

## **CHAPTER 5: THE FOCUS AREA**

- A. The F-1 Competence & Professional Goal and Action Plan (PGAP)**
- B. Sample Focus Area Plans**
- C. F-11 & F-12 Advanced Project**

## Overview

The Focus Area is the part of your degree program where you identify and design an area of particular interest to you. It may reflect a field of study (e.g., history, social work, education), a goal to prepare for graduate school (e.g., pre-requisites for admission to a law or MBA program), a specific career goal (e.g., director of training and development, K-12 teacher), your work or employment (e.g., consultant, events planner), or your avocation (e.g., organizing in the community, reading American literature, working in church administration).

The Focus Area is intended to incorporate competencies that fit your individual and/or professional goals. You will work closely with your Faculty Mentor and a Professional Advisor who has expertise in your area of interest. Together you will discuss and agree on competencies and learning experiences that are appropriate to your goals. It is important that the twelve competencies in this area form a coherent group.

At SNL you can choose from several programmatic Focus Area options that differ not only in competence focus, but also in flexibility and structure. The Bachelor in Computing (BAC), Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education (BAECE), and Bachelor of Arts in General Business (BAGB) are joint degree programs with the College of Computing and Digital Media, the College of Education, and the College of Commerce, respectively, that have predetermined competence requirements across their frameworks to support your learning in specific areas. Information about these programs can be found in the Appendix section of this resource guide and at <http://snl.depaul.edu>. Additionally, students interested in developing competence in Leadership or Work Studies within the Bachelor of Arts with an Individualized Focus Area program will find more structured options and requisites, which are discussed later in this chapter.

The Bachelor of Arts with an Individualized Focus Area (SNL BA) is the most flexible option for constructing your Focus Area, for it allows you to write your own competence statements (except for F-1 and F-11) that reflect the kind of preparation you have or need to have to meet your career or personal aspirations. You will begin in *Foundations* to shape this set of competence statements, and later, work with your Professional Advisor to refine them. All programs will require your writing competence statements in your Focus Area in consultation with your Academic Committee.

As you determine the best Focus Area “fit” for your goals and interests, keep in mind that the Focus Area is **not necessarily** an expression of a specific career plan. Focus areas are as diverse as SNL students themselves. You may be primarily interested in receiving a broad liberal arts education, and perhaps in pursuing a particular interest (e.g., child development) that may or may not be applied to a career. You may also use your work experience as a basis for the Focus Area, add some new learning, and pursue your interest through courses, independent pursuits, etc., that fit into other competence areas as well.

### **The Focus Area may consist of any of the following options:**

#### **All prior learning** (courses, college level learning from work experience)

Student A is interested in going to law school. She has taken many non-SNL literature courses (including upper level ones). These courses reflect not only her special interest in literature, but are also a good preparation for law school (written communication,

analysis, interpretation, etc.). She will build her Focus Area from this coursework. Her success in this series of courses indicates competence in the field of literature, ability to develop and use analytical skills, and writing skills.

Student B has worked for 20 years in finance. While she wants to continue to learn in that area, she is most interested in the impact of the business world on other aspects of human endeavor. She will develop her Focus Area around her experience in the financial world, and plan new learning experiences in the Liberal Arts.

Student C wants to continue his work in community organizing. He has been an activist for many causes all his adult life, but for the past several years has become involved in housing issues. His BA will help him in his goal of creating a non-profit organization for fair housing and homelessness in Uptown. He will use life experience and several courses in social work, non-profit administration, and business to construct his focus area, and will plan to pursue new learning while at SNL in grant writing, fund-raising, and to draw on several courses within the Human Community category.

**All new learning** (courses, independent learning pursuits);

Student D has been working as an administrative assistant for the last 15 years. She is interested in becoming an addictions counselor, but has had no experience in that area. Eventually she is planning on graduate school. She will look into the requirements for graduate school, talk with professionals in the field, and design her Focus Area around the learning she needs to complete for her future profession.

Student E has worked in telecommunications for several years and, while reasonably successful, has always had a passion for at-risk kids. He has decided to become certified in elementary education, teach in the Chicago Public School system, and go on to graduate school for a Master's in special education.

**A mix of prior and new learning;**

Student F has worked in marketing for a number of years. While he has a lot of training and experience, he feels he needs to learn some additional skills to broaden his understanding as well as his employment opportunities. He will document the experiential learning he has already achieved through his career, and then he will plan for experiences and courses to support his new learning needs.

*Students who design their focus area in traditional business areas must dedicate their Lifelong Learning and Liberal Learning competencies to areas outside the traditional business areas.*

## **SECTION A: THE F-1 COMPETENCE & PROFESSIONAL GOAL AND ACTION PLAN**

The F-1 competence development is used for a variety of purposes. For those of you who are unclear about your Focus Area goals, F-1 is the beginning of exploration, eventually culminating in an informed decision about the Focus Area before you undertake further research.

For those clear about their Focus Area, this competence requires research that will help you analyze the components of competence in your career area, define them, organize them into coherent units, and present them in logical format. Through the work you do for this competence, you will also begin to sort out what you already know about your field, what you can already do, and what you need to learn. The evidence you present for the F-1 competence in Foundations also serves to introduce you and your thinking about your goals to your Professional Advisor.

