

Semesters as a Vehicle for Change and Conversion Plus (CFR 2.2, 4.3)

The semester conversion process offered faculty an unprecedented opportunity to reexamine their programs and develop a curriculum that reflects the distinctive [mission](#) of the university, evolving disciplinary concerns, and [emerging best practices for teaching and learning](#). Practices emphasized at Cal State LA included the following: application of the Quality Matters Rubric (APPQMR) to review online/hybrid courses, use of rubrics as detailed and comprehensive guides to inform learners how they will be assessed and/or graded, creation of Flexible Learning Classroom spaces (FLeC-spaces) designed to encourage active learning, and development of small group activities to promote student engagement. The guiding principles in curriculum redesign were to align, innovate, and connect.

Alignment. Students' educational experience was aligned with [institutional learning outcomes](#) through general education courses, their course of study in the major, and university requirements. [GE requirements](#) now include diversity courses, diversity courses with an emphasis on race and ethnicity, civic learning courses, and writing intensive courses. Alignment with the [CSU Graduation Initiative](#) (<http://graduate.csuprojects.org/>) to raise the six-year freshman graduation rate, with a focus on under-represented minority students, was a priority. This included increasing student success through the integration of high impact practices, state-of-the-art modes of delivery, improving faculty understanding of how students learn, and by solving structural impediments such as [availability of high demand courses](#) (<http://ir.calstatela.edu/ir/Data/BottleneckCourse.html>).

For example, any faculty (or departments) who want to explore best practice in their teaching and learning can take advantage of [a new series of 7 workshops on teaching](#) that can be combined into a certification. Various aspects of effective teaching are covered, including first-

generation learners, writing clear (transparent) assignments, best grading practice and the student-centered syllabus. Faculty must take a minimum of ten hours of best practices workshops, active learning and mindful teaching workshops to receive a certificate.

The curriculum was also aligned with CSU and WSCUC mandates. For example, undergraduate degree programs are now capped at 120 semester units (except for those exempted by Title V) with a 24-semester unit minimum for B.A. majors and a 36-semester unit minimum for B.S. majors. This allows full-time students to graduate in 4 years or in 2 years if they are transferring from a community college. The new WSCUC standard for baccalaureate programs ensures the development of core competencies including, but not limited to, written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking. In addition, in planning and implementing our conversion from quarters to semesters for Fall 2016, Cal State LA [committed](#) itself to supporting the academic progress of its students and ensuring the continued academic integrity of its degree programs.

Finally, [general education and service learning](#)

(http://ecatalog.calstatela.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=10&poid=3104) curricula were aligned. The revised General Education (GE) framework now includes a civic/service learning requirement at the lower division, "Life-long Learning and Self Development" area. [Service learning courses](#) integrate course content, skills, and knowledge with community involvement to develop or strengthen students' commitment to social responsibility and civic engagement.

Innovation. High impact practices in academic programs were considered throughout the conversion process including first-year seminars and experiences; common intellectual experiences; learning communities; writing intensive courses; collaborative assignments and projects; undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative activities; cultural and ethnic diversity

and global learning; service learning and community based learning; internships; and capstone courses and experiences. For example, the English department Senior Capstone offers students the opportunity to reflect on their experience as English majors through analytical and reflective writing on their coursework and development while compiling a portfolio of their work. In particular, the portfolio capstone project enables students to develop a cohesive understanding of literary history and evolving critical conversations; in addition to reviewing their accumulated course materials (syllabi, readings, assignments, and notes), students also read works on literary history and English disciplines relevant to their chosen pathway through the English major. Students also read short works contextualizing and explaining the value and purpose of the e-portfolio as a learning practice. Widely recognized as a high impact practice, electronic portfolios are increasingly common pedagogical modes of assessing and deepening student understanding. Students undertaking the portfolio capstone elucidate how their elective courses enhanced their understanding of the field of English in ways that complement and extend the English major core, examining similarities and differences, integrating and synthesizing ideas, and connecting the intellectual currents that make up the discipline of English as a whole. In addition, students reflect on how they use and further develop the knowledge gained as English majors, whether in their future career or advanced academic endeavors, or as lifelong learners and cultural contributors.

Connections. Educational and institutional data were connected to curricular design and delivery (for example, data on program retention and graduation rates, course success metrics, and results of program or accreditation review and assessment). Creative and collaborative networks among faculty across department and college borders to enhance the learning environment for both faculty and students were encouraged through courses that include service learning. Service

learning is credit-bearing, fully integrated into the course syllabus, and closely related to the intended learning outcomes. Civic learning and service learning are distinguished from internships, which emphasize skill and professional training, while civic learning and service learning emphasizes experiential learning for our students and serves the public good (although internships may do both). In other words, service learning enhances academic learning as well as builds moral character in liberal education. One example is the Liberal Studies course (LBS 2340) Multicultural Arts in Los Angeles, in which students attend performances and museums, such as MOCA and the Japanese American National Museum, and discuss with artists and experts. The course emphasizes issues related to race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, youth, and intersectionality in the cultural, historical, and social context of the city of Los Angeles. The Los Angeles-Based (LAB) Faculty Learning Community (FLC) also supports faculty to design civic and service learning courses. Participation in this FLC culminates in the [Los Angeles-Based Learning \(LAB\) Symposium](#), for faculty and instructors at community colleges and universities in the Los Angeles area who are interested in incorporating LA into their curricula. Participants share how including Los Angeles-based material in the classroom has improved student learning and gather additional information on how to include Los Angeles into their own classrooms.