of the Summit program, almost all of the students were junior transfers. Of the students who enrolled in the Summit Program, 77% successfully completed all three classes. Of the students who initially enrolled in the Summit Program, 83% re-enrolled for the following year or had graduated. For students who completed the Summit Program, 87% either re-enrolled or graduated. (For students who began the Summit Program in Fall 2001 and completed it in Spring 2002, their re-enrollment or graduation was determined by examining Fall 2002 data. For students who began the Summit Program in Fall 2002 their re-enrollment or graduation was determined by examining Fall 2003 data on July 15, 2003. Some of the students who had not re-enrolled

**TABLE 4.7  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, STANISLAUS  
RETENTION AND GRADUATION RATES FOR FIRST-TIME FULL-TIME TRANSFERS WITH 60 OR MORE TRANSFER UNITS  
FALL 1990 - 2001 COHORTS AS OF FALL 2002**

Fall Cohort	Yr1		Yr2 Fall		Yr3 Fall		Yr4 Fall		Grad Year 2		Grad Year 3		Grad Year 4		Grad Year 5		Grad Year 6		Grad Year 7		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Fall 1990	134	77.6	41	30.6	13	9.7	55	41.0	80	59.7	84	62.7	86	64.2	89	66.4	92	68.7			
Fall 1991	168	85.1	67	39.9	21	12.5	64	38.1	97	57.7	112	66.7	120	71.4	121	72.0	123	73.2			
Fall 1992	197	82.2	65	33.0	27	13.7	75	38.1	115	58.4	134	68.0	137	69.5	138	70.1	139	70.6			
Fall 1993	241	82.6	101	41.9	31	12.9	80	33.2	141	58.5	162	67.2	171	71.0	175	72.6	177	73.4			
Fall 1994	241	85.5	99	41.1	22	9.1	89	36.9	142	58.9	156	64.7	166	68.9	170	70.5	170	70.5			
Fall 1995	273	83.5	103	37.7	36	13.2	105	38.5	169	61.9	191	70.0	198	72.5	203	74.4	204	74.7			
Fall 1996	300	84.3	105	35.0	33	11.0	121	40.3	194	64.7	212	70.7	219	73.0	221	73.7					
Fall 1997	313	81.2	109	34.8	29	9.3	138	44.1	203	64.9	226	72.2	233	74.4							
Fall 1998	251	86.5	104	41.4	20	8.0	102	40.6	179	71.3	194	77.3									
Fall 1999	350	86.0	140	40.0	39	11.1	162	46.3	245	70.0											
Fall 2000	348	86.2	130	37.4					139	39.9											
Fall 2001	385	86.5																			

Source: CSU ERSS Statistical Extract; Source: CSU ERSD Statistical Extract  
 CSU System undergraduate full-time are students attempting 12 or more hours in a term  
 Document: CSU Stanislaus Fact Book Fall 2002

by July 15, 2003 might still re-enroll before Fall 2003 begins. For this reason, these statistics are subject to change for Fall 2003).

It is very difficult to determine retention/graduation statistics for such a small sample within such a short period of time. It does appear, however, that students who completed all three classes in the Summit Program were likely to continue on at a rate equal to or higher than junior transfers university wide. A better indicator of the effect of the Summit Program on retention comes from the qualitative data. It appears that being involved in a learning community provided students with a network of people they knew on campus and gave some students the comfort they needed to become active members of the CSUS academic and social community.

### **Faculty-Faculty Interactions**

Summit faculty were asked to comment on their experiences participating in a cluster. Their responses indicated an appreciation for the opportunity to collaborate in a learning environment and an appreciation for the personal relationships that developed.

#### Collaboration in a learning environment

Several faculty members commented on the nature of collaboration in their Summit clusters. Those who were able to attend each other's classes and contribute to each other's presentations/lectures/discussions found this to be a rewarding experience. One faculty member commented that the collaboration "was one of the key features of the cluster, and the students' comments indicated that they appreciated it." This faculty member went on to say, "I think that our collaboration worked very, very well. I thoroughly enjoyed it, I think that it is exactly what a GE class (or group of classes) should be about." Another faculty member addressed the collaboration in this way: "I found both of my colleagues to be genuinely interested in creating an environment of advanced learning, supportive of my objectives, willing to hear out my ideas, and fun to be around."