### **Focused Planning**

**F-1: Can design a plan for development in one's Focus Area based on an analysis of elements that comprise the area.**

**Course:** LL 250 *Foundations of Adult Learning*

1. Can set goals to be developed in the Focus Area
2. Can demonstrate an understanding of current issues and trends within the Focus Area through research (reading, interviews, and other forms of inquiry)
3. Can create a unified, well-articulated plan for achieving one's own Focus Area goals, based on research (reading, interviews, and other forms of inquiry)

This competence is designed to help students think through their overall Focus Area and to determine its individual components. In general, the Focus Area should make sense in terms of the student's goals and interests. The evidence for this competence should draw on at least eight sources (such as interviews, readings, and graduate program research). Students work on the Focus Area in *Foundations* and refine their work further in consultation with their Professional Advisors and Faculty Mentors. **Completion of F-1 is required before students can fill other F competencies.**

### **Researching and Producing the Professional Goal and Action Plan (PGAP)**

A large piece of F-1 will be your PGAP. This process of exploration and research should include finding and reading relevant literature, interviewing others more knowledgeable than you, and careful self-reflection. Because each student defines an individual goal area, there is no set pattern for this research. However, the Professional Goal and Action Plan, described below, will help you develop a method for thinking through your professional and personal goals. This thinking process, which started in the *Independent Learning Seminar*, continues in *Foundations*, and develops beyond the first Academic Committee meeting.

A significant part of the SNL curriculum depends on the concentration you define. The Focus Area competencies are negotiated to achieve and demonstrate the knowledge and skills that best prepare a learning plan for your personal and professional goals. This is an individually designed area of the SNL curriculum and uniquely expresses the quality of your preparation for a successful focus area.

The definition of your individual Focus Area is an **ongoing process**, not a singular event. It does not happen just in *Foundations* or in Academic Committee meetings or through courses alone. It happens in all of these areas and more. There is no single answer to how your Focus Area should be designed and fulfilled. For all students, however, the process begins with your focus on goal setting and action

planning and continues through interaction with your Professional Advisor and Faculty Mentor. All of this constitutes the beginnings of fulfilling F-1.

### **Beginning Your F-1 Research**

- ***For students who have already decided on a Focus Area, you can begin at Step 4 (Self-Assessment).***  
*However, while Steps 1 through 3 are optional for you, they may allow you to explore other options that you may not have considered, confirm that you have made the right choice, or narrow down your focus area further.*
- ***For those who have not yet decided on a Focus Area, please begin at Step 1.***  
*Remember, if you do a thorough job with steps 1-3, you may or may not complete 4-7 prior to completing Foundations, but you will submit an extensive status report in FAL.*

### **Step 1. Exploring Your Interests**

You began this process in *Independent Learning Seminar* and might want to revise the exercises you completed then. Students who are still unclear or who have questions about what goal to pursue can use their time in *Foundations* to investigate their interests. The process of choosing a career path or focus area should start by first exploring what you like to do, what activities you do well, and what interests you have. In short, a sound career or focus area choice depends on having a sense of self-awareness and identifying areas where you can best use your skills and that are consistent with your interests and values. Once you have identified two or three areas you believe you might want to pursue, it is then important to investigate them. For career areas, seek out information concerning job requirements, job activities, working conditions, salaries, and education requirements. Below are some suggestions for pursuing these two steps in selecting a career path or focus area.

DePaul's Career Center offers various services that can help you explore your interests, strengths and abilities. Call 312/362-8437 for more information. You can meet individually with a career counselor and obtain assistance in developing a sense of your own skills as well as exploring possible career options.

Finally, there are many books in the DePaul library as well as in other libraries and bookstores on career development and job hunting. What Color is your Parachute, by Richard Bolles, Wishcraft, by Barbara Sher, and The Lotus and the Pool: How to Create your Own Career by Hilda Lee Dail are excellent choices. Bolles updates his helpful paperback every year. His book is filled with exercises and self-assessment tools designed to help the reader determine a best career fit, goals and skills. Dail offers a holistic approach involving dreams, symbols, person myths, intuitions, and memories as well as analytical skills needed to set goals and to plan strategies. Be sure to do some searches on the Internet for helpful career and/or interest areas.

If you are looking at focus areas that are not career oriented, reflect on what aspects of those areas most interest you and explore ways you might develop your knowledge and/or use this focus in your life.

## Step 2. Investigation

By completing some of the activities listed above, you will have gained a greater understanding of what your strengths are, what skills you possess, and what activities you are likely to do well and to enjoy. You should also have identified at least two or three interesting career or focus areas to pursue.

The next step in defining a career goal or focus area is to investigate these areas. In the case of a career goal or more general avocational focus area, find out information about job requirements, roles and responsibilities, salaries, working conditions, expected changes in the field and educational requirements.

Talking to other students who are already working in your career or focus area can be helpful, as can the kind of investigation delineated in the Professional Goal and Action Plan. Obtaining information about a variety of fields and related areas can help you make a final decision about a focus area or career goal.

## Step 3. Status Report on Exploring Focus Area interests

After completing the activities mentioned above, address the following questions thoroughly:

1. What have you learned about yourself through this exploration?
2. What are your strengths, skills, and abilities?
  - a. What do you do well and enjoy?
  - b. What is important to you?
  - c. What specific features do you want to include in your work and life?
  - d. What specific features do you want to avoid?
3. What preliminary decisions have you made concerning career or focus area interests?
  - a. List the occupations or areas that meet the features you have listed in point 1.
  - b. What are the requirements, roles, and responsibilities of each?
  - c. What type and level of education does each require?
4. List the methods you used to investigate the careers or areas you examined.
5. Make a choice, unless you need more development of your ideas. If so, please show the specific steps you plan to take and when you will be ready to move forward with the rest of your Professional Goal and Action Plan.

