

Academic Senate Undergraduate Council

Undergraduate Program Review

Sixth College

Review Committee Report

May 29, 2014

The Committee reviewed the information provided by the Academic Affairs Office of the campus, including the self-study report prepared by Sixth College. On April 17, 2014, the Committee met with the Provost, Academic Programs Director and Associate Directors, Deans of Academic Advising and Student Affairs, Resident Dean, college staff, some affiliated faculty, including members of the Core and Practicum Committees, and students of the College. No teaching assistants were present in the meeting, but written input from TAs was obtained afterward.

The Review Committee is very positive about the progress the College has made in its academic programs in the last few years, the leadership of the College, and the dedicated and enthusiastic staff and faculty. As UCSD's newest college, Sixth College has experienced some growing pains and suffered from a higher than normal turnover rate at the leadership level. However, in the last three years, the College has reached stability with its current Provost and Director of Academic Programs, and it is moving along the right track with its distinctive programs. The morale of the staff is high, and students seem to appreciate the friendly and warm environment of the College and the support provided by its advising staff. Major improvements have been made in the core course sequence, and the College is in the process of streamlining the General Education requirements to improve the time-to-degree. Nevertheless, the Committee has also found areas that need further improvement. This report identifies some of the strengths and weaknesses of the College and its academic programs, and presents a set of recommendations.

1. Background of Sixth College

Sixth College was established in 2002 and is the newest of the six colleges within UCSD. The academic theme of the College centers on Culture, Art, and Technology (CAT). This is its first program review since its establishment. Its student enrollment grew rapidly within its first five years. The College had 3,625 students (16% of the total undergraduate population of the campus) enrolled in Fall 2012. In AY 2012-2013, there were 777 students enrolled in its lower-division CAT writing courses, and 1,004 students in its upper-division courses. The College now has an undergraduate enrollment comparable to the other five colleges.

1.1 Organization

The academic programs and operations of Sixth College are led by the Provost, Professor Dan Donoghue, and run by a core team consisting of Academic Programs Director and Associate Directors, Deans of Academic Advising and Student Affairs, Resident Dean, and several oversight committees. It has affiliated faculty from different academic departments. The Executive Committee of the College is charged with the oversight of its academic plan and educational environment. Its membership comprises 5 faculty members, with one from each Campus Division, the Provost, and two student representatives. Other than the Provost, they serve in two-year renewable terms.

The academic programs are run by the Program Director, Dr. Liz Losh, and three Associate Program Directors, Diane Forbes-Berthoud, Alexandra Santor, and Ash Smith, who are responsible for the Practicum, the Writing Program, and the Art and Technology education, respectively. The supporting staff includes an undergraduate coordinator, a technology officer, a practicum coordinator, and a TA coordinator. CAT courses are taught by faculty from different academic departments, the programs director and associate directors, and lecturers. The Core Advisory Committee oversees the CAT course sequence and affiliated programs. The committee consists of four faculty members, the Provost, the Director of Academic Programs, and one student representative. There is also a Practicum Advisory Committee consisting of five faculty members, the Provost, the Director of Academic Programs, the Associate Director for the Practicum, and one student representative. It oversees the development and the running of the Practicum Program, which is a unique program of the College focusing on experiential learning.

The Academic Advising Office is staffed by the Dean of Academic Advising, Christine Fraser, and 5 staff members. They help students develop academic plans and advise students on the General Education requirements. They and the Student Affairs Office co-organize student orientations for new first-year and transfer students. Students can seek advice by walk-in or by appointment. Advising support is also provided online through the Virtual Advisor. The Student Affairs Office has a Dean, Diane LeGree, an Assistant Dean, and four other staff members. It organizes special events, promotes student leadership and involvement opportunities, and deals with other student affairs matters. The Residential Life Office has a Resident Dean, four staff members, and resident advisors. They manage student housing and organize education, cultural, and social programs.

The College also provides its own Counseling and Psychological Services staffed by two clinical psychologists (one of the positions is vacant at the moment) and one post-doctoral fellow.

