In fall 2007 Salisbury University’s Fulton School of Liberal Arts initiated the adoption of a new curriculum delivery system that saw the School move from a traditional 3-credit course model to an innovative 4-credit course model very much akin to the “course-based” curriculum model found at many of the nation’s best private liberal arts colleges and the Ivy League. The intent of the new model was—and remains—to “provide all Salisbury University students taking Fulton courses—via majors, minors, General Education and electives—with an enhanced, deeper, more focused, more engaged and more rigorous learning experience,” and in so doing, “invigorate the liberal arts at SU and revolutionize how both students and faculty work—and work together—in the Fulton School setting.” The present document introduces the Fulton 4-credit course model, as well as the process followed to put it in place, before moving on to an overview of the reform’s early (2007-2011) implementation.

History and Design of the Fulton Reform/4-Credit Course Model

The Idea and Initial Consideration

The idea for the reform in question came to campus via President Janet Dudley-Eshbach, whose work in 2004 as chair of the Middle States team reviewing The College of New Jersey’s application for reaccreditation introduced her to TCNJ’s just-adopted course-based curriculum delivery system. Intrigued by the energizing effect of the reform on TCNJ’s academic community and the note of distinction that the course-based system brought to this public institution (TCNJ was one of the first public universities to adopt the otherwise private college model), Dr. Dudley-Eshbach encouraged the SU Faculty Senate to investigate TCNJ’s course-based model and determine if there might be sufficient merit in SU looking into adopting the model itself. In spring 2005 an initial ad hoc committee concluded that the idea was worth further investigation, and the Faculty Senate, with support from the Provost’s Office, commissioned a University-wide ad hoc committee, with faculty representation from all schools, appropriate standing committees and the Provost’s Office, to determine whether Salisbury University could and should adopt the course-based system. This 12-person committee spent almost a full year of research, discussion and debate, including a visit by some committee members to TCNJ, a day-long, SU-wide meeting with visiting TCNJ reform experts, numerous meetings, by the ad hoc committee and/or its individual members, with various groups (full faculty, academic departments, administrative officers, and individual faculty members), in multiple venues (including “town hall” style settings). In spring 2006, the committee presented a proposal recommending University-wide adoption of the course-based model. Faculty Senate voted in favor of the proposal but also chose to send it to all fulltime faculty for a campus-wide vote; the proposal was ultimately rejected by a vote of 159-147.
The Fulton School Moves Forward on Its Own

Within days of the aforementioned vote, three Fulton-based members of the aforementioned University-wide reform committee met with then Fulton School Dean, Dr. Timothy O’Rourke, and suggested that Fulton consider proposing either the course-based model itself or a credit-counting model very much like it for adoption in the Fulton School. With approval and support of the Dean, and with the go-ahead from President Dudley-Eshbach to investigate the idea further, the Fulton School convened an ad hoc reform committee in summer 2006 that, by that August, proposed a course model that would deliver all or most of the advantages of the course-based model but still count credits and in so doing still “speak” the language of the rest of the SU campus in this area. That model was built around a 4-credit course model, with several options/possibilities for the 4th credit, most of which, as in the course-based model, entailed additional, more independent, and often more engaged/hands-on/experiential work outside of class, rather than, in most cases, additional seat time. The model also reconfigured faculty teaching load from four 3-credit courses to three 4-credit courses, and, by extension, the course load of many students from five 3-credit courses to four 4-credit courses.

Fulton’s August 2006 proposal was followed by a year-long process, carried out by the members of another small Fulton reform group known as the “Special Ops” committee and co-chaired by two Fulton faculty members, with representation from both the Fulton Dean’s Office and the Provost’s Office. The work of this committee included regular consultation with Fulton School chairs and the Fulton School’s curriculum committee; negotiations with the University-wide curriculum committee; numerous meetings with chairs, departments, and, in one case, even the full faculty of Salisbury’s other schools (in particular because Fulton’s proposal would alter the School’s portion of the University’s General Education requirements); detailed study of Maryland’s credit hour regulations under COMAR; and a litany of small adjustments—and a few rather radical changes—to Fulton’s still-in-progress proposal, all brought about by the ongoing consultations and negotiations.

The “Special Ops” committee and the Fulton School presented a final and official proposal for adoption of the 4-credit course model to the Faculty Senate in March 2007, very shortly after which it received the Senate’s approval. The proposal then moved to a campus-wide, fulltime faculty vote for a second year in a row (Fulton fulltime faculty had already voted, in the positive, on the idea of the reform in November of 2006; they voted again in the spring campus-wide vote). This University-wide vote approved Fulton’s adoption of the new course model.

The Fulton 4-Credit Course Model

As suggested above, the Fulton 4-credit course model imitates the course model found in the course-based curriculum system. In the course-based system, a Philosophy course, say, that would meet three hours a week as a 3-credit course at a non-course-based institution, would still, in most cases, meet for three hours a week, but it would carry greater weight and account for, in most cases, one quarter of a student’s semester course load (or one of four courses; many course-based institutions require 32 courses, spread over eight semesters, for graduation). The extra weight, or the 4-credit nature (if one is speaking of credit hours) of the course, would come from, compared with a 3-credit course, additional, outside-of-class work. A 4th hour of seat time would be possible, but in most institutions of the type that would have a course-based system it would not be the norm.
The designers of the Fulton course model, operating in a credit-counting—as opposed to course-counting—system, had to find a way to create a course model that both counted credits and provided all the advantages of the course-based model. The new course model also needed to meet the reform’s emphasis on greater academic rigor and deeper engagement, as well as provide Fulton faculty with both a manageable and innovative way to “enhance” their 3-credit courses to 4-credit status. The new course model, and particularly its 4th credit, would also have to conform to state COMAR regulations regarding the amount of time and work, and the nature of said work, that constitutes a credit hour. The result was a 4th-credit “enhancement menu” that provides an array of options, any one of which could account for the fourth credit, or, and perhaps more often, be used in combination with other options to build the course’s additional credit. All options also came with the specific requirements of each within COMAR regulations. The Menu and how each option corresponds to COMAR appears below.

**The Fulton Reform Enhancement Menu**

1. **Increased course content and/or collateral readings** (e.g., more primary, secondary and/or supplemental readings).
2. **Undergraduate Research and Information Literacy** (e.g., assignments that fulfill department programmatic approaches to undergraduate research and information literacy, systematically building students’ research and writing skills throughout their majors).
3. **Technology** (e.g., instructor-developed content, commercially developed course packs, digital audio—such as podcasting—video demonstrations, chat rooms, course blogs, individual WebCT [now, in November 2011, MyClassess] tutoring, teleconferences with students at other campuses or international groups, field research, student-authored independent research).
4. **Higher Level Critical Thinking Exercises** (e.g., assignments that specifically develop analysis, synthesis and evaluation, as opposed to lower-level critical thinking exercises that target knowledge, comprehension and application).
5. **Service Learning/Civic Engagement** (e.g., assignments which place students in leadership positions to conceive of and implement programs that they know will benefit others; assignments which will involve students in developing good civic dispositions, as suggested in the 2006 Middle States Report).
6. **International Education/Cultural Enrichment** (e.g., spring break study/experience abroad, museum visits, cultural experiences within our geographical area).
7. **Additional hour(s) in class, lab or studio.**

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<tr>
<th>Enhancement</th>
<th>COMAR Regulation</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
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<tr>
<td>Increased course content and/or collateral readings</td>
<td>(.16.C.1.c.)</td>
<td>Additional 45 hours per semester of supervised, documented learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Research and</td>
<td>(.16.C.1.c. and/or d.)</td>
<td>Additional 45 hours per semester of supervised, documented learning and/or</td>
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Enhancement | COMAR Regulation | Requirements |
--- | --- | --- |
Increased course content and/or collateral readings | (.16.C.1.c.) | Additional 45 hours per semester of supervised, documented learning. |
Undergraduate Research and | (.16.C.1.c. and/or d.) | Additional 45 hours per semester of supervised, documented learning and/or |
Information Literacy | Supervised instruction and documented learning through appropriate technology mediums.
--- | ---
Technology | Supervised instruction and documented learning through appropriate technology mediums.
(.16.C.1.d.)
Higher Level Critical Thinking Exercises (analysis, synthesis and evaluation) | Additional 45 hours per semester of supervised, documented learning and/or supervised instruction and documented learning through appropriate technology mediums.
(.16.C.1.c. and/or d.)
Service Learning/Civic Engagement | Additional 45 hours per semester of supervised, documented learning.
(.16.C.1.c.)
International Education/Cultural Enrichment | Additional 45 hours per semester of supervised, documented learning.
(.16.C.1.c.)
Additional hour(s) in class | Additional 15 hours per semester of supervised, documented learning.
(.16.C.1.a.)
Additional hour(s) in lab or studio | Additional 30 hours per semester of supervised, documented learning.
(.16.C.1.b.)