Once you have completed your status report, you will be ready to begin investigating in greater detail your chosen career or focus area.

## Step 4. Self Assessment (*Begin here once you have decided on your Focus Area.*)

The following exercise is a start in the process of analyzing your own abilities, interests, and values with respect to your professional goal. The questions listed below will help you move toward a better understanding of your focus area. Ultimately, you will need to expand your sources for the *Professional Goal and Action Plan* to include at least eight sources.

For now, this self-assessment should be used as a tool. It is important to use these questions as a means of finding out what you already know and what you don't know. It is likely that you will not be able to answer all of them without further research. A large part of self-assessment is separating our knowledge from our hunches, and then deciding how to get the information we need.

➤ **Please complete on a separate sheet of paper. (Note: If your Focus Area is not career-oriented, answer only those questions that are relevant):**

1. What title do you give your Focus Area? (Training and Development, Community Organizing, etc.) **A Focus Area title cannot replicate titles for DePaul University majors. See <http://www.depaul.edu/academics/undergraduate/majors/Pages/default.aspx>**
2. What are the roles and responsibilities of a professional in your focus area?
3. What theories, information, or models does someone in your focus area need?
4. What specialized professional skills are necessary?
5. What liberal learning skills are necessary?
6. What changes are currently influencing your focus area? (computers, international markets, literary theory, etc.)
7. What other professional areas are related to your field? How? (ex.: Is training part of Human Resources...?)
8. What are the possible organizational structures for someone in your field? (Self-employment, team membership, supervisory capacities?)
9. What are the relevant professional organizations and publications in your field?
10. What are the current debates or issues important to your focus area?
11. What kind of education does a professional in the field need? Is there a difference between classroom and experiential learning in your field?
12. What research skills are important?
13. Does your field require a graduate degree? If so, what sort? What are the available programs? What are their admissions requirements? What pre-requisites are necessary for admission?
14. Note the details of your focus area about which you are unclear.
15. List strategies for obtaining the information mentioned in questions 13 and 14.

### **Step 5. Information Gathering**

After careful self-assessment, you should have a sense of what kinds of information you need. Many university, college, and city libraries carry books and professional journals related to jobs and careers. Below is a list of some helpful books. You should also conduct interviews with professionals already practicing in your field. The Internet, of course, is a great resource.

### a. Books on Careers

The *Career Advisor Series* includes essays written by top professionals in a variety of fields. These essays provide you with an insider's perspective on careers and include information on what to expect on the job, on typical career paths, and what employers look for in applicants. Books in this series also help you identify professional organizations and publications. The series is published by Bradley J. Morgan, Ed. 1993: Gale Research, Inc., Detroit, and includes:

*Marketing and Sales Career Directory*  
*Environmental Career Directory*  
*Travel and Hospitality Career Directory*  
*Medical Technologists and Technicians Career Directory*

The *Encyclopedia of Careers and Vocational Guidance* provides information concerning the history of various jobs, the nature of work within given fields as well as requirements of the job. This volume also includes information concerning methods of entering a field, advancement prospects, employment outlook, earnings and work conditions.

Besides encyclopedias and edited volumes on careers, there are many other books that provide detailed information. Below is a list of some of the books that can be found in the Career Information Centers at the DePaul Lincoln Park and Loop libraries.

<i>On Becoming an Artist</i>	<i>Careers in the Outdoors</i>
<i>Opportunities in Sales Careers</i>	<i>Careering and Relearning in the 90s</i>
<i>Women in Finance</i>	<i>Careers in Veterinary Medicine</i>

### b. Interviews

Talk to people who are involved in the field or subject you wish to pursue. Also, you could interview people who supervise the kinds of positions you would like to have and/or interview people who work for people in those positions or fields.

Plan to go into the interviews with a prepared list of general topics to discuss, but allowing, as much as possible, your respondent to lead the conversation. If your interviewee starts to discuss issues that you had not considered, but are relevant to your focus area, give her or him time to talk. Do be sure, however, that you leave the interview having covered the major issues and questions you have.

Limit the time of your interview to an hour or less. Interviews that go beyond one hour can be tiring and unproductive for both you and your respondent.

During the interview, take few notes, jot down only key words and phrases. Taking more detailed notes can be disruptive and can result in a poor interview. If you leave time immediately after the interview to sit quietly and elaborate on your notes, you will remember much of what was discussed.



### *Sample Interview Questions*

1. Describe your field.
2. Outline what you do in a typical day.
3. Discuss how you became involved in the field, and how you prepared yourself to do this work.
4. What specific educational preparation do you deem necessary for entry into and or success in this field?
5. What specific theoretical information is necessary?
6. What attitudes or personal style issues are important to success in your field?
7. What trends do you see developing in the field?
8. Who are the proponents of these trends?
9. What other professional or academic areas are influenced by the field?
10. How long might it take to become comfortable and experienced in the field?
11. What are the relevant professional organizations, publications, etc., in your field?
12. What are the next steps in your career?
13. What advice can you give me?
14. What is one thing you wish you had done to prepare for this endeavor that you didn't do?
15. What questions have I omitted?

### **Step 6. The Annotated Bibliography**

After completing your research, choose at least eight sources, such as, books, articles, or interviews, that have been the most helpful to you. Develop reflective annotations - approximately one paragraph each - for each of those sources, including a brief summary of the contents, an analysis of the relation of the material to your field, and a comment on the author.

