Give Students a Compass, Phase II - Pilot Project Application

CSU Campus Submitting Proposal: San Francisco State University
Community College Partner Campus: City College of San Francisco
Project Director Contact/Title/Phone/E-mail: Dr. Mary Beth Love, Health Education Department Chair, 415.338.1413, love@sfsu.edu

General Education Area(s) addressed: Area A - English Language Communication and Critical Thinking, Area B - Quantitative Reasoning, Area D – Social Sciences, Area E – Lifelong Learning and Self-Development

High-Impact Practice(s) included:
First-year seminars and experiences
Common intellectual experiences
Learning communities
Writing-intensive courses
Collaborative assignments and projects
Diversity/global learning
Use of e-portfolios to measure student learning outcomes

LEAP Essential Learning Outcome(s) to be assessed:
Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World
Intellectual and Practice Skills
Social and Personal Responsibility
Integrative and Applied Learning

Abstract (150 words maximum)
We propose that Compass II support five outcomes to scale up Metro Academies as a powerful lower division general education and transfer reform: (1) use research and stakeholder discussions to build the case for a large expansion of this approach as more effective, efficient and equitable than current practice; and (2) demonstrate how to articulate GE courses through learning outcomes, not seat time. Add two critical capacities to Metro at City College and enhance current work at SF State: (3) use e-portfolios to directly assess LEAP student learning outcomes; and (4) set up a student tracking system linked to institutional data to monitor student progress metrics. (5) Add four new chapters to the Metro Academies Toolkit, a detailed web-based guide for institutions to use to start their own Metros, building statewide capacity for institutional change and faculty development.

If the pilot project is not funded, do you want to be considered for a networking partnership? (No additional application needed.) No
INTRODUCTION

San Francisco State University (SF State) and its partner, City College of San Francisco (City College), respectfully submit this request for $85,000 for a pilot project, with funds to be administered by SF State’s Office of Research and Sponsored Projects. SF State is a large urban university of nearly 30,000 students, and City College is a ten-campus district of over 100,000 students. In 2007, our partnership launched an innovative postsecondary program called Metro Academies (Metro), centered on a general education (GE) pathway. Our aim is to support the CSU Graduation Initiative to cut in half gaps in graduation rates for under-represented students by 2016, as well as a similar Equity Initiative at City College.

Each Metro Academy is a ‘school within a school’ for up to 140 students, giving students an educational home as they navigate academia. Through targeted outreach, Metro supports first-generation, low-income and/or under-served students to achieve markedly improved persistence, academic progress and learning during the first two years of college, the greatest loss point for students who drop out. The distinguishing feature of the program is a long-duration learning community in which students work as a cohort in two linked GE classes each semester, advancing together over four semesters. Metro students forge strong bonds with their peers and instructors, cutting through the isolation that often affects commuter students.

Metro is a working laboratory of how to reconfigure GE courses to embed an ensemble of high-impact practices into a highly structured four-semester program. In a world of short grant cycles and shrinking resources, Metro has been able to stabilize the great majority of its budget onto institutional funds, primarily by reconfiguring existing courses and support services in a more efficient manner. The main expense is already-required GE courses that are earmarked for the Metro cohorts. Metro shows the potential for scalability and sustainability in the hard-pressed California State University (CSU) and community college systems.

Metro is not a small, isolated program. We are already seeing the cooperation of many departments across our institutions to scale up more effective practices—from the registrar’s office that block-registers students, to admissions and outreach, which helps us enroll and recruit students, to academic counseling, institutional research and multiple academic departments. Creating enduring institutional change of this type requires multi-year work. With the commitment of executive leadership, chairs and deans, the program can be implemented predominantly with redeployed existing resources. Metro Academies is an intervention ambitious enough to truly “move the dial” on college completion.

There are currently four Metro demonstration sites with broad career themes of Health and Early Childhood Education, two at SF State and two at City College. Two more Metro Academies of STEM will take their first students in fall 2012 and fall 2013.

