

California State University, Stanislaus
GRADUATE ASSESSMENT
May 2008

Introduction

This document is an update of the 1997 Graduate Assessment Plan. At that time, the Graduate Council was a leader in creating an assessment approach centered on program student learning goals. In 2002, the Graduate Council created university-wide graduate student learning goals that transcended the disciplinary student learning outcomes unique to each graduate program and began a method for collecting information that focused on student learning as well as overall program and faculty quality. This updated 2008 report provides a description of graduate assessment methods, timeline, and preliminary data analyses.

Current graduate programs at CSU Stanislaus include Business Administration, Criminal Justice, Ecology and Sustainability, Education, English, Genetic Counseling, History, Interdisciplinary Studies, Marine Sciences, Psychology, Public Administration, and Social Work.

Philosophy

The Graduate Council recognizes the complexity of assessment and the importance of designing measures that are multidimensional, meaningful, and oriented toward program improvement and enhanced student learning. Each measure contributes to answering the important question of the degree to which our graduate programs achieve their shared goal of producing graduates who can not only demonstrate relevant subject matter competence, but who also are articulate, critical thinkers, capable of working individually and collaboratively, cognizant of global perspectives, competent with current methods and technology, and able to use a variety of sources and communication techniques.

The Graduate Council subscribes to the philosophical conviction that the quality of teaching is inextricably connected to the quality of student learning. Thus, while we recognize the importance of student learning outcomes as the primary component of program assessment, we avoid reliance on this measure alone as we engage in a critical, comprehensive analysis of the quality of our graduate programs and our graduate students. Each method contributes to ascertaining the degree to which our graduate programs achieve their shared goal of educating competent and educated graduate students.

Knowing both the importance of assessment and the varied application of assessment by different graduate programs, the Graduate Council has endorsed a list of the methods which are currently used for university level assessment. It should also be noted that the graduate programs approach assessment of their specific program goals and student learning outcomes in various ways. Consequently, the methods used at the program level are diverse and linked to individual disciplinary student learning outcomes. A summary of program level methods is displayed in Appendix A, "Program-Level Assessment Methods and Sources for Graduate Degrees."

University-Wide Graduate Student Learning Goals

In 2002, the Graduate Council developed and approved six general student learning goals. Many graduate programs currently shape their stated student learning objectives around these Graduate School learning goals, providing a close alignment between program and university objectives.

1. **Students will demonstrate advanced knowledge, skills, and values appropriate to the discipline.**
2. **Students will demonstrate the ability to be creative, analytical, and critical thinkers.**
3. **Students will demonstrate the ability to work as individual researchers/scholars as well as in collaboration with others in contributing to the scholarship of their disciplines, as appropriate.**
4. **Students will demonstrate relevant knowledge of the global perspectives appropriate to the discipline.**
5. **Students will demonstrate knowledge of new and various methods and technologies as appropriate to the discipline.**
6. **Students will be required to demonstrate advanced oral and written communication skills, complemented, as appropriate to the discipline, by the ability to access and analyze information from a myriad of primary, print, and technological sources.**

| Assessment of Graduate Program Quality | University-wide Methods | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---------------|------------------------|----------------|--|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------|------|------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Academic Program Review | Accreditation | Admission Examinations | Course Syllabi | Culminating Experience: Thesis, Project, Comp Exam | External Reviewers | Faculty Demographics | Faculty Scholarship | Grade Point Average | Student Demographics | Student Scholarship | Student Awards and Honors | Graduate Exit Survey | Graduate Alumni Survey | IDEA Evaluations | NSSE | FSSE | Program Approval Process | Student Portfolios (TBD) |
| Student Learning Goals | x | x | | | x | x | | | x | | x | | x | x | x | | | | |
| 1. Advanced knowledge, skills, values | | | x | | x | | | | x | | | | x | x | x | | | | |
| 2. Creative, analytical, critical thinking | | | x | | x | | | | x | | | | x | x | x | | | | |
| 3. Individual and collaborative scholarship | | | | | x | | | | x | | x | | x | x | x | | | | |
| 4. Global perspectives | | | | | x | | | | x | | | | x | x | x | | | | |
| 5. Methods and technologies | | | x | | x | | | | x | | | | x | x | x | | | | |
| 6. Varied communication, source analysis | | | x | | x | | | | x | | x | | x | x | x | | | | |
| Student Academic Performance | x | x | | | x | x | | | x | x | x | x | x | | | | | | |
| Faculty Quality | x | x | | x | | x | x | x | | | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| Course Quality | x | x | | x | | x | | x | | | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| Student Engagement | | | | | | | | | | x | x | x | | | x | x | x | | |
| Post-graduation Success | | | | | | | | | | | | | x | x | | | | | |

University-Wide Assessment Methods

The following assessment methods are used at the university level to evaluate the six student learning goals, academic performance, faculty and course quality, student engagement, and student success after graduation. For each, a brief statement of purpose and methodology follows, accompanied by the office or persons responsible for gathering and analyzing these data.

