General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: CS100W Technical Communication  GE Area: Area Z

Results reported for AY ___12/13_______  # of sections ___3/3____  # of instructors ___1_________

Course Coordinator: ___Debra Caires______  E-mail: _____debra.caires@sjsu.edu__________

Department Chair: __________Dr. Jon Pearce__________  College: ___College of Science_________

**Instructions:** Each year, the department will prepare a brief (two page maximum) report that documents the assessment of the course during the year. This report will be **electronically submitted to <curriculum@sjsu.edu>**, by the department chair, to the Office of Undergraduate Studies, with an electronic copy to the home college by October 1 of the following academic year.

**Part 1**

To be completed by the course coordinator:

(1)  What SLO(s) were assessed for the course during the AY?

**SLO 2:** Students shall be able to express (explain, analyze, develop, and criticize) ideas effectively, including ideas encountered in multiple readings and expressed in different forms of discourse.

**SLO 3:** Students shall be able to organize and develop essays and documents for both professional and general audiences, including appropriate editorial standards for citing primary and secondary sources.

(2)  What were the results of the assessment of this course? What were the lessons learned from the assessment?

**Table 1:** Grade distribution for Poster Presentation (group collaboration required); 2 drafts minimum required before final poster is printed for Poster Expo.

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**Table 2:** Grade distribution for Literature Review (group work collaboration required); 2 drafts minimum required (first draft submitted for grade and second draft submitted for increasing initial grade).

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**Table 3:** Grade distribution for Cover Letter (accompanies résumé for targeted employer); 4 drafts submitted during semester (2 for critique, third draft submitted for grade, and fourth draft for increasing initial grade).

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Table 1 and 2 demonstrate that students attain the higher end of the GPA scale (as opposed to Table 3) when working: 1. toward a common goal within a group (collaborating as a team, along with the instructor and external client); 2. the document/presentation will be seen in real-time (communicated/demonstrated to an audience of their peers and professionals within the industry); and 3. they have several opportunities to rework the document/presentation before final analysis (final grading). Additionally, assignments (deliverables for Table 1 and 2) were directly related to their applied project and were meant for the client to: 1. understand the technology/project; 2. determine what they wanted/needed from the team and, ultimately, what the team delivered; and 3. create clear and concise project-completion documentation and recommendations for further work that an incoming student team (following semester), along with the client, can follow, maintain, and deliver.

Table 1 and 2 demonstrate that students find more value in assignments that are directly related to applied projects (based on GPA outcomes) where collaboration (working as a group, along with an outside client) is shared among their peers, and critical assessment is based on team peer review, outside client review, and, finally, course instructor review. Although students still dislike the writing process, directly relating written assignments to their applied project that clearly communicate their technical understanding/skills/abilities and related goals/objects to an outside client has made tangible why a computer scientist needs to document their perceived project outcomes and what a client or an end-user actually sees and understands.

Table 3 demonstrates (based on final grade distribution) that students either have a difficult time finding value in the “self-selling” process, known as the cover letter and résumé, or lack the confidence to present themselves in writing (many complaining that they have little or no practical experience). In an attempt to encourage students to demonstrate/talk about their knowledge, skills, and abilities, students were required to submit four drafts (2 for instructor critiques, 2 for final grading), double the number of submissions for previous semesters using the STAR (situation, task, actions, results) method. Students have been schooled that the résumé is meant to “get a job,” when in fact it is meant to gain an interview (phone usually, in-person occasionally). Additionally, students still believe that the cover letter is merely an echo of the résumé when, in fact, the cover letter demonstrates a candidate’s ability to communicate in writing and target a job announcement. We worked on dissecting job announcements and creating both targeted cover letters and résumés; both documents were then used to secure a job shadow experience (semester deliverables included a job shadow proposal, reflection, and thank you letter). The job shadow experience was extremely successful for our students, especially for those with little or no work history within their field of study (approximately 77%).

Literature review projects, targeted to our applied projects, will be explored for the fall 2013 semester and will be published on the Kindle and/or the iPad. We will be replacing the Literature Review document for an end user document (technical manual app) that can be utilized by the client. Students felt that reviewing peer-reviewed literature was valuable; however, for their field of study, an essay-type paper was not. The peer review literature research process will remain; however, the deliverable will change for fall 2013 to include a collaborative, end-user manual that will be published online (Kindle and/or iPad using Adobe’s Master Suite Collection and keeping in-line with the Provost’s technology initiative).

This semester (spring 2013) the Job Shadow and Cover Letter/ Résumé were tied together; the latter secured the former. Although students still struggle with the Cover Letter/ Résumé assignment, they understand and buy-in to its value. Providing great Cover Letter/ Résumé examples, templates, and instructions still remains unsatisfactory for training students how to “sell” their knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) in order to secure an internship (at the very least) and a position in their given field after
graduation. Using the STAR (Situation, Task, Actions, and Results) method helped a great deal; however, students still struggle with the “results” or outcomes portion of their cover letter and résumé. Adding two extra submission edits helped, but the outcome is still disappointing (see Table 3). During the fall 2013 semester, I will be asking job shadow employers to fill out a survey critiquing student cover letters/ résumés used for securing their job shadow experience. Pooling (anonymous) results, comments, and suggestions for students to view after the job shadow experience may help to give students (and the instructor) insight on addressing this challenge in the future.

Part 2

To be completed by the department chair (with input from course coordinator as appropriate):

(4) Are all sections of the course still aligned with the area Goals, Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), Content, Support, and Assessment? If they are not, what actions are planned?

YES

(5) If this course is in a GE Area with a stated enrollment limit (Areas A1, A2, A3, C2, D1, R, S, V, & Z), please indicate how oral presentations will be evaluated with larger sections (Area A1), or how practice and revisions in writing will be addressed with larger sections, particularly how students are receiving thorough feedback on the writing which accounts for the minimum word count in this GE category (Areas A2, A3, C2, D1, R, S, V, & Z) and, for the writing intensive courses (A2, A3, and Z), documentation that the students are meeting the GE SLOs for writing.

N/A