

Explanation of MUSE Goals and Student Learning Outcomes (what makes a course a *MUSE seminar*)

There are two key goals that make a course a *MUSE seminar*. Each goal has a student learning outcome and activities associated with it. These items, as well as how the GE diversity and writing requirements fit within them, are explained below with a few examples of how they could be incorporated into a MUSE seminar. If you would like to include examples from your seminar so they can be shared with your MUSE colleagues, please send them to [Emily Wughalter \(ewughalter@hup.sjsu.edu\)](mailto:ewughalter@hup.sjsu.edu).

1. Becoming a University Scholar

Goal: To establish a strong foundation for becoming a university level student and scholar.

Seminar Activities: Should be designed to enable students to improve critical thinking skills, information competencies, critical writing and reading skills, and group interactions.

Diversity: The GE and MUSE requirements also include activities to help students to appreciate topics and issues from different perspectives and to value individual experiences and views. "Differing perspectives" should be viewed broadly including seeing how people in different disciplines and professions might view a subject matter.

Writing: 1500 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline. Writing is to be assessed for correctness, clarity, and conciseness. The writing does not have to be a single document, but could be several short papers.

Explanation: Perhaps the best way to explain the above items is to say that a MUSE seminar is an opportunity to get first year students on the path to becoming "model" college students. The model college student is one who is excited and enthusiastic about having and taking a role in the learning process, who can analyze information and ask challenging questions, who knows the difference between memorizing and understanding, who knows how to investigate and learn about a subject matter, who knows that learning does not take place solely through the reading of a textbook or lectures – but also through questioning, discussion, research, writing and reflection. An active learning environment is important for MUSE seminars to help students learn how to learn - having an opportunity to learn through "hands on" exploration, discussion, problem solving, and reflection. The design of the MUSE seminars and the above goal and learning outcomes also encompasses helping students to assess their own learning, the importance of doing so, and becoming comfortable in the university classroom environment such that they participate in class and use faculty office hours effectively.

A MUSE seminar is a good starting point for helping students to understand the purpose and nature of a baccalaureate education and becoming an educated person. [For a concise explanation from the CSU Statewide Academic Senate on the purpose of a baccalaureate education, see [Appendix A](#).] It would also be appropriate to include an explanation of the purpose of general education courses in this discussion. [For the objectives of the SJSU GE program, see [Appendix B](#).]

Through the MUSE seminars and attendance at workshops designed for frosh, students will also improve skills to help in their studies: time management, writing, use of the library and other resources, creating effective study plans, notetaking, and more.

In *Making the Most of College – Students Speak Their Minds*, by Richard J. Light (Harvard University Press, 2001), the author identifies four main reasons why students get into academic trouble (pages 36 – 40). A MUSE seminar can help to steer students away from these problems. The four problems are (1) poor time management, particularly studying in short bursts, (2) using the same study techniques as for high school, such as memorizing rather than learning how to apply concepts to new situations, (3) not enrolling in or seeking classes that engage them early on, and (4) always studying alone rather than also learning from their fellow students.

Ideas and Best Practices

- Explain to students and demonstrate how **you** approach learning about a new topic and keeping up-to-date on topics you're interested in.
- Take opportunities in class to help students understand the purpose of a baccalaureate education. Also, since you're teaching one of their GE courses, explain the purpose of GE. Include a discussion of the meaning of the [SJSU Mission Statement](#) (which is also included in the new student handbook - *A Spartan Scholar from the Start*).
- Have students debate an issue in class and help them to see how to prepare and participate to make it an effective learning activity.
- Help students to form and use study groups.

- Take a field trip, attend a student club, have students interview someone, engage in service learning – do something to demonstrate learning outside of the classroom.
- Get to know your students early on, such as having them write a letter of introduction to you, so you have a better understanding of the backgrounds and interests of your students. You may want to give them a letter of introduction for yourself - or perhaps e-mail it to them before your seminar starts, as a way to welcome them to the class.
- Have an assignment be to visit you during office hours - this is a good way to get to know your students better and to help students get used to visiting faculty. Having this be an assignment greatly increases the likelihood that they will come to your office. Before the visits begin, have a discussion with your students about finding a professor's office hours, office location, and how to make a visit productive and comfortable.
- Diversity: Early in the semester, discuss the importance of considering and respecting differing viewpoints. You may want to incorporate such a discussion with the following statement from SJSU's Campus Climate policy (S01-13; <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/s01-13.htm>):

"As a community that values and respects diversity, inclusion, civility and individual uniqueness, San José State University is committed to:

- maintaining a climate where individuals feel welcome;
- encouraging students to act, listen and speak with open minds; to value individual experiences and perspectives, and to appreciate differing viewpoints, for the purpose of promoting the free exchange of ideas that fosters a healthy and productive society."
- Diversity: Create activities to enable students get to know their classmates and to allow group discussions where they can see differences and similarities.
- Diversity - examples from SJSU GE courses - click [here](#).
- Use one-minute papers to help students see reflective writing as integral to the learning process, to encourage them to write often and to get feedback from their professors and their fellow students.
- Writing grading rubric: Explain the meaning of grades A - F. Some students may believe that time at task is enough to "earn" a particular grade. Explain the difference between A and C work. Tie the discussion into their role and responsibility as a university learner. There a variety of articles on the grading process. The SJSU WST folks have a helpful rubric that explains the qualities of written work that would earn an A, B, C, or D - click [here](#).
- Consider different learning styles in creating your seminar's assignments and activities. Also, take advantage of some web sites and the work of Nikos Mourtos and Emily Allen in the College of Engineering, who have created a helpful [2-page overview](#) to types of assignments and learning styles they are geared to with links to some helpful web sites.
- It is helpful to students to break a research and writing assignment into multiple steps with items due along the way. For example, they might first turn in a summary of their project idea followed by an initial bibliography of sources. The multi-step approach can be a good way to help students understand the importance of each step and it can also reduce the possibility of plagiarism (or perhaps you'll find it earlier in the process). For an example of how a research project can be broken down, you may want to review MUSE Professor Andy Fleck's assignment for his English 1B seminar - click [here](#).
- Have students prepare one or two weeks of class discussion and activity where they are responsible for selecting the topics, the preparation materials, and the activities.

2. Becoming a Member of a Metropolitan University Community

Goal: To become acclimated to both the intellectual and social activities of university life.

Seminar Activities: Students should attend workshops and participate in group activities to help them learn about university resources and activities and to improve in areas they have identified.

Explanation: The purpose of this goal is to help students to make the most of being at SJSU by getting involved with campus activities, making use of resources, and taking advantage of what a metropolitan university has to offer. In addition to doing well in their studies, students tend to define success in college as also feeling they are part of the university. This goal also relates to the first goal in that many campus activities, such as participation in a student organization or club, may tie well to a student's studies. This goal serves to help students to feel that SJSU is *their* university – yes, this means a feeling of school spirit and becoming a Spartan!

In *Making the Most of College – Students Speak Their Minds*, by Richard J. Light (Harvard University Press, 2001), the author notes: "Students involved in some outside-of-classroom activities are far happier with their college experience than the few who are not involved." [page 30]

Definition of *Metropolitan University*: The [Coalition of Urban & Metropolitan Universities](#), of which SJSU is a member, provides the following information for understanding the concept of *metropolitan university*:

- [Metropolitan Universities: Who Are We?](#)
- [Declaration of Metropolitan Universities](#)

Ideas and Best Practices

- Help students get to know each other early on in the class. There are a variety of introduction techniques you are all probably aware of. Lee Dorosz has his students write a timed 2-3 minute self-introduction that the student reads at the second class. The intro is to include not just the usual why-am-I-here-what-are-my-career-thoughts, but "at least one thing unusual and/or interesting about you" and "share with us some of the concerns or worries you might have about being new at SJSU." Having students read what they have written sometimes presses upon them the importance of writing clearly and for the intended audience. Students tend to enjoy the exercise and bonding occurs.

Perhaps have students work together in small groups on some project or activity, such as completing the "I'm a Spartan" Quiz or the "scavenger hunt" that the President's interns created for the MUSE students.

- Participation in MUSE workshops and activities, as well as other campus and off-campus activities relevant to your seminar.

The list of MUSE workshops and activities will be mostly completed by the end of Spring 2004 to help you determine whether particular activities should be assigned to your students or if they should select their own. Consider creating some type of assignment for the workshop/activity so that it involves more than just attendance. An assessment tool will also be available to students to help them identify which workshops and activities would be most beneficial to them.

To help encourage students to go to workshops throughout the semester, build the seminar assignments such that they have to attend one and report back by end of Sept, Oct and Nov, for example.

- Consider the "metropolitan" nature of SJSU. Are there other on- or off-campus activities that may be appropriate for your course, such as attendance at a Chamber of Commerce meeting or a school board meeting, a visit to the SJ Art Museum (free)?
- Visit a Student Club - perhaps there is a club with a mission pertinent to your class. For a list of student clubs at SJSU - click [here](#). You can also obtain information in the Student Life Center.
- Diversity: Consider encouraging students to participate in activities on campus such as those sponsored by MOSIAC. Take a field trip to MOSAIC.
- I'm a Spartan Quiz: Have your students take the "I'm a Spartan Quiz" which is designed to give them a broad perspective to the many aspects of SJSU including the buildings, colleges, history, symbols, unique features, athletic teams, and student services. You might want to give it to students at the start of the semester (no points) to get them thinking about SJSU in broader terms. You could give it to them again at the end or have them work in small groups during the semester to get the correct answers. The answer guide includes additional information to help you explain more of SJSU's interesting features to the students. To get a copy of the quiz and answers, send an e-mail to [Emily](#).
- Find a time when you and your students can take a one hour tour of campus to point out items of interest to them (such as locations of computer labs, the print shop, services in the Student Union) and key buildings and perhaps historical items.
- Check out the [campus calendar](#) (note, there are lots of other activities always going on as well - club meetings, MUSE workshops, etc.)
- Talk about the fascinating history of SJSU. For more info - click [here](#).
- Share the SJSU [Mission Statement](#) with your students and discuss what it means. Perhaps tie this discussion into the information from the Coalition of Urban & Metropolitan Universities that define *metropolitan university* ([see above](#)).
- Share with your students some of the [fascinating features](#) of SJSU - things we are very proud of (and it is only a partial list

- add some of your own ideas).

