

2020-2021
Unit Annual Report
Division of Academic Affairs
Unit: School of Graduate, Online and Continuing Education

There are amended instructions throughout this document to reflect the special circumstances of this academic year (AY20-21). You will find these in red. As an institution and as departments we have learned that we can use our creativity to deliver services and learning even in the most difficult of circumstances. This year's annual report should also serve as a memorialization of the lessons learned.

I Mission and Goal/Outcomes Statement:

Provide overall Mission/Goal Statement for your unit.

The school provides life-long learning options for a diverse audience through transformative learning with real-world applications that support professional advancement and personal enrichment. The school is committed offering education that is responsive to the workforce and community needs of the region, is accessible with online, hybrid, evening, credit and non-credit courses and training. Diversity, equity and inclusion are key priorities that are applied and assessed through admissions, programming, retention and school processes and services.

II Personnel:

List all staff and note all personnel changes that occurred during 20-21.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>
Shelby Cota	Moved from the Admissions Department to the SGOCE division.
Meagan Martin	Started her position in February 2021- Instructional Technologist
Kathleen Craigen	Outreach Coordinator Resigned September 2020
Open Admin Position/Sonya Prince	Sonya Resigned in December 2019. We were at the final stages of the search for the position in March 2020 when the position was placed on hold.
Nermin Bayazit	Stepped in as Program Chair for M.Ed. Education 5-12 in Fall 2020

Jescah Apamo-Gannon	Stepped in as Program Chair for Special Education Moderate and Severe Programs in fall 2020
Aruna Krishnamurtay	Stepped in as Chair for M.A. English Studies in spring 2021
Amy Tibbetts	Started her position in Spring 2021 as Part-Time Coordinator for the Online Accelerated MBA Program

III Facilities/Equipment:

List any new facilities/equipment/software etc. acquired during 20-21.

SGOCE purchased Navigate, the student success software packaged from EAB for graduate students. This is an annual commitment of approximately \$17,000.

In addition, the team also replaced Mondays, the task management system we were using with Trello for an annual subscription of approximately \$1200.

IV Budget Expenditure Analysis:

Was the budget expended as planned? Were additions/changes made, and if so, explain.

Please note any changes that resulted from the pandemic.

We believe the pandemic created an increased demand for online education and opportunity for more people to begin an online program if they had remote work options. This demand increased overall enrollment among all SGOCE programs and especially with our online accelerated programs therefore creating higher revenue on enrollments. However, the pandemic had a negative impact on many of our extended campus partners that offer programming in face-to-face courses and with primarily K-12 teachers that were experiencing challenges balancing work and home responsibilities negatively impacting enrollment. Enrollments for Extended Campus were down overall and COVID combined with the resignation of our outreach coordinator also impacted our ability to progress with some of the planned professional development activities and networking for non-credit programming. While we were able to pick up some programming related to diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace and also COVID planning workshops

V Programs/Activities:

List major campus activities, events etc. that the office participated in/supported; committees served; community outreach; etc. List events provided to current and prospective students. Also, provide professional development of all staff. *Please note which, if any, of these activities occurred specifically as a result of, or in response to, the pandemic*

Activity or Event	Description
New Programs Approved	<p>Campus Based M.Ed. In Educational Leadership in Management added 2 new concentrations. These will be available in Fall 2021. Both will be offered 100% online in a 7-week format.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Education Administration Graduate Certificate • Special Education Graduate Certificate