1.2 General Education Requirements

The General Education requirements of the College consist of three lower-division core courses (CAT 1, 2, and 3), focusing on critical thinking and analytical writing with overarching themes drawn across the arts, humanities, social sciences, and science and engineering; one Information Technology course, which can be taken in students' home departments; one upper-division Practicum course, one upper-division writing course (CAT 125), and twelve courses fulfilling the breadth requirements.

CAT 1, 2 and 3 have four tracks, each focusing on a specific interdisciplinary topic. These courses have large enrollments with 100 to 200 students in each track. Each track has one hour of lecture per week and discussion sections taught by TAs. The discussion sections are organized in small groups with about 15 students in each section. They focus on the discussion and analysis of topics presented in lectures and assigned readings, and on analytical and critical writing. The Practicum course promotes experiential learning and emphasizes project-based, collaborative, and community-based research and learning. It can be fulfilled by CAT 124, an independent study course supervised by a faculty member, or one of the approved courses offered by academic departments, or by participating in the Academic Internship Program or the Study Abroad Program. The upper-division writing course (CAT 125) focuses on public rhetoric and practical communication, and has, besides a shared writing component, two basic tracks with different emphases: one on digital media and the other on oral presentations. These tracks also have large enrollments with small-group discussion sections. The Breadth Requirements, which reinforce the College's focus on culture, art and technology, include courses in Social Analysis; Narrative, Aesthetic, and Historic Reasoning; Analytical Methodologies/Scientific Method; Structured Reasoning; Social Context; Ethical Context; Exploring Data; and Art Making. There is an approved list of courses that meet these requirements.

The CAT courses are normally taught by about 12 ladder-rank faculty members each year, lecturers, and the Director and Associate Directors of Academic Programs. CAT 1, 2, and 3 have been taught by faculty from History, Literature, Music, Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology, Theatre & Dance, and Visual Arts. In addition to administrative duties, the Director of Academic Programs teaches 4-5 courses per year, and each Associate Director teaches 1 to 2 courses per year. There are about 35 TAs per quarter recruited from different academic departments.

All of the TAs enroll in CAT 500 (Apprentice Teaching), which is offered in the fall and begins with a two-day orientation. The TAs must attend weekly meetings with course instructors and the Associate Director for Writing. They receive ongoing mentoring through weekly meetings and have classroom visits by program administrators at least once per year. The program also organizes two professional development workshops per quarter for TAs. The Provost and Program Director review all course teaching evaluations.

Teaching evaluations over the last five years show a mean instructor approval rating of 87% with a median of 93%. Several Sixth College faculty members and one TA received Outstanding Teaching Awards from the Academic Senate. Nevertheless, a few CAT 1, 2 and 3 courses received very low ratings in both recommended course and recommended instructor. The College has been proactive in outcome assessment. In Summer 2013, a learning outcome assessment was conducted on student writing samples from CAT 2.

2. Strengths

The College's academic programs are built upon an overarching theme that centers on Culture, Art, and Technology, crossing multiple disciplines in arts, humanities, social sciences, and science and

engineering. The college's core curriculum trains students in critical thinking and writing in relation to emerging technologies, multiple disciplines, and different expressive practices. Students, who are drawn to the college's combined focus on technology and art, are favorable toward the General Education experience and appreciate that these requirements enable them to take courses they would otherwise not consider.

The academic programs are run by a team of highly dedicated staff. The Director, Dr. Liz Losh, has done a tremendous job in improving the CAT Core Sequence and in faculty and TA recruitment. In general, the TAs are well-mentored and trained. The College has successfully recruited a number of ladder-rank faculty to teach CAT 1-3 as well as the practicum courses. The faculty appreciate Dr. Losh's guidance in helping them to align their courses with the aims of CAT, and consider her "ideal" for the position. They link the College's growing success with Losh's strong leadership and have expressed concern that she has an external job offer.

The Practicum Program is a signature program of the College and promotes experiential learning. It provides community-based service and learning experiences along with great internship opportunities. It is well received by students and helps to prepare some of them for future careers. The College has taken on a leadership position among academic institutions in experiential learning and has begun hosting a successful Experiential Learning conference every two years. The Associate Director for Practicum, Dr. Diane Forbes-Berthoud, whose energy and excellence are widely appreciated, received a campus-wide Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action and Diversity Award for her work in promoting community empowerment and global awareness through the Practicum Program. She continues to find valuable new opportunities for students. The Practicum Program has a few highly committed faculty who dedicate their time to supervise students with small compensation.

