



Center for University Studies and Programs (CUSP) Review Committee

Final Report: August 20, 2009

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INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Susan Jeffords and General Faculty Organization (GFO) Chair and Vice Chair Dan Jaffe and Chuck Jackels jointly charged the CUSP Review Committee to undertake the third-year review called for by the Center for University Studies and Programs (CUSP) Charter (2005):

An early review of the CUSP and the provisions of this Charter is scheduled so that the campus can adapt quickly to initial experience as lower division programs are developed. A comprehensive review will be conducted in the third year (at the end of the 2008-2009 Academic Year). The General Faculty Organization and the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs will be jointly responsible for conducting the review and making recommendations for modifications to the Chancellor.

We specifically were asked to respond to this primary question: Does the CUSP charter continue to address the current and future needs of UW Bothell?

In terms of the structure of the report, we were asked to develop two parts of the review:

- Assess CUSP's performance in its first three years in relation to the goals established in the charter.
- Provide recommendations regarding how CUSP should be structured to meet the needs of the next 5 years.

- Should CUSP be responsible for all 1st and pre-major 2nd year students?
- Should CUSP have the authority to hire and appoint faculty to meet the needs of the program?
- Are there lower division models at other institutions that could be beneficial to UW Bothell?

We conceived these two parts as essentially looking backward and forward, respectively.

Moreover, our charge articulated specific issues to be addressed:

- Articulation and effectiveness of learning goals;
- Effectiveness of Discovery Core structure;
- Effectiveness of second-year programs;
- Student performance in CUSP courses and preparation for entrance into programs;
- Role of FOCUS and CUSP representation on campus-wide bodies (Executive Council, Academic Council, Cabinet);
- Faculty appointments, advising, and other staffing needs.

Finally, the Committee elected to pose an additional question: How well does CUSP prepare students to be successful college students? We felt that this question, in a student-centered campus such as ours, is of fundamental importance.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: LOOKING BACK

Overview of Accomplishments in CUSP's First Three Years

- There have been good student outcomes as measured by GPAs and admission to programs. However, more structured and consistent collection of native and transfer student data will help assess these outcomes more clearly.

- The recent retention study which gathered data from students who chose to leave UW Bothell cited examples of issues UWB has already begun to address. These include the need to increase the effectiveness of advising and to provide a wider range of majors and courses to prepare for those majors. Significantly, these issues were of more concern to students who chose to leave than unhappiness with the overall quality of their educational experience.
- Students have the opportunity to be immersed in an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge construction and to engage with “the Bothell way.”
- Some faculty indicate that native students are as well-prepared, or better prepared, for upper-division work as are transfer students.
- For the first time since CUSP began, the majority of applicants listed UW Bothell as their first choice, suggesting the word is out that a quality learning experience is available at UW Bothell.
- Many students say they would recommend UW Bothell to others.

Overview of Challenges for the Next Five Years of Lower-Division Education at UWB

Regarding the question of fit between the charter and CUSP as it currently exists, the largest gaps are related to:

- faculty hiring;
- the absence in the charter of any mention of interdisciplinarity or any kind of coordinated first-year experience; and
- the need to develop a more structured and coordinated set of assessment instruments.

Other problems related to the fit between CUSP and its charter and to the performance of CUSP include:

- the curricular structure is out of sync with some programs' needs, the primary example being the ten-credit Autumn Quarter Discovery Core course; and
- program contributions of faculty from academic programs have not been proportional to the number of CUSP students who are admitted to those programs from CUSP.

Problems related to the CUSP Learning Goals:

These issues have been discussed with the director and interim director of CUSP and work is underway to address them.

- the learning goals have not been as clearly articulated as they need to be in order for them to be operationalized and assessed;
- it has not been clearly shown how the CUSP learning goals and general education areas of knowledge articulate with each other;
- it is not clear how the outcomes of the learning goals are being measured by the program;
- the learning goals are not consistently being used as a framework in CUSP courses; and
- the learning goals are inconsistently or unclearly addressed in syllabi and assignments.

- **Summary of Student Views of CUSP Overall:**

Students feel welcomed by the CUSP director and staff, and would recommend UW Bothell to family and friends; students value small classes and connections with faculty; students feel they are learning new things and are making some progress toward CUSP learning goals; students feel supported by student life and academic services; advising needs attention; the value of CUSP coursework in preparation for upper-division

study or careers is not clear to many students; students need more in-class and out-of-class support developing college study and writing skills.

- **Summary of Student Views Regarding Discovery Core:**

Most students like that the Discovery Cores offer opportunities to meet other freshman, and like learning new topics that are interrelated, but think the Discovery Core I is too long and entails too many credits. Some students think that the Discovery Core courses have a limited selection of topics, do not help them with their majors, and do not understand why the courses are required for a full year. A significant number of students do not like the portfolio or feel it is implemented poorly.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: LOOKING FORWARD

Considerations Regarding How CUSP Should Be Structured to Meet the Needs of UW Bothell in the Next Five Years

The CUSP Review Committee identified some fundamental requirements for the process of finding a pathway to build upon UW Bothell's current successes in first-year education. Key among them are:

1. Clear, explicit, and prioritized goals;
2. A means for assessing the attainment of these goals;
3. A full accounting of perceived short-term and long-term costs weighed against the benefits (fulfillment of the goals) for all stakeholders involved;
4. Explicit and binding commitments from stakeholders, especially programs and faculty members, which are necessary for the strategy to be successful.

The CUSP Review Committee delineated three principal national models for first-year programs:

- **Model 1: Enhanced Advising and Student Life** (provide increased and improved freshman advising, academic, and student life activities that are unattached to curricular changes)
- **Model 2: Learning Communities or First-Year Seminars** (foster learning communities or offer first-year seminars)
- **Model 3: Mandatory core sequence with or without strict cohorts**
 - a. *Without strict cohorts (current CUSP model)*
 - b. *With strict cohorts*

Finally, the CUSP Review Committee identified three key issues that must be addressed regardless of the lower-division education model chosen:

100- and 200-Level Courses: Whether or not UW Bothell chooses to offer a Discovery Core or First-Year Seminar, the CUSP Review Committee is unable to find a rationale for including most 100- and a few 200-level courses in CUSP.

Writing: Developing a coherent writing program is generally considered an important venture for any university, and central to the improvement of the first-year experience. For UW Bothell, with its writing-intensive programs, it would seem to be a necessity.

CUSP as a Unit: The CUSP Review Committee encourages the UW Bothell community to match the future structure of first-year/pre-major initiatives to the number of tasks required for implementation of the strategy, especially the number of full-time and tenure-earning faculty associated with it. The campus's decisions about the extent of first-year/pre-major programs should guide the decision about the fate of CUSP and its place within the campus governance structures.

LOOKING BACK

Assessing CUSP's Performance in Its First Three Years in Relation to the Goals Established in the Charter and in Relation to the Needs of the Campus

An analysis of data indicates that CUSP is meeting its overall purpose as outlined in the charter, but that there are some very significant challenges or limitations that must be addressed in planning for the next five years of lower-division education at UW Bothell, whatever form that unit and curriculum ultimately take.

The challenges faced by UW Bothell as it continues to work towards defining its identity as either a two-plus-two or a four-year campus are occurring within both a national and a campus context, and reflect the opportunities and choices discussed by groups such as the National Resource Center for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition (<http://www.sc.edu/fye/>). Likewise, UW Bothell's range of challenges is being experienced by campuses across the country undergoing transformations similar to ours.

On a campus level, CUSP has been actively involved in implementing the seven priorities in the 21st-Century Campus Initiative. The most problematic is resource sustainability.

- **Growth:** Tables 3 and 4 illustrate the continual rise in growth.
- **Resourcefulness:** CUSP has been forced to make difficult choices to meet basic instructional and advising needs, as the report later discusses, due to inadequate resources to meet the needs of a growing educational unit.
- **Diversity:** Each cohort has been very diverse, and has been more diverse than some other programs on campus. However, as with other programs at UW Bothell, CUSP does not have a strong representation of traditionally underserved communities, though an Academic Transition Program pilot is underway for the 2009-10 academic year.

- ***Student-Centered:*** As seen in this report, CUSP has worked closely with Academic Services and Student Life. CUSP has also worked to engage students in student-centered learning.
- ***Community:*** Some of the Discovery Core (DC) courses and electives have connected students with community organizations. However, this is not a consistent policy of the DCs.
- ***Innovation:*** CUSP has focused on creating interdisciplinary courses and on using innovative teaching methods to engage students in the construction of knowledge.
- ***Sustainability:*** Although “sustainability” is referred to as “environmental sustainability” in the 21st Century Campus Initiative, in this report our use of the term focuses on “resource sustainability.” CUSP’s primary challenge here is the lack of funding available to pay faculty. In order to stay within budget, while also meeting the unit’s growing needs in the absence of more participation from full-time UW Bothell faculty, many classes are taught by part-time lecturers. These lecturers earn a lower salary per class than full-time faculty in other programs. However, an expectation in the charter is that faculty will be primarily full-time.

