University Studies Program
General Education, done better.

Biennial Report
2014 - 2016

USP STAFF IN POLLOCK HOUSE

USP began with interim and half-time employees that were reassigned from other units on campus. In April 2015 we hired our first permanent USP employee, our Pollock House Assistant and Quality Control position at .58 FTE. In January 2016 we were authorized to make the CETL/USP Program Administrator position (which was formerly a project appointment) permanent as well at 1.0 FTE. The Assistant Director and Civic Engagement positions, previous interim appointments and both 1.0 FTE, were made permanent in April 2016. This completed the permanent staff of the USP in Pollock House.

The Associate Director position (which replaced the former "Director for Quest and FYE" position) was filled in Spring semester 2015. The Associate Director has reassigned time from his academic department and works .5 FTE in USP (teaching three courses/year). The Director also has reassigned time from her academic department and works .625 FTE in USP (teaching two courses/year). During Spring semester 2016 a process was devised to ensure regular rotation of the Associate and Director positions among interested and qualified faculty. The USP Council published a call for applications for the position of Associate Director in May 2016 and outlined a new process under which the Associate Director serves in that capacity for two years and then serves as Director for an additional two years. This ensures continuity and innovation in faculty leadership of the USP.

The permanent staff of the USP consists of Mary Chapin (Pollock House Assistant and Quality Control), Susan Fojtik (CETL/USP Administrator), Michael Lueder (Civic Engagement Coordinator) and Debbie Gray Patton (USP Assistant Director). The non-permanent faculty leadership includes Dr. Gabriel Loiacono in the Associate Director position and Dr. Tracy Slagter as Director. As of July 1, 2016, Dr. Slagter will return to her faculty appointment in Political Science and Dr. Loiacono will become the Director for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years. A search for a new Associate Director is underway.

USP ADMINISTRATION & GOVERNANCE

Course Planning
Planning for the array of Quest courses offered in the USP begins very early, typically a full year in advance. The USP Director, Associate Director, and Assistant Director meet regularly with the COLS Dean's Office to decide on how many courses will be required for the following academic year.

Quest I scheduling is the most time- and labor-intensive, as it includes one-to-one pairing of courses. The number of Quest I courses that will be offered each year is based on the projected enrollment for the incoming freshman class, and we work hard to ensure we have very few unfilled seats in Quest I pairs.

All of the requests for Quest and Explore courses come from the COLS Dean's Office (or from the COEHS, CON, or COB Dean's Offices, in consultation with USP and COLS Dean's Office) and are sent to department chairs. Departments respond with instructor names, course numbers and Signature Questions, and those are passed to the USP Assistant Director for scheduling. Due to the complexity of scheduling and the number of variables that can shift, there is often much back-and-forth before the schedule is finalized. Priority is placed on offering courses across the available schedule (MWF vs. TTh, morning vs. afternoon), balance of the Signature Questions, and department or instructor needs. We also take care to ensure that a variety of courses are offered before 3:00pm to accommodate student athlete schedules, and that we meet Community Partner expectations and needs when scheduling Quest III courses.

USP Governance and Advisory Bodies

The USP is administered, maintained, and advised by several different groups on campus. Because this structure has evolved since the passage of the initial USP proposal in March 2012, it is worth reviewing those groups and their functions here.

USP Core Team: This is the small group that works in Pollock House, consisting of four permanent staff members (2 full-time, 1 part-time, and 1 full-time but shared with the Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning) and two rotating faculty directors. This group is responsible for overall program direction and administration, organization, monitoring, and implementation. This group also has primary responsibility for the Pollock House.

Implementation Team: This informal group has met since March 2012 to trouble-shoot and offer solutions to pressing issues within the USP. It includes the following people: USP Director, USP Associate Director, USP Assistant Director, COLS Dean and Assistant/Associate Deans, Director of Advising, Registrar, Director of Admissions, and the Student Academic Affairs Officer. The Associate Vice Chancellor for Curricular Affairs and Student Achievement also attends as necessary.

USP Council: This group consists of most of the USP Core Team plus representatives from the following areas: Quest I, II, and III; Connect; WBIS 188; Comm 111; each Signature Question; OSA's USP Committee; and each of the Explore Councils (Nature, Society, and Culture). It is the primary advisory body to the USP, and the place where major programmatic changes are suggested and discussed. This body is also responsible for recommending a new USP Associate Director to the Provost every two years, and thus controls the process for selecting USP faculty leadership.