#### Development of personal relationships

Faculty members also pointed to the personal relationships they had developed by participating in the Summit Program. This is summed up best by the faculty member who commented, "Suffice it to say that [they] are my best friends in Turlock. I would not have come in contact with them had it not been for the Summit program. I loved working with them." Faculty responses showed genuine admiration and respect for their colleagues.

### **Service Learning**

The CSU system has been recognized as a pioneer in the development of service learning as a valuable educational methodology. In March 2000, the CSU Board of Trustees passed a resolution to ensure that all students have opportunities to participate in community service and service learning opportunities. Several Summit clusters

incorporated service learning activities for students. The Real World cluster was one that provided service learning options in all three classes. Students in Real World Chemistry had four options to choose from: 1) assist with Science night at Osborn Elementary, 2) plant trees at the Cosumnes River Habitat Restoration Project, 3) volunteer at the Stanislaus County Household Hazardous Waste Center, and 4) participate in Take Pride in Turlock Day. In Real World Accounting, students provided free tax return preparation for low-income families as part of the University's Service Learning vita Partnership with the Internal Revenue Service. In Real World Theatre, students presented a free theatrical presentation for the community.

The Waking Up to Nature cluster also encouraged service learning. Students worked on year-long projects that involved environmental issues in the Central Valley. Projects included research on genetically engineered foods, the impact of vernal pools on the environment, and sustained agriculture. Students presented their findings during a poster session on the quad, sharing their information and providing brochures and pamphlets. Students also had the option to donate time in the BioAG Center as service to the University community.

### **Faculty Scholarship**

Dr. Koni Stone presented a paper based on her Summit experience at the National American Chemical Society meeting in New Orleans, March 2003. The paper was titled "Chemistry, Accounting and Theater: A Real World Trilogy."

### **Conclusions: Assessment Goals of the Summit Program**

1. The first assessment goal for the Summit Program was to determine whether this integrated approach improved student learning and brought students to a higher order of thinking skills. This study has indicated that both traditional upper-division GE and Summit classes are successful at meeting the goals of GE. Ratings of student perceptions as to how their classes were meeting the goals of GE for both traditional upper-division GE and Summit classes were 3.11 or above on a 5-point scale for all goals. Traditional upper-division GE and Summit faculty responses were above 3.25 for all goals except goal 5, Interdisciplinary Relationships. Traditional upper-division GE faculty rated their classes as meeting that goal at a 2.88 while Summit faculty rated their classes at 4.19. It is logical that Summit classes would meet this goal to a greater extent because of the required integration of the three classes in the cluster.

Students indicated a difference in meeting goal 1, Subject Knowledge. Students in traditional upper-division GE classes perceived they had learned more subject knowledge. Perhaps the integration of three disciplines resulted in the Summit students perceiving that they had acquired less subject knowledge in specific classes.

Even though Summit students indicated a lower level of subject knowledge, a review of the qualitative responses of the students indicated that the integration of the courses, especially when each course built on the knowledge of the previous course,

resulted in students reaching a deeper level of understanding of a subject. Some Summit students also commented that they had learned new ways to think about their topic. It would be interesting to follow up with a study of student perceptions of subject knowledge. It appears that they are perceiving this in terms of breadth of information rather than depth of understanding. Student comments indicated that Summit classes led to depth of understanding and an interest in life-long learning for many students.

