

March 27, 2023

**PROFESSOR LAKSHMI CHILUKURI, Provost
Sixth College**

SUBJECT: Program Review for Sixth College

Dear Professor Chilukuri,

At its March 10, 2023 meeting, the Undergraduate Council (UGC) discussed the Sixth College 2022 Program Review. The Council supports the findings and recommendations of the review committee and thanks the College and the Dean of Undergraduate Education's office for their thoughtful responses. The Council's comments centered on the following:

The Council commends the College for the improvements it has made based on the report's recommendations. In particular, the Council is pleased to see the improvements within its writing courses. These improvements are integral to enhancing students' educational experience. While not formally part of program review self-studies, a more thorough assessment of the quality of students' writing in downstream courses could be beneficial to assess how well the writing courses are meeting their learning objectives.

There seems to be continuing confusion about the purpose of the practicum requirement, particularly as there is such a wide range of courses that meet the requirement. A comparison with other colleges and their approaches to experiential learning may reveal areas of opportunities for Sixth to improve this aspect of the program. For example, Seventh and Eighth College provide models for experiential learning that include a reflection course.

The Council also agrees with the Dean of Undergraduate Education regarding the College's identity. The improvements made thus far are promising, but we encourage the College to continue to enhance the Mission and Motto with more specific language on what makes the College unique to students and the community.

The Council will conduct its follow-up review of the program in Winter Quarter 2024. At that time, our goal is to learn about the Program's progress in implementing the recommendations of the program review committee and the Undergraduate Council. The Council extends its thanks to the Program for their engagement in this process, and we look forward to the continued discussion.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Kaiser, Chair
Undergraduate Council

Attachment

(1) Program Review Report and Response for Sixth College

cc: H. Caraballo
J. Hildebrand
L. Hullings
J. Moore
N. Postero
M. Rabinowitz-Bussell

Academic Senate Undergraduate Council
Undergraduate Program Review of
Sixth College
May 23, 2022

The review committee reviewed material provided by the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Education, including the Self Study and Dashboard. On May 2, 2022, the committee met with representatives of Sixth College including: the Provost, faculty members of the Executive Advisory Committee, the Director of the Writing Program, the Associate Director of Experiential Learning & Practicum, the Associate Director of Writing, the Dean of Student Affairs, the Associate Dean of Student Affairs / Director of Residence Life, the Assistant Dean of Academic Advising, members of the Academic Advising team, undergraduate student members of the Student Advisory Council, undergraduate students of the College, and graduate student TAs of the College's Writing Program.

It is clear that the College has made tremendous progress since the previous review. There has been substantial turnover in leadership in the interim, but starting in roughly 2017 the College began a period of stability and growth that is palpable. There have been major improvements in the CAT writing program and in the practicum, including the establishment of programmatic learning objectives as well as course-specific learning objectives. Morale amongst faculty, students and staff was high, with several staff members commenting how much they enjoyed working together. The Provost suggested at the outset that culture and community were paramount in Sixth College, and subsequent interviews with students substantiate this position. The committee were particularly impressed with the relatively low level of problems related to EDI.

This report summarizes our review of Sixth College in four categories: a description and analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the College's operations; a description and analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the College's curricula; an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the College in the context of campus and UC-wide policies; and finally our recommendations.

A. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Current Operation of the College.

1. Administrative structure of the College

The executive director of the College is the Provost, Dr. Lakshmi Chilukuri. Directly under the Provost are the Deans of Student Affairs (Dr. Diane LeGree) and Academic Advising (Dr. Christine Fraser - who was absent during the day of our meetings), as well as the Director of Academic Programs (Dr. Phoebe Bronstein). The Dean of Student Affairs supervises several Resident Deans and Student Life Officers. The Dean of Academic Advising supervises a team of roughly 7 academic advisors. The Director of Academic Programs supervises Associate Directors of Writing (Elizabeth Gumm) and Experiential Learning (Bill Geibel), in addition to advisors for the Practicum Program and Teaching Assistants. The structure of the College was well laid-out in their Organizational Chart provided to the committee in advance of the meeting date.