**Changing How Students and Faculty Work**

As stated above, the Fulton reform is intended and designed to change the way students work, the way faculty work, and, most importantly, the way students and faculty work together in the Fulton School setting.

The move to 4-credit courses in the Fulton School has meant that the typical SU student course load has moved from *five courses a semester* (typically five 3-credit courses, for 15 credits, or four 3-credit courses and a 4-credit science course, for 16 credits) to *four courses a semester* (typically four 4-credit courses, for 16 credits, or three 4-credit courses and one 3-credit course, for 15 credits). *This shift is one of the main goals of the Fulton reform.* The move from five courses—and often five completely different subject areas—to four allows students to focus on fewer courses at once and to engage more deeply in each course (and with all or most courses in each student’s load being a 4-credit course, the greater focus on and deeper engagement in each course is required).

Likewise, adoption of the 4-credit course model has required a *reconfiguration* of the teaching load of fulltime Fulton faculty, as they have moved from teaching four 3-credit courses/sections per semester to three 4-credit courses/sections—still 12 hours per semester, but configured differently,
in part because the “math” demands it but also because this configuration helps faculty take full advantage of the reform in order to deliver the best course “product” and faculty mentoring possible to students taking Fulton courses, which is also a main goal of the Fulton reform. Fulton faculty teach both fewer courses/sections and fewer students per semester, and in most cases, though they still teach 12 credits per semester, they do so via 9 hours of in-class time (since most faculty have enhanced their classes from 3 credits to 4 via an option other than extra seat time, in keeping with the philosophy and practice of the course-based system). All of this allows Fulton faculty to focus more on each of the courses/sections they teach and on the students—and fewer students, overall—therein. This improved focus is designed to help in everything from the development of new course content and innovations in pedagogy to the additional attention to and mentoring of individual students (from something as simple—but helpful—as the time to write more and better comments on students papers, to meeting with students individually and/or in small groups more often and easily outside of regular class time). And though the focus of the reform is clearly and squarely on students, the reconfiguration of teaching load is one that, once faculty have fully adjusted to it, should benefit both students and faculty alike, and in so doing further enhance the effects of the Fulton reform. It should also be noted and emphasized—as it was in the Fulton reform proposal—that the reform is not about reducing faculty teaching load, but about reconfiguring—even refocusing—it, as a result of the reform, to serve both the students and the overall Fulton and SU academic communities better.

Preparation for Launch: Program Reform, Faculty Training, Course Development and more

**The department and major/minor level:** Prior to the 2008-2009 full-School launch of the Fulton reform, all Fulton departments and programs spent fall 2007 thoughtfully and carefully reforming their major and minor programs and courses/course requirements in such way that each department moved from (on average) 12-course/36-credit majors and 6-course/18-credit minors to 10-course/40-credit majors and 5-course/20-credit minors (certain majors/minors—such as International Studies—were allowed to exceed these numbers, but departments needed to make a case for doing so). This change was undertaken both to accommodate the 4-credit course model and to take the opportunity of the reform to revisit and rethink majors/minors in order to build stronger programs, enhanced by the advantages of the reform.

**The individual faculty member level:** In summer 2007, representatives from each Fulton department met periodically to learn—via workshops and other sessions—about the various ways formerly 3-credit courses could be converted to the 4-credit level and with the goals and opportunities of the reform in mind. The group attended an initial June workshop that featured an introduction to the Fulton Reform Course Enhancement Menu and related COMAR regulations, as well as presentations by School and campus experts on each of the Enhancement Menu options. The group then met multiple times over the summer to share the work the members had done in experimenting with and practicing enhancing individual courses. A two-day, Fulton-wide workshop in August, with 140+ fulltime Fulton faculty in attendance, helped introduce the rest of the School’s faculty to the Menu, COMAR and other course enhancement issues. A third workshop day was dedicated to department meetings so that each department could map out its strategy and schedule with regard to both program reform and individual course enhancement; department representatives from the aforementioned summer group were instrumental in the reform work of their departments and colleagues in these meetings and the many that followed over the rest of this critical year. Prior to the August workshop, a Fulton reform website was established, with a handbook, FAQ’s (perhaps
the most important and easy-to-use item made available to faculty) and other items, all designed to help Fulton faculty enhance their courses and prepare their proposals for submission to curriculum committees. (The aforementioned website is still in place at www.salisbury.edu/fulton/curriculum/4-creditmodel.html.) Throughout all of the above preparation, and at multiple places in the online documents, faculty were encouraged not simply to add 4th-credit enhancement packages to their previous 3-credit courses, but to take the opportunity of the reform to rethink the courses in question, whether X faculty member had taught said courses for two years or 32 years, and consider reform/enhancement that touched on other areas of the course. Faculty were also encouraged to be sure to fully incorporate their enhancements into the rest of the course, rather than simply add a sort of “side-car” element to the course.

Approving the enhanced majors/minors/courses. Beginning in late fall 2007, via a pre-arranged, staggered schedule, Fulton departments sent proposals for their changed majors and minors to the Fulton Curriculum Committee (FCC). The major/minor packets were also accompanied by all enhanced, 4-credit courses scheduled to be offered the following fall, in 2008 (so as not to overwhelm the Committee or faculty, a schedule was established whereby all enhanced course proposals were sent to the Committee, again on a pre-arranged, staggered schedule, roughly two semesters prior to the first-time offering of X course as a 4-credit course over a two-year period). The FCC fielded and carefully vetted all enhanced Fulton majors and minor program proposals between fall 2007 and early spring 2008, as well as over 500 Fulton course enhancement packets during 2008-2008 and 2008-2009. All of these items, once approved by the FCC, moved on for consideration and eventual approval by the University-wide Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC). In other words, every major, every minor, and every one of 500+ courses was thoughtfully enhanced, officially proposed, meticulously vetted and approved (some, of course, were sent back for changes, both big and small, prior to this) by both the Fulton and University curriculum committees. The task of doing this, both on the individual faculty level and, especially, the committee level was, as someone put it, nothing short of monumental. The work and care put into it, by all parties, speaks to both the dedication and the reform “buy-in” of all involved. One thing was certain—the reform was going to be done right.

