INFORMATION COMPETENCE IN A GLOBAL WORLD:
AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO THE FRESHMAN YEAR EXPERIENCE
Sonoma State University
Final Report – August 2008
Submitted by Erin Daniels and Karen Brodsky

1. ABSTRACT, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OUTLINED IN GRANT PROPOSAL

ABSTRACT

Sonoma State University (SSU) will undertake a two-year pilot project beginning Fall 2006 called University 150. It aims to expand pedagogical approaches to freshman-level critical thinking and writing objectives and to strengthen SSU’s General Education (GE) program. UNIV 150 is a product of the University’s effort to earnestly examine its GE program based on WASC recommendations given in 2000. The result of this examination came four years later with the proposed New Path for GE at SSU. A critical component of the New Path includes UNIV 150, a year-long integrated Freshman Year Experience.

With a unique combination of small seminars and large lectures, the UNIV 150 pilot curriculum addresses critical thinking, analytical reading, information competency, oral communication, writing, and student development learning outcomes. Twelve faculty from various disciplines, 2 librarians, 4 student services professionals, and 10 peer mentors will work with 150 freshmen in 10 sections. Students will meet with their small seminar group (15 students) twice a week and will attend a large plenary lecture once a week. The UNIV 150 is designed as a two-year pilot, although the theme and some of the faculty members might change for the second year.1

UNIV 150 will be offered to incoming freshmen as University 150 for both the 06/07 and 07/08 academic years. During the 05/06 academic year, the interdisciplinary faculty team developed a curriculum centered on the theme of global identities and named the class Identity and Global Change. Six learning competencies were articulated (See Appendix), including clearly expressed outcomes for Information Competence based upon the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education.

UNIV 150 provides a unique opportunity for freshmen to develop their information competence (IC) not only because of its integrated nature, but also due to its yearlong duration. SSU has a successful history of integrating IC into freshmen level courses. Beginning with a CSU funded IC grant in 01/02, SSU librarians and faculty have proven that a collaborative teaching approach is pedagogically effective for addressing IC learning outcomes. For the past five years, this approach has significantly transformed “research instruction” for freshmen at SSU with positive results reported from students, faculty, and librarians.

1 For more information on the FYE program and UNIV 150 visit the website at: http://www.sonoma.edu/ge_initiative/fye_pilot.shtml
This grant proposal is designed to support the UNIV 150 team in meeting and assessing the IC learning outcomes identified for the UNIV 150. The funded proposal would provide resources for intensive faculty training, ongoing faculty/librarian collaboration, and dedicated class time for instruction by librarians. While a variety of assessment tools will be used in the project, the grant proposal will also provide the resources for using the ICT instrument as one of the assessment tools. Students will take the test at the beginning of the fall semester and at the end of the spring semester. After the first year, findings from various assessment tools will be incorporated into the training and class for the second year. The ICT test will be used in the same way during the second year, unless evaluation proves otherwise.

GOALS

Upon completion of the project, UNIV 150 students will:
- Define needs for information, given a particular research focus
- Define a research strategy for locating necessary information, and locate resources of all types
- Comprehend and assess the appropriateness of resources
- Practice habits of academic integrity, using source material ethically
- Effectively articulate and communicate one’s own and others’ ideas, including ideas and arguments with which one disagrees
- Identify and articulate an author’s assumptions and biases
- Evaluate and critique one’s own and others’ research, writing, and presentation skills
- Use numbers as a way to make, understand and interpret arguments

Upon completion of the project, UNIV 150 teaching faculty will:
- Improve their understanding of IC and its critical role in teaching and learning
- Be advocates for collaborative curriculum development between librarians and faculty members
- Develop project assignments allowing students to use IC skills in a concrete, assessable way
- Assess the impact of the IC aspects of the UNIV 150 curriculum
- Gain transferable tools to integrate IC into other course curricula

Upon completion of the project, UNIV 150 librarians will:
- Provide leadership for collaborative curriculum development between librarians and faculty members
- Assess the impact of the IC aspects of the UNIV 150 curriculum
- Use and assess the effectiveness of the ICT test for pre- and post-testing of entering freshmen
- Examine the effectiveness of a year-long approach to IC integration for freshmen
- Advance the integration of IC into the curriculum

2 For specifics on the assessment plan for UNIV 150 visit the website at: http://www.sonoma.edu/ge_initiative/pdf/fye_assessment_plan.pdf
2. PROJECT ACTIVITIES