**Metro is a universal general education (GE) pathway, satisfying graduation requirements for an associate degree, transfer to university, and a bachelor’s degree, for all 241 majors throughout the CSU system.** Students may complete this GE core at either a California community college or California State University (CSU). Metro’s model is different from “two plus two” programs, in that it provides simultaneous, nearly identical programs for the first two years at both the community college and university. With faculty from both segments working together on curriculum and assessment tools, this design fosters a very close alignment between the community college and university.
From the beginning, Metro was organized around seven **high-impact practices**, including **first year experiences; common intellectual experiences; learning communities; writing-intensive courses; collaborative assignments; diversity/global learning; and e-portfolios to assess student learning outcomes**. Dr. George Kuh, the lead researcher in identifying high impact practices, has been a major influence on our thinking and is a senior Metro advisor. Our curriculum and readings center on the LEAP outcomes and feature urban themes. GE content is contextualized with relevant real-life content. For example, students learn graphing skills by using real public health databases to analyze patterns of illness and death in their own neighborhoods, as well as community assets for well being. While many students relate to GE as an annoying requirement to “get out of the way,” Metro students experience GE courses in which they can grapple with the burning social and ethical questions in their field of interest, early in their college careers.

In Metro, student support services are tied into classes. A Metro faculty learning community offers 45 hours of structured faculty development and a continuous quality improvement process, giving faculty a place to learn high impact practices.

An institution may host any number of Metro Academies within its various colleges. The program was designed from the beginning not to be a boutique honors program, but a way of reconfiguring developmental and lower division studies that can go to scale for hundreds and thousands of students. Our inspiration on this question is Brooklyn’s Kingsborough Community College, which enrolls half of all entering first year students in learning communities.

**Results to date:** Metro’s early results have been very encouraging. A multi-method evaluation coordinated by external evaluator Allen LeBlanc, PhD, used a matched comparison study, a qualitative evaluation and analysis of institutional data. At our most mature SF State site, the findings include strikingly improved persistence into the fifth semester, with Metro students persisting at an 84% rate versus a 64% persistence for all students. Indeed this result understates Metro’s impact, because the institutional baseline is ‘all students,’ while Metro students are overwhelmingly first-generation, low-income, and/or under-represented. In the matched comparison, Metro students showed stronger credit accumulation, and statistically significantly better GPA. Metro students showed statistically superior results on many indicators of academic engagement on the National Survey of Student Engagement.

At City College, all the arrows point in the same direction—from pass rates, to unit accumulation, to staying on path. Institutional Studies compared Metro students to non-Metro students in the same classes. Metro students pass courses at an 85% rate, vs. non-Metro students who pass at a 63% rate. Compared to non-Metro students, Metro students enroll in more units (13 units per semester). Metro students are two times as likely to stay on path with high value courses on the transfer-prep pathway.

**Dissemination Toolkit:** From the start, we have developed Metro with a strong emphasis on scale-up. Diffusion theory tells us that few innovations—even tested successful innovations—get over the threshold of having materials and strategies for efficient large-scale dissemination. To address this gap, we are now developing a Metro Academies Dissemination Center with funding from the US Department of Education and the James Irvine Foundation. Scheduled for introduction to statewide and national partners in 2012, the dissemination center will provide concrete, practical assistance to help institutions to start up their own Metro Academies relatively quickly and inexpensively. Its centerpiece center is a web-based Metro Academies Toolkit with detailed materials and templates for all aspects of this work—from securing necessary approvals for a revised GE course sequence, to recruiting students, teaching
courses, setting up inter-department agreements and evaluating student and program outcomes. The Toolkit will be paired with a one-week start-up Institute and other technical assistance. Compass II would be listed as a co-sponsor of the Toolkit.

Metro also brings to Compass II strong relationships with leaders committed to innovation in GE and transfer. In 2010, the CSU Board of Trustees designated Metro as one of six system-wide priorities, and seven California community colleges and California State Universities (CSUs) have signed memoranda to express strong interest in adopting Metro Academies. Metro Academies will be the subject of a 90 minute Congressional hearing in Washington DC in March 2011. We have letters indicating support from scores of organizations and individuals including Chancellors Reed and Scott.

We are very excited about the possibility of being part of the Compass II network, because it would bring us into dialog with a dynamic network of innovators in both the CSU and the California Community College systems.