2. The second assessment goal was to determine whether these learning communities improved retention of upper-division students. CSUS re-enrolls approximately 86% of the upper-division transfer students for a second year. Of the students who enrolled in the Summit Program, 77% successfully completed all three courses. And of these students who successfully completed the Summit Program, 87% either enrolled for the following semester or graduated. (Data available for re-enrollment for Fall 2003 included all students who had re-enrolled as of July 15, 2003. This number could increase as students continue to re-enroll for Fall 03 after July 15, 2003.) Since the Summit Program was mostly junior transfers, the retention percentage was equal to or slightly higher in comparison to the overall retention percentage for junior transfers. An important finding from student comments is that being involved in a learning community provided many students with a network of people they knew on campus and gave some students the comfort they needed to become active members of the CSUS academic and social community.
3. The third assessment goal was to determine whether faculty participants felt a greater sense of community than did faculty in traditional upper-division GE courses. No faculty from traditional upper-division GE courses were surveyed as to their sense of community with other faculty teaching upper-division GE courses. However, Summit faculty indicated that they had been enriched by the collaboration and by the personal relationships they had established. Summit faculty also reflected this dedication to each other and to the program by voluntarily attending meetings to discuss the successes and challenges of the program and by assisting in the summer transfer orientations.
4. The fourth assessment goal was to determine whether the clusters had increased and improved student-student interaction and student-faculty interaction. Students identified the increased student-student interaction as a highlight of the program.

In addition to the increased student-student interaction, Summit students perceived that they had interacted significantly more with faculty in class than did traditional upper-division GE students. The qualitative comments best indicated that Summit students really appreciated the availability and enthusiasm of Summit faculty and the open atmosphere they created in their classes.

5. The fifth assessment goal was to determine whether students in the pilot felt more motivated and more satisfied about their education. The quantitative results indicated that traditional upper-division GE students were more satisfied with their GE courses.

However, Summit students, although their ratings were lower than traditional upper-division GE students, indicated a high degree of satisfaction with their courses (4.03 on a 5-point scale and compared to 4.33 for traditional upper-division GE students). The satisfaction scores must also be interpreted in light of the different expectations students experienced in the Summit classes. Both Summit students and faculty indicated that their classes were more challenging than students and faculty indicated regarding traditional upper-division GE classes. In addition, Summit faculty expected students to study more outside of class and to work more with their peers outside of class than did traditional upper-division GE faculty. Not only did Summit faculty have these higher expectations, but Summit students reported that they had indeed studied more outside of class and worked more hours with peers outside of class than did traditional upper-division GE students. To have a satisfaction average of 4.03 out of 5 given these additional expectations speaks well for the Summit classes in satisfying students. Motivation can be seen in the extra hours studied and in the student responses that indicated the courses encouraged life-long learning.

6. The sixth assessment goal was to determine whether the benefits of the program are such that expanding and institutionalizing the program are worth the money and effort that will need to be expended. This study has shown that both the traditional upper-division GE program and the Summit Program are effective in meeting the goals of GE. However, the Summit Program offers a unique experience for students, especially in terms of the student-student interaction, the student-faculty interaction, and the deeper level of understanding that comes from integrated courses. The major problems encountered by having sequential courses over three terms are the lack of flexibility for students and the consequential low enrollment of the latter courses in the clusters when students are unable to complete them. The Summit Program is not desirable for all students but should be an alternative available to students who are looking for an unique experience where they will develop friendships and study subjects that interest them at a deeper level. To maintain the benefits but to bring more flexibility to the program, the recommendation is that the Summit Program continue but with some changes. Rather than a cluster of three linked classes, faculty should be encouraged to develop paired courses to be offered in Fall-Winter combinations. Most majors do not offer required courses in Winter term, so students could enroll in a Fall course that meets their schedule and plan on a Winter course without having the difficulty of having a set time for the Summit class in their Spring schedule. This should allow student enrollment numbers to remain more consistent, helping department FTES. With paired courses, students should experience most of the benefits noted in the Summit Program. The qualitative results of this study indicated that students do develop a sense of community over two courses. The in-depth study may be a little less over two courses, but this may be necessary to add the flexibility that students appear to require.

Because of these recommended changes in the Summit Program, it is also recommended that this program be reassessed after three additional years (Spring 07) to determine if it is providing the needed flexibility for students, to assess the needs of faculty who teach in the program, and to assess the needs of departments that offer

these courses that are capped at 40 students. If the Summit Program proves to be meeting student needs and interests at that time, the program should be fully institutionalized with budgetary support for participating faculty and departments.

To administer the Summit Program and to work with faculty to develop the paired classes, it is recommended that the faculty coordinator receive 6 units of release time per year and an operating budget of \$6,000 per year.

