1. What is the mission of the project?

The College Scholars Program (CSP) is a 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 the habits of academic excellence and to 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. The program’s ambitious mission is no less than to produce graduates who will 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 third 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, 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 2003-2004 academic year, beginning September 2003 and ending May 2004.

We have now had six 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.**

2 years ago, we began sending surveys to current and former students, asking them to evaluate their experience in the program. The response rate was only fair for alumni, many of whom we probably have outdated addresses for. The response rate was very good for continuing students. The survey may fall short of complete scientific rigor, but does provide a useful guide to student satisfaction. There was a minority of lukewarm or negative responses; the vast majority were highly positive, often using superlative language. Many of them, for example, describe the program as life-changing, the best thing they did in college, an important part of who they are now, etc.

37 students took CSP classes this past academic year. This number was historically low, most years the number is closer to 45. Program retention has been highly variable; the classes of 2003 and 2005 are largely intact, whereas the classes of 2004 and 2006 have lost large numbers. The most commonly-cited reason students drop the program is that it takes up too many credit hours, interfering with their ability to complete their other academic obligations; many students who felt they were profiting from the program have dropped it because of this. For this reasons, director has proposed shortening the program from 18 credit hours to 12.

**Academic Activities, 2003-2004.**

There were 4 senior projects completed this year:

- Dorothy Chiu conducted a study of addiction, focusing on less well-known forms of addiction, such as video-gaming.
- Lila Ibrahim did a research project examining the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict since the Oslo Accords.
- Michelle Kim directed a program intended to expose less-advantaged High School students to careers in Health Care.
Sam Korkor did an art project, producing a series of abstract paintings, and also studying audience responses to them.

Juniors in the CSP program pursued four topics for student-directed interdisciplinary study. As always, the program sought to cover arts, humanities, social science, and natural science topics. The topics were:

- Film Studies
- Postmodernism
- Infectious Diseases
- Comparative Marriage Customs

The faculty of the program continued to work to refine the curriculum. Community service has always been encouraged in CSP. Since 2001-2002, we have paid particular attention to maintaining and increasing academic rigor, and enhancing the service learning requirements. There are plans to increase the latter still more in coming years.

**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.

The program was approached for co-sponsorship on a number of events this fall. This allowed us to devote the bulk of our income from the Provost’s Office on the hugely successful visit of Kurt Vonnegut this Spring, which was easily among the top 3 best-attended speaker events at Case over the last 10 years (the other two probably being CSP’s inaugural speaker, Cornel West, and this year’s visit of Stephen Hawking to the cosmology conference). Students had requested Vonnegut for years, and it was gratifying to get him for what he says will be one of his last public lectures.

Our fall co-sponsored events were:

- Oliver Sacks (for Convocation)
- Angela Bowen (with the Women’s Center)
- Bertice Berry (with SAGES)

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?

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.

No new faculty were added this year. The current director, Jonathan Sadowsky, is on an externally-funded research leave this Fall. Christopher Cullis, of the Department of Biology, who taught in the program in its early years, has agreed to re-join the faculty this year, and serve as interim director for the fall.

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.