2. The composition of the faculty

There are approximately 176 Senate Faculty members affiliated with Sixth College. Faculty are represented from all of the Schools within UCSD. Six members of the Senate Faculty who are affiliated with Sixth College sit on the College's Executive Committee (along with ex-officio members and student representatives). An additional three Senate Faculty members sit on the College's Core Advisory committee, working with the Director of Academic Programs to develop, maintain and evaluate academic programs. Three separate Senate Faculty members sit on the College's Practicum Advisory Committee. Members of the College's leadership are also among the Senate Faculty of Sixth College, including Provost Chilukuri and Director Bronstein.

Many of the Senate Faculty are actively involved in teaching some of Sixth College's courses, including the CAT1, 2, 3 series courses. In addition, there are 270 (?) courses taught by Senate and non-Senate faculty that qualify as Practicum for the College.

In addition to the Senate Faculty there are non-Senate faculty appointed through the College who work on developing courses, learning objectives (programmatic and course-specific) and who aid in teaching the courses. These include the Associate Directors of Writing and Experiential Learning.

3. Undergraduate enrollments

Enrollment in Sixth College has increased from 3625 students in the last review period (Fall 2013) to 5008 students in the current review (Fall 2020), representing 15.73% of the total undergraduate body enrolled at UCSD in Fall 2020. This is slightly higher than that expected if enrollment were even over the seven colleges. Over the course of the preceding five year period, the percentage of Domestic URM students enrolled in the College has increased from 10% in Fall 2016 to 16% in Fall 2020.

Sixth College has - for some reason - lower enrollments of "Women and Nonbinary" students than those of "Men" (43% versus 56%, respectively), although these numbers appear relatively stable over a five year period. The committee is incredulous as to why the University groups women and nonbinary folks into one category. The College could be implementing policies that are particularly helpful - or harmful! - to nonbinary folks, but those effects could be masked by data from women. These counting methods seem unhelpful to us.

There seems to be a second 'wave' of student loss during the second year of enrollment for students at Sixth College. This does not appear to be unique to Sixth College however, but prevalent across all colleges on campus. One hypothesis for this trend is that many programs have arduous courses that students encounter during their second year which might 'weed out' students at this point. It would be important for the campus, through exit interviews and other data tracking, to determine what proportion of these students are leaving postsecondary education, transferring to another institution, or "stepping out" temporarily due to financial or other pressures.

When considering the Transfer student population of Sixth, the Domestic URM students have not had any change in time-to-degree in five years. The average number of quarters to degree for these students was 7.4 in spring 2016 and continues to be 7.4 in 2021. This is in contrast to Domestic non-URM students and International students who are both taking less time to degree in spring 2021 than spring 2016. College leadership was aware of the issue but was unclear on what could be causing the issue, or how to proceed. Indeed the committee was not able to provide much insight into the issue, but an interview with the undergraduate students was revealing: one URM Transfer student suggested that time-to-degree was not a valued metric for her. Rather, she enjoyed matriculating at the College and continued her studies longer than 2 years because of her academic and leadership interests. The committee appreciated the idea that time to degree - as a metric of the quality of experience of Sixth College - may not have been particularly valuable if folks are enjoying their experiences.

Considering Domestic URM students who enrolled at Sixth College in fall 2017, there are a higher number of these students - compared to Domestic non-URM and International students - who are no longer registered at the university in Spring quarter 2021. For first-time first-year URM students, 19% are no longer matriculating at the university compared to 9% and 11% for Domestic non-URM and International students. For Transfer URM students, 14% are no longer registered at UCSD compared to 8% for Domestic non-URM and 5% for International students. It is unclear to the committee if this attrition of Domestic URM Transfer students is College-specific or part of a larger problem across campus. However, this issue merits close consideration and, where possible, mitigation, especially in view of the [UC Regents' 2030 goals](#).

Beyond this last issue of attrition of Domestic URM students, the committee were impressed by the relative paucity of racial/gender disparities reported for Sixth College. For example, enrollment of Domestic URM students is up from 10% of the enrolled student body (in 2016) to 16% in 2021; first-generation students make up 40% of enrolled students in 2021, compared to 33% in 2016; retention rates of URM students were not discernibly different from the rest of campus; and the UCUES survey data suggesting that Sixth College students feel comparable to - or more comfortable than - the rest of the students on campus.