## Appendix A

### Survey: Student Responses

Scale: 5 (a great deal) to 1 (not at all)	Trad. GE		Summit		Sig. at <u>.05 level</u>
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>s.d.</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>s.d.</u>	
1. How challenging was this course?	3.65	.96	3.85	.97	*
2. How much did you participate in the classroom?	3.11	1.36	3.72	1.06	*
3. How satisfied are you with the student-faculty interaction?	3.99	1.01	4.06	1.02	
4. How much did you interaction <u>in class</u> with this instructor/these instructors?	3.23	1.27	3.88	1.09	*
4. How would you rate your knowledge of the subject matter of this class?	3.92	1.02	3.64	1.03	*
5. How much did this class enhance your ability to communicate?	3.36	1.25	3.34	1.14	
6. How much did this class enhance your ability to critically think and engage in inquiry?	3.64	1.21	3.64	1.11	
7. How much did this class enhance your ability to find, understand, and use information from various sources?	3.49	1.11	3.52	1.18	
8. How much did this class emphasize the discipline's interrelationships with other disciplines?	3.48	1.15	3.62	1.11	
9. How much did this class enhance your ability to look at issues from multiple perspectives or see the connection of this discipline to global issues?	3.89	1.24	3.97	1.15	
10. How much did this class help you understand the complexity of ethical judgments and social responsibility or help you see the discipline's connection to social and ethical issues?	3.77	1.37	3.83	1.23	
11. Rate your overall satisfaction with the course.	4.33	1.04	4.06	1.14	*

Statistical test: One-way ANOVA

### Survey: Faculty Responses

Scale: 5 (a great deal) to 1 (not at all)	Trad. GE		Summit		Sig. at .05 level
	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	
1. How challenging was this course for students:	3.50	.54	4.23	.652	*
2. Overall, how much did students participate in the classroom?	4.13	1.13	4.15	.72	
3. How satisfied are you with the student-faculty interaction with these students?	3.62	.74	3.70	.91	
4. How would you rate student mastery of the subject matter in this course?	3.50	.54	3.40	.82	
5. How much did this class enhance students' abilities to communicate?	3.62	.52	3.62	.94	
6. How much did this class enhance students' abilities to critically think and engage in inquiry?	3.50	.76	3.88	.65	
7. How much did this class enhance students' abilities to find, understand, and use information from various sources?	3.25	1.17	3.46	.76	
8. How much did this class emphasize the discipline's interrelationships with other disciplines?	2.88	1.25	4.19	.88	*
9. How much did this class enhance students' abilities to look at issues from multiple perspectives or see the connection of this discipline to global issues?	3.75	1.28	4.30	.99	
10. How much did this class help students understand the complexity of ethical judgments and social responsibility or help them see the discipline's connection to social and ethical issues?	3.88	1.13	4.19	.83	
11. Rate your overall satisfaction with student performance in this course this semester.	3.63	.92	3.85	.83	

Statistical test: One-way ANOVA

## Appendix B

Qualitative comments: Additional student responses.

### 1. Good Idea/Enjoyed Class

#### Classes interesting and enjoyable:

I am extremely pleased to be able to participate in the Summit Program. In truth, I was not looking forward to taking my upper-division GE courses—there weren't any that particularly interested me. However, I found a Summit cluster that I am quite interested in, and I look forward to my future involvement in the program.

I think this is an excellent and a much needed, innovative course/program which should definitely be continued and hopefully built upon...I have enjoyed the class tremendously.

Boy have things changed since I graduated high school! Yes—you should continue this program.

Absolutely continue this program so others can be enriched as I have. The program is perfect!

I really enjoyed this course, although some of the assignments were difficult. I think that this course is the “coolest” course that I have taken here at CSU Stanislaus. I would take more courses like this if given an opportunity.

#### Easy way to complete upper-division GE:

Yes, continue the program because it's an easy and efficient way to get your GE requirements out of the way without worrying what classes qualify for credit.

The program is an innovative way to aid students in GE requirements, and should be implemented again, albeit with some minor changes.

### 2. Student-Student & Student-Faculty Interaction

#### Increased class participation and diversity of perspectives:

I enjoyed the Summit Program. I mostly enjoyed the classmates and instructors. Understanding the Summit Program made each classmate put more effort into class participation which in turn gave many viewpoints on subjects.