Changes in Gen Ed. Approval of the new Fulton 4-credit course model also brought changes to Gen Ed. The Liberal Arts portion of Gen Ed—including both Fulton courses and ECON and Human Geography courses—went from ten 3-credit courses, for 30 credits, to seven 4-credit courses, or five or six 4-credit courses, plus an ECON and/or Human Geography course, each at three credits, for between 26 and 28 credits. (Some observers suggested that Fulton gave up “turf” in Gen Ed, in the form of credit hours, via the adoption of the reform, and that is actually true.) The reform brought historic changes to Gen Ed that went well beyond the number of course and credits, however. The English portion of Gen Ed went from 101: Composition, 102: Introduction to Literature and one literature course, for a total of nine credits, to the brand-new 103: Composition and Research and one literature course, for a total of eight credits. (Some suggested that this reduced the amount of writing instruction being offered to SU students, but the Fulton School’s contention was—and is—that writing is not simply assigned, but taught, across the entire Fulton School curriculum, and especially via the new 4-credit course model, with a significant increase in both writing assignments and faculty feedback and mentoring of students.) The History portion of Gen Ed went from History 101 and 102, for a total of six credits, plus the possibility that a student might take a third History course in the Humanities sub-section of Gen Ed, to History 101, or 102,
or the newly created 103, plus either another of these three course offerings or most any other History course, for a total of eight credits; History was removed from Humanities sub-section of Gen Ed post-reform, so the most History courses students could take for Gen Ed would be two courses for eight credits. The rest of the Humanities and the Social Sciences (including ECON and Human Geography) would be divided across three new slots: III-A, in which students must take one Humanities course; III-B, in which students take one Social Sciences course; and III-C, in which students take another Humanities or Social Science course. Fulton’s enhanced 4-credit courses are clearly the focus of the reform, but proposal and approval of the new course-model brought—and required—a number of changes in Gen Ed as well.

**Initial Implementation**

In winter 2007, prior to the official, March 2007 proposal of the reform (and the subsequent Faculty Senate and campus-wide faculty votes that would approve it), the Fulton School, working with the Provost and the Office of Academic Affairs, agreed to initiate trial adoption of the 4-credit course model via three “pilot” or “starter” programs offered in Art, Philosophy and Political Science, beginning in fall 2007, and on the condition that both FCC and UCC approve the reform-related materials submitted by these departments. With this arrangement in place, the three departments redesigned their majors and minors and their faculty put together course enhancement proposals for all of the courses scheduled to be offered in fall 2007. Both FCC and UCC approved the materials in question, and the programmatic and course changes were put into place for the following fall. Faculty Senate and full-faculty approval of the overall reform followed in March and April, respectively, and, in the minds of some, the three “pilot” programs, with the reform’s approval, became “starter” programs. (The Provost, however, reserved the right to reverse the approval of the reform, should the three “pilot”/”starter” programs reveal serious and unforeseen issues, so the Art, PHIL and POSC programs that launched in fall 2007 were, technically, “pilot” programs indeed.)

**School-Wide Implementation**

By the time the “pilot” programs were getting under way, in fall 2007, the Fulton School, as detailed under Preparation for Launch, above, had already begun to move with both due speed and diligence to prepare for full, School-wide implementation of the 4-credit course model the following year, in 2008-2009. Following a year of workshops, group and one-on-one training, hours of thoughtful consideration by departments and individual faculty, pages and pages of program and course enhancement proposals, and both FCC’s and UCC’s detailed analysis and approval, the Fulton School’s remaining nine departments—and all the programs and courses therein—joined the “pilot” programs in offering the new, enhanced, 4-credit-course-model curriculum in fall 2008.

The scope of this change was unprecedented in the history of the Fulton School and perhaps, even very likely, in the history of the University. From one academic year to the next, almost 20 degree programs, 20+ minors, hundreds of courses, and 140+ faculty went from a 3-credit course model to a 4-credit model, and besides the hundreds, even thousands, of students who populated the courses in question, probably more than half of all SU undergraduates, or over 3,000, chose to make the jump from the SU catalog under which they began their SU career to the new catalog featuring the
new Fulton 4-credit course model, the new Fulton section of the SU General Education requirements, and, for many, the redesigned Fulton majors and minors.

**Early Impressions of Effectiveness**

With only three years of School-wide implementation thus far, it may be a bit early to get a solid read of measurable effects associated with adoption of the 4-credit course model. Also, and perhaps more importantly, as there was no Fulton-wide, common assessment regimen or tool in place prior to the reform, and assessment in general across the School varied greatly from department to department before the reform’s launch, it is impossible to establish a statistical pre-reform, and specifically reform-related, base from which to compare any assessment results post-reform; we have, in other words, no solid “before” with which to compare an “after.” Fulton departments, though still at different stages of development with regard to their assessment plans, are moving forward on the assessment front, and, no doubt, some conclusions about the effects of the reform—based on data—can and will be possible in the future (though there will still be no pre-reform base with which to compare current and future assessment results). At present, the School’s assessment of the reform is based on the student and faculty impressions, as summarized in the following pages.

**Student Feedback – “Three Common Questions”**

In order to get initial—albeit somewhat informal and subjective—student feedback regarding whether the new, enhanced, 4-credit courses were specifically achieving the main goals behind the Fulton reform, the chairs of the three “pilot” programs and the Fulton School Associate Dean met in fall 2007 to develop an end-of-course survey to be given only to students who had already taken a 3-credit course in the discipline in question and were now taking a 4-credit course. (This survey would be separate and in addition to the standard course evaluation, filled out by all students.) While each of the three programs developed somewhat different surveys, the chairs agreed to include some common questions that would be asked of students in all three programs. When the other Fulton departments and programs adopted the 4-credit course model the following year (2008-2009), the common questions asked by the “pilot” programs the year before became the “Three Common Questions” asked by all Fulton departments in 2008-2009. The three questions were:

1. Does this 4-credit course require *significantly more work* than the 3-credit course(s) you have previously taken in this discipline?
2. Have you *learned more* in this 4-credit course than in the 3-credit course(s) you have previously taken in this discipline?
3. Have you been *more engaged* in this 4-credit course than in the 3-credit course(s) you have taken in this discipline?

The feedback returned from the students in question was as follows:
FULTON SCHOOL AVERAGE EVALUATION RESPONSES
FALL 2008

FULTON
4 Credit Course Required Significantly More Work, N = 3013

FULTON
Was More Engaged by the 4 Credit Course, N = 2949

FULTON
Learned More in the 4 Credit Course, N = 3019

50.0%
40.0%
30.0%
20.0%
10.0%
0.0%

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neutral
Agree
Strongly Agree

46.4%
31.0%
14.2%
5.8%
2.6%

50.0%
40.0%
30.0%
20.0%
10.0%
0.0%

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neutral
Agree
Strongly Agree

31.7%
30.3%
23.2%
11.0%
3.6%

50.0%
40.0%
30.0%
20.0%
10.0%
0.0%

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neutral
Agree
Strongly Agree

31.0%
30.9%
23.5%
11.0%
3.6%
% Of Students Reporting that the 4-Credit Course was More Work

% of Students Reporting They Learned More in the 4-Credit Course

% of Students Reporting They Were More Engaged in the 4-Credit Course
FULTON SCHOOL AVERAGE EVALUATION RESPONSES
SPRING 2009

FULTON
4 Credit Course Required Significantly More Work, N = 2654

FULTON
Learned More in the 4 Credit Course, N = 2642

FULTON
Engaged More in the 4 Credit Course, N = 2572
% Of Students Reporting that the 4-Credit Course was More Work

% Of Students Reporting They Learned More in the 4-Credit Course

% of Students Reporting They Were More Engaged in the 4-Credit Course
While there are some differences from discipline to discipline, for the most part the Strongly Agree/Agree answers to the significantly more work and learned more questions were quite encouraging. The answers to the more engaged question were a bit more mixed, owing, perhaps, to the students’ simply not knowing how to answer the question—how, after all, compared to more work and learned more, does one define and accurately measure more engaged? This said, the responses for this particular question were still quite good.

