A Note from the Director

As the spring semester is coming to an end, we are looking back at another successful year in the General Education program. This second edition of the newsletter highlights some of the accomplishments of our faculty and students and describes several innovative changes occurring in the GE program. In the fall semester we introduced a new approach to teaching developmental writing in conjunction with Pacific Seminar 1—designated PACS sections were linked to 100-minute writing labs (“PACS Plus”) that provided students with extra support in writing instruction. The outcomes were great—both students and faculty reported that they had developed considerably as writers over the course of the semester. We will continue the assessment of the pilot program and make permanent changes in 2015-2016.

New courses were certified as General Education classes, such as GEO 93 Hostile Earth, HIST 093 History of Alcohol and Intoxicants, and RELI 170 Bible in America. Pacific faculty taught a total of 367 GE Breadth courses with 11,260 students enrolled in the academic year 2013-2014!

We had an unprecedented number of Pacific Seminar 1 sections (49!), 44 topical Pacific Seminar 2 sections, and offered a total of 37 Pacific Seminar 3 sections.

Five faculty were recognized for innovation and achievement in teaching GE courses, and 14 student received the Long Foundation Core Fellowship that recognizes students who perform well in their GE classes. We gave out prizes to students for their best papers written in PACS 1. Raymond Alumni will also select winners for the best research papers written in PACS 2 at the end of the spring semester.

The GE program is completing the first year of a three-year assessment cycle of all its courses, and the assessment of learning outcomes in PACS 1 (writing) and PACS 3 (information literacy) is ongoing. PACS faculty assisted in ESL tutoring, and we continued our collaboration with the professional schools, Student Life, Athletics, and the Student Writing Center. Faculty were also busy making changes in our well-recognized Pacific Seminar 1, which will be rolled out in the fall semester. Stay tuned!

Thank you all for a great year and for your commitment to the liberal arts and General Education at Pacific!

Gesine Gerhard, Director of General Education
Susan Mannon- Pacific Seminar 1

Dr. Susan Mannon joined Pacific as an Assistant Professor in the sociology department in fall 2013. During her first semester she enthusiastically taught the interdisciplinary Pacific Seminar 1. Here is how she describes her experience: “Having studied and taught at large state schools all my life, I approached PACS with some excitement and more than a little trepidation. What was I supposed to do in this class? What (and how) was I supposed to teach? What expertise did I have to impart? It took me a month of teaching PACS before I could really answer these questions. For me, teaching PACS meant letting go of being the expert, the professor, the "person in charge." It meant, quite simply, becoming a student again. Alongside my students, I read essays that I had never read before, wrote in ways that I had never written before, and thought about things that I had never thought of before. In so doing, I stepped outside of what had become a formulaic approach to my teaching and the comfortable confines of my disciplinary knowledge. What did PACS offer my students? Perhaps what it offered me: a chance to be vulnerable, curious, and open to ideas and to each other.” Professor Mannon is looking forward to teaching Pacific Seminar 1 again in fall 2014.

Cosana Eram- Pacific Seminar 3

Dr. Cosana Eram joined Pacific as an Assistant Professor in French Language and Literature in 2012. Here is how she describes her experience teaching Pacific Seminar 3: “Two years ago, when I first visited the campus, it was Dr. Lou Matz who enthusiastically spoke to me about this program. And he was right. As I now teach What Is an Ethical Life, I am delighted to train seniors for epistemological performance and witness their overall intellectual growth right before graduation. My students think outside the box and are challenged in a positive way through activities that offer structure and leave the discussion flexible as well. In order to support argument with best-chosen evidence, the specific skills that I emphasize are close reading, weighing pros and cons, and the ability to ask high-level probing questions. While they realize that many times there is no single answer to a moral dilemma or a philosophical interrogation, the students come to appreciate the importance of a multiplicity of perspectives and points of view. This year, my French “touch” is The Plague by Albert Camus, a timely fit for the centennial of its author’s birth and also a choice justified by its ethically charged subject matter. “

Dr. Eram states that her Pacific Seminar 3 follows the mission of encouraging students to read, think, and write with a critical voice about a wide spectrum of topics, from the relativity of good and evil to the very nature of being human.
“Fiddler on the Roof”

Pacific Seminar 1 students Emily Hou and Curtis Lo pose with Martin Lehman, aka Tevye the milkman from Anatevka, after an exhilarating performance of “Fiddler on the Roof” at the Stockton Civic Theater this past September.