The Summit Program was excellent—especially because of the variety of students involved from very different disciplines (academic) and ethnic diversity. I am very pleased to have had this experience which has been very limited since I began here in 1996.

I like being in a learning environment with the same people for more than one semester. It allows people to open up and share valuable ideas that they may not have shared before.

#### Increased interaction with faculty:

The teachers are very interested in these courses and in getting to know the students and how we feel about how the course is run—which is a lot more personal than large classes where you feel unknown! I feel a lot more comfortable in a class/program like this.

Increase comfort in asking questions/working with peers:

I'm really glad that I will spend three semesters with these students. I'm not so shy when I don't understand something and I have a question.

I'm very comfortable with some of my classmates. This is the only class that encourages me to study with my classmates and get to know one another. If I didn't join the study group, I probably would have done worse on my first test.

I really liked getting to know my fellow classmates. Spending more than one semester together gave us the opportunity to get to know one another. This was very helpful when it came to studying together. Yes, the Summit Program should continue.

Increased learning/success in class:

I definitely like the Summit Program. It helps unify students. We work better together. More likely to continue and do well in course.

I like the fact that I will be in other classes with the same students. I believe that this helps promote learning by getting to know my classmates.

Please continue the program. I like attending classes with people I have come to know and trust. I feel like this type of interaction only enhances the learning process.

**3. In-depth Study/Higher-level Thinking**Study topics in-depth:

I like the concept and think the Summit Program should be continued. I did think that some of the material presented was one sided. This course of study has caused me to reexamine my attitudes and concepts of ecology.

The integration of the disciplines allows for a much greater understanding of a complex subject such as nuclear physics, war, power, etc.

I believe you should definitely continue the Summit Program in the future. I have already gained a deeper understanding of environmental issues and principles that I wouldn't get from a regular class or on my own. This program has really enriched my academic experience.

I enjoyed the depth of knowledge in which having three courses together let us explore. The repetition of ideas made them stick, and their application to our own local community made them even more interesting and important.

I loved the Summit Program. Taking different classes with the same students on the same theme intensifies the knowledge and interest shared. When taking these classes, it does not feel like one is just temporarily retaining facts to pass a class, but learning information and views that connect with other subjects and views. A lot of issues have been discussed throughout each class and by applying the information learned, I understand that these issues are very complex with many different factors and there is no easy solution.

Influence on critical thinking:

This class has helped my writing skills and organizational argument skills.

I believe that the program should be continued in the future because of the program's ability to cause an individual to enter into different thought patterns, by looking at cultures from different perspectives.

I am a pre-med student and this class has helped me to see how I process things.

I am greatly satisfied with the teaching styles and how they pushed for people to think on their own and form their own opinions.

#### **4. Integration**

##### Integration of subjects promoted learning:

I think the Program is a great idea. Especially if the subject builds on something the student is already interested in. I like the idea of having the three classes of the cluster build on each other and compliment each other and it seems like I will have a much fuller and deeper understanding of the topic by the end vs. taking only one class.

In incorporating Chemistry in Drama, this places a better understanding of the concepts of Chemistry.

I think that a class composed of the same people looking at a common subject from multiple perspectives is very helpful in developing a broad and balanced view. It also disables the production of docile bodies.

The Summit Program helped me to have some inter-related courses that were connected enough to get me thinking more collectively about learning.

I liked the Summit Program overall. The intermixing of course material throughout the year was difficult at times, but very helpful in the end.

##### Integration was interesting:

I like how they try to relate the subject matter from a broad area of disciplines.

It is nice to experience different subjects and how they interact with each other. I am glad to see that somebody is thinking.

I enjoyed that this class related to material I learned last semester.

##### Integration allowed for multiple perspectives:

I liked how all the instructors are present regardless which subject is being taught. This allows for all of their views at the same time regarding the same topics.

I think the concept of combining courses does assist in experiencing the courses from a different perspective.

It was interesting having multiple instructor input and subjects.

##### Integration was repetitive:

Some of the information was repetitive. The instructors need to communicate more so they don't start off each semester teaching some of the same things.

Overall, the Summit Program was horrible. We had one theme and beat it to death.