- See what information on careers fields, alumni contacts, and job listings at the [Career Center](#) may be relevant to your seminar and take your students there (doesn't have to be during your class time) to find the information. Note: If you can't access anything on the Career Center (student accounts exist, but not faculty ones), contact the Career Center and they will get you access. You might want to encourage your students to register with Sparta Jobs to be able to view a variety of jobs and career options. Registering will also lead to the Career Center e-mailing periodic reminders of career faires. If you want to stress the importance of communication skills - have students look at some of the job listings to see how many list "good communication skills" as the top qualification. The Career Center site also have information that students will find useful in selecting or evaluating a major.

Appendix A

Excerpt - *Baccalaureate Education in the California State University* A Report of the CSU Statewide Academic Senate, 1997

The Purposes of Baccalaureate Degrees

"Baccalaureate programs in the CSU build upon the foundations established during elementary and secondary education, as well as other formal educational and significant life experiences. CSU undergraduate education engages each student in the development of advanced knowledge, skills, and understanding that are the mark of educated persons. Such an education is necessary for lifelong intellectual endeavor, for becoming productive members of society, and for participating in democratic institutions and civil society. Equally important, the baccalaureate provides opportunities to understand values and ethics and the role they play in the life of the individual and of society.

Higher education, besides providing society with "educated persons," remains the most effective agent for individual fulfillment and advancement, thus stimulating broad social change. A *public* university system is mindful of its roles in society and of its need to offer the opportunity and benefits of higher education on a fair basis to all who qualify.

Knowledge and skills for lifelong intellectual endeavor. CSU baccalaureate education provides graduates with the opportunity to develop the skills and acquire the breadth and depth of knowledge necessary to continue to learn throughout their lives. Graduates learn to locate, evaluate, analyze, synthesize, and create information. They are able to think critically, understand methods of inquiry, communicate their work effectively, and integrate and apply knowledge from various fields. They appreciate the arts and the importance of imagination and creativity. The educational process prepares them to respect intellectual and cultural perspectives different from their own and to engage in civil and informed discourse over such differences. Graduates are prepared to respond to and participate in change.

Knowledge and skills to participate in democratic decision-making and global civil society. CSU baccalaureate education prepares graduates to participate fully and responsibly in decision-making processes and in global civil society more generally. Graduates possess an understanding of democratic institutions and values, and understand their responsibility to their community. They possess a sense of self-awareness within a broader awareness of kinship with the human community in all its diversity. CSU graduates understand the nature of prejudice and discrimination and reject stereotypic thinking.

Knowledge and skills for productive members of society. CSU baccalaureate education provides graduates with the knowledge, skills, and social perspective necessary to succeed in their chosen careers or in advanced study. Graduates are prepared to accept responsibility, to work collaboratively with others, and to exercise initiative, creativity, leadership, and mature judgment. They understand the value of appropriate technology and are prepared for technological change. The baccalaureate recipient understands systems of merit and reward within a broader framework of ethics and social responsibility.

Systems of values and ethics for using knowledge and skills CSU baccalaureate students examine systems of values and ethics relevant to their use of knowledge and skills. Through their baccalaureate studies and experience, students undergo a maturation resulting in a more developed understanding of values and ethics, a willingness to question personal and social norms, and a more reflective and universal perspective resulting in a sense of social responsibility."

Source: *Baccalaureate Education in the California State University*, AS-2388-97/EX/Floor - November 6-7, 1997, CSU Statewide Academic Senate.

Appendix B

Excerpt from the SJSU GE Guidelines on the Objectives of GE

A university brings together many separate areas of learning, yet it is more than just a collection of specialized disciplines. General Education involves both the development of skills and the acquisition of knowledge through the study of facts, issues, and ideas. Regardless of major, all who earn undergraduate degrees should share a common universe of discourse.

The objectives of the San José State University General Education program are:

- To develop analytical skills and reasoning powers;
- To increase the ability to communicate ideas effectively both in speaking and in writing;
- To enhance the ability to live and work intelligently, responsibly, and cooperatively in a multicultural society and an increasingly interdependent world;
- To provide a fundamental understanding of science and the natural world;
- To further knowledge and appreciation of the arts and letters;
- To promote citizenship through knowledge of the forces that shape the individual and modern society; and
- To develop abilities to address complex issues and problems using disciplined analytic skills and creative techniques.

The advancement of academic discourse requires civility and a respectful attitude toward all members of the academic community in the expression and consideration of a variety of viewpoints. All courses shall reinforce the ethical responsibility of students and instructors to acknowledge respectfully the learning styles and forms of expression of individuals and members of all groups.

Source: [SJSU GE Program Guidelines](#).

Also see - [GE Explanation from Catalog](#)