COLLABORATION WITH FACULTY
Participating librarians (two from SSU) were deeply imbedded with the development and delivery of this year-long course. Librarians attended every weekly and semester’s end curriculum meetings, providing insight when necessary on appropriate steps for achieving first-year information competence. Librarians also attended the weekly lecture for the course of 150 students. This level of involvement was invaluable for advancing information competence in this course because the librarians truly became one of the team in the planning, implementation and assessment of the course. Not only did librarians attend all the curriculum meetings, but they also provided numerous consultations one-on-one with faculty as they planned their course, in order to best integrate critical thinking skills, writing, and information competence. Librarians were matched with five faculty members each for the project.

FACULTY TRAININGS
In the second year of this project, true integration of proposed objectives became much more achievable. This was demonstrated by the two faculty trainings given in the summer and winter. Instead of stand alone trainings on information competence and other topics, the trainings evolved into truly integrated collaborative trainings. One covered the intersection of writing, critical thinking and information competence planned and taught by a librarian, critical thinking professor and writing professor. The other covered the intersection of multimedia project creation and information competence planned and taught by a librarian and communication studies professor. The faculty attending these trainings appreciated greatly the integrated approach, as it mirrored what they were trying to achieve in the course.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION
Librarians were also involved in direct instruction of FYE students on a number of issues covering the project goals for the students (listed above). Since the librarians were so involved in the creation and delivery of the course, direct instruction with the students was much more seamless than in other freshman programs in which the SSU librarians participate. The librarians also developed a rubric for grading the final annotated bibliography, which proved very useful in the assessment of the projects. Portions of the rubric also turned into useful instructional tools in the classroom, particularly around the issue of evaluating sources.

3. ICT LITERACY ANALYSIS

The iSkills test was administered to all 150 FYE students early in the fall semester as a pre-test. A total of 144 participated (84%). We believe the reason for such a high turn out is the test was administered during class time. This requirement was difficult for many of the instructors who believed they had an already overburdened class schedule. The students in the Fall 2007 scored slightly higher the Fall 2006 students
in the Define and Integrate categories. SSU students scored slightly above average in most categories of the pre-test, and much higher than students at two other CSUs. The pre-test results echoed other assessment findings and were helpful in scaffolding assignments.

The librarians decided not to administer the iSkills assessment as a post-test in Spring 2007 because the content of the iSkills did not closely match the goals of the course. Also, the librarians felt that the iSkills test would be more appropriately matched to measure student learning growth over and extended period of time, rather than growth over the period of one course.

4. DELIVERABLES

Project Website: http://library.sonoma.edu/research/infocompetence.html

Materials Developed:
FYE Research Proposal Assignment (Appendix A)
FYE Annotated Bibliography Assignment (Appendix B)
FYE Information Competence Rubric (Appendix C)
FYE Student Source Evaluation Rubric (Appendix D)

5. ASSESSMENT

For the second year of our project, our assessment focused on the student and faculty outcomes. To measure the effectiveness of our project with students we again evaluated the student annotated bibliographies using the rubric we developed for this purpose. We found similar results as the first year, in that FYE students did demonstrate success in locating a variety of materials appropriate to their topic and showed growth in the range of materials they could access (i.e. beyond Google and Wikipedia). Consistent with the first year of assessment, the student papers demonstrated struggle with successfully evaluating sources, despite repeated instruction in this area. This has caused the librarians to begin reconsidering the expectations of the “Evaluating Sources” curriculum, in light of student development and stages of learning.

Our second major assessment of the second year was faculty focus groups. Faculty were asked a series of questions (by a moderator) about information competence in the course, as well as librarian involvement in both the instruction and the curriculum planning. Results of the focus group indicate that for all faculty, the librarian involvement in FYE is viewed as valuable. Faculty understand the need to adopt information literacy concepts themselves, but view student access to a librarian in the freshman year as critical. Faculty appreciated the opportunity to “learn by observing” the librarians in the classroom. Overall, they feel more confident in teaching about credibility of sources after observing the librarians, but still desire the librarian’s
expertise in teaching about relevant/useful resources. Finally, the need for training the new FYE faculty on information literacy concepts is viewed as critical to the program.

6. CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY AND APPLICABILITY WITHIN CSU

Librarian involvement with this course will continue beyond the grant cycle, however in a smaller scale. One librarian instead of two will continue working with this project. This was a fairly time-intensive project for the involved librarians. While there is no question about the importance of students connecting with librarians, the librarians agree that the most beneficial aspect of this project was the time spent in the development of the curriculum and in the weekly faculty curriculum meetings. Many faculty were exposed to and adopted information competency curriculum, not only in the FYE course, but also in their other courses. It was clear from year one to year two that for several of the faculty members who had worked closely with the librarians had a more satisfying experience in terms of information competence and their students. It was much easier for them to integrate information-related concepts into class discussions and the assignment prompts they provided for students were much more succinct. A next step would be to work with faculty so they might gain a deeper understanding about grading for information competence.

While there is no argument that direct instruction meets the specific needs of students working on assignments, the importance was show to be just as important during the two years of this project. The librarians recommend that those with limited resources for direct instruction not neglect the importance for the need to focus on positions that influence curriculum development and planning. This would be the most sustainable model for both Sonoma State. This course is also a significant GE course, as such it is strategic for a librarian to be involved, as the GE Path at Sonoma State evolves over the years.
APPENDIX A
RESEARCH TOPIC PROPOSAL

Task: Over the course of the semester, we have explored a number of topics that have to do with your identity in a global context. The purpose of a Research Topic Proposal is to develop and refine a question you’d like to explore in the coming semester. Explain briefly your interest in the question, and discuss possible directions your inquiry may take.

Some questions to address:
• What theme or idea from the semester intrigued you the most, either positively or negatively? Analyze your reaction.
• What readings, lectures, or discussions left you curious about more information?
• Looking ahead to the syllabus, which ideas seem most appealing?
• What questions do you have about the themes from the fall and those of the spring?
• Are there many different viewpoints on the question you have posed? (Remember that “how/why/what if” questions generate more possibilities than simple yes/no questions)
• What obstacles do you foresee with your topic and research direction? What concerns do you have?

Requirements:
• 1-2 pages
• Topic must have a relationship to the issues raised in the course (something to do with identity and global challenges).

A successful proposal will:
• Offer a clear explanation of your question
• Consider a question that is researchable, neither too broad nor too narrow
• Show connections to the course themes and readings

Due Date: <early in the semester>

(Erin Daniels and Karen Brodsky, Sonoma State University, 2008)
APPENDIX B
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Context: You’ll be locating, summarizing and evaluating <5-10 or instructors choose> sources for you’re the topic you wrote about in your research topic proposal. <you may want to add how you will tie these sources into the rest of your assignments for the semester>

Task:
• Locate 10-12 sources on your topic (use a variety of sources – not all web sites or all books)
• Write a citation and annotation for each source
• Write a 1-2 page introduction to your annotated bibliography (introducing your research topic, briefly summarizing overall themes discovered in reading, and challenges you faced in the research process).

Example Citation & Annotation:
Azimi, N. (2007, February 19). Bloggers against torture. Nation, 284, 11-16. Retrieved February 20, 2007, from Academic Search Premier. This article describes how bloggers are helping to shed light on torture practices in Egypt. This article is useful for my project because it talks about how bloggers clash with authorities and my project is focusing on how new information sources are changing roles in society. It is important to note that The Nation is a liberal publication; I found this out by going to their website and reading about their mission and to whom they market the magazine.

Potential questions to address in annotation:
• What were the main points of the source?
• What is the main argument of the source?
• What did you learn from this source that you didn’t learn in other articles?
• What is the author’s point of view?
• Who is the audience for this piece of information and why does that matter?
• What information does not seem accurate, if any?
• What bias can you detect in the article or the publication

Due:

Citation Styles: http://library.sonoma.edu -- Click on “Citation Styles”

(Erin Daniels and Karen Brodsky, Sonoma State University, 2008)
### APPENDIX C
FYE UNIV 150 Information Competence Rubric