OUTCOMES
We propose five outcomes, in addition to completing Compass II networking and reporting requirements. Four center on institutional change: arranging statewide stakeholder discussions to develop an efficiency argument for scale-up of the Metro GE pathway; revising a Metro course in the City College transfer curriculum to meet additional Area requirements, eliminating three required credit hours; establishing an automated Metro student tracking system at City College; and setting up a student tracking system linked to institutional data. Two of the outcomes relate to faculty development and building dissemination capacity: the addition of four new chapters to the Metro Academies Toolkit and training on using e-portfolios to directly assess LEAP student learning outcomes. We will now list each outcome in bold, followed by a very brief discussion. (Note: We will not repeat the high impact practices listed previously.)

1. Generate a statewide stakeholder dialog on the cost efficiency and sustainability of Metro Academy by issuing a research brief; presenting at a Compass II conference; and leading a webinar. By building a case for cost efficiency, we aim to strengthen the political will for large-scale expansion.

Within the CSU, the California Legislative Analyst states that the average California community college transfer student graduates with 162 units when only 120 are needed—an excess of three semesters of full-time study. Metro largely eliminates this ‘rework and overwork’—called ‘churning’—by providing focused advising and by creating a highly structured educational pathway built around GE courses. We hypothesize that the modest extra costs of a Metro, including a 20% coordinator and tutoring, are more than recovered by speeding time to graduation and reducing excess units.

The nationally known cost efficiency expert Dr. Robert Johnstone of the RP Group is conducting preliminary research to test the hypothesis that Metro is more cost-effective than current practice. This research is being supported by separate funding, and looks at both the CCC and the CSU. With Compass II funding, we will issue a discussion paper based on this cost study, along with expert comment on its implications for system change. We will then make a Compass II conference presentation on the results, and coordinate a webinar for interested stakeholders state- and nation-wide. In addition to Dr. Johnstone, the webinar may involve the CSU and CCC Chancellor’s Offices, as well as Metro advisors such as Jane Wellman of the Delta Cost Project, now the ED of the National Association of Systems Heads, representing all 1

four-year and many two-year systems nationally; renowned learning communities researcher Vincent Tinto; Tom Brock of MDRC; and Tom Bailey of the Community College Research Center at Columbia University. In turn, this stakeholder dialog will build momentum for a more definitive cost study, in which two funders have already expressed strong interest. This would set the stage for large-scale dissemination of Metro Academies in the CCC and the CSU.

2. **Demonstrate the feasibility of articulating lower division general education courses through learning outcomes rather than seat time, by revising the existing Metro first year experience course in the transfer curriculum at City College (Metro 120, now approved for Area D, Social Sciences) to also meet Area E learning objectives (Lifelong Learning and Self-Development). This will eliminate the need for a three-unit course. We will obtain necessary institutional approvals from City College.**

   We have reviewed the learning objectives for Metro 120, Area D and Area E. We are confident that the learning objectives for Area E can successfully be added to this first-year experience course in the City College transfer curriculum. Throughout our work, Metro has taken a strong interest in removing barriers to student success by organizing learning around outcomes rather than seat time. This strategy emerges from the observation that the longer the pipeline, the more students drop out in the transition from course to course, leading to exponential losses over time. Metro has already worked closely with math faculty at City College to compress and intensify a developmental math pathway from three courses to two. The lead Metro English teacher at City College is spearheading a campus-wide effort to compress the remedial English sequence from three courses to two. Metro is also bringing Statway to SF State and to a committed future Metro dissemination partner, Diablo Valley College. Statway compresses two three-unit developmental math courses into one intense four-unit course.

3. **Demonstrate the feasibility of direct assessment of student learning outcomes by adding the VALUE rubric to assessment of LEAP learning outcomes at SF State, and developing the use of electronic portfolios for direct assessment at City College.**

   We are successfully using e-portfolio for assessment of student learning outcomes in all Metro courses at SF State, as the university was able to devote in-kind staff time to set up this effort. Students complete signature assignments, which are evaluated against an assessment rubric. At SF State, we propose to improve on this foundation by revising existing e-portfolios to more explicitly address the LEAP learning outcomes. Compass II will allow an established SF State/City College faculty working team, Connect To Learning, to incorporate the VALUE rubric (and/or DQP) into the direct assessment process of the LEAP learning outcomes. At City College, the tighter resources of the community colleges mean that e-portfolios are at a more embryonic stage. A second use of Compass II funding will be to establish e-portfolios and the direct assessment process in all Metro courses at City College, including faculty development on use of e-portfolios.