Overview of Accomplishments in CUSP’s First Three Years

- There have been good student outcomes as measured by GPAs (see Tables 1 and 2) and admission to programs (see Table 3). However, more structured and consistent collection of native and transfer student data will help assess these outcomes more clearly.
- The recent retention study which gathered data from students who chose to leave UW Bothell cited examples of issues that the campus has already begun to address. These

include the need to increase the effectiveness of advising and to provide a wider range of majors and courses to prepare for those majors. Significantly, these issues were of more concern to students who chose to leave than unhappiness with the overall quality of their educational experience.

- Students have the opportunity to be immersed in an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge construction and to engage with “the Bothell way.”
- Some faculty indicate that native students are as well-prepared, or better prepared, for upper-division work as are transfer students.
- For the first time since CUSP began, the majority of applicants listed UW Bothell as their first choice, suggesting the word is out that a quality learning experience is available at UW Bothell.
- Many students say they would recommend UW Bothell to others.

Table 1 –Program Admission GPA of Native vs. Transfer Students for 2006 Cohort*

	Overall GPA	Business GPA	IAS GPA	CSS GPA
Native	3.19	3.23	3.13	3.16
Transfer	2.98	3.08	2.80	3.05

Table 2 – GPA of Native Students for 2007 – 2008*

	Autumn 2007	Winter 2008	Spring 2008	Overall
Freshman	2.88	3.06	3.07	3.00
Sophomore	3.02	3.05	3.11	3.06

Table 3 – Admission of 2006 Cohort to UW Bothell Programs*

Original Cohort Size	Business	IAS	CSS	Undeclared / Seeking Admission
136	33	26	6	22

Overview of Challenges for the Next Five Years of Lower-Division Education at UW

Bothell

While there have been important accomplishments in CUSP—and these should not be overshadowed by deficiencies—there are a number of areas that will require serious and sustained attention from the campus community as we move towards determining the future of lower division educational planning at UW Bothell.

Many of the challenges CUSP has faced in its first three years most likely have derived from the unanticipated rapid growth in applications and enrollment numbers, as seen in Tables 4 and 5, numbers which show no indication of slowing down.

Table 4 – Enrollment*

	Applied	Admitted	Confirmed
2006 -07	446	338	139
2007 - 08	560	406	158
2008 - 09	722	552	251
2009-2010	1189	912	328

Table 5 – Percent Increase from Year to Year*

	Applied	Admitted	Confirmed
2007 vs. 2006	26%	20%	14%
2008 vs. 2007	29%	36%	59%
2009 vs. 2008	65%	65%	31%
2009 vs. 2006	167%	170%	136%

*All data in tables 1-5 are from the Division of Enrollment Management

Regarding the question of fit between the charter and CUSP as it currently exists, the largest gaps are related to:

- faculty hiring;
- the absence in the charter of any mention of interdisciplinarity or any kind of coordinated first-year experience; and
- the need to develop a more structured and coordinated set of assessment instruments.

Other problems related to the fit between CUSP and its charter and to the performance of CUSP include:

- the curricular structure is out of sync with some programs’ needs, the primary example being the ten-credit Autumn Quarter Discovery Core course; and
- program contributions of faculty from academic programs have not been proportional to the number of CUSP students who are admitted to those programs from CUSP.

Problems related to the CUSP Learning Goals:

(These issues have been discussed with the director and interim director of CUSP and work is underway to address them.)

- the learning goals have not been as clearly articulated as they need to be in order for them to be operationalized;
- it has not been clearly shown how the CUSP learning goals and general education areas of knowledge articulate with each other;
- it is not clear how the outcomes of the learning goals are being measured by the program;
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- the learning goals are inconsistently or unclearly addressed in syllabi and assignments.

The problems related to the learning goals put these lower division challenges solidly in alignment with work being done on other campuses in their general education programs (Hart Research Associates, 2009).

However, despite these challenges to lower division education at UW Bothell, data indicate that CUSP has provided many components of a learning environment conducive to student success. To explore what we have learned, we start with the student voice. The following section reports on the Spring 2008 and 2009 student survey and includes comments from the CUSP Review Committee's student representative. The student responses illustrate that while changes need to be made to improve their learning experience, many have found value in their first year of college at UW Bothell. The data and superscripts referred to appear in endnotes.

Overall Student Opinions About CUSP Overall

Needs Met/Satisfied

Student data collected in the Spring 2008 and 2009 surveys and in comments made to the student representative on the CUSP review committee show that most students feel the CUSP director and staff have created a very open and welcoming student environment and feel any problems or concerns they approach the director with garner results.¹ Students feel the most satisfying aspects of being freshmen at UW Bothell are the small class sizes, meeting many new people, learning new things, and close connections with faculty.² For example, of students surveyed in Spring 2009, 88 percent agreed or strongly agreed that their professors were responsive to their questions and concerns and 75 percent agreed or strongly agreed they have opportunities to meet people and make friends at UW Bothell.³ Additionally, students surveyed in Spring 2009 indicated they would likely recommend UW Bothell to a friend of family member.⁴

When asked how much they have developed toward each of the CUSP learning goals during their freshman year, on a scale of one to five, students rated their progress at an average of 3.59, with Critical and Creative Inquiry rated the highest at 3.73.⁵ While these data are encouraging and supports claims of student satisfaction with their learning, research on assessing student learning strongly suggests that student self-reporting of learning outcomes is overly optimistic and should not be accepted in lieu of measurable outcomes (Boud, 1995; Brown, Bull & Pendleburg, 1997). Many students also agreed that their CUSP coursework challenged them to learn and grow and stated the most challenging parts of being freshmen were adjusting to college-level workloads, time management, study skills, class attendance, and critical reading

and writing skills.⁶ Of the students surveyed in Spring 2009, 68% felt they were learning things they will need for their future careers.⁷

In terms of student support services at UW Bothell, the Campus Library, Quantitative Skills Center, Information Technologies (including the multimedia lab), and Student Life were rated in the top five, respectively, with the Student Fitness Center and Writing Center not far behind.⁸

Needs Not Met/Dissatisfied

Students do have some concerns about their education at UW Bothell as freshmen, especially regarding academic advising and coursework in preparation for majors. There is a shared sentiment among some advisors from other UW Bothell academic programs and some CUSP students that lower-division students are not receiving the high-quality, accurate academic advising they need to move into the majors and areas of study they are interested in.⁹ Some students have noted they have received incorrect advice or felt uncomfortable or unwelcomed when attempting to seek academic advising within CUSP.¹⁰

Sixty-eight percent of students surveyed in Spring 2009 agreed or strongly agreed that CUSP coursework prepares them for upper-division study and future careers, though it is interesting to note that 23 percent neither agreed or disagreed, suggesting many students do not perceive CUSP courses to be contributing to their future academic and professional and careers. Other evidence shows students are concerned about whether the writing and composition skills adequately prepare them for courses in the Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences program.¹¹

While not necessarily dissatisfied, students surveyed in 2009 also noted several challenges to being a freshman at UW Bothell, suggesting coursework or support services may need to focus more on helping them develop such skills as time management, adjusting to

college-level homework, study skills, critical reading and writing, and college expectations (such as class attendance and being on time).¹²

Summary of Student Views of CUSP Overall: Students feel welcomed by the CUSP director and staff, and would recommend UW Bothell to family and friends; students value small classes and connections with faculty; students feel they are learning new things and are making some progress toward CUSP learning goals; students feel supported by student life and academic services; advising needs attention; the value of CUSP coursework in preparation for upper-division study or careers is not clear to many students; students need more in-class and out-of-class support developing college study and writing skills.

Student Opinions About the Discovery Core

Positive/Satisfied

Students have some very strong feelings about the first-year Discovery Core sequence. Some of those surveyed in the Spring 2009 appreciated that these courses offered a community of freshmen, allowing them to meet many students (30 percent), that the collaborative teaching allowed for the interdisciplinary approach to course topics (45 percent), that the courses fostered the learning of new subjects, and that the sequence helped to ease the transition from high school to college.¹³ Some students also see the value in introducing portfolios to students as freshmen, given that other UW Bothell academic programs also use them.¹⁴

Needs Not Met/Dissatisfied

While some students see value in the Discovery Core sequence, others feel dissatisfied with the courses. In open responses for the Spring 2008 and 2009 surveys, many students stated that the Discovery Core I course was too long, took up too many credits, and offered too few

choices of subjects.¹⁵ Some students surveyed in Spring 2009 did not perceive value in the Discovery Core series as a whole or did not understand why it was required or necessary, and instead felt the courses were a waste of time and did not apply to their majors (14 percent and 19 percent, respectively).¹⁶ This is of particular concern to pre-health or science majors who may fall behind in prerequisites during Autumn Quarter because they must take the ten-credit Discovery Core I instead of getting started on math or science sequences.¹⁷ Some students suggested instead that the Discovery Core series should be optional rather than required (yet strongly encouraged) and that it should not take all year.¹⁸

It is also interesting to note that of the students surveyed in Spring 2009, 14 percent disagreed and 34 percent neither agreed or disagreed that the Discovery Core courses helped to build a learning community among themselves, their peers, and their professors.¹⁹ This might suggest this sort of learning community environment may not be as valued by many students as it is by faculty and staff, or that this sort of learning environment is not consistent across the Discovery Core courses. It should also be noted that CUSP does not appear to apply the generally accepted definitions of “learning communities” found in other institutions supporting these efforts, and may instead reflect the advantages of being part of a fairly small cohort of students. This advantage may be steadily eroded as the freshman class grows.