	A certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language was approved and will be available Fall 2021.
Prospective student specific events such as information sessions for programs, application workshops and school open house events. (All virtual events)	17 total events between fall and spring were facilitated, 1150 registrations were recorded for the events, 577 of those registered students attended, over 50% of attendees applied. Nearly 20% of all SGOCE applicants for the spring attended one of the events.
First Virtual Fall Orientation	Over 100 attendees participated in the school's first virtual orientation.
First Spring Orientation	Moving forward the school will conduct new student orientation for the fall, spring and summer terms. This was the first time we offered a spring orientation and approximately half of all newly admitted students for the spring attended.
Virtual Graduate and Career Fairs	Attended 12 of these events to recruit/promote Fitchburg programs.
Held a First Virtual Graduate Fair	Held the first virtual fall Graduate Fair for Fitchburg undergraduate students. 9 Universities were represented. This was the 3 rd graduate fair held by SGOCE.
CPS Programming Offered This Year	<p>Fall/Summer 2020 Programming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting LGBTQIA and Gender Diverse Students in the K-12 Environment • An Introduction to Cultural Competency for Educators • MassEdCO New Employee DEI Workshop/Staff Retreat • Social Justice Webinar Series (284 people registered for the event) • Intercultural Competency for Real Estate Professionals • NewVue Community Steward Social Justice Training • Advanced Placement Summer Institute • Police Mountain Bike Training • MindEdge online non-credit offerings • COVID-19 Business Training Series • Traveling the Road of Insulin Resistance through the Body and the Brain • Human Services/Human Resources Work Group <p>Spring 2021 Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>An Introduction to Cultural Competency for Educators</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>NewVue Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Community Dialogue Series</i> • <i>Introduction to Fundamentals of Technical Education Leadership</i> • <i>Early Identification and Support for Young Children with Autism</i> • <i>MTEL Preparation Workshops in collaboration with the Education Department</i> • <i>Leominster Credit Union Staff Leadership Training</i> • <i>University signed an agreement with Cyber Range Solutions in the spring. Courses commence in the summer of 2021.</i>
<p>Extended Campus Activities</p>	<p>Summer B 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our AUIA partnership moved from a face-to-face program in Shanghai to an online program in the summer of 2020 due to COVID travel restrictions. We offered 23 undergraduate courses to 49 students totaling 133 registrations. <p>Fall Partner Contracts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Massachusetts School Administrators Association. • The Educational Collaborative’s Leadership Institute. <p>Spring Partner Contracts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Granbois Therapy and Consulting, Speech Language Pathology Nerdcast • Orton Gillingham of the North Shore • Sarah Jordan Consulting • The Learning Tree Professional Development Network • Spring 2021 enrollment: 1,651---202 courses • Spring 2020 enrollment: 1,687----199 courses <p>We continue to maintain 30 partnerships across the Commonwealth.</p>
<p>Community Music Program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the fall of 2020, the music lesson program served 15 individuals in 2020 for a total of 265 music lessons. Instruments taught included piano, violin, electric guitar, clarinet, voice, and bagpipe.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Community Music Lesson Program offered virtual music lessons via Zoom to 15 students in the Spring of 2021.
ALFA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall 2019: 928 (56 courses, with 415 individuals enrolled) Fall 2020: 389 (32 courses, with 162 individuals enrolled) The ALFA program continues to serve 100's of local senior citizens each year in 14 surrounding communities. In 2020 the program offered 88 courses. The fall 2020 courses were offered 100% online for the first time ever due to COVID. We also instituted a fee increase from \$30 per course to \$40 per course.
Professional Development	<p>The team participated in the virtual national UPCEA conference. Several members of the team also participated in the NOEL LEVITZ marketing and recruitment conference. Digital Learning participated in and Nicole Chelonis served as co-chair for the MCO conference in the Summer of 2020. Several staff participated in a NAGAP Conference. Other organizations the staff worked/with and participated in activities included CAEL, the Council of Graduate Schools, MA ACE Network, National Distance Learning Conference, MA Diversity workshops/Regional Networks and Slate.</p>

VI Action Plan for 2020-21:

(Insert Action Plan for 20-21)

VII Assessment Report for 2020-21

Were the Action Plan objectives met? Provide in list or table format that parallels item VI above.

Please note any changes to the plan that occurred as a result of the pandemic.

Goals	Accomplishments
Goal 1- Strengthen Academic Programs – Will be addressed through new program	Three new credit based graduate certificates were developed: Teaching English as a 2 nd Language