- **Academic Program Review.** The purpose is to review and enhance the quality of academic programs. To achieve this goal, academic program review procedures encourage self-study and planning within programs and strengthen the connections among the strategic plans of the program, the college, and the university. The essential element is the identification and evaluation of student learning goals as a key indicator of program effectiveness. Conducted every seven years, the comprehensive review includes assessment plans, program objectives, curriculum, faculty, students, program resources, and contains a curriculum map which clearly demonstrates course alignment with program goals and student learning outcomes. An external review of graduate programs is part of the Academic Program Review.
Departmental Faculty, Graduate Council, Provost, and President.
- **Accreditation.** The purpose is for reflective self-study and institutional review of the quality of graduate programs. Accreditation for various programs is prepared by faculty and reviewed by external, independent agencies on a scheduled basis.
Departmental Faculty, Accrediting Body.
- **Admission Examination.** The purpose is to assess the degree of preparation for graduate studies as evidenced by scores on nationally-recognized admission tests.
Graduate Program Directors, Graduate School, Institutional Research.

Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores are required by twelve programs as part of the admission criteria, but the faculty has insisted that no absolute minimum scores are established for program admission decisions. Instead, the GRE is used as one indicator along with other criteria for making student admission decisions. The Miller Analogies Test (MAT) is required by the Education graduate program. A formula which combines the MAT score with the GPA of the last 60 units of undergraduate coursework is used by program faculty as a minimum admission criterion. For admission to the MBA, a minimum score of 450 has been established for the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT).

University policy requires each department to ensure that students are provided information about their courses, no later than the end of the first week of classes and that any changes in course requirements be communicated to students in an expedient and timeline manner. Such information to include, as appropriate to the course, course goals, objectives, and requirements; grading policy; attendance

Departmental Faculty, Graduate Council, Office of Quality Assurance.

requirements; policy on due dates and make-up work; required texts and other materials; policy on assignments; and availability of instructor outside of class, including office hours and telephone.

Because overall academic rigor of course expectations and the intellectual challenge for students in a master's degree program are paramount for program quality, criteria and a review process for the development of syllabi for the program have been established. Syllabi are evaluated for their integration of the university-wide and program student learning objectives, types of assignments, and pedagogical approaches using the document "Graduate Curriculum Policies and Procedures," approved by the Graduate Council and updated in February 2008.

- ***Culminating Experience (thesis, project, or comprehensive examination) with oral defense.*** This method remains the primary direct means for assessing the achievement of the six graduate learning goals and the quality of overall student learning. The culminating experience is designed specifically to provide confirmation of advanced disciplinary knowledge, skills, and values, critical and creative thinking, independent research, relevant global perspectives, current theory and technology, oral and written expression, and other elements related to specific disciplines. An oral defense is required for all theses, and many programs require oral defense for the project as well. Rubrics may be used, depending on the program, to evaluate the quality of the culminating experience. Comprehensive examination procedures on file in the Graduate School. Theses and Projects are bound and become part of the library collection.

Thesis/Project Chair,
Department Faculty,
Library.

The Graduate School offers a variety of online resources to help students successfully create exceptional theses and projects. The document "Thesis/ Project Preparation Guidelines," updated and approved by the Graduate Council in September 2005, is used to guide students and chairs of thesis/project committees in ensuring that the high standards set forth in the document are met. The 2007/2008 Graduate Catalog also includes a description and criteria for thesis and project, which are consistent with Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations.

- ***External Reviewer.*** The purpose of this method is to provide independent, external assessment of one or more components of the university-wide assessment program, such as culminating experiences (thesis, project, and comprehensive examination), course syllabi, overall graduate assessment, faculty scholarship, and elements as determined by the Graduate Council.

Graduate Council,
External Reviewer.

- **Faculty Demographics (degree, diversity, and experience).** The purpose is to provide demographic data for faculty who teach graduate courses, including the number of faculty who have earned terminal degrees, the variety of institutions from which degrees were earned, diversity of gender and ethnicity, and other variables related to faculty preparation and experience. Faculty Affairs, Institutional Research.
- **Faculty Scholarly Productivity.** The purpose is to provide evidence of faculty productivity in research, scholarship, and creative activity commensurate with graduate education and regional accreditation standards. The currency and depth of faculty knowledge directly impacts the quality of a student's educational experience and greatly influences the quality of student learning. Analysis uses data from the Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities Compendia. Also evidenced in vitae of faculty. Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, Graduate Program Directors, Institutional Research.
- **Grade Point Average.** The purpose is to assess the academic performance of students within the graduate programs. The required overall GPA (consisting of undergraduate and post-baccalaureate coursework) for graduate students at time of entry into the university is a minimum of 2.5; most programs require a 3.0. Most programs require graduate students to maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA as they progress through their coursework toward graduation. Requires analyses by discipline and other variables (on-site, Stockton, ITV) as compared to benchmark measures such as system, state, or national norms. Institutional Research, Graduate School, Graduate Program Directors.
- **Student Demographics.** The purpose is to assess graduate student and program emphasis on completing a master's degree. Requires analysis student persistence and graduation rates and time to degree completion. Institutional Research, Academic Affairs.
- **Student Scholarship.** The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs reports the annual research, scholarship, and creative activity of students. Starting in AY 2006/07, Master's theses and projects are published in the annual Research Compendium alongside faculty scholarship. ORSP also conducts an annual Student Research Competition to promote excellence in undergraduate and graduate scholarly research and creative activity by recognizing outstanding student accomplishments. Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.
- **Student Awards and Honors.** The purpose is to assess the highest levels of student academic performance. Analysis includes the number of graduates awarded honors or distinction at commencement and the percentage of students who qualify for membership in honors societies such as the interdisciplinary Phi Kappa Phi. Institutional Research, Enrollment Services, Greek Advisor, Graduate School.