### **Step 7. The Professional Goal and Action Plan**

The *Professional Goal and Action Plan* helps you, your faculty mentor, and your professional advisor understand the goals you are trying to reach at SNL, and the level at which you currently comprehend and perform in your focus area. This document describes your professional or curricular goal, and demonstrates your knowledge of the theories and theorists, practical considerations, relevant skills, and future concerns of your field. Remember, you are using the *Professional Goal and Action Plan* as partial evidence for F-1: *Can design a plan for development in one's Focus Area based on an analysis of elements that comprise the area*. Refer back to the criteria for assessment of this competence regularly to keep your discussion focused on the fulfillment of the F-1 competence.

**Please address all the questions** below to construct a Professional Goal and Action Plan.

#### **1. Goals**

- a. State your goal.
- b. Explain why this goal is important to you.
- c. Relate your professional goal to the liberal arts (i.e. counseling calls on theories of human behavior, etc.)

- d. Based on your research, explain in detail what trends are currently influencing your field or focus area, drawing from the sources you consulted in Steps 5 and 6 above.

## 2. Learning Objectives

- a. Explain what knowledge you need to succeed in your field.
- b. Discuss current issues, controversies, challenges in your field
- c. Describe the skills you need to acquire.
- d. Describe the attributes for success you need to demonstrate.

## 3. Self Assessment

- a. Explain what knowledge you already have.
- b. List the skills you already have.
- c. Describe attributes for success you already possess.

## 4. Learning Processes and Resources

- a. Describe the steps you will take to learn what you don't know.
- b. List the resources you will use.
- c. List the steps you will take to acquire the skills you need.
- d. Describe the steps you will take to develop the attributes for success you need.

## 5. Target Date: How long will it take you to reach your goal?

## 6. Evaluation Standard: How will your Academic Committee know that you have reached your goal? (I will have succeeded in learning what I need to learn when...)

## 7. Annotated Bibliography (See sample below)

- a. Include at least 8 references
- b. Include your interview notes

### **Annotated Bibliography Samples**

#### **1) Interviews**

Doe, J. Personal Interview. July 1, 2015.

Jane Doe has been a Telecommunications Manager at Magic Cellular Corporation for one year. She provided insights into the technical requirements of the telecommunications field. She suggested that anyone interesting in pursuing a career in Telecommunications gain as much knowledge about new technology as possible. She suggested that one get as much exposure to the data environment as possible. She stated that she believes there is growing opportunity surrounding call center technology.

#### **2) Articles**

Lester, D. (1988). "One Theory of Teen-Age Suicide." Journal of School Health, 58, 193-194.

This article proposes a theory for the increase in teenage suicides. The basic premise is that the improved quality of life may be partially responsible. Lester tested this using 43 nations of the world and found that suicide rates correlated positively with the quality of life. He advocates

programs which will contribute meaningful and fulfilling experiences for youth.

### 3) Books

Golter, Gary D. and Yanuck, Deborah F. Opportunities in High Tech Careers, 1987, National Textbook Co., Chicago.

This book contained job descriptions about various careers, including one for a telecommunications Technical Consultant. The job descriptions included analyzing information, developing designs and system configuration. The necessity of excellent project coordination skills was emphasized. The authors recommended at least a BA or BS in Business Administration. The skills for technical consultant parallel the responsibilities of a telecommunications analyst position in my current employment.

### 4) Web Sites

Murphy, Douglas. Course Syllabus Page. Dec. 2015

<http://condor.depaul.edu/~dmurphy/internet.htm>

This page reviews the syllabus and related information for this course. The course is an introductory look at the Internet, its history, and projected development. Among the items covered during the course are browsers, email, search engines and website design.

## Step 8. Designing your Focus Area and Competence Statements (begun in *Foundations* but not complete until after the First Committee Meeting)

After defining the content of your Focus Area via the Professional Goal and Action Plan, you and your Professional Advisor, with the consultation of your Faculty Mentor, will distinguish specific items that will form the separate competencies in your Focus Area. For each of the competencies F-2 through F-12, you must write a statement that describes the learning you have achieved or you hope to achieve via the evidence you produce. Competence statements should be general enough to include the variety of experiences and knowledge you have attained or hope to attain, but should also be descriptive enough to allow the reader to imagine some specific applications of the knowledge.

In *Foundations* you will begin the process of writing these Focus Area competence statements. The Criteria for the Design of the Focus Area listed below should help you develop succinct, specific, yet understandable competence statements.

### 1. Criteria for the Design of the Focus Area

The Focus Area design must be consistent with the educational and professional goal statements you have articulated.

These goals must:

1. Be appropriate for college-level work in a Bachelor of Arts program.
2. Identify expected outcomes of the degree program rather than be limited to a statement of your existing skill and knowledge
3. Meet entry requirements for graduate work (for those who intend to go on to graduate school). For students whose goals clearly include graduate study, it is recommended that

pre-requisites for particular programs be investigated and incorporated in the appropriate domains

Areas of study must:

4. Represent current standards and expectations of the field. These should include:
  - a. theories or models that provide the frameworks for work in the field
  - b. applied knowledge (practice within the field)
  - c. specialized skills needed to function effectively in the field.