Faculty Senate USP Committee: This committee, with rotating membership (which includes a student representative), approves all new courses for the USP in accordance with the program as approved by the Faculty Senate. It also approves all major changes to the original USP proposal passed in 2012. Additionally, this committee is responsible for the regular review of USP courses to ensure compliance with USP guidelines and overall program expectations. The USP Director, Associate Director, and Associate Vice Chancellor for Curricular Affairs and Student Achievement are permanent members of this committee; the Associate Vice Chancellor is ex officio.

Oshkosh Student Association USP Committee: This committee is selected by the membership of the OSA and serves in an advisory capacity to the USP Core Team and USP Council. A representative from this committee sits on the USP Council and provides student perspective on program administration and changes.

Explore Councils: These informal Councils—one each for Nature, Culture, and Society—provide feedback to the USP from instructors who teach courses in each Explore category. They also help to disseminate information about the USP to the wider group of faculty teaching in the program. Their leadership is chosen from among the instructors participating, and they report on their meetings to the USP Council.

Other groups: The USP Director also serves as a member of the Provost's Administrative Staff and meets monthly with the Provost to discuss program progress. The USP Director and/or Associate Director also make special reports to the Faculty Senate and OSA as requested.

The Quest Sequence and Connect

Quest I

Instructors and students have the most experience with Quest I courses, as several have now been offered three times (or more if they are offered in the Spring semester to students who begin then). We offered 72 individual sections of Quest I in Fall 2014, and that figure includes both paired and unpaired classes. In Fall 2015, we offered 62 sections (five unpaired). This dramatic decrease is due to lower overall University enrollment, a trend that is not unique to UW Oshkosh. Unpaired sections are required each semester for those students who come in to UW Oshkosh with credits (e.g., from AP or CAPP), who are enrolled in developmental courses, or who have other scheduling complexities.

Peer Mentors

Peer Mentors remain a unique component of Quest I classes. Since the first group of Peer Mentors were trained in 2013, the task of training them on the ins and outs of the USP and the importance of general education has become a bit easier: now, nearly 30% of our Peer Mentors have actually experienced the USP and understand its purpose. In Fall 2014 we employed 72 Peer Mentors; in Fall 2015 we employed 62.

Since 2013 we have endeavored to secure more referrals/recommendations of students who might make good Peer Mentors from instructors who teach Quest I. From our conversations with Peer Mentors, we know that instructors who knew their Peer Mentors through having them in a previous class (and especially in a Quest class) had a better foundation to build upon and a more successful pairing overall. Additionally, we designed and now require all instructor/Peer Mentor pairs to complete a "Peer Mentor Contract," which provides a framework for discussions and outlines expectations for the course.

Since Fall 2013, Peer Mentors have been paid a small stipend of $500 for their work with Quest I students. This is paid in two lump sums of $250 each. Due to new rules for student employees, starting in Spring 2016 Peer Mentors were also paid an additional $50 for their all-day training session in April.

Quest II

In Fall 2014 we offered 1 Quest II course, and in Spring 2015 we offered 36. In Fall 2015 there were three Quest II courses offered, plus an additional Quest II course offered through Lifelong Learning and Community Engagement (LLCE). Finally, in Spring 2016 we offered 33 Quest II courses.

Scheduling pressures on students required that we examine the way in which Quest II courses were paired. In

Fall 2014, Quest II courses were still paired on a one-to-one basis with a WBIS 188 or Comm 111 section. Student feedback and input from the Undergraduate Advising Resource Center (UARC) indicated that this tight pairing was a significant scheduling roadblock for students. In Spring 2015 we experimented with pairing Quest II courses with multiple sections of WBIS 188 and Comm 111 that were offered in the same Signature Question. While this alleviated some of the scheduling pressure, we also began to think about the value-added of this second, Quest II learning community. Input from our advisory bodies indicated that after the close Quest I learning communities, Quest II pairings were less necessary. In the USP 2.1 proposal that passed the Faculty Senate in April 2016, Quest II pairings were eliminated entirely. (See "Program Refinements," below).

Quest II is still lacking its own identity. This will be the subject of a campus-wide discussion in Fall 2016.