The Fulton School chose not to ask the “Three Common Questions” after 2008-2009, as the pool of respondents (students with both 3-credit and 4-credit experience in courses in the discipline in question) was going to shrink significantly with the graduation of the 2009 senior class (the respondents’ pool had already shrunk from roughly 3,000 in fall 2008 to 2,500 or so in spring 2009, just from one semester to the next, without the loss of a full senior class). The time since the students in question had taken a 3-credit course in the same discipline was also getting longer and with that perhaps their ability to remember the details of the 3-credit courses well enough to compare them with the new 4-credit courses might diminish to a significant degree. These two factors would make the responses to each subsequent semester’s/year’s “Three Common Questions” less meaningful.

All of the above said, SU will ask students to complete the National Survey of Student Engagement in 2012, for the first time since 2008. While not Fulton- or reform-specific, the School looks forward to seeing how the pre- and post-reform NSSE results compare with one another and what the results might suggest about the Fulton reform and its impact on students’ learning experience.

**Faculty Feedback**

In some ways paralleling the “Three Common Questions” student survey, the Fulton School asked faculty to fill out a survey as well, at the end of 2008-2009 and again in 2009-2010. Unlike the student population alluded to above, the number of faculty with both 3- and 4-credit course experience was not shrinking, and more to the point, it was thought that the experience and impressions of faculty a year later might be sufficiently different so as to change faculty responses to the survey questions—thus the rationale for running the survey a second year.

**Faculty Feedback – May 2009**

The questions asked of faculty in May 2009 were:

1. Briefly, what enhancement(s) did you incorporate into the courses you taught in 2008-2009? Be as general or as specific as you see fit.
2. How do you think students responded to the enhancements in question and to the reform in general (i.e., quality of the study work, student engagement)?
3. What has your own experience been like, teaching enhanced courses and teaching within the reconfigured load? Do you think the reform—and focusing on fewer sections and fewer students—has made you a better teacher?
4. Based on what you have observed regarding your students’ experience/performance and on your own experience, where might the reform need improvement?
Over half of all Fulton’s 140+ fulltime faculty responded. A report on the answers to each question follows:

1. **Briefly, what enhancement(s) did you incorporate into the courses you taught in 2008-2009? Be as general or as specific as you see fit.**

Most faculty reported that they chose to enhance their courses via Enhancement Menu Option #1: Increased Course Content and/or Collateral Readings, though most of these faculty mixed or blended this option with others, particularly #2: Undergraduate Research and Information Literacy, and #4: Higher Level Critical Thinking Exercises, and they frequently employed #3: Technology to some degree in order to deliver and/or receive elements of the aforementioned options. Some examples of specific enhancements, or pieces thereof, included the assignment of additional texts (compared to those used in the former 3-credit version of the course), the reading of scholarly articles (on works of literature, for instance), followed by the writing of reaction and/or analytical essays; the writing of journals or reading logs; the creation of working, annotated bibliographies; the writing of more and/or longer essays/papers; writing assignments that, more so than in past courses, emphasized the step-by-step research and writing process, requiring students to meet with the instructor and/or turn in work in progress at set points in the path from idea to finished product. Some faculty reported not only assigning more reading, but more difficult reading, and giving more difficult exams and other assignments. Many faculty used technology to conduct additional class discussions online, or to deliver learning activities, such as web-based reading and/or research assignments, as well as interactive assignments and online quizzes. Some faculty sent their students out of the classroom and into the SU and local communities to attend on-campus academic and cultural events (accompanied by a writing assignment or presentation), or to provide some sort of service or participate in civic engagement (Menu Option #5). Some faculty took their students out of the classroom on experiential field trips, as close as the local community to as far away as Ghana, Iceland and England via in-course Spring Break study abroad (Menu Option #6). A small number of faculty (mostly in Art and Theatre) added class or studio time to their courses (Menu Option #7). Though Enhancement Menu Option #1 clearly dominated in Fulton’s new 4-credit courses in 2008-2009, all Menu options were employed across the School, and in many if not most courses, even those dominated by Option #1, some combination of options was used. The work related to these enhancement elements all directly contained or led to assigned and graded work, specifically meeting the COMAR requirement of “supervised, documented learning.” And specifically, as enhancements added to former 3-credit courses, the work, activities and assignments in question were ones that could not have been assigned or realized without the 4-credit course model.

2. **How do you think students responded to the enhancements in question and to the reform in general (i.e., quality of the study, work, student engagement)?**

Most faculty thought that students, in general, responded well to enhanced courses and to the specific enhancements themselves and both accepted and rose to the challenge of the more rigorous and/or more intensive courses. Many said that students, again in general, were more engaged, learned more, wrote better, did more work, both in amount and in depth and type, the likes of which faculty would not have been able to include in the previous 3-credit version of the course(s) in question. Some faculty, however, reported that many students struggled with, for example, the extra reading and writing, and that some students got bogged down, even to the point of failing a course that they might not have failed in the old 3-credit model. While it seemed clear that most
students adjusted to the greater workload and challenge of the reformed courses—and some even embraced it—some (especially seniors, for example, in need of one more Fulton course to complete a minor) resented the change to the 4-credit model and the workload and the specific nature (particularly more independent work) of the enhancements included in their courses; some such students even asked if they could take a 3-credit version of the course instead, just to finish the minor. One faculty member observed that the required student culture change had been slow and another said that many students did not appreciate the goals of the reform and viewed the change as simply more work. Another faculty member, however, pointed out how helpful it was to articulate very clearly during the first week of classes the difference between a 3- and 4-credit course, and yet another said that he/she explained this difference, as well as the full expectations of a 4-credit course (12 hours of work per week, combined, between class time and out-of-class work) and the overall purpose of the reform. Finally, several faculty member thought they had over-enhanced their courses in the fall and took steps to adjust their course enhancements in the spring—while still meeting COMAR requirements—and this had helped significantly.

3. *What has your own experience been like, teaching enhanced courses and teaching within the reconfigured load? Do you think the reform—and focusing on fewer sections and fewer students—has made you a better teacher?*

Most faculty said that the reform and the reconfigured teaching load had made them better teachers; in fact, many were adamant about it. The reasons they cited included the fact that they had more time to meet with students and otherwise deal with their fewer students more individually and personally. The reconfigured load and fewer students also allowed faculty to provide more feedback, such as more—and more thoughtful—written comments they found themselves writing on student exams and papers. Others said that the reconfigured load forced them to become familiar with new textbooks and/or new ways of putting their students to work with the subject covered in the course, or to experiment with new ways of teaching and approaching different learning styles, none of which they would have done had the reform not pushed them toward innovation. Some said the reform had reenergized their teaching and that, specifically, the reconfigured load had given them greater energy for their fewer classes and fewer students. This said, many said that the new load had not made for less work; some thought their overall teaching load was heavier than before. Many of those who made this observation, however, also pointed out that this was probably because they were going through the newly reformed courses, and the specific enhancements, for the first time, and that, ultimately, the reconfigured, reformed load would—or should—provide a far more manageable teaching load than its 4-course-a-semester predecessor. Most respondents would probably agree with the faculty member who called the reform “one of the best decisions the Fulton School had ever made.” A very small minority, however, suggested that the reconfigured load had made them worse teachers than before.

4. *Based on what you have observed regarding your students’ experience/performance and on your own experience, where might the reform need improvement?*

Many faculty thought that improvement in the reform, or in the execution thereof, would come by more faculty embracing a wider variety of Menu items, rather than relying so strongly on more reading and writing assignments. Some faculty were concerned that some of these assignments might lend themselves to “busy work,” or at least work in which quantity might sometimes threaten to override quality (a danger inherent, in some ways, in the nature of the COMAR regulations). Some faculty were concerned that too many of the same type of enhancement assignments, across
several Fulton courses that a student might be taking at the same time, might be “piling on,” when Fulton has a varied Enhancement Menu of which faculty were not taking full advantage. Several faculty encouraged ongoing Brown Bag events dedicated to helping faculty adopt some of the less-used Menu items; some faculty even suggested that though such events had been held already, they were worth repeating. One faculty member said that the University needed to push for the reform—or some aspect of reform—across the entire University, both because Fulton reform was a positive thing and because University-wide reform would make changing the academic culture at SU—and for both students and faculty alike—easier. Many faculty wrote about how improvement in the reform would come simply via the gradual change in student culture, which most who cited this suggested was sure to come; it would just take more time. Most faculty would have agreed with the one who wrote that “the reform [was] on the right path,” though one faculty member call for its repeal.