Competence Statements should:

5. Reflect the conceptual areas in appropriate proportion and depth for your focus area goals and also should emphasize performance or behavioral outcomes

Learning Experiences should:

6. Address various skills and should draw on a range of resources. Students may earn competence through the following means:
  - a. transfer courses from other institutions, including other areas within DePaul
  - b. SNL courses
  - c. college level learning from prior experience (ILPs)
  - d. independent study (ILPs or FDIS or GIS)

**2. Example of Focus Area Competence and Evidence:**

**Competence Statement:** *Understands principles of organizational development and can apply these to the design of a human resources plan for a specific organization.*

**Possible form of evidence:** A written plan for the HR function of the student's company (or other organization)

Evaluation:

1. The design is consistent with the organization's mission.
2. The design is specific enough to provide guidance to the HR department or manager
3. The design is feasible
4. The rationale for the design draws on specific principles of organizational development
5. The rationale provides evidence that the student has sufficient grasp of the principles of organizational development to apply them to a different setting

**3. Writing a Competence Statement in the Focus Area**

A competence statement in the focus area generally defines and describes your knowledge and skills and/or the topic you will pursue or have already learned. The statement can indicate the level at which you are competent, can address the depth of your knowledge, or can show your ability to perform a skill. Competence statements are general, in that they can be demonstrated in a variety of ways. They are specific in that they refer to a specific field. The language you use in a competence statement should be understandable, but it should also refer to the specific

vocabulary of your field. Writing a competence statement gives you the opportunity to define your areas of knowledge, and to tailor your evidence to meet your specific needs.

After you have drafted a list of relevant items for your Focus Area, write a few descriptive words beside each entry. For example, in the sample provided above, Human Resource Management, a portion of the list might look something like this:

Relevant items:

*interviewing*  
*compensation and benefits*  
*organizational growth*  
*statistics*

Descriptors:

*skill, interpersonal, evaluation*  
*laws, pay scales, options*  
*corporate policy, organizational culture*  
*math, computers, information, problem solving*

Develop your competence statement drafts by using the words you list under Descriptors to describe the items that fall under your Focus area. Use words indicating that you know something; that you know how to do something; that you can do something; and/or that you have reached some conclusions on how and why things are done. [See Chapter 4, Section E, “X Competencies: Writing Your Own Statements,”](#) and [Chapter 9, “Writing X Competence Statements with Assessment Criteria,”](#) for more help.

For example:

*Model 1: Understands regulations and processes governing compensation and benefits, and can apply that knowledge to counsel employees about benefit options*

**Or**

*Model 2: Can demonstrate interviewing skills, apply them in a business setting, and use them to evaluate potential employees.*

#### **4. Focus Area Draft**

You will present a draft of the Focus Area for the Professional Advisor and Faculty Mentor’s review prior to the First Committee Meeting. The Professional Advisor applies SNL’s criteria for Focus Area competencies and offers you feedback on the design. You will incorporate any suggested revisions in the statements prior to the First Committee Meeting. Other follow-up tasks are negotiated between you and your Professional Advisor before the First Committee Meeting.

At the First Committee Meeting, your goal and plan for the Focus Area will be reviewed, discussed, refined, and approved by your Professional Advisor and Faculty Mentor. After the F-2 through F-10 competence statements are articulated, you, your Professional Advisor, and Faculty Mentor will identify learning experiences and/or appropriate forms of evidence to be submitted for assessment. You will then work at your own pace to produce evidence of learning for each statement and submit that evidence to your academic committee for assessment. The F-11 and F-12 competencies will be defined and written when you are ready to work on your *Advanced Project*.

If your Focus Area evidence takes the form of courses you have taken or you plan to take at other accredited institutions, use the Non SNL Transfer coursework form for documentation to present to

your Academic Committee. [If your evidence falls into the category of Independent Learning, see Chapter 7, “Learning from Experience & the Independent Learning Pursuit.”](#)

## SECTION B: SAMPLE FOCUS AREAS AND FX COMPETENCIES

Below you will find three examples of Focus Areas designed around specific topics and areas of interest. Unlike the Leadership and Work Studies Focus Areas, these are simply samples, offered to provide ideas and models. It is important to remember that these are by no means the only possible configurations of competencies in Focus Areas. In fact, we have two offered samples that fit within the business world and one that can cross all three categories (Human Community, Arts and Ideas, and Scientific World). Focus Areas are as diverse as SNL students. However, with these samples, you may wish to pick and choose from the competence statements offered within an individual area, reformulate statements to address your specific interests and add relevant competencies as needed. Our primary hope is that these samples provide you with insight into the construction of a Focus Area.

### Sample Focus Area in Global Studies

- F-1: Can design a plan for development of one’s Focus Area based on an analysis of elements that comprise the area. *(This is accomplished through preparation of the Professional Goal and Action Plan, by writing Focus Area Competencies, and by articulating the connection of planned Focus Area competencies to your goal.)*
- F-2: Can employ the concept of culture to explain regional and/or national differences.
- F-3: Can express the role that arts, customs or language play in the development of one or more cultures.
- F-4: Can articulate the connections between regions or nations in terms of economics, politics, natural systems, or the arts.

*(The following competencies concentrate on one or several specific areas of the world—nations, regions, bio-regions—and apply the general learning of the earlier competencies to understanding historical and contemporary issues.)*

- F-5: Can describe historical factors that have shaped contemporary life in *(select region or country)*.
- F-6: Can analyze and articulate the contemporary political or economic situation in *(select region or country)*.
- F-7: Can describe one or more significant philosophical, religious or spiritual perspective in *(select region or country)*.
- F-8: Can describe contemporary or traditional arts or customs in *(select region or country)*.