4. Work towards an inclusive climate

The EDI climate at Sixth College seems remarkably positive. The only issue that the committee feels is noteworthy is the previously mentioned issue of Domestic URM students (both FTFY and Transfer) leaving the College at greater rates than other students. However, it was not clear that this issue was a Sixth College issue or a broader issue across campus.

The UCUES survey results did not reveal any 'red flags' for the committee members. Climate is very strong. Indeed, the discussion around community seems prevalent at Sixth, not only among College leadership but also among the student population.

Reading that is provided by the faculty for CAT1, 2, 3 promotes anti-racist mindsets. For example, assigned readings include books by bell hooks and Robin Kimmerer.

Strengths

- Administrative structure: seems they have excellent people in place, who have built a cohesive unit that enjoys working together.
- The college is able to get faculty from outside the college to contribute to teaching its CAT 1/2/3 series courses
- No discernible differences in 'URM' candidate experiences, with the exception of: transfer URM students and time-to-degree; and a higher number of domestic URM students who leave UCSD altogether.

Weaknesses

- It would be helpful if the Associate Directors of Writing (Liz Gumm) and Experiential Learning (Bill Geibel) could also teach courses by themselves (ie: without having to co-teach with Senate faculty). The committee heard that this would make life easier on these members of the teaching team moving forward.
- The issue of transfer URM students and time-to-degree may not be a weakness at all, rather a desire by these students to remain engaged in interesting programs.

B. Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum

1. CAT 1/2/3 courses

The College has clearly been working doggedly since the last review to implement Learning Objectives that tie together the CAT 1/2/3 series. The Programmatic Learning Objectives that have been developed have helped tie the courses together in a logical sequence, and there are Course Learning Objectives within each course. The undergraduate students reported that there are clear, deliberate attempts in each step of the CAT 1/2/3 progression to link to the College's motto of Art, Culture and Technology. Since the College allows each faculty member to focus the content of CAT 1/2/3 courses on their own research, there are multiple different topics available for students to select for CAT 1/2/3. This flexibility is possible because the College's administrative team have put some clear guidelines (eg: programmatic and course-specific learning objectives; syllabus structure that is to be used) in place to make sure that each faculty member meets the courses (and the programmatic) Learning Objectives. As such, there is some control ensuring the students all meet the course learning objectives, even though the CAT 1/2/3 courses have different topics. The students with whom the committee met thoroughly enjoyed the flexibility offered by this model. The students also thoroughly enjoyed that some of the CAT1/2/3 courses used different types of media in their instruction.

The model at the College for the CAT 1/2/3 courses seems to be that the faculty member teaches class and that the Teaching Assistants (TAs) work with the students on their writing during discussion sections. Unfortunately, there seems to be some disconnect between what some faculty members are doing in class and what the TAs are being asked to do in section. It's possible that this issue results from the faculty member taking an already existing class and torquing it to fit the needs of CAT 1/2/3, including modifying it to fit the learning objectives and the structure of the assessments. The TAs report that (at least some, not all) faculty aren't actively engaging with the course reading during class time. As a result, students do not recognize the importance of the assigned reading, which means that they don't do it. When

they come to section without having done any of the assigned reading, the onus then falls to the TAs to aid the undergraduates in their reading AND being the point of contact to work on their writing. Several of the TAs reported that this added work made their jobs more difficult.

Other than having some issues with a small number of faculty, the TAs spoke very highly of their experiences with Sixth College. The TAs were clear that they received a tremendous amount of support from Drs. Bronstein and Gumm. Specifically, the TAs mentioned that they were supported with: help on teaching methods; they were provided suggestive lesson plans; there was a presence from administration during weekly TA meetings with the faculty; etc. We feel compelled to mention that the students with whom the committee spoke loved their TAs. Students all described TAs as going above and beyond to help them, and they felt that the TAs helped their learning. Indeed, the relationship between TAs and undergraduate students seems to be one of mutual admiration.

The CAT 1/2/3 series, as a writing program, seems to compare favorably to other college writing programs at UCSD. The ability of the College to use Senate faculty to aid in teaching the CAT 1/2/3 series gives the opportunity to introduce students to various topics of their choosing while still getting them to fulfill their writing requirements. The students interviewed reported that their classmates in other colleges were jealous of the opportunities that Sixth students had to take the College's writing program, with its interesting topic list and the strength of the TAs.