Martin’s day job is with the Center for Teaching and Learning, but he made time to visit our Pacific Seminar class to share his experience of preparing for the lead role in the musical. The students were very appreciative of his visit and felt it was a great conclusion to an overall rewarding Pacs 1 Arts Experience.

Elke Schmeling, Pacific Seminar 1 Professor

Student Thoughts on Pacific Seminar 3:

- “The most valuable aspect of the course is the ‘seminar’ style of presenting course materials. It seems more effective than lecturing in the sense that it encourages students to retain the knowledge and be accountable for knowing the material prior to class.”

- “The autobiography was the most valuable part of the course. It really gives the student a chance to reflect on their own moral development and put what is discussed in the class into perspective within their own lives.”

University Writing Programs

Throughout fall 2013, the University Writing Program has continued to evolve and expand its support services with interim director Eileen Camfield at the helm. The Student Writing Center (SWC) welcomed six new hires to the team of student Writing Mentors stationed on the second floor of the Library. Additionally, the SWC saw an increase from this time last year in the total number of visits by students, both undergrad and graduate, reflecting the Center’s expanded promotional efforts. While students from Pacific Seminar sections make up the largest population of SWC attendees, the Center hopes to encourage students to bring in assignments associated with an even greater spread of GE and discipline-specific courses. No matter the discipline or stage of development the paper is at, the Writing Mentors at the SWC seek to bolster students’ self-efficacy and intentionally support their writing process as a mode of critical inquiry that breeds improved reasoning, comprehension, and communication skills. The SWC also offers faculty the option of holding Writing Mentor-assisted peer review sessions within the Center’s space.

In the coming months, goals for the University Writing Programs includes developing training opportunities for Writing Mentors, offering a program of workshops addressing salient writing and research topics, and spreading awareness of the Student Writing Center as an approachable and beneficial resource for all Pacific students. For more information regarding the Student Writing Center or how to become a writing mentor, please contact Melanie Hash, Coordinator, at mhash@pacific.edu or 209.932.2969.

Melanie Hash, SWC Coordinator

Winners of the Long Foundation Core Scholarship

Aroosa Ahmed (Psychology), David Carranza (Pre-Pharm. and Political Economy), Alea Freeman (English and Philosophy), Vanessa Fuentes (Intl. Relations), Deidre Graham (Intl. Relations and Mathematical Econ.), Michelle Gretzinger (Philosophy), Nahid Kadrizada (Econ. and Intl. Econ.), Rachelle Kim (Biology), Minjin Ko (Biology), Noah Lipshutz (Pre-Pharm.), Beata Meluch (Engineering Physics), Osagie Omoruyi (Pre-Pharm. and Biology), Tu Pham (Business Administration and International Business), Melanie Vieira (Education).
Dr. Ken Albala teaches a new GE course titled, “A History of Alcohol and Intoxicants.” The course examines alcohol and recreational drugs through history as a fundamental part of the human experience. Dr. Albala states that the course offers students applicable value for living a rich and full personal social life and for doing so responsibly. He describes his experience writing and teaching this class for the first time in the fall semester: “I had the most fun learning about topics I knew very little about, alcohol in Asia and pre-Columbian societies, drug use in ritual and religion, throughout the world and especially the history of the technology of alcohol production. I would never have expected that toward the end of the course, it necessarily became a story of American pop culture and music. The students were just as eager and enthusiastic as I was, and they were just a step behind me the whole way.”

The course satisfies the GE category I-A, Individual and Interpersonal Behavior. The course helps students develop written communication skills, critical thinking, cross-cultural awareness, and ethical reasoning.