CAT 125 has been recently restructured so that it is uncoupled from CAT 124, which has helped students with course scheduling and thus in time to degree. The current focus of CAT 125 on public rhetoric and practical communication helps students develop communication skills for practical purposes such as employment application. Students find it useful.

Even though the Advising staff support is limited in size, Academic Advising is well run and effective, providing students with convenient access to advice in person and online. Devoted advisors even visit the residence halls and make themselves available after normal working hours. The Advising staff also regularly organizes workshops to help students who have been placed on academic probation.

The morale of the College's staff is high. There is strong communication and coordination among different units. Staff members are provided with opportunities for professional development and advancement. They appreciate the recent stability in the College's leadership, and agree that the College is advancing in the right direction.

Students are generally pleased with the friendly environment of the College and appreciate the support provided by the staff. They feel that the college has a special spirit and offers a stimulating general education within a family-like atmosphere.

3. Weaknesses

1. Sixth College has ambitious academic programs and noble educational goals that are not only unique but also compatible with the interdisciplinary emphasis of the campus. Nevertheless, resources of the College appear to be stretched to support these ambitious goals, in spite of the fact that the College is receiving at least an equal if not slightly greater share of resources from the campus as compared to the other five colleges. The college may warrant a larger share of resources given the intensive demands of its writing-based and experiential learning-based curriculum, which, to remain effective, requires lower faculty/student ratios. As student enrollment increases, it will be necessary for the university to provide adequate resources to support this distinctive, ambitious and cutting-edge academic program.
2. The Director of Academic Programs has a heavy teaching workload in addition to her administrative responsibilities, and often teaches an overload. She has already made notable improvements in the program, and these efforts should be continued. The College should find ways to reduce her teaching workload so that she has ample time to oversee and further improve the core curriculum and its delivery. Faculty, staff, and students expressed resounding praise for Losh and her efforts. Her colleagues are eager to see her stay in the position and do not want her to burn out.
3. Although the Director has been very active in reaching out to possible CAT faculty, the budget-induced decline in the number of faculty and graduate students in Arts and Humanities has made it harder to recruit faculty and TAs to teach CAT courses. To some extent, this appears to be a campus-wide issue, beyond the College's control. The result, however, is that fewer TAs are inclined to take on a heavier workload with larger sections. Faculty and TAs report concern about increasing TA workload and the challenge of recruiting graduate students for these demanding TA positions. At the very least, to alleviate burdens on the TAs and assure the quality of discussion sections, it would be helpful if the College's program directors would work with TAs to develop reusable lesson modules and materials. TAs could still have some flexibility and discretion in what they teach but would have a common template to work from.
4. a) Faculty members who are teaching CAT courses are not sure how effectively they are fulfilling the goals of this sequence. Some assessment process would be helpful both to them and to the college.

b) Students expressed some issues with the CAT 1-3 sequence. The theme of each track has not been well advertised or clearly communicated to students. CAT 125 also has several tracks and the theme of each track can be different; again, some students felt that the themes of these tracks need to be better articulated so that students know what to expect as they work to fulfill their requirements.