<p>development of both non-credit and credit -based options, improved assessment processes of current programs, updated program chair and faculty training resources and improved program chair communication.</p>	<p>Online Higher Education Administration Special Education Director</p> <p>A variety of new non-credit certificate programs focused on diversity, equity and inclusion and education. The full list is included in the programs and activities section under Center for Professional Development. In addition, a non-credit cyber security certificate program was launched with a partner organization.</p> <p>A survey was launched in the spring term to collect assessment information from each program chair. An FAQ document was developed to assist adjunct faculty with general questions and SGOCE held meetings with adjunct faculty and chairs in each school to review the status of SGOCE programs and enrollments and discuss program specific concerns. An SGOCE chairs listserve was also established to improve access/ease in messaging to chairs.</p>
<p>Goal 2- Promote Student Success – Will be addressed by updating student retention reporting, assessment and developing targeted messaging for student stop-outs. Also, improved communication with SOGCE program chairs will help to improve overall student outreach. A focused effort to improve 2-year rotation updates and assist students in following a pathway towards graduation will assist matching course offerings to student course demand. In addition, a review of the student billing and payment process will be conducted to identify opportunities to streamline.</p>	<p>The 2-year rotations were updated. SGOCE has not been successful in getting access to/developing retention reports for SGOCE programs. While we can work on improving year-over-year stop outs, we need a more holistic approach and understanding of retention by program. We will continue to work on this. We can then establish retention targets when we have a way to track and more importantly a University model for how we report and understand retention at the graduate and SGOCE UG programmatic level.</p> <p>While we wait work on this, SGOCE purchased Navigate for all graduate students. Beginning Summer 2021 we will be able track enrollment for all graduate students and send out specialized communication. The implementation plan has been underway since approximately February 2021.</p> <p>The review of student billing process was also delayed due to staffing challenges. We plan to ask for a change in the registration calendar, allowing students to register for both fall and summer courses earlier in</p>

	the year in addition to creating billing due dates for all students.
<p>Goal 3-Contribute to a Global and Civic Awareness – Accomplished through international strategic enrollment planning, building new and expanding current community partnerships, growing professional development offerings, increase CPS enrollments, and incorporate equity and justice into the divisional strategic plan with identified action items and assessments.</p>	<p>SGOCE continued to meet with the international enrollment committee and developed a draft contract allowing us to work with an agent. We developed 6 new extended campus partnerships and continued our relationship with AUIA to offer summer online courses. We added 10 new non-credit workshops through CPS (2 of which were focused on diversity, equity and inclusion, continued our offerings through Mindedge ran the advanced placement institute in Summer B 2020. In addition, the CPS build a partnership to promote cyber range security.</p> <p>Programming for ALFA continued and was moved to 100% online offering in the fall due to COVID. The number of courses decreased due to the change in platform and COVID.</p>
<p>Goal 4-Grow and Strategically Align Resources – Addressed by completing an assessment of all operational responsibilities to realign with department and University strategic priorities, review internal communication and update annual assessment processes.</p>	<p>The assessment was placed on hold due to staffing challenges. The team was down 2 staff for fall 2020 and 3 staff most of spring 2021 therefore some projects were delayed. There was an analysis of the communication that goes out to all online accelerated students, the communication was updated and in the Spring of 2021 we worked with AP to update.</p>

VIII Other Accomplishments:

List accomplishments not already captured above.

Please note which, if any, of these accomplishments are related specifically to your department's response to the pandemic.

- Despite being 2 staff down in the fall term and 3 staff down in the spring term SGOCE enrolled the largest number of students to date in both the fall and spring terms. Overall graduate enrollment increased over 40% for spring 21 and over 27% in the fall. Undergraduate enrollment increased 11 % in the fall and 18% in the spring. While much of the increase in enrollment came from the online accelerated programs, we improved the conversion rate for all other SGOCE programs, improving over 14% in graduate accepted students for the fall and over 35 % higher for the spring across SGOCE programs for accepted non-OAP students.
- SGOCE led a transfer taskforce to explore the challenges that transfer students experience at Fitchburg and make recommendations for improvements to address identified issues. A student survey was developed in collaboration with a variety of

university departments including admissions, the registrar, student advising, academic affairs and student affairs. A report will be completed over the summer of 2021 and submitted to executive cabinet upon conclusion.