When asked what one thing they would change about the Discovery Core classes, students frequently mentioned the portfolio in both the Spring 2008 and 2009 surveys. Some suggested not attaching it to the Discovery Core courses while others suggested not requiring it or abandoning it altogether. Other student feedback indicates that the portfolio is not carried out well and instructors are not integrating the portfolio into the Discovery Core III class.²⁰ This suggests that the portfolio may not be consistently introduced early on and throughout the

Discovery Core sequence or that its value may not be apparent to students as they move through the Discovery Core courses. While CUSP is currently working to address this problem, resources for faculty development around teaching to a portfolio may be beneficial, in addition to more consistent faculty participation within the structure of Discovery Core sequence.

Summary of Student Views Regarding Discovery Core: Most students like that the Discovery Cores offer opportunities to meet other freshman, and like learning new topics that are interrelated, but think the Discovery Core I is too long and entails too many credits. Some students think that the Discovery Core courses have a limited selection of topics, do not help them with their majors, and do not understand why the courses are required for a full year. A significant number of students do not like the portfolio or feel it is implemented poorly.

Examining CUSP's Performance Related to Specific Parts of the Charter

Purpose, Role and Mission

CUSP was fit into the broader role and mission of UW Bothell to implement the legislative directive associated with establishing a lower-division program serving the Eastside and Northshore areas. Student demographics from the 2006-07 freshman classes indicate that CUSP was meeting this goal. The rapid growth in each succeeding year of applications and enrollment demonstrates that we are continuing to meet this goal (see Tables 4 and 5).

The charter indicates CUSP's purpose is to "a) manage coursework and student learning assessment associated with UW Bothell's lower division core and distribution course requirements and b) facilitate coordination of academic programs, student life, and academic services for lower division students before they are accepted to majors." The intent of CUSP is

also to offer a “focal point for collaboration among the faculty of various academic programs and the staff of student and academic services.”

Additionally, while CUSP fosters much collaboration among faculty, it often occurs among academic services, Student Life, and faculty, among faculty co-teaching the Discovery Core I, and among faculty teaching other courses in CUSP. It is not apparent how CUSP is fostering collaboration among faculty in the UW Bothell academic programs, perhaps because few full-time faculty have taught CUSP courses. Figures 1 and 2 (see page 26) illustrate this disparity.

Lastly, the charter states CUSP “will provide an organizational focus on lower division programs while allowing academic programs to maintain a balanced emphasis on native and transfer students.” CUSP has attempted to deliver a coherent lower-division curriculum for pre-matriculated students, although the charter itself created inconsistencies which are becoming increasingly apparent. Some UW Bothell academic programs are stepping in to manage or offer both 100- and 200- level courses themselves rather than through CUSP, creating a more “seamless” entry into the academic program in terms of attaining prerequisites or academic advising, for example. On the other hand, other academic programs are offering courses only at the 200-level or above. Given that some programs have contributed many more full-time faculty than others to CUSP (for example, Science and Technology faculty account for a majority of the non-Discovery Core CUSP courses taught by full-time faculty), the choice of a program to let CUSP take responsibility for courses normally in the program’s purview greatly increases the likelihood the course will be taught by a part-time instructor.

Responses to the Spring 2009 faculty survey display a wide range of opinions about which program or unit should offer lower-division courses. Not all programs agree that they

should teach all lower-division courses pertinent to their majors. Unanswered is the question about which program(s) should teach courses that serve all the majors.

Authority and Responsibilities

The CUSP charter specifies that the Center's authority and responsibilities include providing academic advising, managing funds and budgets, performing strategic planning, hiring faculty, building curriculum, connecting students with academic services and Student Life, evaluating the CUSP program and student learning, and documenting CUSP's activities through annual reports. All of these responsibilities are commensurate with those of the academic programs at UW Bothell, although CUSP has not been constituted as a program, nor does it have its own faculty to carry out these tasks. The Faculty Oversight Committee for University Studies (FOCUS) is charged with some of these responsibilities, as is seen below. Opinions from the faculty survey about the role and responsibilities of FOCUS ranged from getting rid of FOCUS entirely, to requiring FOCUS to create all the curricula and evaluate all CUSP faculty, with other suggestions in between these two extremes.

Administrative Structure and Staffing

As stated in the charter, CUSP is functioning within the office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, but has a "director" rather than a "center coordinator," as the charter suggests. However, the CUSP center coordinator duties as outlined in the charter appear to match those of the current director position. The director's responsibilities include overall leadership (strategic planning, budgeting, and representation on Academic Council), appointing CUSP staff and faculty (with the appropriate approvals indicated in the charter), managing CUSP's fiscal resources within campus and university policies, scheduling CUSP courses in consultation with other program directors, ensuring a coordinated set of advising, student life, and academic

services, and lastly, the development of a data and reporting system for data-based review of the program.

The faculty survey indicates that the faculty members feel the CUSP director is flexible and easy to work with, and is performing well considering the constrained resources and structure within which CUSP operates. The CUSP office has succeeded in contributing to building student life on campus through numerous events held in the CUSP office space, including both on- and off-campus communities. The staffing of CUSP as outlined in the charter includes “a counseling services coordinator and such office and other staff as are necessary to fulfill the mission and goals of the center.” Most respondents to all CUSP Review surveys identified advising as the staffing area most in need of immediate improvement.

Throughout the last three years, CUSP has had one academic advisor and one program coordinator. This may have been adequate when CUSP began with 136 students in 2006. Feedback from both CUSP faculty and students and from advisors in other UW Bothell academic programs indicate that more coordinated advising is needed and that more than one advisor needs to be dedicated to CUSP students. CUSP now has advising responsibility for about 700 students, including incoming freshmen, sophomores, and pre-major juniors. *Implementing solutions will become even more critical given the rate at which the CUSP student population is growing.* The search for possible solutions must become a key component of the campus community conversations throughout the 2009-2010 academic year about the future of lower division education at UW Bothell. Some ideas suggested in the Spring 2009 faculty survey follow.

In addition to—*but not as a substitute for*— hiring more advisors, suggestions for addressing the advising situation include:

- developing closer collaboration between the CUSP advisor and program advisors;

- having the CUSP advisor send interested students to the program advisors sooner, even if they are undeclared or not yet admitted to the program; and
- having the CUSP advisor schedule group advising sessions or do advising during freshmen events;
- conducting regular (perhaps yearly) evaluations of advising in CUSP (as well as in all academic programs); or
- developing a peer advising or mentor program.

Academic Services units (Campus Library, Information Technologies, Teaching and Learning Center, Writing Center, and Quantitative Skills Center) have experienced challenges in consistently coordinating and collaborating with CUSP faculty teaching Discovery Core courses, particularly with transient part-time lecturers who are unfamiliar with the UW Bothell culture of collaboration, but these units also have had the director's support in working to strengthen those relationships and in marketing academic services to CUSP students. Academic Services staff members also have played key roles in mapping out the Discovery Core sequencing of college skills, have continued to refine that sequencing, and have contributed to the training and support of CUSP faculty at retreats and workshops.

The charter calls for CUSP to develop a “data and reporting system that provides for regular data-based review of program efficiency and quality.” Throughout the last three years, CUSP has used many methods for collecting data on the program, such as data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the 2008 review conducted by Jean Henscheid from the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, the 2009 retention study by Lori Holloway, Spring Quarter student surveys, and portfolio assessment in

the Discovery Core III. This latter has been relatively informal, but work is underway to make it a more structured and formal process. A more intentional and coordinated assessment strategy carried out in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Research would provide the data necessary for an effective review of efficiency and quality, especially of student learning. However, the development and implementation of this strategy will require the commitment of more human and financial resources than are currently allotted to lower division educational planning.

Faculty Oversight Committee for University Studies (FOCUS)

Structure and Roles

The CUSP charter establishes the Faculty Oversight Committee for University Studies (FOCUS) as part of its administrative structure with a primary role of providing “faculty leadership and decision making” in CUSP. This entails the responsibility and authority to hire part-time lecturers and to develop the CUSP curriculum through course development and approval in consultation with the relevant academic programs.