It was clear, from the 70+ returned survey responses, that the vast majority of Fulton faculty viewed the reform in a positive light; saw students’ responses to the reform as generally positive but also clearly a work in progress; were, in many ways, working harder in their teaching than ever before, but felt they were serving their students better than ever, as well and recognized that this was a rather intense period of transition, the full benefits of which, for both students and faculty, still lay down the road a bit. They also recognized that they and/or their colleagues needed to add further variety to their approach regarding course enhancements, and that student culture needed to—and would—change.

**Faculty Feedback – May 2010**

The questions asked of faculty in May 2010 were very similar to those asked in May 2009, but tweaked a bit to emphasize a comparison of the faculty member’s experience and impressions from one year to the next. A fifth question, regarding the reform website, was also included. The questions were as follows:

1. Did you alter your course enhancements in 2009-2010 from the ones you employed in 2008-2009, and if so, why?
2. How do you think students responded to course enhancements in 2009-2010, compared to 2008-2009, and if you saw a difference, in either direction, to what do you think it might be attributed?
3. Was your experience teaching enhanced courses and with the reconfigured teaching load (4/4 to 3/3) different from your experience in 2008-2009, and if so, why? Based on your experience in 2009-2010, as last year’s survey asked, do you think the reform has helped to make you a better teacher and student mentor?
4. Do you have any suggestions regarding what the Fulton School could do to help you with your enhanced courses, including how it might help you consider and/or adopt other types of enhancement options in the Course Enhancement Menu (such as service learning, civic engagement, study abroad, the incorporation of technology)? Do you have any suggestions as to where the reform might need improvement?
5. Did you access and make use of the reform website ([www.salisbury.edu/fulton/currref/](http://www.salisbury.edu/fulton/currref/)) in 2009-2010? What helps might the website offer you (that it currently does not) in your continued teaching and development of enhanced courses?
Once again, over half of Fulton’s 140+ fulltime faculty responded. Below is a report on the responses to each question:

1. Did you alter your course enhancements in 2009-2010 from the ones you employed in 2008-2009, and if so, why?

While some faculty reported that they made no changes at all to their course enhancements from the previous year, most made some adjustments, and some made radical changes. Some faculty realized that they may have over-enhanced their courses in 2008-2009, exceeding both COMAR expectations and what their students were able to handle (and in some cases what the faculty were able to handle on the mentoring and grading end of the process). Others found that with students becoming more comfortable with the workload and expectations of the enhanced courses, they could actually increase the workload or, more often, include more difficult texts and assignments. While most faculty stayed with the Enhancement Menu option(s) they had used the year before—even those who made significant changes to content and specific assignments—several reported venturing into other options, such as more class time (though a few who had employed more class time in 2008-2009 retreated to three hours of class time and added more outside work), civic engagement, and a greater use of technology (in fact, the use—and more sophisticated use—of MyClasses was clearly growing in 2009-2010, as faculty, as one professor put it, became more comfortable with it and saw its potential for true course-enhancing work and activities). A few faculty reported cutting back on enhancement-related assignments purely on the basis of the difficult of keeping up with the grading, but some addressed that issue by refining and even redesigning their assignments in such way that they were as beneficial—or perhaps even more so—to the students, but more manageable for faculty to field; one faculty member, in particular, who chose this path reported that the grading—and related thoughtful feedback/mentoring—was still “overwhelming,” but it was “a sacrifice [he/she was] willing to make for my students.”

2. How do you think students responded to course enhancements in 2009-2010, compared to 2008-2009, and if you saw a difference, in either direction, to what do you think it might be attributed?

The vast majority of faculty reported—and some quite enthusiastically so—that they saw a clear difference between both the attitude (particularly regarding level of acceptance) and performance of their students compared to the previous year. One said that he/she saw a marked difference from one year to the next via a “growing comfort and acceptance [by the students] of the enhanced course format AND my increased confidence and certainty that what we are doing is ‘good stuff.’” Many others used the terms “accustomed,” “acceptance,” “adapted,” “expected,” and “acclimated” to describe the change they saw in their students the second time around, as it were. One faculty member reported not hearing “any [of the] negative feedback” of the prior year, and another went so far as to say that the enhanced course workload was “not an issue anymore” for students, and another reported being “thrilled” with how students had adapted to and even embrace/taken ownership of the assignments—particularly writing assignments—related to enhanced outside and independent (the key term, for this faculty member) work. And others commented that students were writing better; that students were writing more—and much more—was clear from the launch of the reform, but now faculty began to report more often that students were writing better as well. All this said, others, albeit a minority, reported seeing “no meaningful change” in student
performance; one faculty member even thought students had performed less well than the year before—these reports, again, however, were in the minority.

3. Was your experience teaching enhanced courses and with the reconfigured teaching load (4/4 to 3/3) different from your experience in 2008-2009, and if so, why? Based on your experience in 2009-2010, as last year's survey asked, do you think the reform has helped to make you a better teacher and student mentor?

Most faculty reported that their overall experience teaching enhanced courses had changed, though some report little or no real change. Most faculty went on to report that the reform and new course model, with its enhancements, and the reconfigured teaching load had made them better teachers and mentors, and more so than during the previous year, as they became more comfortable with and used to executing their courses with the enhancements in place. One faculty member went so far as to state that there was “NO QUESTION that [he/she was] a better teacher,” going on to cite, in particular, “hours” of “direct one-on-one mentoring” of students not possible in the old course model and former configuration of the teaching load. Another said that the reform and newly configured load allowed him/her to “be more creative and try new things,” while another reported that the new model challenged one to “revamp teaching pedagogies, rethink, reinvent and redesign courses.” Many pointed out that the combination of fewer overall students and the nature of the course enhancements allowed for and even demanded more—and more thoughtful—feedback from the instructor, which make the faculty member a better teacher/mentor, and in ways and to degrees not possible in the 3-credit model and with the former 4-course teaching load. Many faculty talked about being better prepared for each class, even less “harried” in the classroom. One faculty member mentioned that the reform allowed one to be more reflective. Others mentioned being more focused on each course, with three courses rather than four, and getting to know their students, and their students’ work, better, with fewer overall students. One professor even said that the new model and reconfigured load made him/her “not feel as though I’m in a learning factory.” One faculty member cited being able to enjoy “the art of teaching,” thanks to the reform. One professor, who confessed not to have been a supporter of the reform initially, talked about believing that making students, through increased and more independent work, more responsible for their own education showed them that “we have confidence in them,” and then, in turn, they become more confident in themselves; other faculty expressed a similar sentiment. Several faculty members—though clearly a minority—felt that the new model and load had not made them better teachers (one even thought the new model and load had had the opposite effect). And most, including many of those who praised the reform and new load for making them better teachers, mentioned how the reconfigured teaching load and the execution of the enhancements did not mean less work (though many mentioned that their workload—and sense of being overwhelmed, for example, with grading and keeping up with the enhancements—had improved from the year before). One faculty member said that “[i]n no way does the shift [to the reform and new load] constitute a work reduction,” and another pointed out that while the reform had made him/her “a better teacher and student mentor,” the enhanced 3/3 load was more work than the old unenhanced 4/4 load (though some who echoed this sentiment also mentioned that they expected this to be less the case, as they grew more accustomed to the course model and, perhaps, as importantly, they refined their enhancements in order to still provide their students with a meaningful, enhanced learning experience, but via assignments that they, as faculty, could manage better).
4. Do you have any suggestions regarding what the Fulton School could do to help you with your enhanced courses, including how it might help you consider and/or adopt other types of enhancement options in the Course Enhancement Menu (such as service learning, civic engagement, study abroad, the incorporation of technology)? Do you have any suggestions as to where the reform might need improvement?