Quest III

In Fall 2014 we offered 18 Quest III courses (which includes one interim course); in Spring 2015 there were 19 courses (which includes one interim study abroad course). In Fall 2015 we offered 13 Quest III courses (including one interim study abroad offering) and 14 in Spring 2016 (including one interim study abroad course).

The first iteration of many of these courses in Fall 2014 was difficult as both instructors and students adapted to the significant (14-20 hours) requirement for out-of-classroom work with a Community Partner. By Spring 2015, however, many of these transition issues were resolved or on the way to being resolved. USP provided support to instructors in scheduling, background checks for students working with Community Partners that require them (e.g., Oshkosh Area School District), course materials fees, and overall troubleshooting. We also helped to develop, coordinate and offer new study abroad opportunities in Ireland (ENG 294: Literary Landscapes) and Costa Rica (El/Sec Ed 202: Culture and Community Change in Costa Rica) that will be repeated in future semesters.

Community Partners have remained consistent throughout the two years of Quest III implementation, and include on-campus partners (multi-cultural programs, Veteran's Resource Center, Office of International Education, Polk Library) and off-campus collaborators (Oshkosh Area Community Pantry, the Lighted Schoolhouse, re:TH!NK, Habitat for Humanity, Growing Oshkosh, Girl Scouts of America, the YMCA and area farmers). The Winnebago County Literacy Council was recently brought on as a new partner for the next iteration of Quest III courses in 2016-2017. More partners will be added as the program continues to develop and instructors and community members come up with new ideas for community collaborations.

Quest III has matured relatively quickly. Together with instructors in the program, we have developed (and continue to develop) an informal set of "best practices in community-based learning" around scheduling, background checks, and alternative projects. We share these at intervals with the Quest III instructors during sharing and feedback sessions over the interim months. Additionally, as part of our commitment to sharing the results of our campus/community collaborations, we have presented the Quest III Showcase—an exhibition of various Quest III projects and formal presentations of major collaborations—as well as Quest Talks, which feature three or four Quest III student speakers presenting in a TED Talk-style. (Last year's Quest Talks are available at http://questtalks.tumblr.com.) We are happy to note that all of these presentations have been well-attended by campus and community members alike.

The impact our students have had on the community is difficult to capture, but instructors report to us

their community projects and the number of hours students work in the community each semester. During the 2014-2015 academic year, Quest III students contributed 21,322 hours to the local community through a wide variety of projects. In the 2015-2016 academic year, Quest III students contributed 20,947 hours. This is a very significant way the University is giving back to the city that surrounds it.

Connect

Connect (ENGL 300) is the final course students are required to take to complete their general education requirements. It was designed to be a course in which students not only build on their writing skills, but also in which they discuss and write about a liberal arts education and write their own research paper through the lens of a Signature Question. In Fall 2014, only students who had gone through the USP starting in Fall 2013 could enroll in ENGL 300; due to changes in other programs, students who have completed Honors 175 and 275 as well as transfer students can also enroll in ENGL 300. ENGL 310 is a special Honors version of the course, and ENGL 312 is offered to students who need to fulfill their composition requirement but have no USP experience.

The English Department fully staffs Connect courses, though they can be taught by other departments as well. We offered 22 sections of ENGL 300 in Spring 2015, 18 sections in Fall 2015, and 18 (plus one online) in Spring 2016. Additionally, we offered one section of ENGL 310 for Honors students in each semester starting in Fall 2014.

Special Student Populations

Transfer Students (USP 200)

In the original USP proposal passed in March 2012, transfer students were to be assigned to different transfer groups based on the number of credits they brought with them from other institutions. All were required to take USP 200, which was a seven-week course devised to ease their transition to our campus and introduce them to the USP and our Signature Questions. After one semester of this program, we determined it was not serving the purpose that was originally intended and was creating a significant barrier for transfer students to overcome. We eliminated the seven-week course in Spring 2015. Since that time, transfer students with fewer than 15 credits transferred in start with Quest I as a traditional first-year student would. All other students enroll in USP 200, which now consists of two, one-hour meetings designed to introduce transfer students to campus and its resources, and to answer their pressing questions. For those students who cannot attend USP 200 meetings in-person, an online version of the course was also developed and is offered several times each year.