The charter indicates that FOCUS “will consist of five to seven full-time faculty members who have teaching assignments in the University Studies program” in addition to representatives from the Teaching and Learning Center and the Campus Library. Members are appointed to FOCUS by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs with concurrence of the Academic Council and the GFO Executive Council to serve for two years and at least three academic programs must be represented in any one academic year. The activity level and involvement of FOCUS has varied from year to year. Also, for 2008-09, only one of the three members of FOCUS was from the tenure-earning ranks, which, while complying with the charter’s requirements, is less than ideal in light of the small number of tenure-earning faculty

members teaching in CUSP. While the high level of participation from full time lecturers has been valuable and should not be overlooked, it is clear that the framers of the charter intended a much greater involvement from tenure-earning faculty in CUSP teaching and oversight.

Role in Faculty Hiring

FOCUS is also involved in the CUSP faculty hiring process, particularly for part-time lecturer hires. As seen in the charts in the following pages, the CUSP faculty tends to be predominantly part-time. Because of this situation, FOCUS's faculty hiring decisions may greatly impact the CUSP and the greater campus community, yet there appears to be no consistent mechanism in that hiring process for the broader UW Bothell community to review or offer feedback on the candidates. The large number of part-time faculty hires to teach within CUSP also leaves FOCUS with a larger workload than perhaps is acceptable or was anticipated. Part of the challenge for FOCUS members is that often they are presented with application materials shortly before the start of the quarter for which the new hire will be made. Although some part-time faculty have now taught in CUSP for several years, each quarter there are more new hires to consider. This is a larger faculty hiring role than is typically carried out in the programs but arguably with less consistent and in-depth vetting.

FOCUS also is to have a role in how CUSP faculty members are funded, assigned, and evaluated by approving such processes before they are passed on for review by the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, the Academic Council, and the GFO Executive Council. However, this specification of the charter appears not to be practiced.

Role in Course Approval

The CUSP charter's policy on course approval grants FOCUS the authority to act as departmental faculty in course approval matters. Specifically, FOCUS is to consult with the

faculty in all academic programs who might normally be responsible for the course under consideration before taking any action and is also supposed to circulate course proposals establishing or revising a course to relevant faculty members for written responses to be forwarded to the UW Bothell Curriculum Committee prior to final approval.

The initial FOCUS group was instrumental in the development of the Discovery Core sequence and in shepherding curriculum materials through the appropriate committees. Succeeding iterations of the DC courses have generally followed the format approved for the first DC courses. The initial FOCUS group also created the first “learning objectives,” which were later transformed into broader “learning goals.” These goals are now undergoing their second revision, the focus of which is to clarify them and make them more useful for faculty, staff, students, and students’ families.

Policies on Faculty Hiring

Faculty hiring is greatly out of alignment with the language and intent of the charter. The staffing of lower division courses will need to be a key part of campus conversations about the next five years of the campus’s growth.

The CUSP charter clearly outlines the policy for faculty teaching assignments and is intended to implement the recommendations of the GFO Executive Council. The review committee’s assessment found that the need to “increase and stabilize the faculty resources dedicated to the lower division,” as noted in the CUSP annual reports for 2006-07 and 2007-08, continues to be a challenge that must be addressed campus-wide as we move toward a plan for lower-division education for the next five years.

1. *A faculty member's service to and instruction within CUSP should be given the same consideration and value as within the faculty's academic program in terms of merit and/or promotion evaluations.*

The CUSP Review Committee did not have data to thoroughly assess this recommendation, but the lack of full-time UW Bothell faculty volunteering to teach in CUSP may be an indication that faculty are concerned that academic programs may not give the same consideration and value to service and instruction within CUSP. Also, data from the Spring 2009 faculty survey indicated that some resistance may be due to concerns that teaching in CUSP could be seen to accord less status and could delay or derail faculty scholarship and movement towards promotion and tenure. There was a concern that CUSP could become a "lower division ghetto" or would become the "UW Bothell Community College."

2. *The campus should rely primarily on tenured faculty for instruction in CUSP.*

As demonstrated in Figure 1, this charter provision clearly has not been met. This trend of relying on lecturers continued during Spring 2009 with just six full-time faculty and 27 part-time faculty. Figure 2, featuring data for Autumn 2009, highlights the continuation of this trend.

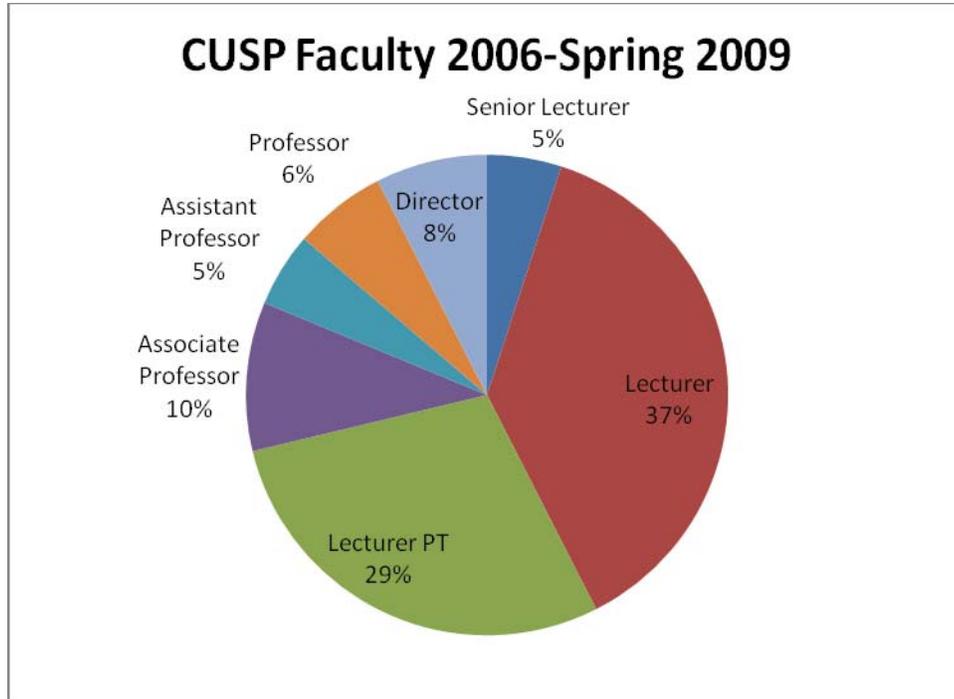


Fig. 1: CUSP Faculty from 2006 to 2009

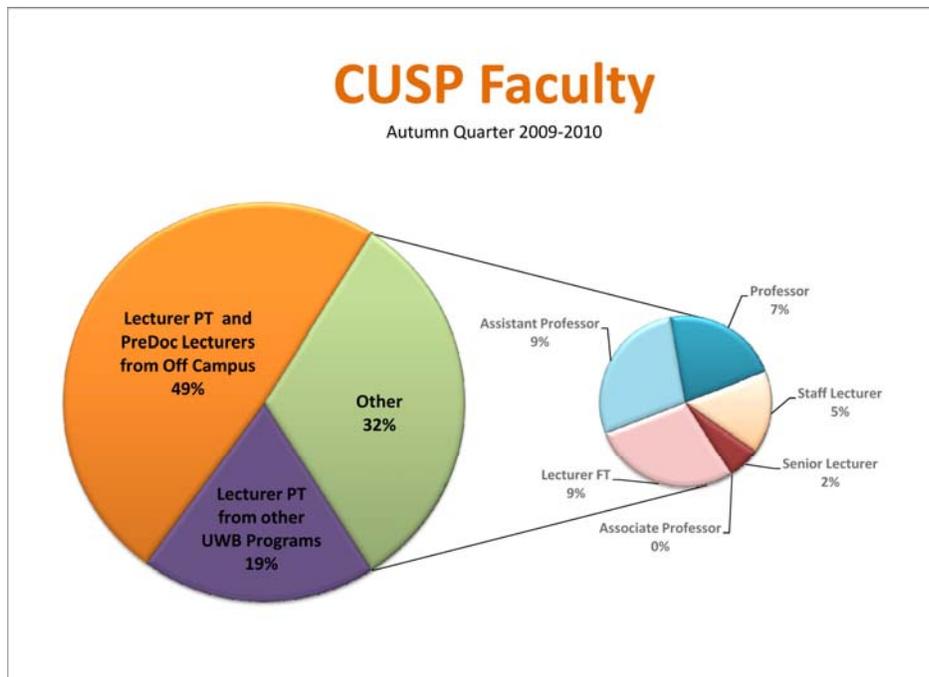


Fig. 2: CUSP Faculty, Autumn 2009

Although the distribution of ranks within the CUSP faculty is currently not in alignment with the expectations in the charter, it should be noted that overreliance on part-time lecturers should not be taken as an indication of poorer teaching quality in any particular case. These individuals have expertise in the areas in which they teach, have shown a willingness to create and teach innovative and engaging courses, often come from interdisciplinary backgrounds, and have experience teaching at various levels, including the freshman level. Some have won teaching awards.