- c) Students also complained of inconsistencies in the types of assignments, workloads, and grading standards among different courses and sections within the CAT core sequence. Some students noted a lack of feedback from TAs on their writing assignments. Student survey data show that Sixth College has lower student satisfaction than the other five colleges in the development of writing skills needed for their post-graduation activities. Since CAT 2-3 are writing focused courses, this issue deserves attention; however, as the writing program is being reviewed separately, we are not making suggestions about it.
5. Students are required to take two courses in Art Making to fulfill the Breadth Requirements. However, the definition of what qualifies as an Art Making course is not as clear as it should be. There is also a requirement that the two Art Making courses cannot be taken in the same field. Students feel that this requirement is too restrictive, preventing them from acquiring the depth they would like to gain in one field. Furthermore, this can be a hurdle when an Art Making course a student may want to take has a pre-requisite in the same field.
6. a) The Practicum is a distinctive feature of the College. As CAT 124 has limited enrollments, the program relies heavily on related courses, including independent studies offered by departments. Students can also satisfy the requirement through an internship program or the Study Abroad Program. This array of alternatives is a sensible approach to meet the demand. However, these courses require both the participation of willing faculty and constant evaluations by the program to ensure that courses meet the objectives and standards to fulfill the requirement. The course evaluations and proposal process demand the time of the program staff as well as that of the advising staff.
- b) The Practicum presents a challenge in finding a sufficient number of faculty to supervise students in these courses. Field work often demands heavy workload as it requires logistical coordination, making and sustaining contacts, and supervising research and learning activities outside the campus. Faculty members are often teaching these courses as overloads with little, if any, compensation. Half of the courses are taught by faculty on a volunteer or half-volunteer basis. Hence, faculty recruitment has been an issue.
- c) For students, the process of creating a proposal for the practicum is not always clear.
- d) The practicum director, with one full-time staff member and some student aids, advises over 1000 students a year on possible practicum projects, a process which involves conversations with each student about their post-college goals. The director works hard to create and maintain connections in the community in order to identify internship opportunities, and review practicum programs to ensure that they remain valid and relevant. The Practicum director is excellent, but she could use more help with this array of necessary and time-consuming activities.
7. Students expressed a concern that the New First-Year Students Orientation occurred too late, after they had registered for classes. Shifting the Orientation to an earlier time in the summer will present a problem for international students, who may not be able to arrive that early. The

Review Committee is pleased that the College already has a plan to address this problem by offering two Orientations, one in the summer and the other in the fall. Other solutions might include online chat opportunities for students trying to create a class schedule before their arrival on campus, and student-to-student mentoring by upper-level students for incoming students, again starting before the arrival of the new students.

8. The average time-to-degree of 4.4 years for graduates starting as freshmen in Sixth College is slightly higher than the campus average. However, the College has taken - and is continuing to consider - actions to streamline the GE requirements and increase their flexibility in order to improve this situation. Separating CAT 125 from 124 and increasing the number of sections have helped noticeably.
9. Sixth College's students have recently been housed in two different campus locations, with some overflowed to the dormitories of Revelle College. Even so, the dorm rooms are overcrowded with three students per room. Students in distant "overflow" dorms feel cut off from the college community. Overcrowding leads to problems that require the extra time and attention of staff involved in student affairs.
10. Student exit survey data show that Sixth College has lower student satisfaction than the other five colleges in satisfaction with faculty instruction in GE courses and in their general attitude toward their undergraduate college; however, these lower rates may be the result of past problems that have now been resolved. Students met in the review meeting did not seem to share those dissatisfactions.

4. Summary of Recommendations

1. The Review Committee recommends that the College develop a clear mission statement and a strategic plan to prioritize its resource allocations to best fulfill that mission. The intentionally eclectic set of requirements needs to be held together by a clearly articulated vision; the mission statement should make intelligible to students and participating faculty how the core curriculum reflects and relates to the mission of the College. The College should also conduct an internal review of the core curriculum (CAT Courses) and ensure it is fulfilling its mission and objectives.
2. a) The Director of Academic Programs plays a critical role in formulating the mission and educational goals of the College. Securing a ladder-rank faculty position for the current Director will provide greater stability for the College. The current director has an external offer in hand and would like to have a ladder faculty appointment. Given Losh's very strong research profile (two books published and a third forthcoming) and international reputation, we encourage the Provost to initiate dialogues with an appropriate academic department (Art or Communication) and pursue efforts to convert the LSOE position into a ladder-track academic appointment.