Students Who Fail Quest I (USP 100)

Despite the abundance of resources available to Quest I students, some of them still fail their Quest I classes. This can be for a variety of reasons: attendance issues, illness, family/relationship stresses, lack of academic preparation, or poor academic skills. After Fall 2014, 74 students failed Quest I. In Fall 2015, 77 had failed. Since these students are at-risk of falling behind in meeting general education requirements, we instituted a seven-week course for them called USP 100.

The initial goal of USP 100 was simple: reiterate the Signature Questions and ensure that students understood the program and the resources available to them. This was complicated by the fact that students received no credit for the course, so the work expected of them was minimal. This was corrected in 2016, making USP 100 a 1-credit class. In addition to meeting each week, students in USP 100 are also encouraged to take an academic skills class (ACAD 115) via the Reading & Study Skills Center. Dr. Karl Boehler has taught this course since Spring 2015.

The results of USP 100 are mixed. Some students who failed Quest I also did poorly in their other courses, and eventually decided not to return to the University. For others, however, USP 100 is the springboard to academic recovery; we retain these students and they make good academic progress.

Honors Students (University Honors Program)

Students participating in the University Honors Program must complete Honors 175 and Honors 275. These courses are

designed to follow the Quest sequence program goals, in that Honors 175 is a first-year experience and Honors 275 offers ethical reasoning and community engagement experiences. Honors students are also introduced to the Signature Questions in these two courses. Upon completion of these courses, Honors students can enroll in ENGL 310 (Honors Connect) or ENGL 300 to meet their advanced composition requirement.

Online Students (Lifelong Learning and Community Engagement)
Students who are admitted to UW Oshkosh in fully online programs must also be offered the Quest sequence. LLCE has developed online Quest I and II courses and are working on developing an online Quest III version. Due to the fact that there are currently very few first-year students who enroll in fully online programs here, these courses have not yet run. LLCE instead offers them alternative experiences that replicate the Quest sequence.

Program Refinements

USP 2.0 and USP 2.1
Discussions about various program difficulties and bottlenecks had been ongoing since the beginning of the program. After Fall 2015, however, we decided that it was time to correct some of the major roadblocks for students. The USP Implementation Team (see above) created several draft plans for a USP reform; ultimately, we decided to present "USP 2.0" to faculty and staff for feedback.

In February 2016 we held a series of four meetings to unveil and receive feedback on USP 2.0, a plan to make the USP easier for students to navigate. The changes we proposed were based on information we received from students, faculty, advisors, and many others. The meetings we held led to many fruitful conversations, and we gathered the feedback we received to devise a new proposal we titled "USP 2.1." (Note that this does not change the title of the USP, but rather is an administrative note to keep track of variants of the original proposal passed in 2012.)

The USP 2.1 proposal recommended the following changes: 1.) formally unpair Quest II from WBIS 188 and Comm 111, but keep these courses as co-requisites; 2.) drop the requirement that students take a course in each Signature Question in their Quest sequence, which was creating a registration bottleneck for students; and 3.) allow Explore courses to carry Signature Questions, which will ensure repeated exposure to the Signature Questions throughout the general education curriculum. These changes were approved by all of the USP's governance bodies and also the Faculty Senate. The changes will be in place for Fall 2016 and will be retroactive to Fall 2013.

Global Citizenship
Beginning in Fall 2016, students will no longer be expected to fulfill a Non-Western Culture requirement. Instead, they will complete a Global Citizenship requirement. This new general education requirement can be met in any Signature Question in any approved course at the 100- and 200-level. It is expected that students will likely fulfill this requirement in one of their Quest courses, but they can complete it in Explore courses as well.

Global Citizenship (GC) differs from Non-Western Culture (NW) in that courses approved for GC must demonstrate not only non-U.S. content, but also significant interaction and interdependence between different global actors. Courses that were previously approved for NW were not automatically approved as GC; the approval process is the same as it is for all USP courses, and any course that wishes to be approved for GC must meet Faculty Senate USP Committee approval.

Assessment
The USP is assessed in multiple ways, which is a significant improvement over the old general education program. Assessment of the USP is part of the overall University Assessment Plan. Indirect assessments were compiled after every semester through Spring 2016 via Qualtrics surveys. The results of those assessments are available on the

USP website: http://www.uwosh.edu/usp/for-faculty-and-staff.

Additionally, instructors are asked to report on student learning via an online Direct Assessment tool. Data from both of these instruments is collected by the Office of Institutional Research and reviewed by the University Assessment Committee.