Strengths:

- Tremendous improvement in the structure of courses (and course progression) for CAT 1/2/3 since the previous review. Programmatic learning objectives and course-specific learning objectives mean that the progression between courses is well choreographed, and that the expectations of each section of CAT1/2/3 are clear. There are also syllabus structures provided to faculty to ensure that there is similarity between all the CAT 1/2/3 courses offered.
- The students loved having the freedom to select course topics for CAT 1/2/3 from a list provided. The reason for this flexibility is that the College's administrators have put structured systems into place to ensure that faculty are engaging students in the proper content directed at shared learning objectives, regardless of course theme.
- The connections between the course topic and Art and Culture and Technology are made abundantly clear to the students.
- The use of multimedia instead of just writing in certain CAT 1/2/3 classes was valued by the students.
- The Teaching Assistants. One student described Sixth College as being "the College with the good TAs". They are often asked to carry more of the academic burden than they should. But they are doing a terrific job.
- The structure provided by administration for the TAs. From teaching methods, to suggestive lesson plans, to their presence at TA meetings, the TAs had high praise for administration.

Weaknesses:

- Certain CAT 1/2/3 faculty are not engaging with the content properly. Specifically, the faculty do not seem to gear their lectures closely to the readings required, which leads to the students not valuing readings. In addition, students' failure to do the readings suggests that class time may be devoted entirely to lecture, without students having to use the texts in real time to engage in active learning. These factors put undue burden on the Teaching Assistants.
- Unclear if students are aware of Programmatic or Course-specific learning objectives. These should be articulated in course syllabi.
- It would be helpful if these courses were offered each quarter (eg: off-cycle). As it stands, If a student were to fail a CAT 1/2/3 course, it would delay graduation by a year instead of a quarter.
- The committee are unclear about ELWR needing to be taken prior to CAT1. CAT1 is not a writing class, so the need for a writing requirement is not clear. There seems to be reasons beyond Sixth College for this. However, to the extent that CAT 1 is a kind of cohorting opportunity for first-year students (allowing for the fact that not all students take the course in their first quarter), there may be benefits to considering allowing non ELWR-certified students to take CAT 1.
- Perhaps we change the term "track" to "topic" when describing the different themes for CAT 1/2/3, to clarify that these are not actually tracks anymore, but rather independent topics. The committee found the term 'track' confusing.
- There was some mention of CAT1/2/3 progressing from "past to present to future". For example, that CAT1 focuses on the past, while CAT2 the present and CAT 3 the future. This was not obvious to the committee, and we wondered whether it was important for the series. Indeed, the committee were unsure if the courses offered in this sequence stayed true to this progression. If this designation is important, perhaps it could be made more obvious.

2. Practicum

One thing that became clear early in the review was that the Practicum was not easy to define. Indeed, the term "experiential" - one that is used ubiquitously to describe the practicum - is itself difficult to define. The justification for the existence of the Practicum requirement is that the College wants students to engage in a hands-on experience that one might not typically find in a classroom setting. Ironically, the overwhelming majority (94.2%) of Sixth students meet the Practicum requirement via course work. The remaining students get credit via studying abroad, an AIP credit, or another type of special project.

One class students can take to fulfill the Practicum is offered by Sixth itself (CAT 124), but only a small number of students (roughly 2% between 2015 and 2021) take the course for Practicum credit. The other courses that count for Practicum credit come from a list of ~275 pre-approved courses that already exist across the different Schools at UCSD. These courses count for Practicum credit because they offer a 'significant amount of experiential learning', although it is not clear what that might mean, or how these courses meet that definition.

