

Goal Two

Offer accessible, innovative, and high quality academic programs based on student needs and those of the region and the state.

SWOSU stakeholders and the goal 2 taskforce have identified six measures of successful achievement of goal 2 (4 top priority measures appear in black type). By 2014 SWOSU will

1. Establish an interdisciplinary honors program that serves 200-250 students or 5% of SWOSU enrollment.
2. Have a revised general education program equips students for a rapidly evolving world.
3. Have an academic environment that fosters innovation through experimentation with and adoption of “high impact” and the “best” educational practices.
4. Offer classes and schedules that match the needs of both traditional and non-traditional students.
5. Assess accessibility, innovation, and quality utilizing tools in which
 - a. Eighty-five percent or more of responding SWOSU graduates report that they are able to use the education and training they received at SWOSU in their current employment and that they are satisfied with the education/training they received.
 - b. Programs requiring licensure exams will have a 90% pass-rate and students in other programs using national standardized exams, will perform at or above the fiftieth percentile.
6. Will establish criteria to designate quality programs and allocate resources in consideration of such designations.

The Goal 2 Task-Force has selected the following as priority measures of achievement.

1. **Establish an interdisciplinary honors program that serves 200-250 students or 5% of SWOSU enrollment.**

SWOSU made a commitment to providing enrichment opportunities for highly qualified and motivated students initially by the establishment of the President’s Leadership Class. It followed that by providing both financial support and recognition of undergraduate research. SWOSU will further endorse and expand those commitments by establishing an interdisciplinary honors program. The National Collegiate Honors Council states that honors programs are based on the belief that superior students profit from close contact with faculty, small courses, seminars or one-on-one instruction, course work shared with other gifted students, individual research projects, internships, foreign study, and campus or community service. SWOSU believes that a successful honors program will attract greater numbers of high performing students that will increase retention and degree completion rates.

- Co-PI's, Faculty, and Administrators involved in development of the NIH (SWOSU MARC-STAR) proposal guide the implementation of the STEM interdisciplinary honors program detailed in the proposal.
- Assess the success of the program by comparing the honors program cohort with the non-honors cohort on the CAAP exam and determine
- Establish a university committee to plan expansion of the STEM honors program to non-STEM disciplines.
- Establish funding for faculty support, student recruitment, and student scholarships through appropriations supported by alternative revenue streams (grants and endowment).
- Present proposals to large donors/foundations to establish endowed support for honors program.

References and Links:

2. Have a revised general education program equips students for a rapidly evolving world.

Many studies and authors observe that the world and our understanding of it are changing at an accelerating pace. This means that freshman graduating after 4-6 years will find that much of what they learned at the beginning of their college education no longer applies. No longer will general education programs that merely expose students a variety of disciplines and branches of knowledge be sufficient preparation. Instead, general education programs will need to give students the tools to acquire and disseminate knowledge and to adapt to new circumstances and possibly new careers.

American Association of Colleges and University Statement on General Education

A quality general education is an essential part of every undergraduate student's experience and should reflect an institution's core academic commitments. In the ideal, general education outcomes are achieved through a coherent sequence of dynamic learning experiences, in general courses and in students' majors, and through curriculum-embedded assessments tied to important educational goals. In the ideal, general education is everyone's shared concern.

SWOSU's general education program has undergone only minor adjustments (course credits, category rearrangement, etc.) over the past two decades. Over that period, national trends in general education shifted to greater emphasis on life-long learning and knowledge development, skill (written and oral communication and critical thinking, reasoning, and problem solving) development, and connecting courses and disciplines. It is unlikely that SWOSU can completely reshape its general education program in the next 5

years but focusing attention on three critical areas can create the momentum to pursue other changes.

- SWOSU must correct a widespread perception that general education is unrelated to student success and career achievement. This begins with faculty and administration placing greater emphasis on general education and using it as a means to develop the student skills required for success in college even as students broaden their knowledge.
- The general education curricula of the Weatherford and Sayre campuses should be fully aligned.
- General education courses must reinforce the written and oral communication skills introduced in English and public speaking classes. An ad hoc committee should be formed to identify GE courses where writing and speaking skills can be utilized most effectively. Departments and programs should identify areas where those skills will be reinforced in the major.
- General education courses should require students to utilize critical thinking, reasoning, and problem solving skills. Pedagogical applications for achieving this goal can be found in the best practices strategy discuss later in this document.
- A university committee should be formed to determine if the content areas of general education should be changed and how those changes should occur. This committee should rely heavily on a variety of best practices resources for general education as it completes its work (this strategy will likely extend into a second 5 year planning period).
- Increase the numbers of juniors and seniors in the CAAP post-test cohort to make pre- and post-test comparisons statistically valid.