- **Graduate Exit Survey (University-Wide).** The purpose is to assess students' perceptions of the quality of graduate student learning and program effectiveness. The survey includes questions on students' satisfaction in 5 categories: Achievement, Experience, Classroom and Campus Social Climate, Educational Plans and Career. This survey is administered annually to graduate students who have earned their master's degree during the previous academic year. This survey was administered in print from 1995-2004. Beginning in 2005, the survey was revised and administered electronically through the university website. Institutional Research, Graduate Program Directors.
- **Graduate Alumni Survey (University-Wide).** The purpose is to assess alumni's perceptions of the quality of student learning and institutional effectiveness. Instrument includes questions on students' satisfaction and experiences in 5 categories: Educational Experience at CSU Stanislaus, Graduate Student Learning Goals, Overall Program Effectiveness, Employment, and Advanced Education. This survey is administered annually and tracks students at the 3rd, 10th and 25th year after graduation. In 2005, this survey was revised and administered electronically through the university website. Institutional Research, Graduate Program Directors.
- **IDEA Evaluation of Courses.** The purpose is to assess student opinions on course effectiveness in helping them achieve faculty-identified course objectives and student learning objectives. Since 1993, CSU Stanislaus has used a course evaluation system called the Individual Development and Education Assessment Student Evaluation of Courses (IDEA) developed by Kansas State University. The report is tailored to fit each instructor's teaching objectives. Teaching effectiveness is determined by student ratings of their progress from among 12 learning objectives chosen by the instructor. Items on the IDEA instrument are based on research and results are interpreted using a national database. Institutional Research, Graduate School, Graduate Program Directors, Graduate Council.

In fall 2007, CSU Stanislaus began using the IDEA diagnostic tool to provide aggregate, institutional, longitudinal information to the faculty about overall teaching and course quality. The information generated from the student evaluation of courses by the IDEA provides evidence overall of students' positive perceptions of the quality of graduate courses and faculty. Each faculty member is required to evaluate a minimum of two courses annually. The Graduate Council examines relationships between the professors' identification of major objectives on the IDEA forms and the six University-wide student learning goals when it reviews course syllabi and conducts its program review. The Graduate Council also assesses the types of course assignments and pedagogical approaches used by faculty.

Faculty identify each of the 12 IDEA course objectives they deem essential, the primary teaching approach used in the course, types of course assignments, and circumstances that impact learning. Provides evidence of variety and sophistication of faculty teaching methods and course assignments to ensure the rigor of master's degree programs. An analysis of the types of course assignments is used to display the rich array of pedagogical approaches, both traditional and alternative. Students rate learning objectives identified by the faculty, linked with primary teaching

approach; students also rate the overall quality of the instructor and the course. Aggregate data purposefully do not include identifiers for courses, students, faculty members, departments, or colleges.

- **NSSE (Graduate National Survey of Student Engagement).** The purpose is to measure the degree of graduate student engagement in college activities that correlate to student learning and personal development. This survey includes questions on class participation, academic rigor, amount of effort put into classwork and overall experience. Analysis includes demographic data and comparisons between faculty and students. The current instrument consists of 84 questions clustered in 11 topical areas, to be administered every three years. Institutional Research, Provost, Graduate Council, Alumni Affairs, Graduate Program Directors
- **FSSE (Graduate Faculty Survey of Student Engagement).** The purpose is to measure faculty expectations for graduate student engagement in educational practices as well as provide comparative data to be used with the Graduate National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Questions address the importance faculty place on various areas of learning and development, the nature and frequency of faculty-student interactions and faculty organization of class time. Survey consists of 120 questions clustered in 15 topical areas, the first 11 identical to the NSSE for ease of comparison. Starting in 2007, the FSSE will be administered every three years. Institutional Research, Provost, Graduate Council, Alumni Affairs, Graduate Program Directors
- **Program Approval Process.** The purpose is to ensure the overall academic rigor of course expectations and the intellectual challenge for students in a graduate program. Criteria and a review process for the development of syllabi for the doctoral program have been established by the Graduate Council. Course proposals must be approved by the department and college curriculum committees, the Graduate Council, and the Vice Provost. Graduate Faculty, Curriculum Committee, Graduate Council, Vice Provost.
- **Student Portfolios (to be determined).** The purpose is to provide evidence of students' growth throughout their graduate experience. University-wide program was approved by Graduate Council in 1997. Randomly selected students asked upon entering the program to keep a portfolio of papers, research reports, examinations, and other evidence of student learning in accordance with requirements established by the Graduate Council. Program currently on hiatus. Graduate Council.