The material in the third course was too similar to the material in the second course. There should be more variety in this program.

##### Classes were not integrated enough:

I personally do not think that the program should continue due to the class not significantly correlating to the next two.

One of the professors had a schedule conflict and couldn't be in our class, which was unfortunate and undermined the idea of having all three professors in each class.

The teachers should have more communication between classes. They knew what we had been doing, but not how we had been doing it so we had to update the teachers or change the way we had started certain projects.

The course needed to tie in better with the other previous courses. Lot of material was overlapped from other courses.

## **5. Nature of Instruction**

Teaching style: Available, enthusiastic professors/open atmosphere:

I don't expect any of the upper division courses to be easy, but when I felt that I needed help the instructors went way out of their way to offer assistance.

I liked the atmosphere that the instructor established. Non-threatening, easy going. The teacher was very respectful to all students and all ideas or thoughts. The instructor did a great job of getting us comfortable enough to open up.

I loved the discussion and the instructor is very articulate and insightful. I looked forward to coming to class and doing the homework.

I liked the open atmosphere. The teacher created an atmosphere where all ideas were welcome. All points of view were given the same "level" of importance.

What I have enjoyed the most is that all the instructors were friendly, helpful, knowledgeable, and interested in what they are teaching. I would recommend this to anyone.

The material related very well to my everyday life and the instructors were always available to assist me.

I think these courses should be taught to everyone as a requirement. It taught views and ideas that I never heard of. The professors were excellent in portraying their views. They were so passionate, that it made everyone passionate about the subject. Now that the program is over, I still want to pursue research in this area.

Teaching style: Lecture, discussion:

The only thing I think should be changed is more lecture before exams.

Integration through a group project:

Need to have more class time to interact on project. Hard to get others in group project together for meeting at the same time because of class load, family, work, etc.

I didn't enjoy the year long group project because people dropped the course and made it harder for our group.

I would change the group project to a dyad project since a lot of students, like me, have trouble working in groups.

The capstone project needs some changes, or to be taken out. If you're going to allow adds/drops make the capstone project end after each semester. The capstone project allowed slackers to ride on the coat-tails of hard working students, and still get the same or in one case a better grade as the students who worked hard.

Integration through intermixing classes during each semester:

I enjoyed relating the different areas of study. Since all three courses are taught at the same time it may be better not to get a final grade on a course until the end of all three.

The Summit Program was overall a good experience. However, one thing that I would change is the connection between the three subjects. Instead of teaching all three subjects year round, we should do one subject and only one subject each semester.

I would rather keep the teachers separate. Let the class go from one teacher to the next. Do not intermingle them.

It is confusing to leave a subject for a month and pick it up again.

I feel that inter-mixing all three subjects for three semesters is not a good idea. When you finish a semester that should be the end of that subject. The following subject can tie the other subjects in a light way.

The part that I disliked was the team teaching. I felt that the instructors were pushed greatly to get all the information they wanted taught in the few weeks they had to teach.

Unclear expectations:

Alter the assignment schedule, more structured, a lot of uncertainty of when assignments were due. Some confusion.

The class was interesting, but sometimes I felt that I didn't know where I stood grade wise.

## **6. Scheduling**

Guaranteed enrollment/simplifies scheduling:

Continue the program. It is simple for scheduling.

It's nice to know that I am already enrolled in classes for the whole year.

I think the Summit Program is good because you are guaranteed enrollment in the classes.

I like it so far and find it helpful because all of my UDGE will be done by Spring.

Hard to schedule/lacks flexibility:

The only thing that made it difficult was having the classes scheduled two semesters in advance because it held me back from a class I needed to take.

People can not be expected to know their entire schedules a year in advance, so it is not possible to know at the beginning of Fall if one's schedule will work with the Spring course.

The only concern I have is that you are committed for a whole year which means you cannot change your schedule around for this class.

Initial impression is that it is a good idea, but I personally would prefer to pick and choose from all the classes offered, not be tied down to a certain schedule.

Given our students' lives, I think we need more flexibility (e.g., pairs of classes, or take two from a cluster one year, and one another). Overall, I'd like to see more variety of mode of GE classes, rather than less.