### F-9 & F-10: STUDENT WRITTEN COMPETENCIES

These are student written competencies centered on Focus Area (business, nursing, education, etc.) in a region or country. These might include statements such as the following:

- Can apply contemporary business practices in appropriate ways within the context of (region’s or country’s) culture.
  - Can analyze economic growth in terms of a society’s traditional values.
  - Can articulate the role of (institution) in the contest of (region’s or country’s) social framework.
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### F-11 & F-12: ADVANCED PROJECT

The Advanced Project shows application F-1 through F-10 to a specific question or project related to the Focus Area.

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#### **Sample Focus Area in Entrepreneurship**

- F-2: Can see and act upon new business opportunities. (*Initiative*)
  - F-3: Can understand principles of marketing and undertake market research to ascertain if and how to provide a product or service. (*Information Seeking*)
  - F-4: Can develop a plan that anticipates obstacles and evaluates alternatives. (*Systematic Planning*)
  - F-5: Can take repeated or different actions to overcome obstacles. (*Persistence*)
  - F-6: Can demonstrate ability to take risks. (*Risk Taking*)
  - F-7: Can use strategies to influence or persuade others to buy a product or provide financing, or support the business in some other way. (*Influence*)
  - F-8: Can search for, understand efficiency models, and discover ways to do things faster, better, or at less cost. (*Efficiency Orientation*)
  - F-9: Can understand and conduct a financial analysis for the business including financial forecasting, startup costs, revenue projections, cash flow projections, and profit & loss projections. (*Financial Analysis*)
  - F-10: Can understand interpersonal relationships, including customers, employees, and suppliers, as a fundamental business resource. (*Interpersonal Relationships*)
- OR**
- F-10: Can demonstrate a strong relationship between the demands of the business and the existing and potential attributes of the business owner. (*Self-Assessment/Expertise*)

#### *Advanced Project (F-11 & F-12): Business Plan*

- F-11: Can design and produce a significant artifact or document that gives evidence of advanced competence.
  - F-12: Can construct a thorough business plan for (*the desired business*).
- 

#### **Sample Focus Area in Organizational Improvement and Development**

- F-2: Can understand rapidly changing environmental trends, market opportunities, competitive threats, and strengths and weaknesses of one's own organization to identify the optimum strategic response. (*Strategic Thinking*)
- F-3: Can communicate a compelling vision, sponsor innovation and implement frequent changes. (*Leadership in Change*)
- F-4: Can involve and influence others and build cooperative teams in which members have shared goals (*Relationship Management*)
- F-5: Can create a positive climate in which individuals know their own strengths and limitations and develop accordingly. (*Managerial Insight*)
- F-6: Can provide coaching and training to develop the performance of others. (*Developmental Orientation*)
- F-7: Can understand principles of change and change methodology, and can create and shape change rather than passively accepting it. (*Proactive Orientation*)

- F-8: Can set high work standards and ambitious yet attainable goals through understanding principles of motivation and fostering achievement in others. (*Achievement Orientation*)
- F-9: Can understand theories of client orientation and can demonstrate an ability to work with clients. (*Client Orientation*)
- F-10: Can identify and implement technological solutions to client and organizational problems. (*Technology Innovation and Management*)

(As a part of F-1 and the final graduation review: *Continuous Personal Development*, that is, demonstrating the ability to take steps to grow as a manager and a person throughout life.)

### **Sample Focus Area in Work Studies**

The sample Work Studies focus area gives you space to voice work-related experiences and knowledge that may not be addressed in conventional business classes. For instance, you may have witnessed or experienced discriminatory hiring or recruitment practices based on the applicant's national, gender, or ethno-racial background; you may have suffered from psychologically damaging forms of sexual harassment; you may have experienced sudden job loss due to corporate mergers or downsizing; you may have been struggling with making it through the double-day of job and unpaid mother-work at home; you may also be directly involved in efforts related to organizing your co-workers, or you may have a lifelong history of volunteer work at your church or in your community. *Work Studies provides an avenue for articulating and validating these (and many other) knowledge and experiences by critically examining their social, political-economic past, present, and possible future.*

- F-2: Can understand issues, problems, and history of labor organizing from a national or international perspective.
- F-3: Can understand how race-ethnicity, nationality, gender, able-bodiedness, age or class affect social and economic divisions of labor.
- F-4: Can understand the nature of the global market economy.
- F-5: Can understand the changing nature of the U.S. welfare state in relation to the interdependence of political and economic institutions.
- F-6: Can understand the culturally and historically changing meanings of work and can appreciate different cultural or artistic expressions of identity and experiences related to work.

### II. The Rest of Your Focus Area

1. You need to take or transfer one course that addresses *macroeconomic issues*. You can place this course into the Human Community (H-1-C or H-1-X) or into the Focus Area (if there is no space in the H area).
2. You can opt to take (or transfer) *up to three business courses* as part of your Focus Area . These may be classes on marketing, finance, management, instance, if you have been involved in labor organizing activities or have done extensive community-based volunteer work, you can demonstrate the learning you garnered from these activities as an H-2-H or FX competence.



3. At least one of your learning activities must be *community-based learning*. You can fulfill your Externship requirement by taking a community-based learning Externship class or designing a community-based learning project for yourself; you can take a class that offers the H-2-H competence; or you can design an ILP around a planned or prior community-based learning activity. For instance, if you have been involved in labor organizing activities or have done extensive community-based volunteer work, you can demonstrate the learning you garnered from these activities as an H-2-H or FX competence. You can fulfill the rest of your Focus Area according to your particular interest.