California State University, Stanislaus
ANALYSIS OF ASSESSMENT DATA FOR GRADUATE STUDIES
2001-2008

This report summarizes the results of assessment activity for the University-wide Graduate Studies Program 2001-2008. The methods and sources are listed in alphabetical order, not in the order they appear above, since many of them provide multiple levels of student learning, faculty quality, and program quality assessment. Information regarding individual graduate programs assessment plans and reports can be found on the Assessment of Student Learning website

- **Academic Program Reviews.** All graduate programs have completed self-studies and received university approval during their most recent seven-year rotation.

The Academic Program Review (APR) process at CSU Stanislaus is the most important method by which the university evaluates the effectiveness of its academic programs. In 2000, a review of the APR process was initiated, primarily as a result of the increased emphasis on the demonstration of the quality of student learning, a general dissatisfaction with a burdensome process and timeline, and the perceived inconsistent use of outcomes at the college and university levels.

The Chancellor's Office requirements changed to focus on assessment for program enhancement for student learning. For every program completing the academic review process in a given year a summary including the results of the assessment of student learning outcomes, the implications of the results for modification of program requirements, standards, and the changes made as a result of the assessment findings, is included in the annual academic Planning and Program Review reports. Academic Program Reviews are also a critical component of the university's assessment and quality assurance processes, and a review of the Academic Program Review process is a stated outcome for CSU Stanislaus' reaccreditation efforts as part of its Capacity and Preparatory Review.

Under the guidance of the University Educational Policy Committee (UEPC), the Academic Program Review procedures are viewed as a dynamic process, subject to continual examination and refinement, which implements the APR policy in accordance with the university's *Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning*. As such, UEPC continues to evaluate the procedures and makes appropriate changes.

- **Accreditation.** We have secured accreditation for our graduate programs for which national, professional/disciplinary accreditation is available. Business Administration (Spring 2003), Education (Fall 2001), Psychology Master of Science (Spring 2002), Public Administration (Fall 2003), and the Social Work program (Spring 2002) have all obtained final accreditation in the last seven years. The Education and Psychology MS programs are seeking reaccreditation in AY 2007/08, and Social Work has begun the review process for reaccreditation in AY 2009/10. The Genetic Counseling program undergoes professional accreditation for the first time in AY 2012/13 after it has graduated its inaugural cohort.
- **Admission Examination Scores.** An analysis of scores on the Graduate Record Examination at the time of program entry indicates that, for the past five years, the mean score for graduate students is 549 verbal (national mean 465), 435 quantitative (national mean 584), and 4.0 analytical (national mean 4.1). The mean score for graduate students on the Miller Analogies Test (Education) is 414.7; the mean score for Graduate Management Admissions Test (Business Administration) scores is 498.

Data reflect all students who identified CSU Stanislaus as a score recipient, not only those who enrolled. In Fall 2008, the Graduate Council will begin to record graduate admission examination scores into the university's data system.

- **Course Syllabi.** For 2007/08, the Graduate Council audit of course syllabi indicates high level of compliance with graduate standards. From among 41 submissions of new or modified courses, 19% were not approved upon first submission and returned to the program for revision.

In addition, the audit included an examination of the rigor of master's degree programs as evidenced by pedagogy, the variety and sophistication of the faculty's teaching methods and course assignments. Results indicate a rich array of pedagogical approaches, such as:

1. Examinations: Midterm and Final (all essay)
 2. Research papers (range 5-30 pages)
 3. Research projects: individual and group
 4. Research prepared for publication in refereed journals and grant proposal submissions
 5. Research studies such as ethnographical and participatory research studies, policy studies
 6. Applied research/scholarly projects such as oral history projects handbook, instructional units, presentations to external community and agency groups, flowcharts, policy development, scientific field studies, children's book, poetry, social work and business case studies, structured interviews with practitioners
 7. Annotated bibliographies, book reviews, scientific journal findings through meta-analyses
 8. Creative and critical thought processes such as creative problem-solving, writing activities, jurisprudential argument simulation, role playing, scenario responses
 9. Fieldwork projects, job shadowing, reflective practice
 10. Laboratory projects: statistical/research
 11. On-line: course sessions, on-line threaded discussions with embedded assignments and/or reflective essays
 12. Oral presentations and seminar presentations: individual and group
 13. Service learning projects
 14. Self-reflection essays related to student learning objectives
 15. Culminating activity: thesis, project, and/or comprehensive examinations
- **Culminating Experience and Oral Defense.** For AY 2004/05, 127 theses and projects were submitted and judged to have met the quality standards for graduation. In AY 2005/06, 138 theses and projects met all requirements. In AY 2006/07, xx theses and xx projects were approved and reported in the annual Research Compendium. As required, all theses provided conclusive evidence of advanced written and oral communication. Seven graduate programs also offer comprehensive examinations, either optional or mandatory. The Graduate Council is currently reviewing rubrics for the evaluation of culminating experiences.
 - **External Reviewers.** Dr. Mary Allen, a nationally recognized assessment expert, conducted three days of in-depth interviews in Fall 2007 and evaluated CSU Stanislaus on three dimensions: institutionalization of assessment, common understanding by faculty and administrators regarding shared responsibility for assessment, and effective implementation of assessment. Allen concluded that CSU Stanislaus overall has made substantial progress toward institutionalization, has invested in a complex infrastructure to support assessment, has achieved common understanding of roles and responsibilities through a collaborative process between faculty and administration, and is

implementing assessment effectively. With regard to graduate programs, she observes that while graduate programs have developed assessment plans specific to their program goals, the six graduate student learning goals were not always evident. The Allen Report concludes as follows: "Much is being done and is being done well, but there is room for improvement." We concur and are acting on her recommendations for refining our efforts.