However, this overreliance does have negative consequences for CUSP courses, faculty, and students, particularly regarding the consistency and the fit of CUSP within the UW Bothell campus mission:

- Students have a harder time gaining access to part-time faculty who may rarely be on campus aside from class time or office hours.
- Part-time faculty members typically share small, windowless offices, making it difficult to schedule meetings with students and to do course planning.
- Even seemingly trivial issues, such as being able to count on having access to a continuously-functioning copier and printer near their shared office, diminishes the time part-time lecturers have for preparation.
- Many of the part-time faculty members, many of whom are “freeway flyers,” need to teach as many courses as possible on as many campuses as possible given that their remuneration is low, which can diminish the attention given to any course.
- Although there is a CUSP space, adjunct faculty members essentially have no UW Bothell home because CUSP is not a bona fide academic program. Summer retreats

and contact with the director have helped to mitigate this problem somewhat, but it is hard for them to feel they are part of the UW Bothell community.

This reliance on a part-time teaching corps also creates challenges for scheduling regular faculty meetings and the kind of collaboration critical for sustaining the cohesion of an integrated first-year experience. Additionally, part-time faculty new to UW Bothell face a steep learning curve in getting used to the campus culture, which may be quite different from other institutions where they have taught or are teaching concurrently. For example, UW Bothell's culture of collaboration may feel foreign or unnecessary to them, which has created challenges for some Academic Services staff working to integrate instruction addressing the articulated learning goals for CUSP (writing, information literacy, quantitative literacy, etc.). Further, there may be differing expectations about grading and assessment.

The high ratio of part-time faculty teaching in CUSP begs the question: Why is this recommendation not adhered to? Some responses from the faculty survey indicate that for *some* faculty:

- there is a lack of buy-in for the lower division;
- there is reluctance to volunteer to teach in CUSP;
- there may be unfamiliarity with lower-division pedagogy; and
- there may be willingness but the faculty member's academic program is unable to give up any full-time faculty to CUSP because programs need to cover their own courses or are unable to release faculty given the limited faculty buy-out rate that CUSP is able to support.

Additionally, it must be noted that part-time faculty are generally much less expensive to hire than full-time faculty, and thus the overreliance on these instructors means that the campus in general is benefitting financially. As the lower division and the campus as a whole continue to grow, these issues will become increasingly critical.

3. *Full-time faculty should be appointed to “regular” academic programs, not CUSP.*

This recommendation is being adhered to due to CUSP’s current inability to appoint its own faculty. In the faculty survey, as with other issues, there were strongly held opinions—both yes and no—about whether CUSP should be able to appoint its own faculty.

- Some faculty members were concerned that this could create an underclass from which faculty would never escape.
- Some felt that instead of hiring faculty through CUSP, programs should be given new lines, in return for which they would loan faculty to CUSP.
- Others suggested that CUSP hires should be primarily a stable group of lecturers.
- Others suggested having CUSP-hired dedicated faculty along with program faculty committed to CUSP for a specified amount of time.
- Others suggested hiring faculty into CUSP, who would then sometimes be loaned to upper-division programs.
- There was a diversity of opinion about the feasibility of having joint appointments between CUSP and the academic programs ranging from thinking it would be a great idea to worrying that it could be problematic on a number of levels.

- Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the faculty responding to the survey said they would be interested in pursuing a joint appointment between their home program and CUSP.
4. *No full time faculty should exclusively be assigned teaching and service solely in CUSP.*

This recommendation appears to be adhered to. However, the charter also states that “agreements [between CUSP and academic programs] will normally be for one academic year or less.” However, the CUSP Review Committee suggests an idea to explore as part of the conversations over the coming year related to this charter item. The campus should consider that CUSP students and curricula could benefit from multiyear commitments from full-time faculty to work primarily within CUSP while also maintaining connections to their native academic programs. Such commitments would facilitate cohesion not only within CUSP, but between CUSP and the upper-division programs. This would also provide continuity for the lower division and provide role models for part-time faculty. As seen in item 3 above, there was some support for this idea in the faculty survey.

Summary of Part 1, “Looking Back”

Much has been accomplished in the first three years of the existence of CUSP, the Center for University Studies Program, including good student outcomes, introducing students to the interdisciplinary “Bothell way,” and creating an overall learning environment and experience that students are recommending to their friends. However, along with these accomplishments, there are some serious challenges that the UW Bothell campus community must face in the 2009-2010 year as we thoughtfully consider how best to structure lower-division education for

the next five years to meet the needs not just of the lower division but of the entire campus.

CUSP began with just over 100 students. It now has responsibility for around 700 lower-division and pre-major students. The rate of increase in applications and enrollment each year shows no sign of decreasing. While this growth is exciting and demonstrates that UW Bothell is fulfilling the mandate to provide greater access to university education, a key issue to be resolved is how to staff the courses. This, and other issues, will confront us, no matter which form of lower-division education we develop. Part 2, "Looking Forward," addresses some options we can consider as we build the future of our campus.

LOOKING FORWARD

Considerations Regarding How CUSP Should Be Structured to Meet the Needs of UW Bothell in the Next Five Years

The CUSP Review Committee reviewed many different approaches to supporting first-year and pre-major students at a variety of colleges and universities. In most cases, significant amounts of time, energy, planning, and financial resources had been devoted to these efforts. Research shows that improving the first-year experience leads to increased retention, better grades, and improved social, emotional, and physical health for students. Although the CUSP Review Committee is not recommending any particular approach, it is strongly recommending that the UW Bothell faculty take seriously the CUSP Review Committee's observations about the need for the following during the decision-making process:

5. Clear, explicit, and prioritized goals;
6. A strategy for successfully implementing practices and processes that will lead to fulfilling these goals;
7. An understanding of current UW Bothell and CUSP resources and accomplishments and their applicability for the chosen strategy;
8. A means for assessing the attainment of these goals;
9. A full accounting of perceived short-term and long-term costs weighed against the benefits (fulfillment of the goals) for all stakeholders involved;
10. Explicit and binding commitments from stakeholders, especially programs and faculty members, which are necessary for the strategy to be successful.

1. Clear, Explicit, and Prioritized Goals

The CUSP Review Committee believes that, according to the “best practices” literature on innovative lower-division programs, the current CUSP “Learning Goals” are neither encompassing enough across a range of concerns nor specific enough for measurable learning objectives, nor have they been implemented in a discernable, consistent manner. (They do, however, contain the clear potential for either broader program-wide goals or specific academic learning outcomes). For example, in the oft-cited *Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student: A Handbook for Improving the First Year of College*, Upcraft et al. (2005) put forth the following institutional goals for first-year success:

- Developing intellectual and academic competence (*skills for academic success, learn how to learn, appreciate the means and ends of learning*);
- Establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships (*including interpersonal skills*);
- Exploring identity development (*make progress in understanding personal identity and place in the world*);
- Deciding on a career (*begin developing clarity about life goals, career*);
- Maintaining health and wellness (*learn to learn healthy lives, deal with stress*);
- Considering faith and the spiritual dimensions of life (*beginning reconsider and internalize what students believe and value*);
- Developing multicultural awareness (*developing awareness of multicultural realities, learning to tolerate and affirm cultural differences*);
- Developing civic responsibility (*begin to become responsible citizens outside the college environment*).

Whether UW Bothell would adopt these specific goals or the wording associated with it (this report simply puts them forward as an example), a successful lower-division program requires an

explicit understanding of how such goals are to be achieved, measured, and paid for, and what specific activities to prioritize over others. Within each goal, UW Bothell would need to create explicit outcomes and criteria for assessing success and the means for all students to have the equal opportunities to fulfill these goals. It is not enough to be able to point to specific courses and note how each might address some of the goals (or not). It is much more preferable for a program to identify a limited number of outcomes that can be successfully reached than to make broad, unfulfilled claims.

2. A Strategy for Successfully Implementing Practices and Processes That Will Lead to Fulfilling These Goals

The CUSP annual reports are very effective at noting what needs to be done to improve the program; however, they generally do not identify how these improvements will be effected. Goals without clear, implementable and assessable strategies potentially carry significant costs to different stakeholders. While no approach should be rigidly bound to a specific plan, failing to set forth a clear, explicit pathway, especially for a program with large ambitions, is not recommended. For example, as noted below, a program that includes serialized core courses requires a strategy with far more structure and faculty coordination than do single-term seminars; programs that do not include changes in the curriculum generally require strategies with little if any faculty involvement.