The majority of faculty offered no suggestions. Among the relatively few who did, some spoke of keeping enrollment down (or certainly not increasing it, and even rolling it back in some cases) by providing students with a Fulton statement about the intent of the reform so they would understand its purpose and the expectations that come with it; encouraging and helping develop more enhanced online courses; providing financial support for more campus speakers, course-related field trips, the purchase of DVD’s, and so on; pushing for changes, across campus, that would encourage a quicker and stronger change of academic culture, University-wide; more (or fewer, depending on the faculty member making the suggestion) Brown Bags on reform topics, particularly “under-used” Menu options; discipline- or department-specific idea-sharing events regarding enhancements; moving away from COMAR as the primary credit-hour/work metric; and “policing” the reform (a few faculty members were concerned that some of their colleagues were not fulfilling the 4th-credit workload requirements of the reform). One lone faculty member even suggested that “the most effective improvement I can imagine would be to revoke the whole idea.”

5. Did you access and make use of the reform website (www.salisbury.edu/fulton/currref/) in 2009-2010? What helps might the website offer you (that it currently does not) in your continued teaching and development of enhanced courses?

Almost all faculty responding said that they had not accessed the reform website (now under www.salisbury.edu/fulton/curriculum/4-creditmodel.html) during the previous year. Of the few who had visited the site, some said it had been quite helpful, others said it was not, and a couple made a suggestion for improvement (developing a student section, showing a sample “lesson plan,” etc.). Among those who had not accessed the site in 2009-2010, many praised the site for its existence, and some for its content, and many also said it had been very helpful while transitioning into the new model, but they had not needed it since. One who did think it might be helpful, and had visited it with that hope in 2009-2010, had found nuts and bolts, as it were, on the site, and had really been looking for “inspiration.”

The results of the May 2010 survey, overall, were fairly similar to those of the May 2009, but it was also clear that the reform was catching hold more with both students—in their response to it and performance—and faculty, who were adjusting and otherwise getting more comfortable with both the enhancements that had used in 2009 and new ones that some of them were beginning to explore.

Faculty Feedback – Impressions Three Years after School-wide Implementation (Fall 2011)

In preparation for the present report and with School-wide adoption of the new course model beginning its fourth year, Fulton department chairs were recently (October 2011) asked to provide feedback/impressions of their own and as solicited from their department faculty regarding the effectiveness of the reform at this point. The response, particularly from non-chairs, was significantly lower than for the May 2009 and May 2010 faculty survey, due, perhaps to the less direct, less formal request for feedback, but also due to what might be termed a bit of “reform fatigue.” Executing the reform has not been an issue; continuing to talk about it, however, has been
less popular, as the “reform” has become “form,” or the norm in the Fulton School. That, for the most part, is a good thing. The responses of the chairs and faculty who provided their impressions are summarized (and cited verbatim in many cases) below (note—unlike the previous, more formal May surveys, chairs and faculty, in most cases, were not asked to respond to specific questions, but just shared their impressions):

It is clear that Fulton students are reading much more in the enhanced 4-credit courses than in the old 3-credit model—no question about it. It is also clear that this enhancement, along with more writing and related research, three years after School-wide launch, remains the most popular of the course enhancements employed by Fulton faculty. But it is not just about the amount of reading. Many faculty report—as some did in 2009 and 2010—that they are able to include more challenging reading, or “more ambitious course readings,” as one of them put it, including scholarly articles. The degree to which they are doing this, however, seems to be up considerably since 2009 and 2010. Consideration and discussion of most of those added and often more difficult texts come back into the classroom (and all end up showing up in some sort of graded work, be it discussion, exams and/or writing assignments, as required by COMAR), but more faculty have also added readings the discussion for which takes place, like the reading itself, outside of class, on MyClasses via a discussion that runs parallel to class and often supplements what is happening in class. One department chair writes that the reform in general, but also the inclusion, in her program’s courses, of additional and more challenging readings, has led to a capstone Senior Seminar experience that never would have been possible under the 3-credit model; assigning the level of readings currently included in the seminar, some of the most difficult primary texts in the field and “more difficult than we would have dared used just a few years ago,” would have been “disastrous for all but a few students” in the past; that is not the case now, thanks to the reform and its effect on the program in question.

More writing, across enhanced Fulton courses in all disciplines, has seemed to be as common an enhancement as more reading. And as with reading, it has not simply been about the quantity of writing assignments and overall pages written; it has been about the quality and nature of the writing assignments as well. While many faculty report that they have assigned “reaction essays” related to particular assignments (attending an on-campus lecture or performance, or reading a scholarly article, for example), many also report that they have assigned longer, more research-oriented, and often more closely mentored writing assignments than in the past. One chair reports that her department has “increased our emphasis on secondary sources a tremendous amount” and that “research in general is increasing.” This is evident even—and particularly so—in English 103: Composition and Research (which has replaced the 3-credit and less-research-oriented English 101: Composition). Assigning annotated bibliographies, both related to writing assignments and as a research (and content) exercise, is up, including but not only in English 103. And many faculty are being, as one chair termed it, “very proactive” in requiring writing assignments that “emphasize critical analysis,” along with research.

The significant increase in writing in Fulton’s enhanced courses is evident at the SU Writing Center, where Dr. Nicole Munday, Director of the Center, reports that since the full implementation of the reform and new course model in fall 2008, “the number of Writing Center sessions among Fulton School majors [has] increased 52 percent [327 to 497], whereas the number of Writing Center sessions among non-Fulton School majors increased 21 percent [from 886 to 1071].” Dr.
Munday goes on to say that, “Fulton School majors are visiting the Writing Center at a significantly higher rate than their peers, which suggests a change in the culture of writing within the Fulton School following the four-credit curricular enhancements. Furthermore, since students’ Writing Center visits are voluntary, the increase in Writing Center visits among Fulton School majors suggests that Fulton students are becoming more self-directed learners, which was an important goal of the Fulton curriculum reform.”

Besides increased reading and writing assignments, and the attendant use of research, critical thinking skills and technology, Fulton chairs also report an increase, within enhanced Fulton-credit courses, of performance and creative work opportunities, participation in (in one way or another) campus academic and cultural events (the Visiting Artist Program, for example), in-course study abroad (first England, Iceland and Ghana, and now the Art department’s course that takes students to Venice—as part of the course—after the semester is over), and course-related service learning and civic engagement.

Chairs and almost all reporting faculty also suggest that most students have “made the leap,” as one put it, to the work required—and the type of work required—in the enhanced courses. One faculty member writes that “students [are] coming more prepared to class—especially in terms of understanding that we expect more of them,” and that students “are handling challenging material more fully and in a more consistently focused manner.” One chair writes that, “it took till last year for students to accept the changes, but then the changes became obvious.” One faculty member reports that students are writing and thinking better by the end of her freshman course than they did under the 3-credit model, and another reports seeing “an appreciable rise in the quality of my students’ work.” Another says, “[I]t continues to amaze me just how much they [the students] can do now [that] we have raised the bar and demanded it of them.” A chair writes, “We are able to expect them to tackle challenging material without complaint.”

Most chairs and faculty who addressed the issue of the reform’s effect on faculty as teachers and researchers stated that they thought the reform had helped them in both areas. Regarding teaching, one faculty member said, “I expect more of myself per course [and] am more ambitious about the places I hope to reach through discussion with my students.” A chair said that, “I think the four-credit model has definitely been a good thing for us (and our students).” She goes on to write, “We are better teachers and have more time and energy for research.”