- All SGOCE Departments confirmed and posted their Program Learning Outcomes. These will now be posted on the program webpages and in catalog for each program.
- Fitchburg State University/SGOCE was approved for membership in the Council of Graduate Schools. This will expand opportunities for scholarship for faculty and students and provide professional development opportunities for faculty chairs and staff. The Council of Graduate Schools also provides advocacy services for graduate schools and students.
- Digital Learning began working with departments to create department-specific faculty training and increasing the advanced offerings of general faculty training. The current focus is on onboarding adjunct faculty and providing department specific resources to ensure the quality of course content and the consistency of teaching methods across each department.
- Office hours were instituted by the Digital Learning staff so that faculty could drop in at a published, specific time and join an online meeting with a member of the digital learning team.
- Digital Learning worked with the FYE committee to produce tutorial content geared towards student success and training.
- The Instructional Designer (Meagan Martin) tracked 133 faculty members served by her from January - June 2021
- Digital Learning collaborated with the library and CTL to offer roughly 30 training sessions and workshops in the spring of 2021.
- We served an average of 14 faculty per session. Though some of the initial sessions in March 2020 had 30-50 faculty in attendance. We had around 378 faculty participants in the sessions over the year (though some sessions had the same handful of faculty in each).
- 34 faculty assisted since between October and December of 2020 by our Instructional Technologist in 1:1 appointments.
- Completion of the online certificate Standards and Practices training fell off during 2020 but we do refer all new faculty to it. Every faculty member has access to the training module and we use it to update department specific policy and procedure. We continue to receive positive feedback from new faculty on the course as a resource.
- Digital learning had 317 interactions with the course content and discussion boards in the fall 2020 semester.

IX Action Plan 2021-2022:

<p>Planned Initiatives for 2021-22 Add more rows as needed</p>	<p>Associated Strategic Plan Goal & Strategy Goal # followed by Strategy # ex: 3.2</p>	<p>Indicate if a DEI initiative</p>
<p>Implementing a structure and process for offering one or more adjunct faculty awards each year through SGOCE.</p>	<p>Goal 4 #2`</p>	
<p>Completing an assessment of services and processes in SGOCE through a Diversity Equity and Inclusion lens in collaboration with 3 or more state Universities. We will work to build an instrument that can be used for adult and graduate populations and online programs. Will include review of areas such as – Adjunct faculty hiring practices/communication after hiring/ student services/ financial aid and student accounts practices/ online instruction and online classroom practices/resources/ admissions practices/processes, marketing and outreach etc.</p>	<p>Goal 2 #6 Goal 4 # 1 Goal 5 #1</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Create and facilitate a program chairs training session in the fall term. In addition, update and improve the SGOCE chairs resource webpage and increase/improve communication to chairs throughout the year.</p>	<p>Goal 4 # 4, #5</p>	
<p>Review the process and work with HR and Academic departments to update/improve the adjunct faculty hiring and onboarding process.</p>	<p>Goal 4 #1, #3</p>	
<p>Develop a plan in collaboration with SGOCE Chairs for adjunct faculty communication throughout the year across programs.</p>	<p>Goal 4. #3, #4</p>	
<p>Explore options for an interdisciplinary masters degree and/or options in the graduate programs for one elective course outside of the program area.</p>	<p>Goal 1 #2, #3 an #4</p>	
<p>Explore new program options in areas such as a bachelor’s completion degree in Psychology, a Masters Degree in Public Administration and additional non-credit options in computer science/technology/ business and other areas.</p>	<p>Goal 3 #5, #6 Goal 5 - #4 Goal 6 - #3</p>	

Implement process improvements for graduate admissions and SGOCE enrollment reporting to align with university enrollment reporting structures.	Goal 2 #6	
Review of processes across SGOCE to seek efficiencies in processes and workload distribution.	Goal 4 #2	
Work with Institutional Research to establish a University Structure for the review and reporting of Graduate Student Retention by program.	Goal 2 #6	
Implement a structure for using Navigate to support graduate student retention and registration. Create guides for program chairs in using Navigate and a bi-annual assessment process of usage/process improvement.	Goal 2 #6	
Develop doctoral pathway workshops for graduate students in collaboration with career services and the academic departments.	Goal 2 #5	
Create an SGOCE Advisory board in collaboration with Student Affairs.	Goal 2 #2	
Examine and propose opportunities for updating the SGOCE student billing process to create payment due dates and change the registration calendar to allow students more time to register for the summer and fall terms.	Goal 5 #1, #7	
Implement the approved recommendations of the transfer taskforce and track progress.	Goal 2 #4	
Implement the contract for hiring at least one agent to assist with international recruitment. Work with the international admissions/recruitment team to track and continue exploring and implementing new strategies to increase international student numbers.	Goal 5 #3	
Increase the number of faculty that have earned the online teaching certificate.	Goal 4 - #4, #2	
Implement more professional development options for faculty related to teaching remotely, teaching online and teaching strategies for online class sizes.	Goal 4 - # 4	
Improve and add to the communication and resources available to online and all students	Goal 2 - #4	