3. An Understanding of Current UW Bothell and CUSP Resources and Accomplishments and Their Applicability for the Chosen Strategy

- A. The most challenging feature of CUSP currently is the allocation of resources. Decisions were made to convert tenure-earning faculty lines to part-time hires, so that current ratios of full-time (including full-time lecturers) to part-time instructors in CUSP is about 1:5.

This excessive use of part-time hires has enabled CUSP to subsidize the DC I courses, which are taught at a ratio of 22:1 (a smaller-than-funded ratio), and to offer far more courses than might have been made available. (As noted below, however, most of these courses are taught at ratios of 44:2, because of FTE accounting practices associated with team-teaching.) As noted above, maintaining this ratio is unsustainable and inequitable, and should be returned (at least) to the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty equal to the campus as a whole. The CUSP Review Committee strongly supports this re-allocation of resources, since improving first-year interaction with full-time faculty who have an institutional history and commitment is usually a prime goal of first-year experience programs, and is explicitly required in the existing CUSP charter. Any first-year experience/pre-major strategy will need to account for this new economic reality.

- B. The experience of full-time faculty working together to create and implement shared outcomes in the Discovery Cores has thus far been largely unsuccessful. As noted below, the best practices literature on implementing mandatory classes for first-year students makes clear that they should include measurable outcomes with shared criteria that can be understood by students and implemented and assessed by instructors. Further, participation rates by full-time instructors, especially senior faculty, have declined since the Discovery Cores inception. This history should be taken into account when choosing a strategy that requires extensive full-time faculty involvement, since thus far full-time and tenure-earning faculty have not been willing to be involved in this type of structured course series, even though the requirements thus far for cooperation have been minimal (and therefore insufficient).

- C. Although a robust advising program is seen as a hallmark of most first-year programs, CUSP has a single advisor for hundreds of students, with no discernable specialized program for ongoing advising (compare to UW Tacoma). Any new strategy must consider including additional resources to support this crucial feature of first-year/pre-major success.
- D. Although Common Book, learning communities and experiential learning have been mentioned as being part of the CUSP experience, there is no evidence of effective and consistent implementation. Any strategy including these efforts should consider them as new initiatives that must be developed rather than existing programs that need to be strengthened. All three approaches have been proven effective at improving the first-year experience when implemented correctly elsewhere.
- E. CUSP does not appear to have a special curricular or advising focus for second-year pre-major students, or sophomores. Indeed, there does not appear to be a special web page or tab for pre-major advising of any kind.
- F. Although CUSP has a carefully constructed math and quantitative literacy curriculum, the writing program appears to be ad hoc and lacking in coherence. Further, UW Bothell has only a few full-time faculty with experience teaching composition. Any new strategy would need to address who will be teaching writing and how a new writing program will be constructed.
- G. Until this year, with the development of the Dream Project and the Academic Transition Program, CUSP—and UW Bothell generally—did not have a strategy or even specific activities to support the success of underrepresented cultural groups. These groups include first-year English as a Second Language/English Language Learner students, who

still are not being provided official support within or outside the curriculum. (The committee applauds the current development of an ESL/ELL support position, which will be part of the solution.) This lack of support for diverse student communities must be addressed for UW Bothell to begin to meet its basic mission.

H. Unlike most research universities, UW Bothell tenure-earning faculty members generally balance teaching and research interests, interact with undergraduates in smaller classes, and use active-learning pedagogies. Also, the small size of the campus, the even smaller size of the freshman class relative to upper-division students, and the lack of larger classrooms, means that UW Bothell freshmen have not faced the normal disadvantages that most incoming freshmen encounter when starting at a public research institution. Further, UW Bothell has a strong tradition of excellent program advisors and effective administrative units (Student Life, Enrollment Management, Academic Affairs) that cover the areas usually requiring special attention for first-year, pre-major (FYPM) students. These advantages should be seen as providing a positive starting point for rethinking the present first-year/pre-majors students strategy, whether UW Bothell chooses an extensive strategy requiring a separate FYPM unit, on one hand, or at the other end of the spectrum, chooses one that devolves previous responsibilities (and adds ones not currently being covered) to existing programs.

4. A Full Accounting of Perceived Short-Term and Long-Term Costs Weighed against the Benefits (Fulfillment of the Goals) for All Stakeholders Involved

Before embarking on a chosen strategy, UW Bothell needs to make an honest projection of short- and long-term costs and ascertain whether these costs can be sustained in a variety of economic environments. As noted above, this projection would begin by identifying the costs of

converting the necessary number of full-time faculty lines that are supporting part-time hires into full-time hires. For example, if the campus makes the choice to hire mainly lecturers with those lines, and to assign the new hires primarily or entirely to lower-division/first-year courses, it should balance the cost savings for the campus with the negative effect of the message being sent about the desirability of teaching first-year students, the service loads for CUSP faculty, and other factors. If the campus cannot identify the resources that would be needed to enact specific activities within a strategy, then it should not lay claim to the goals that the activities were intended to fulfill. Further, any claims made regarding student benefits must be weighed against the costs, including impingement on their course selection, transferability of courses, quality of the instruction within specific courses and across a mandated curriculum, etc.

5. Explicit and Binding Commitments from Stakeholders, Especially Programs and Faculty Members, That Are Necessary for the Strategy to Be Successful

Unless individual faculty members and programs make explicit commitments before finalizing the strategy, and unless there is a means of enforcing these commitments, initial projections are useless. These commitments are the most vital resources that need to be deployed in any successful strategy involving curricular innovation for first-year/pre-major programs. At the same time, the administration must be explicit about (a) the priority of and commitment towards the lower division curriculum and students expected of programs and faculty, (b) the level of support for faculty development, academic services support, etc., and (c) how it will deliver upon these promises. The notion that “if we build it, they will come” is only recognized as a successful strategy for a Hollywood film; it is not a successful approach for developing successful first-year/pre-major programs. Instead, the slogan should be, “we

(faculty, staff, and administration) have come to build something that we have demonstrated students want and need.”

6. A Means for Assessing the Attainment of These Goals

CUSP has collected very useful data on student satisfaction and other self-reported data. However, whatever strategy is adopted must include the means to collect data on student learning outcomes, as well as broader measures of student and institutional success that correlate with the stated goals. Further, it is essential to attempt to disaggregate data that can be causally linked to the specifics of the first-year strategy, rather than assessing the general strengths of teaching and the raw talent of students. The costs of first-year/pre-major programs must be justified by the successes of the program, and deficiencies corrected as indicated by the data. Only then can the projections about costs and benefits be accurately assessed.

We now turn to national models for first-year programs, with discussions of issues regarding the applicability of each to UW Bothell.

Models for First-Year Experience/Pre-Majors Programs

First-Year Experience (FYE) programs have proliferated in recent years as research has demonstrated that effectively designed and implemented programs can substantially increase student retention, engagement, social welfare, and long-term academic and social success.

Model 1: Enhanced Advising and Student Life

This is the most common approach to first-year programs.

- Provide increased and improved freshman advising, academic, and student life activities that are unattached to curricular changes.
- Programs may include:
 - extensive orientation activities

- “Welcome Week” activities that combine social, advising and academic features
- Common Book activities (highly structured, and either mandatory or highly encouraged for all first-year students)
- peer mentoring
- holistic advising (integrating academic, student life, and emotional welfare)
- advising tracking throughout the year
- improving residential and student life and orienting it toward programmatic goals
- assistance for transitioning to majors

If UW Bothell determines it is not able or willing to provide the resources and full-time faculty involvement required for Discovery Cores or First-Year Seminars, it can choose to redirect the resources that would have been required to support these courses to strengthening advising efforts and Student Life activities, especially in light of the fact that UW Bothell is currently underfunding first-year and pre-major advising. (UW Tacoma provides three advisors for its General Education program, including a Lead Advisor, but the campus does not provide a coherent pre-major advising option. CUSP is currently responsible for first- and second-year students and has only one advisor. The additional advisor currently being hired is probably still insufficient.)

- responsibility for all pre-major advising could be assigned to Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, or Admissions, with the unit being provided with the necessary resources to provide this vital service

- a separate “First-Year/Pre-Major” sub-unit within the unit might also offer activities such as Common Book discussions before the start of classes
- CUSP would need to be provided with additional resources for to adequately support its advising responsibilities if it continues as a separate unit
- UW Bothell would need to provide new resources rather than shifting resources from a disbanded CUSP unit
- even a slimmed-down CUSP (an abbreviated Discovery Core or single First-Year Seminar) will require a substantial increase in funding to continue its mission

Model 2: Learning Communities or First-Year Seminars

The next stage of development involves integrating curricular features with the previously-stated activities. These features include:

- fostering learning communities (through cohorts, seminars that connect larger discipline-specific courses around integrative problems, etc.) or
- most popularly, first-year seminars, usually but not exclusively taught in the Autumn semester, which have become synonymous with first-year experience programs at some colleges.