ARTS 035: Ceramics

An introductory ceramics course is taught every semester. The course involves the technical aspects of working with clay. These include: clay mixing, wet formation, glazing, and firing at varying temperatures. The course is usually taught by Professor Trent Burkett whose work is influenced by experiences travelling in the Sierra Nevada landscape and an understanding of Eastern aesthetics. His goal for the course is to give students an understanding of how to solve visual problems both conceptually and in process as it pertains to ceramic arts. This course satisfies the GE category II-C, Visual and Performing Arts.
Thank You Notes: Written by Second-Graders to Pacific Students

David (Age: 7) “Dear U.O.P. students, I want to thank you for inviting us to the play. That was a funny play and the one with the blue shirt had a Mario mustache. And thanks for making us laugh. Look on the back there is more to read...”

Amelia (Age: 7) “Dear U.O.P. students, I want to thank you for inviting us to the play. I really liked the part when Peggy saved the pirates. I wonder if the sea monster talked in a microphone. Did you make the wheel of misfortune. I wish I had a wheel of misfortune at my house.”

Pacific Seminar 2: Drama and Community

Dr. Amy Smith’s PACS 2 class, “Drama and Community” focuses on the community and how her students can interact with and improve it. One of the requirements of the course was to do community service and incorporate drama into that service.

One of the students, Jasmeen Rana, described how she and a few other students performed a play for children at the Cesar Chavez Central Library. They started out by finding a short play that would appeal to the children. The play they chose was titled, “Peggy the Pint-Sized Pirate.” It is a story about a little pirate with a big heart that saves her fellow pirates from the sea monster and stops the litter that the pirates had been throwing in the sea.

Jasmeen and her fellow students practiced every other day and created props and costumes. They planned to put the play on for about twenty second-graders, in the end sixty children showed up. The children were very enthusiastic and really into the play, laughing at all the jokes and the antics of the pirates. Jasmeen said that her favorite part of this project was seeing how much the children enjoyed the play, this assured her that the work she put into it was well worth it.

The value of this community-based learning experience for the children comes through in the thank you notes written by the second-graders to the Pacific students.

Long Foundation Awards for Excellence in Teaching in the GE Program

Dr. Macelle Mahala (Theater Arts)
Dr. Amy Smith (English)
Dr. Keith Smith (Political Science)
Dr. Xiaojing Zhou (English)

Raymond Essay Awards

The Raymond Essay awards were created to reward student excellence in the Pacific Seminar program. Pacific Seminar 1 and 2 faculty submit their best student essay and Raymond Alumni choose 3 to 4 winners who each receive a $200 reward. The winners from this year’s Pacific Seminar 1 (and their professors) were:

Danielle Cummings (Professor Michael Garbarini)
Alyssa Rodriguez (Professor Elena Savelieva-Thompson)
Dakota Smith (Professor Scott Evans)
Pacific Seminar 1 Plus Pilot (PACS 093)

This past fall we successfully piloted an integrated approach to providing support for developmental writers enrolled in Pacific Seminar 1. Students enrolled in “PACS Plus” received an additional 100-minutes a week of writing instruction from the same instructor who led their seminar class. Multiple assessment projects are currently underway, but the preliminary feedback is encouraging. Based on some pre-and-post semester narrative writing, students demonstrated huge growth in their confidence as writers, in their understanding of the writing process, and in their resilience in managing setbacks along the way. Much of this growth was attributed to specific teaching practices used by their professors. Students valued the freedom they had to write about what they cared about. Their emerging sense of agency as writers was also facilitated by the kind of feedback they received from their professors. As one student put it “I have benefitted from having a teacher that doesn’t tell me everything that is wrong with my paper and instead tells me what is good about it [and] where I can improve.” Another acknowledged, “Sure getting an A on a paper is rewarding, but it’s not as meaningful as someone saying ‘I really enjoyed that paper; Good job!’” Seeing grades as less important signals a significant shift in motivation and self-regulation.

Eileen Camfield, Director of Writing Programs

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