## SECTION C: ADVANCED PROJECT

The *Advanced Project* demonstrates your ability to apply problem solving and research skills in an area relevant to your Focus Area. Because it caps off your Focus Area it may very well build on expertise you already developed. However, while augmenting or diversifying an existing knowledge base, the *Advanced Project* must always represent **new learning**.

Depending on your particular learning needs and goals, you may want to address a very specific practical problem, or you may be interested in finding the answer to a more theoretical-analytical question. Your *Advanced Project* can therefore come in one of two basic forms:

1. In the form of an “**artifact**,” the result of your practical application of knowledge, abilities, or skills, accompanied by an **analysis paper** that provides the theoretical or analytical context for the particular artifact.
2. In the form of a **stand-alone research paper**.

However, **whether you address a practical problem or a theoretical question, the *Advanced Project* should demonstrate your ability to investigate a problem in depth, and, where appropriate, an understanding of the form or principles you used in the creation of a particular artifact.** In either case, you need to define and describe in detail the problem, issue, or theoretical question you want to address; you need to review related background information and literature; and you need to decide what are the most appropriate research methods for obtaining the information you need for carrying out your particular project.

Regardless of your particular Focus Area, your individual learning needs, and the actual design of your *Advanced Project*, you will demonstrate the two competencies that are capping off your Focus Area.

**F-11: Can design and produce a significant product that gives evidence of advanced competence.**

**F-12: Written by student/faculty. This competence summarizes the particular focus and content of the Advanced Project.**

In particular, in the *Advanced Project* the student

1. Demonstrates the ability to apply problem solving and research skills to one’s Individual Focus Area.
2. Understands the broader context of a particular issue or problem and can propose possible solutions.
3. Appropriately uses direct methods of investigation, personal experience, or application of knowledge and skills to a particular issue.

4. Produces a coherent and refined document of appropriate professional quality as evidence of learning.

The *Advanced Project* demonstrates knowledge and expertise in a student's Focus Area. Where the project involves the practical application of knowledge or skills, it should include an understanding of the dialogue between theory and practice. For example, case studies, or analyses of specific problems can serve to illustrate general principles. Whether addressing a practical problem or a theoretical question, the *Advanced Project* should demonstrate the student's ability to investigate a problem in depth, and to establish clear links between the definition of the problem, discussion of conceptual issues, methods of investigations, analysis of findings, and practical applications.

### Relationship to *Research Seminar*

The *Advanced Project* draws on key elements of *Research Seminar*:

- narrowing a particular topic into a clear and researchable focus;
- reviewing the literature available on a particular subject;
- identifying appropriate sources of data; and
- clearly describing and justifying the planned engagement in various data gathering strategies or methods of investigation.

At times, but not automatically, the research proposal, the final product developed in *Research Seminar*, lends itself to being actually carried out in the *Advanced Project*. At times this requires some adjustments of focus or research methods. Other times students mainly utilize the expert knowledge they developed when preparing the literature review—the bulk of the research proposal—as supportive evidence for the larger context and background of the particular issue they want to address in their *Advanced Project*. Your Academic Committee can assist you in deciding whether, and to what extent, the research proposal developed in *Research Seminar* can be turned into the Advanced Project Proposal & Contract.

### Examples

Projects can include, but are not limited to, original art work, business plans, book chapters, training modules, sociological analyses, organizational change proposals, articles for publication, information system plans, or philosophical theses. For instance,

- You may be involved in a reorganization effort at work and choose to produce a **plan for implementing a new organizational structure** as the *Advanced Project*. In addition to creating such a plan you would also have to demonstrate understanding of underlying principles of planned change or organizational development and describe how they guided your particular decisions when developing the plan.
- You might choose to develop a **training module** that could be used at your workplace, because you are interested in training as a field of study. Aside from producing the actual module, you would also demonstrate an understanding of the principles of training and/or learning theory you applied in the construction of the module.
- You are planning an **artistic production**, such as a painting, a novella, a play, etc., which will become the artifact of your *Advanced Project*. You should also make explicit the decisions behind the creative process in an analysis paper where you describe the context, or history, of the particular genre your artistic product represents, and how you applied certain principles or aesthetic standards in its creation.

- You may also be interested in **comparing and analyzing the differences between medical-psychiatric and non-medical alternative treatment approaches** to specific mental problems. Your project will result in a stand-alone research paper where you critically present different perspectives and persuasively argue for your own particular viewpoint.
- Your company just merged with another one, resulting in a number of difficulties and misunderstandings among employees as well as managers. You decide to study possible reasons and **review literature that discusses problems associated with the merging of different corporate cultures**. You summarize your findings in a report that ends with a proposed action plan of general use for any company undergoing a merger.

### Final Product

As you can see from these examples, the final version of the *Advanced Project* can take on quite different forms. All pieces should, however, build upon or complement each other, or illustrate different aspects of the particular problem or issue you pursued. Regardless of the particular format of your *Advanced Project* it should always include the following elements:

- An **Introduction** that explains your reasons for engaging in the project, its purpose, and its objectives, and goals;
- The **methods of investigation** you employed;
- A **list of resources** you consulted. Make sure that you list at least ten to fifteen (10-15) scholarly sources, and that you adhere to either MLA or APA guidelines for style and reference citations.