Both types of courses have strong research demonstrating their positive impact on students, traceable to their small size (usually limited to twenty, sometimes as small as fifteen), as well as to their ability to connect students to full-time faculty and to improve student engagement and develop peer relationships. Whereas learning communities are often run by graduate students or advanced undergraduates (with faculty instructors collaborating on shared

assignments, and meeting with the groups), the seminars are usually taught by full-time faculty, with an emphasis on senior faculty.

- First-year seminars have outcomes that range from general (usually focused on basic skills, such as critical reading and note-taking, introduction to academic writing, etc., as well as perspectives such as civic awareness, diversity, etc.) to specific and measurable.
- Also notable are programs intended to support underrepresented cultural groups which often focus on the first year (bridge programs, remediation, cultural-specific support groups, peer mentoring, targeted financial services, etc.), but are usually organized as part of a coherent program for underrepresented populations and provided across the undergraduate experience.

The following points should be taken into account if Model 2 is to be considered for UW

Bothell:

- replace the Discovery Core series with a single First-Year Seminar limited to twenty students at most (fifteen is recommended) taught only by full-time faculty, with a special effort to recruit senior faculty
- participation by tenure-earning faculty should be at least 50 percent, although many first-year programs make a point of using only tenure-earning faculty (since improving connections between students and tenure-earning faculty is the point) and most do not hire additional faculty (such as renewable contract lecturers) to teach in the program

- outcomes would involve general skills (working with a librarian, Writing Center representative, and Teaching and Learning Center and/or Educational Technology representative) and the topic would be chosen by the faculty member
- proven to be highly successful at other institutions
- a mandatory First-Year Seminar taught with a cap of twenty students would require around eighteen full-time faculty members

Model 3: Mandatory core sequence with or without strict cohorts

c. Without strict cohorts (current CUSP model)

Only a handful of colleges attempt the type of serialized, structured mandatory core course series currently employed by CUSP.

- most challenging to create and maintain because of the need to develop and consistently implement shared learning outcomes, and to recruit and retain a faculty willing to engage in such highly collaborative and teaching-intensive work
- most are honors or innovative colleges within larger research universities, such as New Century College at George Mason University, Fairhaven College at Western Washington University, and Portland State University's University Studies program
 - control a comprehensive set of courses at different levels of the curriculum
 - draw on much larger faculty than UW Bothell (as well as significant resources)
 - hire directly into the program

- context is very different from UW Bothell's, and thus this model should be applied very carefully if used by UW Bothell
- most programs have the problem of “ghettoizing” the University Studies faculty, denigrating their participation and often creating tensions between themselves and the “regular” faculty²¹

d. With strict cohorts

The final model comes from the UW Tacoma, which has the same number of freshman FTE as UW Bothell, and which has managed to develop an innovative program while drawing on a significant number of full-time faculty from a range of ranks and programs. (About 60% of the lower division faculty is tenure-earning; the rest have been hired into the General Education program on renewable one-year contracts.)

- UW Tacoma's General Education (Gen Ed) mandatory core course structure appears to be similar to CUSP's Discovery Core, requiring ten credits in Autumn, ten in Winter and five in Spring
- separate track for students entering with thirty-five credits or more allows them to take a track of ten, five, and five credits
- key differences from CUSP:
 - use of strict cohorts, so that students follow the same progression of coursework with the same group of peers throughout the year
 - students have the choice between taking 44- and 22-capacity courses, meaning that they have the opportunity of seminar-style courses (unlike most CUSP DC offerings).

- each track (and set of instructors) works with the same representatives from the Library, Writing Center, and Teaching and Learning Center, allowing for consistent implementation and standardization of writing, information literacy, and “introduction to college” outcomes.
- links two discipline/field-specific courses around a general problem rather than team-taught, general, interdisciplinary courses covering multiple disciplines, as CUSP does
- courses themselves are labeled broadly (Introduction to Humanities, Social Science, Science, or Academic Writing), but each cluster has a specific title, such as *CORE 114/TCORE 112: Science and Technology in the Information Society; Professors Donald Chinn (Computer Science) and Amós Nascimento (Philosophy)*
- provides methodological focus and specificity and helps with the transferability of course credit should students transfer to another college
- courses are either team-taught or taught as linked courses
- Gen Ed faculty agree to participate in “Core Camp” and other workshops and meetings to improve the program’s coherence
- Gen Ed does not have a comprehensive set of learning outcomes
- offers almost no other courses beyond the Cores

- outside consulting firm hired to assess students' learning outcomes and other measures of program progress, which will be reported soon
- three advisors, including a Lead Advisor, within General Education at UW Tacoma, while having a similar number of FTE compared to UW Bothell
- advising tools include an online form for students (who are encouraged to fill them out with their parents' assistance) in order to place them in the most appropriate cohort, as well as an online form for instructors to report perceived problems in a student's academic progress
- UW Tacoma seems to lack the more extensive type of robust advising and student life strategies aimed at first-year students found at larger, more well-established programs
- UW Tacoma, similar to UW Bothell, is wrestling with the challenge of transitioning students from freshman/pre-major advising to advising in the majors

With either option (a) or (b) in Model 3, UW Bothell can modify the Discovery Core sequence to align more with students' stated concerns and with the concerns of some program directors regarding schedule flexibility for pre-major prerequisites. This model would continue the Discovery Cores in some form, which would include at least two sequential, mandatory courses. Following the CUSP Review Committee's guiding observations, the following would need to change in order for this strategy to be successful:

- Re-emphasis from administration and program faculty toward the priority of a campus wide commitment to engaging and serving CUSP students.
- Employ all full-time faculty to teach the courses, including at least 50 percent tenure-earning faculty members from a range of ranks. (If DC I remains at ten credits, next year this will require at least sixteen full-time faculty members for Autumn, ten for Winter [if taught at 35 students each], and twelve for Spring [if taught at 30 students each]).
- Develop measurable learning outcomes for at least basic skills (e.g., writing, information literacy, and college life) in order to enable scaffolding of the courses.
- Apply the outcomes to specific assignments in the syllabus.
- Generate clear definitions for “DC I,” “DC II,” and “DC III” courses and their explicit purposes and shared processes.
- Separate the portfolio function from the course content function in DC III or else require all DC IIIs to coherently combine the two.
- Do not claim that the DC IIIs provide “experiential learning” or else implement that goal in all sections of the course and do not provide general education credit for portfolio courses.
- Account for science students who need to complete extensive prerequisites during their first year.
- Create at least the opportunity for seminar-size courses for most students; ideally, reconsider the use of team-teachers or else reduce the size to 22 (thus reducing instructors’ teaching credit from two courses to one course).
- Realize that every course taught at 22:1 needs to be subsidized by efficiencies elsewhere, or direct budget support, not by hiring part-time faculty above the campus ratio.

Variations on this approach to adjusting the Discovery Core:

- ten-credit, team-taught, 22-student DC I in the first quarter; five-credit course in the second quarter; two-credit portfolio in the third quarter
- five-credit, single-instructor, 22-student DC I in the first quarter; five-credit course in the second quarter; two-credit portfolio
- five-credit, single-instructor, 22-student course DC I in the first quarter; five-credit DC II in the second quarter
- a serialized Discovery Core but have it be “highly recommended,” or create an “honors” track. In either case, the proven quality of the series and the advantages it offered students would help determine whether there is a “market” for this approach.

Issues for UW Bothell Regardless of Model

100- and 200-Level Courses

Whether or not UW Bothell chooses to offer a Discovery Core or First-Year Seminar, the CUSP Review Committee is unsure of the rationale for including most 100- and a few 200-level courses in CUSP. This policy seems to have come from the University Studies/Honors Colleges model, which is not applicable to UW Bothell. Further, many 200-level courses serve as general education courses, yet they are controlled mostly by Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences (IAS), and it is not clear where the distinction between the 100- and 200-level courses lies. The result at UW Bothell has been to divorce the CUSP courses/curriculum and faculty from the established programs, and to disinvest the programs with any ownership in the curriculum. (The clear exceptions are science and math instructors). The CUSP Review Committee questions the continuation of this practice unless a clear rationale that is in the students’ interest and can be justified academically (rather than as an administrative efficiency). Instead, the CUSP Review

Committee suggests that the campus consider whether courses should devolve back to the programs that should be responsible for them. In the case of courses that are needed as prerequisites by students from more than one program, the CUSP Review Committee suggests that the VCAA work with affected programs to assign responsibility as jointly- or individually-owned by the programs, as appropriate to the situation. This already occurs with a number of courses, such as statistics.