A meta-review of culminating experiences by an external reviewer is currently under consideration, to be submitted for approval by the Graduate Council in Fall 2008. If approved, this review will be accomplished the following academic year.

- **Faculty Demographics.** Data from 2007/08 indicate that 88% (153 of 174) of all instructors of graduate-level courses hold terminal degrees. Demographic analysis reveals a mixture of senior faculty and those with many years of experience hired in the last decade (10% were hired in the 1970s or prior; 13% in the 1980s; 37% in the 1990s; and 40% in the 2000s). About 45% of those who teach graduate-level courses are tenured professors, 20% are tenured associate professors, 22% are assistant professors, and 13% are lecturers with expertise in the field.

Faculty diversity in terms of the variety of institutions and the region of their degree indicates a wide dispersal, though heavily weighted towards the West: 42% received their higher degree from the Pacific West (34% overall from California and over one third of those from the University of California), 9% from the Mountain States, 20% from the Midwest, 24% from east of the Mississippi, and 3% from foreign universities. Graduate faculty is evenly split by gender. In terms of ethnic diversity, 74% identify themselves as white/Caucasian, 13% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 5% Hispanic, 3% African American, and 5% chose not to specify.

- **Faculty Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity.** The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs reports the annual research, scholarship, and creative activity of faculty members in a Research Compendium, with about 60% overall faculty response in AY 2005/06 (169 of 289 reporting) and AY 2006/07 (177 of 281 reporting). Results from these years indicated that 39% of faculty who taught at least one graduate course (67 of 174 total) reported publication of a refereed scholarly work, while 33% reported an externally-funded grant. These data under-represent faculty scholarly activity given limitations in data collection. The Graduate Council will review the Research Compendium.
- **Grade Point Averages.** The mean overall GPA at program completion for AY2006/07 was 3.756, with a total of 209 students graduating between Fall 2006 and Summer 2007. In AY 2005/06, the mean GPA was 3.712 for 219 graduates. In AY 2004/05, the mean GPA was 3.731 for 199 graduates.
- **Student Demographics.** Institutional Research is currently implementing a system to systematically collect these data.
- **Student Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activity.** In support of student scholarship, research, and creative activity, CSU Stanislaus promotes student participation in scholarly activities such as conferences and competitions.

On Wednesday, March 5, 2008, CSU Stanislaus held its 22nd Annual Student Research Competition at the Faculty Development Center, featuring presentations by twenty-five students. This was a great

opportunity for the university to highlight and celebrate the academic accomplishments of our diverse student population.

On April 12, 2008, seven history students (six graduate, one undergraduate) presented their research papers at the Northern California Phi Alpha Theta Regional Conference at CSU Chico. This conference included students from the CSU system Northern California campuses, UC Berkeley, UC Davis, Santa Clara University, the University of the Pacific, and a number of other private universities and colleges. CSU Stanislaus is proud to be hosting this conference in 2009.

- **Student Awards and Honors.** Seventy-six students, approximately 36% of the graduating class, were awarded honors or distinction at commencement in Spring 2007, which means they earned at least a 3.9 grade point average and were recommended by their department for distinction. In AY 2005/06, 63 students (28.77%) received honors or distinction. In AY 2004/05, 72 students (36.18%) received this recognition upon graduation.

Student Awards. From the 2008 Student Research Competition, the three undergraduate winners, three graduate winners, plus four more entrants qualified to advance to the statewide CSU Student Research Competition. At this event, students from all 23 CSU campuses submit written papers and make oral presentations before juries of professional experts from major corporations, foundations, public agencies, and universities in California. One undergraduate and one graduate student came home with first place prizes from the system-wide competition held at CSU East Bay in Hayward. In 2007, xx graduate students qualified to advance to the statewide competition, and xx of those received awards at the statewide level.

Three of the seven CSU Stanislaus students who participated in the Phi Alpha Theta conference swept the top three awards in the Graduate Student category of the essay competition. The first-place graduate student presents the winning paper at the annual conference of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association in August 2008 in Pasadena, CA. A graduate student from CSU Stanislaus also won this top honor in 2007.