The administration - Dr. Geibel in particular - have done a tremendous amount of work trying to evaluate and identify courses that allow students to have 'experiential learning opportunities'. In fact, a grading rubric has been developed to 'score' courses on the amount of

experiential-ness. Indeed, one of Dr. Geibel's first actions upon being hired in 2020 was to cull the list of courses that count for practicum credit from over 300 down to roughly 275. It is clear that the College is doing its utmost to clarify what the Practicum is and how that requirement can be met by the undergraduates. However, of the students interviewed by the committee none were aware of the fact that they had fulfilled their Practicum requirement until after the fact. The courses that counted for Practicum credit (such as labs or field courses) were simply required of their major. Indeed, at one point the committee wondered if it were even possible for a Sixth College student to meet the requirements of their major and *fail* to meet the Practicum requirement. It turns out that it is possible for a handful of majors. But the overwhelming majority of students in Sixth College will meet their Practicum requirement as a function of meeting the requirements of their major, given that most majors have themselves worked to include more "experiential" opportunities. The committee points out that this might simply be a 'win' for significant learning at the University: that many of our undergraduate students are going to have "experiential learning" as a consequence of pursuing their major. The committee wonders if this makes the requirement for a Practicum obsolete, or whether, perhaps, what could distinguish Sixth College would be the opportunity for students to reflect on the experiential course or courses and how the course(s) changed their understanding of or relationship to their chosen field.

The idea of wanting students to 'branch out' and get some learning experiences that would not normally come from a classroom setting is noble, and the committee agrees with the gestalt of this message. But the Practicum is so difficult to define. The committee were asking ourselves: Is it supposed to work-related? Synthesizing course information? Work in the community? And perhaps most importantly: Are we just asking folks to meet a requirement that is already being met? The administration provided a list of six tracks that can be used to meet the requirement, but it remains unclear what that requirement is, beyond some form of learning experience that is not largely passive.

2.1 CAT 125

The CAT 125 course is currently about writing and presenting skills, focusing on translating what was learned in CAT 1/2/3 into writing and public rhetoric. One idea that the committee had was the possibility that CAT 125 could also be a course that encourages students to engage in some reflection about their CAT 124 (or equivalent experiential learning) experience(s). The major themes of CAT 125 would be unchanged, but would also incorporate the reflection of their experiential learning. That is: what experiences did the student actually have during their experiential learning? How might that be transformative for them? How was it different than what they would experience in a more didactic learning environment?

We believe that this might be beneficial to many of the students who received credit for experiential learning despite being unaware that they had done so. Again, we see the value in this model, but making those connections more obvious/evident to the students might be valuable, and CAT 125 might be the place to make those experiences explicit.

Strengths

- The idea of wanting students to get hands-on learning in a manner that is beyond the typical classroom setting.

Weaknesses

- The Practicum is difficult to define. Relying on an equally difficult term - like “experiential” - is not helping clarify what the requirement is.
- There are courses that fulfill the requirement of ‘hands on learning’, but since the number - and content- of courses is ever-changing, it requires someone to constantly evaluate all of the courses on campus to decide whether those courses meet the requirement of the Practicum.
- Students are largely unaware of what the Practicum is and whether they have already received credit for the Practicum.
- The practicum may be formalizing a requirement that (nearly) all students will already be meeting.
- While there is a mechanism in place for students to retroactively receive Practicum credit for a course they have taken (not on the pre-approved list), this was unknown to students. Perhaps this could be made clear to the students so that they do not feel compelled to take an extra course to fulfill this requirement.

3. Achievement gaps

As mentioned in section A. 3., there were two achievement gaps observed in the student population. One was that there appears to be no change in time-to-degree by Transfer URM students, while all other groups of transfer students show significant improvement in time to degree since 2014. The other is that there are a larger number of Domestic URM students who leave UCSD altogether (19%) than any other demographic.

The first reported achievement gap (Transfer URM students having no change in time-to-degree) may not be a problem at all. One of the students during the committee’s interviews was a Transfer URM student, and she objected to being “pressured” by the Advising team to finish her degree as soon as possible. This particular student was enjoying her time studying at UCSD and wanted to take a greater range of courses than they had originally planned on taking. By delaying time-to-degree, they felt that they were getting a richer, more fulfilling experience at UCSD. The committee was inclined to agree with the student.

However, if this experience were generalizable, we would still not see an equity gap between URM and non-URM/international students in time to degree. While some students, like the student we spoke with, may be extending their time at UCSD because of the wealth of opportunities they find there, the equity gap for URM students suggests that some of those students are facing barriers to completing within normative time.

The second achievement gap was more mysterious. For first-time first-year URM students, 19% are no longer at UCSD (compared to 9% and 11% for Domestic non-URM and international students, respectively). In all honesty, the committee did not become aware of this until after we had formally interviewed College administrators. Indeed, these values may not be

unique to Sixth College, rather a trend throughout campus. Certainly, this gap merits significant further inquiry and attempts at mitigation, even if it is represented across the campus.