Erin Daniels & Karen Brodsky
Sonoma State University Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Literacy Outcome</th>
<th>Absent (D) Need for improvement outweighs apparent strengths</th>
<th>Emerging (C) Strengths and need for improvement are about equal</th>
<th>Advancing (B) Shows strength in this outcome. Improvement is still needed</th>
<th>Mastering (A) Applies outcome in multiple contexts. Numerous strengths are present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>D1: Define needs for information, given a particular research focus.</strong></td>
<td>Student does not narrow topic.</td>
<td>Student shows awareness that topic must be refined, but focus remains broad.</td>
<td>Student identifies a focused topic.</td>
<td>Student identifies a focused and clear topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope of topic does not match scope of the assignment.</td>
<td>Scope of topic shows awareness of the assignment requirements, but remains broad.</td>
<td>Scope of topic is manageable for the assignment requirements.</td>
<td>Scope of topic matches scope of the assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student does not formulate a question about topic.</td>
<td>Student does not formulate a question about topic.</td>
<td>Student does not formulate a question topic.</td>
<td>Student formulates a question about topic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **D2: (a) Define a research strategy for locating necessary information and...** | Student is unable to identify types of potential sources | Student identifies only a few types of potential sources | Student identifies many types of potential sources | Student identifies all types of potential sources necessary for project |
|                              | Student is unfocused and unclear about search strategy.     | Student consistently uses same method for information seeking. | Student experiments with new strategies for seeking information. | Student applies several creative approaches to information seeking. |

| **D2: (b) Locate resources of all types for information need** | Student does not locate or use sources outside of immediate sphere of influence (parents, friends, | Student only locates and uses convenient and known sources. | Student locates and uses known and convenient sources, and attempts using new sources. | Student locates and uses a variety of relevant information sources, regardless of convenience or |
|                                                             |                                             |                                                            |                                                                  |                                                                  |


### D3: Comprehend and assess the appropriateness of resources

| Information gathered lacks relevance, timeliness, coverage and accuracy in relation to the assignment | A few of the sources are relevant, timely, accurate, and have appropriate coverage in relation to the assignment. | Most of the sources are relevant, timely, accurate, and have appropriate coverage in relation to the assignment. | All of the sources are relevant, timely, accurate, and have appropriate coverage in relation to the assignment. |

### D4: (a) Practice habits of academic integrity

| Student is unaware of the University’s Cheating & Plagiarism Policy. | Student is aware of the University’s Cheating & Plagiarism Policy. | Student is aware of the University’s Cheating & Plagiarism Policy, and demonstrates awareness of the consequences. | Student is aware of the University’s Cheating & Plagiarism Policy, and demonstrates awareness of the consequences. |

### D4: (b) Using source material ethically

| Student demonstrates no awareness of proper citation styles. Student demonstrates no effort at effective paraphrasing and synthesizing source material with own ideas. | Student is aware of citation styles, but demonstrates inconsistencies in citation format. Student needs work on effective paraphrasing and synthesizing source material with own ideas. | Student demonstrates proper citation format. Student needs work on effective paraphrasing and synthesizing source material with own ideas. | Student demonstrates proper citation format. Student demonstrates beginning skills with effective paraphrasing and synthesizing sources material with own ideas. |

### D5: Effectively articulate and communicate one’s own and others’ ideas, including ideas and arguments one disagrees with

| Does not accurately identify or summarize source ideas Fails to include counter-arguments or other relevant viewpoints Does not develop ideas to any appreciable degree | Attempts to identify source ideas, but lacks clarity or adequate development Does not address counter-arguments or other relevant viewpoints Development of ideas may be inadequate | Accurately identifies source ideas, perhaps with some lack of clarity or development Omits or slights some counter-arguments and other relevant viewpoints Development of ideas is adequate but not extensive | Clearly and accurately summarizes source ideas Includes counter-arguments and other relevant viewpoints Develops ideas extensively |
| D6: Identify and articulate and author's assumptions and biases | Student shows no awareness of the role of "language" in the author's position. Student shows no awareness of how author used source material to support position. Student shows no awareness of the point of view of the source of publication. | Student inconsistently articulates how "language" is used to support an author's position, Student shows little awareness of how author used source material to support position. Student occasionally articulates an awareness of the point of view of the source of publication. | Student articulates how "language" is used to support an author's position, but does not fully grasp concept. Student occasionally demonstrates how the author used source material to support a position. Student articulates an awareness of the point of view of the source of publication. | Student clearly articulate how "language" is used to support an author's position. Student clearly demonstrates how the author used source material to support a position. Student articulates an awareness of the point of view of the source of publication, and articulates how this shapes the ideas presented. |
| **APPENDIX D**  
Student Source Evaluation Rubric  
Erin Daniels & Karen Brodsky – Sonoma State University |
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No evaluation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How prepared are you to evaluate the article?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What do you know about the author of your article?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What do you know about the magazine/journal the article is published in?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What do you know about the evidence provided in your article?</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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