Phi Kappa Phi Honors Society. The criteria for membership in Phi Kappa Phi are quite rigorous. Graduate students must have a minimum cumulative graduate GPA of 3.85 at end of the Fall semester, and a minimum undergraduate cumulative GPA of 3.6. They must be approved by faculty in student's major, based on scholarly endeavors and/or commitment to research as indicated by student performance in that department, and good character, defined as compatible with departmental Statement of Professional Ethics and/or the ethical standards expressed in the current California State University, Stanislaus catalog and Student Handbook. Finally, candidates must receive a two-thirds affirmative vote of active members. Furthermore, not all students who meet these requirements are inducted in this prestigious interdisciplinary honors society.

In AY 2007/08, xx graduate students met these rigorous eligibility criteria, and xx students were inducted in the Spring ceremony. In 2006/07, 32 graduate students were eligible for membership in Phi Kappa Phi, and ten were inducted. In 2005/06, xx were eligible, xx were inducted. In 2004/05, 40 graduate students met the eligibility requirements, though only four were inducted.

- **Graduate Exit Survey.** The Exit Survey was most recently administered in Spring 2006 and Spring 2007. Results from the two years were combined for analysis due to a low response rate, 49 students from the class of 2005/06 (23.3% of total) and 22 students from the class of 2006/07 (10.4% of total). On

a 4-point Likert scale, 93% of the class of 2005/06 and 87% of the class of 2006/07 rated the overall quality of their program as excellent or good. For the six Graduate School Student Learning Goals, more than 90% of students indicated *good* or *excellent* achievement for four of the six learning goals, while “relevant knowledge of the global perspectives” and “knowledge of new and various methods and technologies” were ranked *good* or *excellent* by 77% to 83% of students.

In the category of educational experiences, the highest ratings (*excellent/good*) were given by the class of 2005/06 as follows: 100% for education and grading practices in program courses, 98% for overall qualifications of the graduate faculty, 96% for faculty guidance for culminating experience, and 94% for faculty academic assistance received. For the class of 2006/07, rankings of *excellent/good* were given by 91% of students for the overall teaching effectiveness of the graduate faculty, 86% for the usefulness of program for employment possibilities, overall qualifications of the graduate faculty, and faculty guidance for culminating experience. Items in which the excellent/good quality ratings were lowest included quality of career information received (58% for 2005/06, 50% for 2006/07), and the availability of courses (61% for 2005/06, 59% for 2006/07). Most students also agreed that the classroom social climate is supportive and not discriminatory to students of all backgrounds.

Half of the respondents reported they plan to continue their education. 94% of the class of 2005/06 and 68% of the class of 2006/07 either agreed or strongly agreed that they were competitive with graduate students from other universities to secure admission in another graduate program. 57% of and 31% respectively indicated they received a new job or promotion as a result of obtaining a master’s degree, and 91% and 69% indicated that their job is related specifically or highly to their master’s degree. 96% and 94% either agreed or strongly agreed that their program helped them begin or advance their career.

Graduate students were asked to identify one improvement they would make to CSU Stanislaus. 24% of students indicated they would increase the variety of programs, 11% would increase/improve faculty hiring, 8% suggested improved food services, 8% would improve parking and transportation, and 8% suggested developing a graduate/professional network.

- **Graduate Alumni Survey.** The most recent Alumni Survey was administered in Summer 2007, and 29 former students the class of 2002/03, and 54 from 2003/04 completed the questionnaire. Respondents ranked the two most desirable aspects of California State University, Stanislaus, as “availability of classes, class size, access to courses” (22.1%), and “faculty: supportive, knowledgeable, available to students” (20.5%).

The majority of respondents (57.8%) said if they had the opportunity to begin their degree over again, they would enroll at CSU Stanislaus. When asked to evaluate their program’s effectiveness in helping them attain the Graduate School Student Learning Goals, 92.8% of respondents rated “advanced knowledge, skills, and values” either *good* or *excellent*. The lowest rating, given to “global perspectives,” was still rated as *good* or *excellent* by 86.8% of respondents.

Most alumni (93.3%) said graduate program preparation for their current jobs was either *good* or *excellent*. On a 5-point Likert scale, the mean score for “usefulness of graduate study completed to employment possibilities” was 4.0. 78.3% of alumni reported they were employed full-time; all said they were either *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with their jobs. In terms of additional education, more than half (67.6%) hope to eventually earn a terminal degree, and 26.4% of respondents had already begun their graduate work in the three years after graduation.

- **Individual Development and Educational Assessment (IDEA) Surveys.** The analysis of IDEA scores for 137 graduate courses and 1157 undergraduate courses taught during AY 2005/2006 indicates that students overall felt they made substantial progress in achieving the twelve course learning objectives, a mean of 3.4 to 4.4 on a 5-point Likert scale. The highest overall mean scores, exceeding 4.2, for student progress on the learning objectives were found for the following: gaining factual knowledge, learning fundamental principles, learning to apply course materials, and developing specific skills/competencies/points of view. Approximately 80% of the students rated their progress on these objectives as either *exceptional* or *substantial*.

In comparison to undergraduate students, graduate students reported a significantly higher rating for *exceptional/substantial* progress on oral/written communication skills (58% for undergraduate and 74% for graduate). For graduate courses, the highest overall student ratings on progress (*substantial and exceptional*) toward learning objectives were reported in courses using multimedia as the primary teaching approach (mean of 4.0), followed by skills and seminar. The lowest overall student ratings on progress toward overall learning objectives were in courses using fieldwork as the primary teaching approach (mean of 3.4).