- b) In conjunction with the recommendation above, the College should also find ways to reduce the Director's teaching workload so that she can remain effective in this position.
3. The College could expand the global understanding part of its mission and requirements. This could be done by appointing faculty with more extensive international expertise in the areas of culture, art and technology, focusing on CAT issues in different parts of the world, and inviting guest lecturers.
 4. The decreasing number of graduate students available for TA positions is something not under the control of the College. However, the College should develop a strategy to address this issue in case this trend continues. This may include reducing the TA workload by streamlining the activities in discussion sections to make the job more attractive and by developing reusable lesson modules to reduce course preparation time.
 5. The CAT sequence is trying to do many things at once. On behalf of both the students and the participating faculty, the Review Committee recommends that the College conduct an internal review of CAT 1-3 and take measures to ensure these courses satisfactorily meet College's objectives. In particular, the following areas need improvements: clear communication regarding the theme of each track; stronger correlation between course lectures/content and writing assignments; workload consistency across different tracks and discussion sections; development of student writing skills; coordination and mentoring of TAs.
 6. The College should review its Art Making requirement. This requirement should be more clearly defined and possibly broadened in its scope. Students find the College's definition of "art making" to be narrow and restrictive. The current requirement also prevents students from studying one area of Art Making in depth.
 7.
 - a) The Practicum is a distinctive feature of the College but it needs more resources to assure its success. Some of its issues can be addressed by developing a more formal structure for the program.
 - b) Currently, half of the practicum courses are taught on a volunteer or half-volunteer basis. The success of the program cannot solely rely on the good will of the participating faculty. Faculty participating in this program need to be compensated appropriately for their time and labor.
 - c) Given that students are required to submit a proposal on a practicum project and cannot receive retroactive credit for the Practicum prior to the approval of the proposal, guidelines for the proposal process need to be clarified for the students.
 - d) The Associate Director for Practicum needs additional staff support so that she can dedicate more time to establish contacts for internship opportunities, increase faculty participation, and oversee the program.

8. The Review Committee applauds the decision of the College to provide two orientation meetings for new first-year students, with one in the summer and the other in the fall. This will help new students in course-work planning and course selection. We suggest, furthermore, that to improve the first-year experience, the College establish a mentoring program in which freshmen and first-year transfer students are mentored by upper-level students. Contact information for mentor and mentee should be given before the new student's arrival. Online chat to assist students in selecting a course schedule before they arrive on campus could also be helpful.
9. The Review Committee is pleased to see that the College is taking actions to streamline the General Education requirements and has increased the numbers of tracks and sections of CAT 125 so that the time-to-degree can be improved. The Committee encourages the College to continue this effort.
10. The shortage of student housing is a campus-wide issue and is beyond the control of the College. However, Sixth College, together with the other colleges, should work with the campus administration to resolve this problem.

Respectfully submitted,

Professor Lisa Parks, Department of Film & Media Studies, UC Santa Barbara

Professor Janet Smarr, Department of Theatre & Dance, UC San Diego

Professor P. Benson Shing, Department of Structural Engineering, UC San Diego (Chair)

January 20, 2015

PROFESSOR DANIEL DONOGHUE, Provost
Sixth College

SUBJECT: Undergraduate Program Review for Sixth College

Dear Professor Donoghue,

The Undergraduate Council has discussed Sixth College's 2014 Program Review. The Council supports the findings and recommendations of the review subcommittee and congratulates Sixth College on a highly positive review. We were especially pleased with the high student and staff satisfaction with the College. The review committee had several recommendations and the Council would like to highlight a few for continued review by the College and to be revisited at the Winter 2016 follow-up review.

- The Council applauds the College for an ambitious core program and understands that such an undertaking utilizes significant staff time. Given that Sixth College is the most highly funded of the six colleges, the opportunities for additional resources may be challenging. We encourage you to manage your current resources more effectively. An assessment of needs of the CAT program and available staff hours should be undertaken. If resources cannot cover the demands of the program, we encourage reexamining the curriculum.
- We look forward to seeing the results of the internal CAT review that you have proposed. The lack of consistency that was experienced by students is also seen as a problem by UGC.
- Please make your mission statement easily available to the general campus via your website.

The Undergraduate Council will conduct its follow-up review of the College in Winter Quarter 2016. At that time, our goal is to learn about the College's progress in implementing the recommendations of the program review subcommittee and to see the results of the CAT program internal review. The Council extends its thanks to the College for its engagement in this process and we look forward to the continued discussion.

Sincerely,



Leslie Carver, Chair
Undergraduate Council

cc: G. Boss R. Continetti G. Cook R. Rodriguez B. Sawrey M. Sidney