4. **Set up a student tracking system at City College that enables automated tracking of the Metro students’ metrics versus comparable non-Metro student metrics, using the measures required for Compass II research. Describe how to set up the system in the Metro Toolkit.**

   Again tapping in-kind staff time, Metro recently set up a student tracking system at SF State that permits us to easily track student progress, persistence, GPA, and units accumulated and compare them to metrics of non-Metro students. The system allows us to readily aggregate data across two and soon three Metro Academies. Compass II funding will allow us to set up a
similar system at City College, meeting an urgent need and allowing us to contribute data to Compass II research.

5. **Build capacity for institutional change and faculty development during a time of limited resources, by adding four new features to the web-based Metro Academies Toolkit:**

a. Complete a new Toolkit chapter with detailed guidelines for community college or CSU dissemination partners on how to institute and sustain a Metro Academy pathway through redeploying existing courses and services into a more effective configuration. Included will be template budgets, customizable MOUs and a sample proposal for start-up that can be used for funding requests to institutional or external sources.

b. Complete a new chapter with guidelines, samples and faculty development materials detailing how to develop, introduce and conduct direct assessment of student learning outcomes with e-portfolios, as discussed.

c. Revise the Toolkit and curriculum to feature LEAP student learning outcomes as a prominent graphic theme throughout, via sidebars and infographics on the VALUE rubric and/or DQP.

d. Describe how to set up a student tracking system linked to institutional data in both CSU and community college settings.

**ASSESSMENT**

We have a four-fold assessment strategy to evaluate the results of this work. First, we will do a straightforward process evaluation in our monthly reports with annual in-depth reports: Have we completed the activities in our timeline? Have we reached our intended outcomes? Second, in terms of impact on student learning, we will report on key metrics for Metro students compared to non-Metro students semi-annually or as required by Compass II. Metrics include persistence, accumulated credits, grade point average, and academic progress benchmarks.

Third, we will measure attainment of LEAP student learning outcomes through an evaluation of student e-portfolio signature assignments that target each of the LEAP learning outcomes using the VALUE rubric and/or DQP. To evaluate whether students were successful in accomplishing both Area D and Area E outcomes in Metro 120, we will set up a formal assessment process with the cross-campus Connect to Learning Committee. The committee will cross-walk the VALUE rubric and/or DQP, and the learning objectives in the Executive Order governing GE. Then they will establish a threshold of achievement on whether the Area D and Area E learning objectives were successfully completed. They will apply these criteria to a random sample of portfolios of Metro 120 students on both campuses. Fourth, we will assess the impact of our argument on cost efficiency and scale-up in the following manner. We will engage the groups below in discussion of our brief and the Toolkit chapter on redeployment strategies, asking if they think that scale-up is both desirable and feasible: the leadership of the RP Group; the relevant officials at the CSU and CCC Chancellor’s Offices; and both cabinets at SF State and City College. We will summarize this vetting process in a memo.

**PARTNERSHIP**

Metro Academies is the most recent project to grow out of a nearly twenty-year partnership between the Colleges of Health and Human Services at SF State and City College. Our partnership has completed many projects in both educational innovation and community health, working at the local, state and national levels, and hosting both statewide and national multi-city initiatives. We have been instrumental in starting four large new educational programs. We have enjoyed the support of some $27 million from 23 funders and have received

---

2 Separately funded by the US Department of Education (FIPSE) and the James Irvine Foundation.
fifteen highly competitive FIPSE awards. We are proud that we have a 100% track record of successfully institutionalizing grant-initiated programs onto tenure track positions.

Metro faculty and staff at City College and San Francisco State University have collaborated closely since 2007. The Metro Academies leadership team meets weekly on alternating campuses. Thirty-three instructors in several departments from both campuses have participated in a structured 45-hour faculty development process, and now meet monthly at their sites to review and act on student and program data. A cross-campus Connect to Learning work team is refining the use of e-portfolios.

