Santa Clara University

Dear Committee Members,

It is my pleasure to let you know about our exciting and innovative new Pathway Core Curriculum requirement at Santa Clara University. A Pathway is required of every undergraduate student at Santa Clara University. It was implemented in the fall of 2009 and this past June 2013 we graduated our first full class under the requirement.

The Pathway is considered innovative because it allows for inter-disciplinary and integrative learning across the four years of a student's college experience, culminating with students writing a synthesizing essay about their Pathway theme, the ways different disciplines approach the Pathway theme, and the connection of the student's Pathway to his/her major and other experiences. The essay is written independent of a class and the paper is assessed by faculty Readers and must be approved before a student is able to receive his/her degree from the university.

In response to the Pathway requirement, faculty and staff have created 24 different Pathways. Sustainability is one of the Pathways that students may choose from. The Sustainability Pathway has almost 100 courses approved to fulfill the Pathway, ranging across twenty-one different disciplines from Religious Studies to Civil Engineering, Economics to Ethnic Studies, etc. Students must take no more than two of their four Pathway courses from any one discipline, thus learning how different areas approach the same topic area.

Students can begin taking Pathway courses their first year at the university. They must declare their Pathway (some students refer to it as a "mini-minor") by the end of their sophomore year. As students take courses in their Pathway they save at least one assignment from each Pathway class they can review and upload when they submit their essay their senior year. The Sustainability Pathway allows more students to be exposed to a curriculum related to Sustainability beyond those who major or minor in a sustainability-related field. The integrative essay at the end of their college experience gives students the time to reflect and consider what they have learned about sustainability over their time as a college student and what that knowledge means for them in the future.

For example, one of the fifty students who graduated under the Sustainability Pathway in the class of 2013 wrote about her deepened understanding of sustainability issues from her Philosophy class on Ethics and the Environment along with her Environmental Studies and Biology courses. Another student contrasted the approaches of her Sustainability Marketing (MKTG 189) and her Religious Studies course, Sustainability and Spirituality. The Marketing major wrote, "Ultimately, taking the pathway courses illuminated my vocation of a

sustainability-oriented marketing career. I believe I have found an important calling that has a connectedness with the Earth and my fellow people." (Student Pathway Essay).

Our Pathway requirement at Santa Clara University is starting to receive recognition for the innovative way that it is allowing students to integrate their learning across disciplines and reflect about this learning before their graduation. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) recently published a newsletter piece on our Pathways and we will be presenting at a pre-conference on integrative learning in undergraduate education in early March.

We believe that the Pathway requirement has allowed us to better integrate the many courses, across departments and disciplines, which focus on Sustainability at Santa Clara University and provides a unique opportunity for students to connect an interest in sustainability with any major that we offer. Thank you for the opportunity to let you know more about our Pathways requirement. Please let me know if I can provide further information.

Sincerely,

Laura Nichols
Associate Professor of Sociology
Director, SCU Core Curriculum

Further resources available at:

www.scu.edu/pathways

https://www.aacu.org/aacu_news/aacunews13/december13/feature.cfm