Almost all chairs and faculty reporting seeing the reform/4-credit course model in a very positive light, even among those who had issues with its effect on faculty (more on this below). One faculty member cited “appreciable and quantifiable differences” in her students’ work and her own teaching between the old and reform models. Another said that there “is no question that the Fulton move to four credit hours has made a tremendous difference in my courses…” and “in expanding the educational experience of these courses for my students.” Another faculty member said that the new model “allowed me to broaden and deepen the scope and range of materials covered in my classes…” and that the “results are tangible.” A chair states, “I think…our new curriculum is getting majors to a significantly higher level than our old curriculum did.”

As in 2009 and 2010, there is still a minority of faculty who report, in particular, less of a positive impact on them as teachers and researchers—or at least so far—than they had expected. One went
so far as to say, “The promise that faculty would have more time for research and service is totally
untrue,” and went on to say that he/she had “less time and opportunity to publish in the 4 credit
model than in the 3.” Another wrote about having “[l]ess time available for outside research due to
the rigors of enhancement and the need to give feedback on the additional work.” Another wrote
the he/she “supported this model and…still believe[s] in it,” but that “it’s just turning out to be more
challenging than I thought.” Most of the faculty who spoke about the time-consuming nature of
teaching in the new course model cited an increase in the enrollment caps in their classes as a main
reason the reformed model, with the reconfigured teaching load, was taking more time than
teaching in the 3-credit model; most also, however, said that they thought the students were doing
more and better than in the old model.

The feedback from chairs and faculty, from May 2009 through October 2011, shows, according to
most, particularly at this point, a course model that is delivering as promised, and to which students
are responding well, though fine-tuning the use of the enhancements, getting it just right, from the
faculty perspective, so that the model both delivers for the students and is manageable for faculty,
and even makes faculty better teachers, can still be, and perhaps rightfully so, an ongoing challenge,
but it is a challenge that most faculty have welcomed and embraced, and they are seeing the results
in their students’ work and in their own work as teachers and mentors. One stated purpose of the
reform was to “invigorate the liberal arts” at SU. The feedback from almost all faculty would
suggest that it has done that, and continues to do so. It may still be—and should be, just three years
into full implementation—a work in progress, but most would agree that it is succeeding, and very
few indeed would have any desire to go back for the old 3-credit, unenhanced course model.

Impact of the Reform

*Initial Effects of the Reform Based on Data-Driven Analysis*

The data below shows the impact of the reform/4-credit course model on a variety of fronts, from
grades and retention and graduation rates, to the number of Fulton majors and the use of classroom
time and space per credit hour. Most of the data presented here was initially selected for inclusion
by then-Associate Provost Dr. Robert Tardiff, UARA Director Dr. Kara Siegert and Fulton
Associate Dean Dr. Keith Brower, in consultation with Fulton Dean Dr. Maarten Pereboom, in
summer 2010 as they looked ahead to both an initial and ongoing report on the Fulton reform, and
Dr. Siegert and Ms. Maureen Belich, also of UARA, supplied the data in question. Many of the
reporting areas presented here were specifically selected in response to some early, pre-
implementation concerns that, for example, a greater number of students might be put on academic
probation because of the Fulton reform, or students might abandon Fulton majors in significant
numbers due to the rigor of the enhanced 4-credit Fulton courses, and so on. As warranted, the
narrative that accompanies the data that follows addresses those concerns.

Note: For most of the data below, information has been supplied covering the years of 2005-2006
through 2000-2011; that is, two years pre-reform (2006-2006 and 2006-2007), one year during
which the three “pilot” programs (ART, PHIL, POSC) were in place (2007-2008), and three years
with full implementation of the reform (2008-2009, 2009-2010 and 2010-2011). In the statistics
below, all years and numbers corresponding to the years of full implementation of the Fulton reform
are marked with italics; where appropriate, the year of the Fulton “pilot” programs is marked with italics as well.

Use of Selected Course Enhancement Menu Items

The Fulton reform Course Enhancement Menu, as presented above, lists seven course enhancement options designed to provide the fourth credit hour for each course. Faculty may choose to employ one Menu option fully to achieve the fourth credit hour, or they may use an appropriate combination of options. The Menu includes more traditional and obvious, for lack of a better term, enhancement choices, such as Option #1: Increased course content and collateral readings, Option #2: Undergraduate Research and Information Literacy; and Option #4: Higher Level Critical Thinking Exercises (these three options are frequently used together); and even Option #7: Additional Hours in Class, Lab or Studio. The Menu also includes enhancement choices that are more experiential in nature; these are also, however, the ones with which relatively few faculty have experience in offering and incorporating in their courses prior to the reform. These include Option #5: Service Learning/Civic Engagement and Option #6: International Education/Cultural Enrichment. The Menu also includes Option #3: Technology, which is most often used in support of other options in a course’s enhancement strategy or package.

Encouraging faculty to embrace the more traditional options focusing on more reading, writing and critical thinking has been easy; encouraging faculty to embrace the options with which they have less experience—service learning, civic engagement and international education—has been more of a challenge. (It should also be noted, however, that service learning, civic engagement and international education are not appropriate for every course, and certainly not for as many as, say, increased course content and collateral readings, along with more and deeper forays into undergraduate research.) In an online survey in late spring 2010, Fulton faculty were asked how many courses and sections they had taught in 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 and how many of those sections included service learning, civic engagement and/or study abroad. Faculty were also asked how many sections included the use of technology and/or additional seat time. Roughly 50% of all faculty responded; the results from reporting faculty were as follows:

Use of Selected Enhancement Menu Items
2008-2009
Courses: 325
Sections: 517
Additional Seat Time: 100 sections (19%)
Service Learning: 23 sections (4%)
Civic Engagement: 23 sections (4%)
Study Abroad: 8 (2%)
Technology: 299 (58%)

2009-2010
Courses: 312
Sections: 512
Additional Seat Time: 96 sections (19%)
Service Learning: 25 (5%)
Civic Engagement: 24 (5%)
Study Abroad: 2 (.5%)
Technology: 291 (57%)

The number of sections employing additional seat time was, on the surface, somewhat surprising. A closer look, though, reveals that in both years fully half of these sections, among the faculty reporting, were being offered, as expected, in the Art and Theatre programs, in the form of additional studio time—these departments and the faculty therein, in other words, were making the reform options work for their programs, as appropriate, just as other programs were taking appropriate advantage of the reform and its Menu options via the incorporation of more reading, writing and critical thinking assignments. Still, the fact that the other half of the additional seat time sections came from non-studio-oriented programs, and at a rate of 11% for both years, was a bit surprising, as informal estimates prior to the survey put the overall Fulton figure at around 5%. The higher numbers here may be due to the faculty who responded to the survey versus those who did not. Faculty who utilized one or more of the options asked about in the survey may have been more apt to respond, as opposed to those whose answer might have been “zero” for most or all of the questions asked. So the numbers, in other words, presented in this survey—and the percentages, in particular—may be a bit higher than the overall Fulton School numbers.

Even if the numbers are a bit skewed due to the aforementioned factors, the survey revealed, or at least suggests, exactly what many expected—that the Fulton School was not taking full advantage of what might be considered the less traditional course enhancement options (service learning, civic engagement and, in particular, international education) listed on the Menu. Besides representing exciting opportunities for students, these options allow both faculty and students to more fully embrace the nature and philosophy of the reform. While the School recognizes that the options in question, as stated above, are neither appropriate for every course or for as many courses as the more “traditional” options, the School has made a concerted effort, particularly shortly after launch of the reform—via curriculum development “Brown Bags,” for example—to encourage faculty to explore these options and will continue to do so; the School is confident that as faculty continue to tweak and even radically alter their enhancement strategies (which the School encourages), more faculty, with the support of the School and their colleagues, will embrace these currently less utilized, but very exciting, enhancement options. In fact, based on anecdotal information, it seems fairly obvious that were the spring 2010 survey cited above repeated in, say, spring 2012, significantly more faculty would report the use of the less traditional menu options, such as, and in particular, Option 6: International Education/Cultural Enrichment, which via both in-semester and post-semester study abroad and attendance at on-campus cultural events, has begun to flourish as faculty’s use of the new course model has continue to evolve and mature.