Student work is also collected in D2L's ePortfolios. Students are asked to upload a significant assignment as well as a reflection on their learning to the ePortfolio. Theoretically, these ePortfolios can be randomly sampled by the Assessment Committee or an outside body, though it is not working as intended. There are plans to revisit the ePortfolio requirement in the near future. (See "Future Plans," below.)

The USP is a focus of our 2017 report to the Higher Learning Commission, our accrediting body.

Professional Development and Information/Feedback Sessions

In the early days of the USP we were able to support faculty professional development with stipends, the product of a generous Curriculum Reform grant through the UW System. That money had to be spent by June 30, 2015, and it went to instructor stipends. In the 2015-2016 academic year, we did not do as much professional development due to USP 2.1 and other demands on staff time. Professional development for USP-related activities (e.g., Global Citizenship workshops) did, however, continue with the support of the Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning (CETL).

Also, members of the USP Core Team are constantly providing one-on-one or small group development for instructors new to the university or to a particular type of course.

The following is a list of professional development and program feedback opportunities offered through the USP since August 2014:

August 2014   USP for New Hires Workshop
USP + WBIS Workshop
Transfer Dialogue and Luncheon with UW System & Transfer Campus Partners

October 2014   RE|Quest: Rethinking Ethical Reasoning in Quest II

January 2015   Quest III de-briefing

February 2015 Why a Liberal Arts Education? (x2)

April 2015   Explore | Nature Syllabus Workshop I
Peer Mentor Training
USP + Instructional Academic Staff Meetings (x2)

May 2015   RE|Quest: FYE Best Practices in Quest I
Teaching English 300/312 Online (facilitated by English; supported by Curricular Reform Grant)
Quest III de-briefing

June 2015   Explore | Nature Syllabus Workshop II
Explore | Culture Syllabus Workshop
Explore | Society Syllabus Workshop
Global Citizenship in USP Workshop (previous GC workshops held by CETL)
Connect Assessment Workshop

| **August 2015** | USP for New Hires and Others Workshop |
| | Quest I/WBIS/Comm 111 Mixer and Semester Prep |

January 2016 Connect Debriefing (information and feedback session)

February 2016 USP 2.0 Proposal (information & feedback session)

| **June 2016** | USP 2.1: What's Changed? (information session on program changes) (x2) |
| | Quest III Best Practices (sharing of techniques, feedback) |

Other Improvements
USP Website
The original USP website was created shortly after the USP proposal was passed in 2012. In Spring 2015 we launched a new website, designed by IMC with the input of the USP Core Team. This was a major undertaking; the website is now updated frequently by our USP/CETL Program Administrator.

Pollock House
The beautiful Pollock House, once a student dormitory and, most recently, home to the Alumni Office, has seen multiple updates since Fall 2014. On the outside, spider-laden bushes were removed from the front entrance and replaced with perennial flowers and bushes. On the inside, the entire house was cleaned and de-cluttered, and excess furniture was donated or moved to other places on campus. The roof, which is an entry point for both squirrels and heavy rain and snow, was patched to mitigate leaks, and damage to the ceilings due to excess water was repaired in January 2016. All offices on the upper floors were repainted in colors appropriate for the time period of the house, and new window treatments were added to maximize efficiency and light. The Pollock House is a campus treasure, and multiple groups hold regular meetings here. Additionally, the house can be rented by campus and outside groups for a small fee. Those fees are then used for USP student programming (e.g., the popular "A Very Harry Potter USP" event), USP Awards of Excellence (part of our "workplace joy" initiative), meeting and event supplies, and Pollock House improvements.

Future Plans
Though we have accomplished a lot as a campus, there is still much work to be done. Here is a small sample of issues that you will likely see addressed by USP in the coming months and years:
- Minimizing USP syllabus inclusions
- Revising the USP Course Approval Form
- Rethinking Quest II's identity in the program
- Adding an additional Signature Question
- Revisiting and retooling the ePortfolio requirement
- Revising USP 200 and USP 100 content and delivery
- Modernizing our Ethnic Studies requirement in general education
- UWO USP Best Teaching Practices Blog

These are large projects that will require intense collaboration—exactly the type of collaboration we have become so good at over the years. We look forward to more exciting work, illustrating to all that the USP is truly "general education—done better."