There are, of course, other pieces that need to be included in the final product, such as a **summary of your findings, a conclusion to your investigation, a description of your decision-making process** when developing an artifact, the artifact itself, and, where appropriate, attachments of other supportive material. Your Academic Committee will assist you in putting all the pieces together into a coherent document.

### Guidelines for Preparation and Process

In *Foundations* you start thinking about possible topics for your *Advanced Project* and in *Research Seminar* you refine and expand your thinking to include research methods and literature reviews. Actual work on your *Advanced Project* should begin after *Research Seminar*, at least two quarters prior to graduation, if not before.

The *Advanced Project* needs to be related to your Focus Area. With approval from your Academic Committee it can be an extension of work begun in Research Seminar. You may want to start with the Advanced Project Student Guide to decide which route you want to pursue. Please engage your Academic Committee from the start in a conversation about possibilities and corresponding formats of the final product. The Committee will guide you through the process of developing an outline that indicates all the pieces that need to be included and developed in the final draft of your particular *Advanced Project*. You should also look at the Advanced Project Assessment Rubric for being informed about the criteria your Committee will draw on when assessing your progress and final project.

Regularly submit a draft of your *Advanced Project* to your Professional Advisor and Faculty Mentor who will give you guidance and concrete feedback. Start work on your first draft at least one quarter before you plan to graduate in order to give yourself sufficient time to make revisions, if necessary. Remember:

your Academic Committee should approve your Advanced Project before your Final Committee Meeting.

### Evaluation

Your Academic Committee will provide you with the Advanced Project Assessment Rubric. Here is an abbreviated list of the main criteria your Academic Committee will apply in the evaluation of your project, with questions for you to use for personal guidance and self-assessment at various stages of your *Advanced Project* in order for you to know what you already accomplished and what you still need to work on.

- ✓ **Understanding of the broader context** of a particular issue. Have you drawn on what others have said about a given problem, i.e., accessed and analyzed the existing literature? Do you demonstrate an understanding of key issues and perspectives in a given field of investigation? For example, if you want to illustrate a children's book, did you probe into various approaches to design and the methods of illustration that are also appropriate for a specific age group?
- ✓ **Appropriate use of direct investigation or experience, or application.** In case you saw a need for collecting original data, or for drawing on your own experience, or for applying knowledge and skills to a particular project, did you systematically collect and analyze the original data, convincingly drew on your experience, and carefully tested a process of application? Is there a good balance between the use of methods of direct investigation, hands-on experience, application of theories, and secondary reading? Are they all inserted in a broader context or larger theoretical framework?
- ✓ **Appropriate professional standards of investigation and presentation.** Does the project investigate a problem in sufficient depth? Are generalizations offered and sufficiently supported by evidence? Is the document well written? Where appropriate, is the artifact skillfully developed and presented?
- ✓ **Documentation.** Are citation and bibliographic style properly followed? Are necessary attachments or supporting materials included?
- ✓ **Consistency with the proposal.** Is the *Advanced Project* in alignment with the original proposal? Did you successfully meet the goals and objectives specified in the Advanced Project proposal?
- ✓ **Quality of the final project.** Is the final document coherent, with the problem definition, discussion of conceptual issues, methods of investigation, analysis of findings, and, where appropriate the artifact, all linked and related to the main issue?

Note: All SNL students developing research projects that involve gathering data from human beings (e.g., surveys, interviews, archival, observation, etc.), must complete the **CITI on-line Basic initial training program before they will be approved as personnel on a research protocol.** Access the training program through the website of the DePaul University Institutional Review Board (IRB): <http://research.depaul.edu/>. A copy of the training certificate should be presented to the Academic Committee at the time the proposal is submitted.

*If there are any plans or intentions to publish or present, or otherwise make public, the data from the project, a formal application must be made to the IRB prior to any data-gathering commencing. See the IRB website for a list of Local Review Board (LRB) contacts, and people to contact at SNL for initial information and assistance in this process: <http://research.depaul.edu/IRB/LRB.html>*

### **Advanced Project Ideas and Examples**

Student A has dreamed about entering into an entrepreneurial business. For the *Advanced Project*, she will develop a business plan with a 5-year marketing plan.

Student B will carry out a study proposed in Research Seminar where she will work with a team in her neighborhood to create an alternative to youth sentencing based on Balance and Restorative Justice. Her Focus Area is in Work Studies.

Student C will examine the impact of technology on daily life. He will research computer crime, presenting the types, techniques and relevant law.

Student D will research and develop a counseling program for the treatment of drug and alcohol dependency. This will form part of her Focus Area in human resources.

Student E will analyze the change in management in the second millennium and the reduction of middle manager positions. She will approach this problem from several points of view including organizational and human resource impacts.

Student F, whose Focus Area is in the construction business, will design a floor plan and architectural blueprint for a new house. She will pay special attention to investigating code and zoning requirements.

Student G will draw up plans, based on his work in Research Seminar, for restoring the ecological balance in several of the canals and channels in the Chicago suburban area. His Focus Area is in Environment and Ecology.

Student H will focus on the investigation of Resource Based Relative Value Scale systems for healthcare reimbursement in order to properly serve the managed care environment.

Student I will explore the short story form, reading, analyzing, and writing about a selection of a dozen or so short stories and write several drafts of her own story. She will also participate in a writers' group for feedback and professional growth.

Student J will define and develop skills in drawing others into a vision, plan, and exercise of lay outreach ministry. His Focus Area is in parish ministry.

Student K will draw on his Focus Area in counseling and his experience as a parent of adopted children. He will design and write a manual for parents of adopted children.