Beyond these issues, the committee was impressed at the lack of any other achievement gaps. Several students and faculty commented to the committee that Sixth College was known for being a close-knit community of learners, and the data seem to substantiate those claims.

Strengths

- Very few achievement gaps noted.
- A strong sense of community seems present at Sixth College.

Weaknesses

- For first-time first-year URM students, 19% are no longer at UCSD (compared to 9% and 11% for Domestic non-URM and international students, respectively). Whether this is a Sixth College issue or a broader UCSD issue is not clear.

C. Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the College in the context of campus and University policies

1. Mission and Definition of the College

One interesting element of the review of Sixth College was that the motto and mission of the College were still not totally clear. One of the students interviewed said that they only knew the motto of Sixth College as being the College “with the good TAs”. The committee - based largely in response to the feedback from students - felt that the strength of the College was the blending of Art and Technology, and the mention of the broader community was possibly unnecessary. During our end-of-day wrap-up meeting, the Provost did a nice job of explaining that the importance of community was for students to consider how they might make the connection between the intersection of Art and Technology in their own local communities. While the community agreed that this approach had merit, the students seem unaware of this mantra. Perhaps the College could do a better job of marketing this motto to their students and finishing the long-awaited project of defining the College’s mission.

2. Staff and turnover.

Several staff members report that they had lost valued coworkers in the past 2 years due to high stress and low pay. It was mentioned during the end-of-day meeting that this issue was known to the University, not unique to Sixth College, and that measures are being taken at UCSD and across the system to address staff turnover.

Advising staff and undergraduate students both had high praise for remote advising. Even after the return to in-person advising in Fall 2021, the College maintained some remote advising sessions which were well attended. This increase in accessibility for the undergraduates is excellent.

Staff at the College reported being very fond of one another. A few individuals suggested that the reason they hadn't left the College for higher paying jobs was the camaraderie they felt with their coworkers.

Strengths

- Strong sense of community and camaraderie among staff members at the College.

Weaknesses

- Identity of the College - of where Art and Technology coalesce - could be made clearer to the campus and to Sixth undergraduates.
- Pay for staff could be higher.

D. Recommendations for alleviating any shortcomings suggested by the description and analysis

1. It would be helpful if the Associate Directors of Writing (Liz Gumm) and Experiential Learning (Bill Geibel) could also teach courses by themselves (ie: without having to co-teach with Senate faculty).
2. Considering the issue of certain CAT 1/2/3 faculty not engaging with the content properly: perhaps administrators could remind faculty of the importance of the readings as they guide the TAs' work in the discussion section. Talking with faculty about not just what but how they teach might lead to better utilization of the reading material and a better sense among students of the value of class preparation.
3. Unclear if students are aware of Programmatic or Course-specific learning objectives. These could be articulated in course syllabi.
4. It would be helpful if CAT 1/2/3 courses were offered each quarter (eg: off-cycle).
5. Perhaps we change the term "track" to "topic" when describing the different themes for CAT 1/2/3, to clarify that these are not actually tracks anymore, but rather independent topics
6. Considering the progression of CAT1/2/3 from "past to present to future". If this designation is important, perhaps it could be made more obvious. Perhaps mention in the course description and syllabi.
7. The possibility of adding a reflective component to CAT 125 as a way for students to gain more appreciation of their experiential learning experiences.
8. While there is a mechanism in place for students to retroactively receive Practicum credit for a course they have taken (not on the list pre-approved list), this was unknown to students. Perhaps this could be made clear to the students.
9. The College is working on better articulating the Identity of the College - of where Art and Technology coalesce. The committee would like to recommend that the College set a date for completion of the process of reviewing their mission, logo and motto. Then the College could engage in a marketing campaign to enhance their "brand recognition" moving forward. We believe that this will benefit the College's current and prospective students.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Jody Greene, Associate Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning; Founding Director, Center for Innovations in Teaching and Learning; Professor of Literature; UC Santa Cruz.

Dr. Julian Betts, Economics, UC San Diego.

Dr. James Cooke, Biology, UC San Diego (Chair).