Time blocks too short:

One suggestion is that I think each class session should be longer because we always seemed to run out of time due to the nature of the class. Therefore, I believe it would be better if the class was on Tuesday and Thursday in the future.

Improvements: longer classes, less days per week.

Inflexibility of contract:

Since I've already taken an UDGE geography course, I'll be duplicating units that it appears I won't be able to use. That's a bit frustrating (I may take the GEOG course credit/no-credit which will not be as fair to my group since I'll only be working for a passing grade).

But overall, I don't believe I would recommend the Summit Program to someone else, i.e.: contract signed. I don't know if I'll be able to attend school next semester. If I don't, I lose 6 units and \$. That makes me a little frustrated.

The schedule should be more flexible, and students unable to attend all three semesters (Fall, Winter, Spring) should retain credit for the semesters they did attend. This way, someone who attends classes in Fall and Winter but was unable to take the Spring class would at least get partial credit for the work they did.

Contracts should be enforced—no adds/drops.

I enjoyed the program and had no problems at all. Although several of my classmates did and for that reason there are some things that should be done to ensure stability in the program itself: First, it should be made absolutely clear that once you enroll you will affect others if you drop. Deter people from dropping. Second, no one should be allowed to add. This disrupts the flow of groups that have been formed.

Compulsory nature when connected to Honors:

Please discontinue this program immediately. Locking students into certain classes two semesters in advance is unacceptable. Scheduling becomes a problem, and after two semesters of talking about a certain topic students are too sick of it to care about the third class. Also, if the student finds that they do not get along with an instructor or that they don't really like the class after a week or two, they are unable to get out of it like they could do in a normal class. The Summit Program was a pilot program, and it has failed.

The Summit Program is a good idea, but in reality I don't think it works very well. It is very difficult to have a class planned out for a year. Also, the classes are not necessarily all interesting—if one of them looks interesting, you have to end up taking two that aren't interesting. In addition, the Summit Program goes terribly with the LIBS major. The classes don't fit into the major at all, which means you end up taking a bunch of extra classes. Please note that as Honors students, we don't have the choice of taking the Summit Program—we have to. Therefore, many people are not happy with it.

The idea is good, but I think you need a wider variety of programs. At least provide us with a choice of two programs. I would never voluntarily take a philosophy class, but because of this program I had to. If I had an option of perhaps Computer Science, Humanities/Art, and Economics, I would have enjoyed the cluster more.

**7. Adjustment to CSUS:**

As a transfer student, it has been beneficial to meet people at CSUS.

So far, I really like how this program is set up. There are many opportunities to meet new friends. I think you should continue to offer this program college-wide because it has served extremely helpful and useful to learning the CSU system.

Definitely continue the program—students don't always get to make connections with other students in the University because of busy schedules, or have fun in class—the program provides both of these—and positive attitudes toward school activities.

I think its structure is very helpful especially with respect to coming on a new campus. Without this program I'd still be a little intimidated with attending CSUS. Thank you.

It gave me the opportunity to become more socially active as a student.

## **8. Relevance**

These courses are relevant, and it makes sense to structure them the way they are structured. I get the chance to work on the same issues for three terms.

I've found the Summit Program to be very involved with today's issues which made our learning easier. I would definitely recommend this to other students and it should be continued because I believe I learned more in this class than any other.

This program can help students of the future to see how the world is changing and what the real truth is about how nuclear weapons really work.

Overall all the classes were highly informative and I now have the desire to teach my son a better way to live with our environment.

## **9. Amount of Work**

I think the idea is great. The content for the final exam is more material than a typical upper division course. Considering these classes are not for my major, the material seems a bit excessive.

This class was a little more demanding than the classes that actually matter to my major.

Three novels for 1/3 of a course seemed a bit much—nine novels for a 3-unit course is more like a major-course course load.

The class was taught very well. It was hard for me because I am not a big fan of science and this class was the hardest science class I have ever taken. That kind of snuck up on me and I struggled this semester.

I am not too fond of the Service Learning component section being in this section because we do have group projects that need to be completed for a grade. From my experience, just getting together in the groups was not an easy task to complete. One or the other should be eliminated, or perhaps the Summit section should only be available to person with a 3.0 or above GPA.