Writing

UW Bothell could initiate a single first-year seminar of twenty students with full-time faculty, with a special effort to recruit senior faculty. One set of courses that may make sense residing within CUSP would be writing courses including integrated information literacy instruction. Traditionally, these courses are offered by the department connected either specifically to an “English” department or more broadly to the humanities division. The obvious responsibility for writing courses would seem to fall to the Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences program. However, where faculty members in the Science and Technology program have expressed great interest in offering introductory math and science courses, IAS has not at this point advanced a similar interest in offering introductory writing courses. Because these courses should be taught at a maximum of twenty students, and because they require a high degree of instructor involvement, they are traditionally difficult to staff with tenure-earning faculty, only a few of whom currently have the experience to teach composition. Developing a coherent writing program is generally considered an important venture for any university, and central to the improvement of the first-year experience. For UW Bothell, with its writing-intensive programs, it would seem to be a necessity.

CUSP as a Unit

The CUSP Review Committee is not providing a specific recommendation about whether CUSP should continue as a separate unit or whether it should be disbanded. However, the Committee, in reporting on different possibilities, encourages the UW Bothell community to match the future structure of first-year/pre-major initiatives to the number of tasks required for implementation of the strategy, especially the number of full-time and tenure-earning faculty associated with it. It may be argued that a first-year/pre-major unit that includes at least the number of faculty members (especially tenure-earning faculty), advisors, and support staff equal to the smallest existing academic program would need to be a stand-alone unit. This unit could legitimately be considered as equal to existing academic programs in terms of representation in campus governance bodies. However, a unit with little or no tenure-earning faculty attached to it, with limited staff, would be harder to justify as either a stand-alone unit or as being worthy of inclusion with other academic programs in governance structures. Further, such a unit would be difficult to justify in terms of the added costs. Therefore, the campus's decisions about the extent of first-year/pre-major programs should guide the decision about the fate of CUSP and its place within the campus governance structures.

CONCLUSION

It is clear to the CUSP Review Committee that the framers of the charter exhibited exceptional vision and wisdom, especially given the very short timeframe granted to them. Many of the problems that now need to be addressed result, in fact, from the campus's unforeseeable success in recruiting first-year students in the last few years, engendering a rate of growth that is now outpacing CUSP's resources. Nevertheless, we noted a remarkably high level of satisfaction among lower-division students for their overall UW Bothell experience, and the trajectory from one year to the next is upward.

Equally clear, however, is the need for careful, intentional change in how the campus envisions and delivers lower-division education based largely on whether the campus fully conceives of itself as a four-year institution, with lower-division education articulated seamlessly with upper-division education. The current structure and methods are unsustainable, especially given the rapid growth of the freshman class.

We are glad that UW Bothell students, staff, faculty, and administration care deeply about the campus's lower division and are optimistic that the difficult conversations will result in even better outcomes. At the 2009 campus retreat, Chancellor Chan stated to one of the CUSP Review Committee's co-chairs that the campus ought to spend a solid year in such discussions rather than rushing to implement hasty changes. We concur.

It was an honor to be entrusted by the campus leaders to undertake this important review. We wish to thank the hundreds of individuals who provided ideas, data, and feedback throughout the process.

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¹ Student interviews

² Spring 2008 and 2009 surveys

³ Spring 2009 survey:

My professors are responsive to my questions and concerns.	Disagree	3	1.7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	18	10.3%
	Agree	94	54.0%
	Strongly agree	59	33.9%
Group Total		174	100.0%
I have opportunities to meet people and make friends at UWB.	Strongly disagree	6	3.4%
	Disagree	9	5.1%
	Neither agree nor disagree	28	16.0%
	Agree	82	46.9%
	Strongly agree	50	28.6%
Group Total		175	100.0%

⁴ Spring 2009 survey:

	Mean	Valid N
Overall, how satisfied are you with your experience at UW Bothell - from the time you first applied to now?	3.55	N=164
Would you recommend UWB to a friend or family member?	3.86	N=166

⁵ Spring 2009 survey:

During your freshman year at UWB, how much have you developed toward each of the following learning goals?

	Mean	Valid N
Communication - Communicate persuasively using appropriate writing, speaking, and active listening skills.	3.60	N=165

Quantitative and Qualitative Literacies - Understand how to gather, analyze, interpret and explain quantitative and qualitative information.	3.54	N=165
Critical and Creative Inquiry - Create, interpret, and transmit new ideas, works, and knowledge in different ways and effectively seek, shape, and evaluate evidence.	3.73	N=165
Ethics and Social Responsibility - Understand the relationships between local, national, and global events; the relationships between knowledge and ethics; and how values are shaped and influence decisions.	3.56	N=165
Inclusive Practices - Understand different cultural traditions and ways of interacting with the world, and exchange ideas with different communities.	3.52	N=165

⁶ Spring 2009 survey

⁷ Spring 2009 survey:

I am learning things I will need for my future career.	Strongly disagree	1	0.6%
	Disagree	13	7.4%
	Neither agree nor disagree	41	23.4%
	Agree	81	46.3%
	Strongly agree	39	22.3%
Group Total		175	100.0%

⁸ Spring 2009 survey:

How helpful to you is each of the following services for students at UWB?

	Mean	Valid N
Academic Advising in CUSP	3.56	N=114
Campus Library	4.12	N=161
Career Services	3.45	N=69
Disability Support Services	3.20	N=30

Freshman Orientation	3.45	N=159
Information Technologies (including the Media Center)	3.88	N=90
International Student Services	3.39	N=38
Psychological Counseling	3.13	N=30
Quantitative Skills Center	4.03	N=100
Student Fitness Center	3.71	N=79
Student Life	3.75	N=87
Veterans' Services	3.04	N=26
Writing Center	3.66	N=73

⁹ Interviews with students and with program academic advisors

¹⁰ Student interviews

¹¹ Student interviews; Spring 2009 survey:

Please indicate your opinions about being a student at UWB

I am learning things I will need for my future career.	Strongly disagree	1	0.6%
	Disagree	13	7.4%
	Neither agree nor disagree	41	23.4%
	Agree	81	46.3%
	Strongly agree	39	22.3%
Group Total		175	100.0%

¹² Spring 2009 survey:

Q8 What has been the most challenging part about being a freshman?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time mgmt • Getting used to college level work/homework • Study skills • Critical reading and writing • College etiquette – class on time and general attendance

¹³ Spring 2009 survey:

		Cases	Col Response %
What do you value most about the Discovery Core courses?	Meeting new people, other freshmen, making friends	46	29.5%
	Varied, interesting, interdisciplinary courses	70	44.9%
	Applicable pre-req credits	10	6.4%
	The open environment, ability to learn, express opinions	34	21.8%

Please indicate your opinions about being a student at UWB

The Discovery Core courses help build a learning community among me, my peers, and my professors.	Strongly disagree	17	9.7%
	Disagree	25	14.3%
	Neither agree nor disagree	59	33.7%
	Agree	59	33.7%
	Strongly agree	15	8.6%
Group Total		175	100.0%
The Discovery Core courses help build a learning community among me, my peers, and my professors.		3.17	N=175

¹⁴ Student interviews

¹⁵ Spring 2008 survey:

Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCI too long • DCI takes up too many credits and tuition \$ • “don’t see the value”; not sure why they’re necessary • Not enough choices of classes/subjects • Feel like a waste of time; don’t apply to my major;

¹⁶ Spring 2009 survey:

Q4. What do you value most about your discovery core classes.

What would you change about the DC courses?	Don't have them, waste of time, not useful	21	14.1%
	Keep me from taking other, more needed courses	2	1.3%
	Course is too long, needs to be shorter	21	14.1%
	Need more variety, topics	57	38.3%
	Need more relevancy, relation to my major	29	19.5%
	Don't have them required, voluntary only	17	11.4%
	More active participation in lessons, not just lectures	6	4.0%
	Do not require a portfolio	6	4.0%
	Less structure, more freedom	4	2.7%
	Not stringent enough, too simple	5	3.4%
	None, nothing	6	4.0%
	Other	1	0.7%
	Don't know	3	2.0%
	Total	149	119.5%

¹⁷ Student interviews

¹⁸ Spring 2008 survey

¹⁹ Spring 2009 survey:

Please indicate your opinions about being a student at UWB

The Discovery Core courses help build a learning community among me, my peers, and my professors.	Strongly disagree	17	9.7%
	Disagree	25	14.3%
	Neither agree nor disagree	59	33.7%
	Agree	59	33.7%

Strongly agree	15	8.6%
Group Total	175	100.0%
The Discovery Core courses help build a learning community among me, my peers, and my professors.	3.17	N=175

²⁰ Student interviews

²¹ PSU's University Studies program began an initiative several years ago to integrate its hires with departments in the broader campus. This effort involves a significant investment of funds and creates new pressures (around criteria for tenure and promotion, for example). One exception to this model is the University of Idaho's Core Discovery courses. This unit reports directly to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs; most of its faculty members do not have advanced degrees (except the science faculty, who teach the "Science Core" courses). The unit maintains a set of outcomes, some of them specific, some quite general, which instructors apply to their courses. It is not clear if faculty have any control over the outcomes established by the unit. The unit does not have any special advising or student life functions. It controls no classes beyond the Core Discovery courses.