References and Links:

3. **Have an academic environment that fosters innovation through experimentation with and adoption of “high impact” and the “best” educational practices.**

We believe that academic quality is associated with the need for and the willingness of the academic community (i.e. faculty and administration) to foster innovative practices where deficiencies exist, needs are demonstrated, and where our own creativity along with leaders in higher education help show us the way. This does not mean that we should adopt whatever new technology or fad comes our way but rather, this initiative is designed to unleash the bounds of creativity while not “reinventing the wheel” as we focus on student needs and those of the area and region. We suggest the following strategies in implementation of this measure.

- Conduct an in-depth comparison of tested “high-impact” educational practices with our own. The “high impact educational practices” found within the Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) campaign can be used as a resource. An ad hoc committee should be tasked with this study and with dissemination of its report. This initiative should be completed in year 1.
- At the same time, an oversight committee (High Impacts and Best Educational Practices Committee) should be established to accumulate, archive, and disseminate information to faculty and programs. A website with an indexed database could be used for this purpose. The archive should include “best practices” that have been demonstrated through research and evaluation to be effective with facilitation, support, and review of academic programs and departments. Sources and examples can be found at Florida Atlantic University and Middle Tennessee State University as well as the NSSE Institute for Effective Educational Practice and articles or publications such as “Achieving success in internet-supported learning in higher education: Case studies illuminate success factors, challenges, and future directions.” (Alliance for Higher Education Competitiveness). The collection should be completed in one year, while adoption of strategies should continue throughout the period.
- If and when the comparisons determine significant differences exist, an ad hoc university committee (representing faculty from all colleges and schools) should be formed to create university-wide policies regarding experimentation with and adoption of innovative practices and programs and to provide assistance and university support with innovation and evaluation to programs and departments. This should be completed by year 3.
- The university should establish an incentive program to encourage faculty to test best practices in their courses and curriculum. Such a program could include proposals for reassigned load and/or funding to support trial implementation of new practices.

References and Links:

4. Offer classes and schedules that match the needs of both traditional and non-traditional students.

This measure of success is primarily intended to address the accessibility of courses and academic programs to students based on their scheduling needs. However, it may involve creating innovative delivery systems for some courses and programs as well.

Traditional students are defined as those who enroll in college immediately after high school and attend full-time until graduation (this accounts for approximately 61% of SWOSU students according to the 2009 survey of student opinion). Non-traditional students are defined as those who vary from this definition. Another factor to consider is that 20.5% of all students responding to the survey of student opinion indicated dissatisfaction with the availability of courses at times they can take them (The source of this dissatisfaction is not known. It could be the lack of 8:00 AM classes). This percentage is equivalent to approximately 1,000 students.

The committee recommends the following to achieve implementation of this measure.

- a. Conduct surveys to determine the adequacy of scheduling for traditional classes and to determine the demand for asynchronous or other modes of delivery of course content and which courses would be needed.
- b. Depending on the outcome, work with departments and programs to establish one or more sections of asynchronously delivered GE courses where appropriate (some courses may not be appropriate for web-based delivery). Determine if procedures are necessary to ensure that traditional student enrollment does not interfere with non-traditional student access to online offerings.
- c. If asynchronously delivered courses are not appropriate for specific disciplines, the departments involved should be requested examine potential alternatives.
- d. SWOSU should examine the feasibility of offering one or more degree programs asynchronously.
- e. The distance learning committee and the academic departments shall develop procedures for ensuring quality and equivalency of asynchronous and synchronous courses. (Note: refer to recommendations from Goal Six Taskforce).
- f. Identify the financial technological, and personnel resources necessary to support expansion of asynchronous course offerings.

References and Links:

Lastly, a few words need to be said about “high quality.” Quality is a term that is often used as if everyone knows what the user means when he/she says it. This is rarely the case. If we are to say that we are providing quality education, we need to state clearly what we mean. We must assess what we are doing to determine if we are actually accomplishing our stated goals. Too often assessment is done because it is expected, but nothing is done with the results. If we are truly a quality institution with quality programs we must take assessment seriously and act upon the findings.

Assessment of quality should include:

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- Assessment of academic content to determine if it accurately represents current thinking in the field. Departments are responsible for this and should select an instrument or modality that compares their program content with other institutions or national norms.
- Assessment of appropriateness of level. Introductory courses should prepare students for future courses. Departments are responsible for establishing prerequisites and the university must enforce them. Departments should regularly review prerequisites to determine their effectiveness.
- Assessment of student learning. Is each course accomplishing its stated goals and objectives? Faculty should be encouraged to regularly assess whether their methods are achieving the desired results. This can be accomplished through embedded assessment, regular opportunities for student feedback, etc. Self-assessment should become a regular feature of continuance and tenure and promotion discussions.
- Finally, the departments and programs should assess the success of graduates and their level of satisfaction with their education. The university must develop ways to increase participation in alumni surveys and methods to judge graduate success (performance on licensure/certification tests, admission exams, and employment are a few measures).

Taskforce 2 selected these four measures because they are transformative. The challenges addressed by these measures and their achievement will make SWOSU the premiere institution we all envision it to be.

Goal 2 Taskforce

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