For the quality of graduate courses, 54% of students replied *definitely true* and 82% as *definitely true or more true than false* for course excellence. Three percent rated course quality in the lowest two categories. The mean rating was 4.3. Regarding instructor excellence in graduate courses, 64% replied *definitely true* and 86% as *definitely true or more true than false*. Six percent rated instructor quality in the lowest two categories. The mean rating was 4.4.

On the IDEA forms, faculty members are asked to identify the key student learning course objectives for their graduate courses. An analysis of their responses indicates that overall faculty identified three learning objectives as *essential/important* by 73% or more: gaining factual knowledge, learning fundamental principles, and learning to apply course materials. Faculty teaching graduate courses selected developing personal values as *essential/important* at almost twice the rate of undergraduate faculty. Developing skill in oral and written expression was identified as *essential/important* for 48% of undergraduate and 64% of graduate courses. Faculty indicated the highest percentages for three course requirements for graduate courses: critical thinking (65%), oral communication (59%), and writing (49%).

For both graduate and undergraduate courses, the teaching approaches identified by the faculty overall as *primary* with the highest percentages are: lecture (55%), other (13%), seminar (12%), and discussion/recitation (10.4%). These percentages were followed by skill/activity (10%), laboratory (4%), studio (2%), practicum (2%), field experience (.84%), and multi-media (.75%). A comparison of *primary* teaching approaches for undergraduate and graduate programs indicate the following differences for graduate education: significantly less lecture, more discussion/recitation. The largest difference was in use of multi-media approaches (67% compared to 10% undergraduate). This clearly reflects positively on the earlier student ratings of progress toward course objectives, which ranked multimedia approaches as most successful.

For graduate courses, the seminar (65%) was the predominant *primary* teaching approach linked to *essential* objectives. A comparison of undergraduate and graduate courses indicated significant difference between faculty selection of primary teaching approaches and faculty selection of essential learning objectives. For graduate courses, faculty had greater variability in the selection of teaching

approaches with regard to four objectives: written communication skills, analytical/critical evaluation, intellectual/cultural appreciation, and developing personal values, Graduate faculty showed greater selection of seminars, discussion, field experience, and practicum to achieve essential objectives. Thus our graduate faculty clearly demonstrates variety and sophistication in teaching methods, with a rich display of pedagogical approaches.

- **NSSE (*Graduate National Survey of Student Engagement*)**. The NSSE survey was administered with NSSE approval for use with graduate students for the first time in Fall 2007. Results must be viewed with caution due to a very low response rate of only 92 graduate students.

Many graduate students at CSU Stanislaus are working parents who are tightly scheduled. The majority work for pay off campus, many of them full-time (59.7%). Almost half spend substantial time caring for dependents (46.2%), and less than one-third spend more than 10 hours a week on relaxation (28.3%). Most students do not engage in personal enrichment efforts through arts events, physical exercising, or spiritual activities. It would not be an exaggeration to say that many graduate students are “time starved.”

Overall, students expressed satisfaction with experiences at CSU Stanislaus. On a 4-point Likert scale, respondents rated the overall quality of the university as good (3.05). Approximately one-third of the sample rated their educational experience at CSU Stanislaus as excellent. Academic advising received moderate ratings from this sample, with a mean score of 2.65, falling in the “fair to good” range. Even so, one-fifth of the sample rated their advising experience as excellent. Most described their relationships with faculty, staff/administrators, and other students as helpful and supportive.

More than half of the sample stated they would choose CSU Stanislaus if starting again. The mean for this question was 3.4, indicating ‘probably to definitely.’ The strongest statistical predictor of reenrollment was the quality of campus relationships, emphasizing the importance of personal contact between faculty-student contact and student networks. Students overwhelmingly indicated positive relationships with other students (93.4%), faculty (89.2%), and administrative personnel and staff (72.3%). High ratings on mental activities and educational outcomes also predicted reenrollment. Surprisingly, low engagement in out-of class learning activities correlated with desired reenrollment, perhaps reflecting the time-starved experience of CSU Stanislaus graduate students.

Traditionally, graduate education has been an intensive process involving rigorous assignments and collaboration with faculty outside the classroom. However, more than one-half of the present sample did not write a paper of 20 pages or more in the past year, and not many students said they tutored or taught other students (13.2%), worked with faculty outside the classroom (9.8%), or participated in service learning (6.6%). It also appears that the amount of time spent preparing for class is less than desired. The mean score for the entire sample (2.57) translated to 6-10 hours per week of work outside class. Full-time students spent more time (mean score 2.93 full-time, versus 1.87 part-time), giving responses in the 11-15 hours per week range. There was no difference in the self-reported grades of students who studied more vs. less time.

There is ample evidence of the overall quality of CSU Stanislaus graduate programs. Students were asked how often they completed tasks such as analyzing and/or synthesizing ideas, judging the value of information, and applying theories. These activities were endorsed by approximately 40% of the student sample. Most students had done, or planned to do, practica/internships (90.6%) and capstone experiences such as theses and projects (78.8%). Many reported participating in class discussion

(50%), working on an integrative paper (54.3%), using electronic media to work on a project (46.7%), making a class presentation (44.6%), and including diverse perspectives in assignments (42.4%). They also described examinations as challenging.