SF State President Robert Corrigan and City College Chancellor Donald Griffin are active champions of Metro Academy and are strongly committed to educational equity, as are Provost Sue Rosser at SF State and HHS Dean Don Taylor. At City College, the Vice Chancellor position is now unfilled, but we have briefed the incoming candidate and have a Health dean, Terrance Hall, who has been involved in the cross-campus partnership since 1994. Department chairs are involved in weekly meetings.

TEAM MEMBERS

Metro’s team members have a long history of successful collaboration on large-scale projects. Dr. Mary Beth Love, SF State project director, is chair and professor of health education at San Francisco State University (SFSU). She has a 40% in-kind assignment to work on Metro (including Compass II). She received her doctorate from the School of Public Health at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 1987. Chair since 1989, Dr. Love has successfully incubated, implemented and institutionalized numerous curricular innovations in her 20 years in higher education administration, including SF State’s well-regarded Master of Public program. Vicki Legion, MPH, City College co-project director, has been tenured faculty of City College since 1995, with 80% of her time assigned in-kind to new programs and Metro (including Compass II). Ms. Legion completed her bachelor’s work at the University of Chicago and the New College of California, and her master’s in public health at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Together with Mary Beth Love and others, Legion co-founded the Community Health Worker Certificate at City College, and led a process of dissemination to nearly 50 community colleges. Tim Berthold, Metro’s lead champion at City College, has been chair and faculty member of the Health Education Department at City College for over a decade. He has a 20% in-kind assignment to work on Metro (including Compass II). He earned his B.A. from Brown University and his M.S.P.H. from Harvard University. He has twenty years of experience working with community-based health and human rights projects in the Bay Area as well as in Central America, South Asia and North Africa. He is an institutional leader, serving as chair of the Equity Committee of the Department Chair Council at City College.

Savita Malik, MPH, curriculum and faculty development director, was responsible for the writing and sequencing of the Metro Academies curriculum and syncing the curriculum with local and national standards. She leads the faculty learning community and manages faculty affairs. Malik is a doctoral candidate (ABD), with her thesis research and publications centered on faculty learning communities. She is a lecturer in the Department of Health Education at SF State. Amie Fishman, MPH, coordinates Toolkit writing and production, as well as data management for Metro. She completed her bachelor’s degree at Vassar College, and received her MPH from SF State. Ruth Cox, Ph.D., is an academic technology coordinator at SF State, and a nationally known expert in e-portfolio as a vehicle for direct assessment of learning objectives. JoAnna DeVito-Larson coordinates partnerships and convenings, and handles human relations and financial matters for our program.
CAPACITY

Our team has worked together for many years on large initiatives in education and community health. The team has strengths in internal and external partnership building, educational innovation, research and publication, and shares a deep commitment to education equity. FIPSE (Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education, US Department of Education) funded the planning and start-up of Metro Academies in 2007-2010, (600K) and refunded us for dissemination in 2011-2014 (750K). FIPSE is a highly competitive funder, awarding only three percent of grant applications. Earlier in 1998-2001, FIPSE funded us to start the nation’s first college-based program for community health workers. FIPSE then refunded us for national dissemination. Today there are 47 such community college-based programs in the US. In 2009 we published the first-ever textbook in the field of community health work (through Jossey-Bass/Wiley), which Harvard’s Dr. Paul Farmer called “a tremendous resource…a great step forward for the field.” From 2000-2004, we hosted the state office of a $12 million, 12-city, state-wide initiative, ‘Community Action to Fight Asthma,” on behalf of The California Endowment. Our partnership has received two awards from the Chancellor’s Office of the California Community Colleges, one from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and a national award from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Our biggest challenge is the fact that mid-level and executive leadership at our institutions are in a defensive posture from relentless budget cuts, many of which place more barriers in the path of the very students Metro is trying to reach. On the other hand, we have found that if we work collaboratively with these leaders, many are in fact more determined than ever to keep open the doors of opportunity. Many have been willing to go far above and beyond the call of duty—even in hard times.

SCALABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Scalability and sustainability have been central concerns for the Metro Academies leadership team since our first brainstorming meeting in 2006. During planning, we scrutinized every proposed program element as to whether it could survive outside the grant hothouse.

As we have described, a Metro Academy can be institutionalized in large part by redeploying resources that already exist. For example, a specific section of an existing English 1A course is earmarked as a “Metro Academy section of English 1A.” In this way, only three years after start-up—and in the midst of great budget duress—the Metro Academies at SF State and City College have already institutionalized all core classes, a total of 77 courses permanently set aside for Metro. Institutional leaders in charge of allocating sections review Metro’s results on a regular basis, and note that the greater persistence of Metro students means a more efficient use of institutional resources, and a much better ability to plan from semester to semester.

Metro does involve modest extra costs. These include more intensive academic advising and tutoring. Metro makes use of well-trained peer advisors and graduate counseling interns for student orientation, routine explanations of the course sequence, tutoring and referrals. For more complicated issues, redeployed professional academic counselors meet with each Metro student over four semesters. The dean of Student Services at City College, Dr. Lindy McKnight, has agreed to set aside one or more dedicated counselors for Metro as the program grows. Metro also requires modest ongoing coordination time. To date, City College has institutionalized ongoing program coordination with a 20 percent full-time equivalent (FTE) coordinator for each Metro Academy, while SF State has allocated funds for this purpose from its College of Health and Human Services budget. Grants have paid for program start-up, including additional coordination time to set up ongoing institutional agreements, as well as faculty development.
Metro’s greatest challenge is that it is an ambitious endeavor. During a period of budget retrenchment, some persons and institutions become discouraged from innovation, while others are spurred to innovate. Working with many others, we seek to uphold a bold example of what equitable high quality education could look like—right here, right now, on a significant scale.

**TIMELINE**

**Year 1 - 2012**

**Spring Semester: January thru May, 2012**
1. Revise the existing Metro first-year experience course (Metro 120, now approved for Area D), to also meet Area E learning objectives. Obtain approvals from City College.
2. Design and implement student tracking system at City College.
4. Participate in quarterly webinar and provide monthly progress reports.
5. Conduct preliminary cost study.
6. Monitor and quantify campus student service staff support needed in the proposed cost efficient redeployment model to mount and sustain a Metro program.

**Summer: June thru August 2012**
1. Place LEAP SLOs throughout Metro Toolkit using VALUE rubric and/or DQP.
2. Metro e-portfolio advisory faculty revises e-portfolios to fully reflect LEAP SLOs.
3. Participate in quarterly webinar and provide monthly progress reports.
4. Review findings by cost study experts to draw out practical and policy implications.

**Fall Semester: August 2012 thru December 2012**
1. Implement revised Metro 120 at City College and SF State with 6 new Metro cohorts.
2. Pilot student e-portfolios use with two Metros at City College.
3. Participate in quarterly webinar and provide expanded report in September 2012.
4. Complete the new Toolkit chapter on sustainability using redeployment model.

**Year 2, 2013**

**Spring Semester January - May 2013**
1. Complete cost study discussion paper for webinars and Compass II conference.
2. Attend Compass Project conference, dates TBD.
3. Provide monthly progress reports and participate in quarterly webinar.
4. Assessment Area D and Area E learning outcomes for the 210 students completing Metro 120 on both CCSF and SF State campuses using student e-folio data.
5. Vet our cost efficiency argument with Presidents/Chancellors’ cabinets on both campuses, CCCCORP group and relevant leaders in the CSU Chancellors office. Write memo.

**Summer May thru end of grant**
1. Initiate an in-depth cost efficiency study under separate funding.
2. Using randomly selected e-folios, assess the achievement of LEAP and/or DQP SLOs using cross institution faculty evaluators.
3. Based on feedback from the sustainability chapter vetting process, refine and publish the Toolkit chapter with detailed instructions on how to create a sustainable program.
4. Complete inclusion of LEAP/VALUE and/or DQP learning outcomes and rubrics into web-based Toolkit.
5. Complete expanded report in September 2013, participate in quarterly webinar and complete culminating monograph.