

February 27, 2004

DEPARTMENT CHAIRS

Re: Comprehensive Exam/Senior Exit Requirement

Dear Colleagues:

In conjunction with the ongoing WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) review of UCSC CEP has been doing some basic research and conducting a range of discussions concerning comprehensive exam/senior exit/capstone requirements. In part this is because, in UCSC's "Reflective Essays" written preparatory to the February WASC team visit, the better understanding and assessment of capstone experiences is a highlighted focus, one on which we will need to report. In part it arises from our realization that the current quite diverse constellation of departmental exit requirements was developed in an earlier, grading-free environment, and with an eye to providing measures of career-long accomplishments on the part of individual students. And, third, it also reflects our sense that, whatever their history, having requirements and possibilities in place for our students have a real educational value, and that many other institutions are currently working to develop such programs.

In order to pursue our discussions and to move towards strengthening this area of our undergraduate curriculum, CEP would like to ask your help. While we have in hand a listing of the formal options that your individual programs afford, it would be very helpful to have more textured and reflective on-the-ground input from each of you. Clearly it is the prerogative and responsibility of individual departments to set their objectives for these capstone experiences – and to provide strategies for understanding how well the required exercises meet those expectations. We would very much appreciate hearing from you about such questions as these:

- 1) How well do you think your current capstone options work as a learning experience for students?
- 2) How effective a use of faculty and student time are they, and are there ways in which they might be improved?
- 3) What is the rationale for the present range of options - or the single option – that your program affords?
- 4) Are there ways in which you could characterize the extent to which the exit requirements actually serve as an impediment to graduation?

CEP would very much appreciate your responses by April 20.

Sincerely,

Donald Brenneis, Chair  
Committee on Educational Policy

cc: Undergraduate Departmental Advisors  
Vice Provost/Dean of Undergraduate Education Goff  
Vice Provost Academic Affairs Brown