Students also said they gained positive outcomes from their education experiences. They reported the most gains in areas of job education (51.1%). Respondents also noted gains in critical thinking (43.5%) and working with others (41.3%).

- **FSSE (Graduate Faculty Survey of Student Engagement).** 19% of faculty members who teach graduate courses (33 of 174) completed this survey instrument in Fall 2007. The viewpoints of this group may or may not represent all faculty teaching graduate classes at CSU Stanislaus. Still, the sample is composed of experienced faculty members from a variety of disciplines, and thus gives some insight into educational practices.

Survey respondents utilize the teacher-scholar model effectively, spending about the same amount of time in scholarship activities and graduate classroom teaching, approximately 5-8 hours per week. In addition, they spend substantial amounts of time on class preparation and grading, and many faculty members noted that they also spend time teaching undergraduate courses. Faculty respondents also reported high level of involvement in improving instruction. In the past year, most attended workshops (71%) and met with colleagues to discuss teaching (81.2%); the majority also attended conference sessions (69.7%) and campus-wide forums (56.2%).

Faculty respondents acknowledged the time constraints experienced by their students. Most saw their students as highly involved in family and work responsibilities, leaving little time for other activities. However, they described students as building strong, supportive, and helpful relationships with both faculty and students on campus. These data likely reflect the small campus atmosphere at CSU Stanislaus and efforts of graduate programs to respond to student needs and foster group learning.

Approximately one-third of faculty respondents rated the quality of educational experience of graduate students at CSU Stanislaus as excellent, and the mean for the sample fell in the "good" range (mean 3.13). Academic advising was seen just as positively by faculty respondents, even though students gave tepid ratings (mean 3.19 compared to 2.65). One must consider first that faculty and students were drawn from different programs. However, another plausible interpretation is that students and faculty have different views of what constitutes good advising.

Looking at the benefits of their programs, the majority of faculty respondents reported gains in job-related knowledge and skills, reflecting the nature of many CSU Stanislaus programs. Most faculty respondents also said students gain the ability to think critically and analyze issues (51.5%). Outcomes related to clear writing, independent learning, and contributing to the community were cited by more than one-third of faculty respondents.

Traditionally, graduate education has been an intensive process involving rigorous assignments and collaborations with faculty outside of class; however, fewer than 40% of faculty said their students spend more than 10 hours per week on class preparation. On an 8-point scale, the mean estimate translated to 6-10 hours per week of class preparation. Also, most faculty did not assign papers 20 or more pages in length during the semester, instead focusing on short, report-style papers. These data are remarkably similar to student reports.

When asked about the emphases of CSU Stanislaus graduate programs, more faculty members mentioned computer use (39.4%) and encouraging student contact across demographic boundaries (25%) than other entries. Surprisingly, they did not see the university as emphasizing significant amounts of studying with a focus on academic work (18.2% agreed). Perhaps high involvement of students in work and family life has led academic programs to lower their expectations for how fully engaged graduate students should be in academic work.

Despite these restrictions, the quality of graduate instruction at CSU Stanislaus is high. Most faculty members utilized a variety of active-learning activities. The majority reported using small group activities, seminar discussion, and teacher-led discussion in their graduate classes, and about one-third used lecture and student presentations. Faculty said their students engage in class discussion, work on integrative papers, use email to communicate with the instructor, and receive prompt feedback from the instructor. Graduate-level assignments were said to involve students in a variety of high-level mental activities, especially application of theory and synthesis of ideas.

The student engagement surveys, NSSE and FSSE, also allow direct comparison of student and faculty opinions regarding student achievement of the six Graduate School Student Learning Goals. For instance, 43.5% of students reported their program contributed to their development in thinking critically and analytically (Goal 2), compared with 51.5% of faculty. 54.3% of students reported completing assignments which integrated ideas or information from various sources (Goal 5), compared with 42.4% of faculty.

- ***Program Approval Process.*** Approved by the Graduate Council in November 2007 and updated in February 2008, the document "Graduate Curriculum Policies and Procedures" identifies criteria for developing and evaluating graduate programs in general and criteria for specific types of graduate courses (seminars, laboratories, fieldwork and other clinical practice courses, culminating experience, etcetera). The university-wide learning goals are integrated into curriculum and course criteria (items 11-28). Course syllabi must include course goals and learning objectives (item 27). Program criteria also include requirements for student learning assessment (items 45-51). Faculty has access to the criteria while preparing proposals, and proposals are uniformly evaluated and approved only when the Graduate Council is satisfied that criteria are met.

The CSU Stanislaus Graduate Council has recently approved two new graduate programs using this rigorous process. The new Genetic Counseling Master of Science program and the Education Doctoral program begin in Fall 2008. The CSU system praised these proposals as exemplary, to be used as models for other campuses. The Nursing program is currently undergoing the approval process for a proposed graduate-level degree.

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