1. **What is the mission of the project?**

The College Scholars Program (CSP) is a highly select community of undergraduate learners and teachers. Its mission is to empower students for lives of leadership, community values, independent thinking, and self-direction. The program is dedicated to inculcating in its members the habits of academic excellence and of thinking across traditional disciplinary boundaries. Its focus goes beyond the classroom and seminar table to larger world concerns, through academic group study, community service underpinned by scholarly analysis, and the development of leadership skills. To the extent that we are successful, the graduates of this program will go on to change the world in positive ways.

Many of the College Scholars Program’s specific projects have a campus-wide impact, including the student civic groups that have formed through the leadership and commitment of CSP students, along with the CSP speaker series, which brings to CWRU’s campus some of the most distinguished thinkers of our time.

2. **What are your specific goals and objectives?**

This past year was the second year the program was directed by Jonathan Sadowsky, who holds the Dr. Theodore J. Castele Associate Professorship of Medical History in the Department of History. The goals and objectives of the program have remained consistent. Our objectives are:

1) Offer an outstanding academic program for a select group of highly motivated students, who want to develop leadership skills, and put them to use for social and civic engagement.

2) Attract a group of students to the program who are diverse in their interests and backgrounds.

3) Staff the program with outstanding teachers.

To achieve these goals, we instituted the College Scholars Program, a three-year program offering students admitted into the program three academic credits (one course) per semester. Students enter the program as sophomores and move as a cohort through the program of study. Sophomores concentrate on the development of communication skills and understanding leadership. Juniors investigate multi-disciplinary topics of their joint choosing. Seniors conduct and defend a yearlong independent study project of their own design.
3. **Describe briefly your progress to date in achieving these goals.**

**Overview.** This is an interim progress report covering the 2002-2003 academic year, beginning September 2002 and ending May 2003.

We have now had five graduating classes. The majority of the graduates of the program are still attending graduate/professional schools so it is early to establish the impact of the program participants on their communities. Some CSP graduates continue to report that their participation in the program was the most positive experience they had at CWRU.

**Program Evaluation and Impact.**

Last year, we sent to graduates a survey, asking them to evaluate their experience in the program. Although the responses we did get were dramatically positive, the response rate was not good. We are working this summer to see if we can improve it, for example by getting updated addresses, since recent college graduates move frequently.

This Spring, we also had the graduating seniors from the program fill out a survey on their experience. These were also very positive, and are available for review. We made sure that the survey was sent to students who were admitted to the program, but chose not to finish it. These were, perhaps surprisingly, also positive, but cited time constraints from other academic obligations as their reason for not finishing. These are some quotes from this year’s survey responses:

“Above all else, I learned how to coexist with a group of people whose opinions and methods of argument are drastically different from my own…I learned to compromise…and this was a skill I sorely needed…What you learn in the process [of CSP] is invaluable…it has something to do with developing a deeper appreciation for other people and their ideas.”
--Phillip Miller

“[CSP] is an exceptional opportunity to go through 2 03 years of learning with a small group of powerhouse thinkers.”
--Maria Dikshteyn

“I feel like I have gone a long way in becoming a better group member, sometimes leader, even teacher…[I] hope very much that the program will continue to thrive and grow.”
--Louise Yeung
“I gained new points of view…This alternative not only kept me fresh and thirsting for the technical knowledge of other courses, but enhanced my ability to see many different sides to the same problem…”
--Eliot Bourk

**Educational Outcomes.** There were 42 students affiliated with CSP in the 2002-03 academic year, and 18 new freshmen were selected for entry to the program as sophomores in September 2003. 10 seniors completed senior projects and finished the entire CSP program this year. Retention of students in the program has continued to improve. Two of this year’s sophomores dropped out of the program early in the fall semester, citing stress from other responsibilities, but of the rest, all have expressed a desire to remain in the program. This year’s junior class was small, largely because an unusual number of students in that class transferred to other universities.

The senior projects were one of the program’s biggest successes this year. Past senior classes always had some exceptional projects, but this year’s class was remarkable for the consistency of its excellent projects. The students and their projects were:

- Carolyn Eggert, who did a study of math as a feminist issue, exploring barriers to advancement in mathematics for girls and young women.
- Chhavy Tep, who developed a service project to help low-income people in the community to obtain access to computers.
- Emily Link, who studied the efficacy of campus efforts to educate students on the dangers of drinking and drug abuse.
- Louise Yeung, who studied alternative medicine, culminating in a highly successful one-day alternative medicine fair in the atrium of University Hospitals.
- Marwa Sabe, who wrote a combination of ethnography and travel narrative based on her semester in Egypt.
- Marcela Smid, who produced a documentary film about staff at CWRU, which was complemented by a “student-staff interaction day” she organized on campus.
- Megan Melo, who studied the American pharmaceutical industry.
- Philip Miller, who wrote a remarkable book intended to develop philosophical thinking in small children; Miller also did an excellent job of illustrating the book himself.
- Ahalya Viswanathan, who wrote a chapbook of poetry, and did a public reading.
- Christina Garrett, who used and developed software to help high school students gather necessary information to learn about choices that face them after graduation.
Juniors in the CSP program pursued four topics for student-directed interdisciplinary study. Their topics were:

- The Italian Renaissance
- The Beat Generation
- Religious Experience
- Dreaming

The faculty of the program continued to work to refine the curriculum. Community service has always been encouraged in CSP; this year, for the first time, it was required for the sophomore class. The class was also required to write papers about their service, so the assignment went beyond what they could accomplish by volunteering outside the auspices of an academic program. The senior curriculum was marked this year by much closer monitoring of the students’ progress.

No changes were implemented in the junior curriculum this year, but a change was adopted for implementation this coming year. Students will be required to work more closely with faculty to develop the syllabus, and more time will be given to teaching students how to teach.

**Speakers**. The program is grateful for the support of the Provost’s Office, which allowed it to continue its important speaker series. The series brings to CWRU major public figures who benefit the entire campus and the Cleveland community, and provides the program itself with both intellectual stimulation and role models for engaged moral, civic, and scholarly leadership.

Speakers for this past academic year included:

- Richard Rodriguez, author of *The Hunger of Memory*
- Susan Sontag, essayist and novelist
- Katha Pollitt, columnist with *The Nation*
- Mary Catherine Bateson, writer and cultural anthropologist
- Donald Johanson, Physical Anthropologist and discoverer of "Lucy"

**Other Programming**. CSP continued to organize the popular “cake and coffee” meetings, which bring together students and faculty.

**4. What is unique about this project?**

The College Scholars Program is unique in a number of respects:
1) Working together in a cohort of students for three years permits learning experiences and collaborative projects that are unusual in ordinary academic programs.

2) The heavy emphasis on student-directed learning gives students a greater opportunity to develop leadership abilities than other academic programs.

3) Although service and community-based learning approaches are used in some courses outside of the program, CSP is the only program that aims to make them integral.

4) The CSP speaker series is the only series on campus oriented towards undergraduates, and is distinctive in bringing in nationally known public intellectuals whose provocative ideas are of interest to a wide audience.

5) CSP is marked by unusually close mentoring ties of faculty to students.

5. What modifications have occurred to project activities, focus, staffing, management or finances?

Several changes are noted above. The most important changes this year were 1) adding a service requirement to the sophomore curriculum and 2) more closely monitoring the progress of the senior projects to insure their quality.

One new faculty member was added this year: Linda Ehrlich, of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, who came on as a replacement during Atwood Gaines’s sabbatical in the Spring. Ehrlich is a specialist in Japanese film studies, and came to the program with a lot of enthusiasm. Jonathan Sadowsky, Patricia Princehouse, and Mary Barkley continued to teach in the program.

Because the program budget is shrinking, it was necessary to reduce the number of faculty to 4. The director strongly believes that the ideal number of faculty for the program is 5. Next year, the program will have 4 ½ faculty; we will again be without Atwood Gaines for half the year, as he is teaching in the SAGES Program in the fall.

The phasing out of the generous funding of the program by the Mandel Foundation has required the program to identify other sources of financial support. The support of the Provost’s Office has allowed the speaker series to continue, and the College of Arts and Sciences has made up most of the rest of the budget. The reduced budget the program has worked with over the past year and a half has required us to cut some programming back, but the current budget does allow us to continue most program activities. Further cuts would require that the program change in fundamental ways.
6. Have you learned anything to date that may change your expected outcomes?

To conclude, the College Scholars Program continues to be an innovative, and transformative program. It has had several missions, and has achieved success in all of them. Its appeal is limited to a select, but elite, group of students, and it has had an impact on college life that is greater than the number of students enrolled might at first suggest. Retention and student satisfaction with the program have been growing continually in recent years. In its interdisciplinarity and focus on community service, it is already embodying priorities the university has recently identified for future growth. The students who apply are among those the university is most interested in attracting and retaining; for example, every year, nearly all the Adelbert Squire Scholars apply. By offering small, interdisciplinary seminars, the new SAGES program builds on the experience of the College Scholars Program. Yet CSP retains many distinct features that SAGES lacks: the emphasis on community service, the emphasis on leadership, and a curriculum that is substantially shaped by the students themselves.