related to online courses and strategies for success.		
Develop a short-term and long-term plan for Digital Learning across the University as we prepare for new learning models for the future. The plan will highlight recommended strategies and updates on how the University should plan/adapt to meet future workforce/community and student needs.	Goal 5 - #6	
Design and post a general education rotation document to align with the new gen-ed curriculum highlighting all SGOCE online and 7-week online options.	Goal 1 - #1	
Explore the possibility of adding an SGOCE advisory board with local employers and community leaders to help shape future non-credit and credit programming in SGOCE.	Goal 1 - #6 Goal 3 - #3	
Work with the Computer Science Dept to Successfully implement an online accelerated Computer Science Degree.	Goal 6 - #3	
Work with the School of Business and the Engineering Technology Dept. to successfully implement concentrations in the MBA program in Construction MGMT and Technology MGMT.	Goal 6 - #3	

Updates to the Action Plan may be submitted via a revised Annual Report.

X Reflection:

Take this section to reflect on--

1) *Initiatives that you may be considering for 22-23 academic year that you did not already capture above.*

2) *Reflect on how the department adapted to the pandemic. Reflect on actions that surprised you and on lessons learned that will help in the future.*

Digital Learning was the first department in SGOCE to feel the initial impact of the Pandemic as they had to quickly assist the faculty at the University in moving to virtual learning. Digital Learning collaborated with a number of university departments to assist with this transition and overall the work was successful as all courses were moved to remote learning for the spring and summer 2020 terms and partially remote in the fall 2020 and spring 2021. The Center for Professional Studies (CPS) and Extended Campus experienced declines in enrollments due to the pandemic as many of the extended campus partners offered face-to-face options and were not able to move to remote work and employers had to prioritize work so adding new professional development opportunities was challenging. However, the CPS was very responsive to the needs of the community as they were able to develop a training for local employers to planning for COVID in the workplace in partnership with a local company that specialized in this field (cleaning/planning and workplace safety). They also developed several trainings related to diversity and equity in the workplace and in education environments in response to the social unrest communities experienced this year. While some of the diversity trainings were already part of the plan for SGOCE/CPS, the events of this year moved the process forward sooner than expected and all were well received. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion workshops and professional development will now serve as a main component of our non-credit offerings into the future and we are exploring new programming in this area.

One of the major challenges we experienced this year related to the enrollment increases we experienced across the credit-based programs. This was a great challenge to have and one that we were very thankful for, however we were down 2-3 staff throughout the year and operating remotely required the team to focus first on providing quality student service, addressing all immediate student needs and concerns first, maintaining course schedule processes and messaging, keeping faculty in the loop on important changes and also continuing to improve enrollment operations to increase registrations with our graduate and undergraduate programs outside of the online accelerated options. Essentially managing the daily operations and making sure student needs were addressed took up the majority of our time and we did not have as much time as we would have like to tackle new projects or make larger scale process improvements. However, we are very proud of all that we have accomplished and that the team was able to manage the increased enrollment sufficiently. We did find that working remotely may have been one of the factors that contributed to our success. In the past all student questions and appointments had to take place during office hours 9-5 except on special occasions. During the pandemic the staff altered their hours to accommodate student needs. They took appointments in the evening or early mornings which worked better for our busy adult students. Also, the staff were easily able to monitor and address online chat questions and student email questions from their homes throughout the day and planned their schedules so these channels of communication we always covered. The remote work model allowed the team to be more student centered and flexible in meeting students where they were.

We also recognized throughout the pandemic that SGOCE students experienced many challenges throughout the pandemic as working professionals, many of whom worked on the front lines in hospitals or other health, safety and service industries. Other students experienced challenges with childcare, providing online education or care to their children, while trying to work remotely themselves and also go to school. Health issues including students serving as caretakers for others in the family that were will added to the mix. Overall stress was a major factor for students and highlighted the need to services/workshops that would allow for working professional/ SGOCE students to get together learn/share and the University did not have specific options for SGOCE students. This is something we want to build more of in the future. Also, because the day students and the rest of the University moved to remote work, we feel it helped to strengthen services and processed for our SGOCE students as everyone was able to experience some of the challenges and began building more accessible resources and more online options, which will help to better serve SGOCE students in the future.

Overall, despite the pandemic, we made some great accomplishments and it was truly a team effort!