Impact on Fulton Majors and Student Credit Hours

Prior to the launch of the Fulton reform/4-credit model, some expressed concern that the increased workload in Fulton courses and the greater emphasis on research, writing and other outside-of-class work might drive students away from Fulton courses and majors. The numbers below show that exactly the opposite has been true.

Number of Fulton Majors
Fall 2006: 1,950
Fall 2007: 2,050
Fall 2008: 2,081
Fall 2009: 2,169
Fall 2010: 2,302
Fall 2011: 2,334

The number of Fulton majors has grown 19.7% since 2006 (pre-reform); during the same period, the number of majors University-wide has grown only 16.2%.

The Fulton School is also currently (2011) home to five of the ten SU undergraduate programs that have grown for three or more consecutive years. The programs are: Art (three straight years of growth), Communication Arts (six years), Conflict Resolution (seven years), Environmental Studies (seven years) and Music (three years).

**Fulton Undergraduate Student Credit Hours**

AY 2005-2006: 77,038 (44.3% of all SU undergraduate student credit hours)
AY 2006-2007: 80,744 (43.6%)
AY 2007-2008: 84,904 (43.5%)
AY 2008-2009: 89,304 (43.2%)
AY 2009-2010: 91,788 (43.4%)
AY 2010-2011: 94,480 (43.7%)

Fulton’s percentage of SU undergraduate credit hours has remained fairly consistent with pre-reform numbers, despite the fact that students need to take fewer Fulton courses in Gen Ed (down from—in most cases—ten to seven) and to complete a major or minor (down, on average, from 12 courses to ten and six courses to five, respectively). Of course, the additional credit hour in each course helps offset that, but the point is, the numbers in both of the lists above show no mass retreat from Fulton course and program offerings; in fact, as noted above, the number of Fulton majors is up significantly from pre-reform counts. This might suggest that students find Fulton courses and programs more attractive than prior to the reform, perhaps because they offer a deep and often untraditional engagement with the subject matter; perhaps, indeed, students find that particularly attractive; it might also be because, thanks to the reconfigured teaching load, Fulton faculty are able to focus more and better on the fewer courses they teach and mentor their corresponding number of fewer students more closely and in more meaningful ways (and via more, and more meaningful, assignments). The reform was meant to trade quantity for quality, via both the content (and depth) of the courses and the way in which faculty engage students; perhaps this change is one of the reasons that more students are moving toward Fulton programs, rather than away from them.

**Fulton Course Grades**

Prior to the launch of the new course model, with its emphasis on both more—and more independent—work in each course, some expressed concern that students’ grades might suffer. Each Fulton 4-credit course, compared to its former 3-credit self, as it were, was going to be more
difficult and require not just more effort, but more self-discipline, from students, as well as, in many cases, force them to work and approach the subject matter in new and different ways. Would students, particularly those accustomed to a 3-credit course model, be up to the challenge? As demonstrated in the ABC/DFW distributions cited below, it would certainly seem that they were and are. The percentage of ABC grades has actually gone up a bit across the School, in spite of the fact that the courses have required far more of our students than in the pre-reform course model. The intent of the reform was not, however, simply to create more difficult courses, but also to allow students to take fewer courses at one time and in so doing be able to focus more on, and dig more deeply in, each individual course. The grade patterns listed below, which show grades going up while courses get more demanding, suggests that the reform is accomplishing what is was meant to do.

**ABC/DFW Grade Percentages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2006</th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
<th>Fall 2010</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>87/13</td>
<td>87/13</td>
<td>87/13</td>
<td>88/12</td>
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<tr>
<td>SU</td>
<td>87/13</td>
<td>86/14</td>
<td>86/14</td>
<td>87/13</td>
<td>88/12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Attempted vs. Earned Credits**

Given that the Fulton School provides 43% of all undergraduate credit hours at SU each year—via major, minor, elective and Gen Ed courses (the Fulton School delivers roughly 40% of all SU majors and covers 32% of all SU Gen Ed requirements)—and that virtually all Gen Ed science courses (offered by the Henson School) are 4-credit courses, with Fulton’s switch to a 4-credit course model, many, if not most, SU students—particularly freshmen and Fulton majors—have moved from a five-course semester load of 15-16 credits to a 4-course load of 15-16 credits in the wake of the reform. There was some initial concern that students taking, say, 15 credits, in particular, including one or two 4-credit Fulton courses, might more often than in the past fall below the fulltime student line by virtue of dropping one of their Fulton courses, or otherwise fall behind to be on pace to graduate by failing one of said courses within such a load. This concern was based on the basic math associated with dropping (or failing) a 4-credit course from a 15-credit semester course load, but the concern also had to do with a wider worry that added work, expectations and rigor might make Fulton courses suddenly so difficult that more students would find themselves in this predicament. The numbers below do show that the percentage of students who dropped below the fulltime line, with regard to earned credits, did increase during the first year of full implementation of the Fulton reform in 2008-2009, and then, after rebounding a bit in 2009-2010, they rose again. One might suggest that the rise in the percentage of students dropping below the fulltime line might be attributable to the new Fulton course model—and the timing might certainly suggest that, but both the ABC grade information above, and the full, detailed data regarding the grade distribution for each Fulton program (not listed here), do not reveal an increase in DFW grades or any marked change in F and W grades (in most departments, in fact, W grades, in particular, have gone down since the reform). One possible explanation for the increase in students dropping below the fulltime status line might be that more students may be taking three 4-credit courses and one 3-credit course in a semester and dropping or failing one of the 4-credit courses and
thus finishing with 11 credits earned; further research may uncover the answer to that, but numbers otherwise suggest, so far, that the change is not directly, at least, due to the Fulton reform.

**Attempted vs. Earned Credits: Percentage of students who finished the semester below the fulltime student line**

- 2005-2006: 7.80%
- 2006-2007: 8.17%
- 2007-2008: 7.69%
- 2008-2009: 11.27%
- 2009-2010: 9.79%
- 2010-2011: 11.60%

**First-Time Academic Probation Status After One Year**

One particular area about which there was some pre-reform-launch concern about student success and retention was the area of first-time academic probations. Might we lose more students than before via academic probation and, ultimately, academic dismissal? The percentage of first-time students placed on academic probation has actually decreased since full implementation of the Fulton reform, as demonstrated in the figures below. In fact, these figures may indeed support one of the basic tenets of the Fulton reform, already noted above—that students who focus and engage more deeply in a semester load comprised of fewer but more credit-bearing courses than they might in a five-course load are able to do better in each course than they can while juggling more (five-plus) different subjects at the same time.

2005
- # of first-time students on probation: 216
- Total cohort: 958
- % of cohort on probation: 22.5%

2006
- # of first—time students on probation: 198
- Total cohort: 1033
- % of cohort on probation: 19.2%

2007
- # of first-time students on probation: 220
- % of cohort: 1150
- % of cohort on probation: 19.1%

2008
- # of first-time students on probation: 201
- Total cohort: 1199
- % of cohort on probation: 16.9%

2009
- # of first-time students on probation: 224
Total cohort: 1276
% of cohort on probation: 17.6%

2010
# of first-time students on probation: 175
Total cohort: 1250
% of cohort on probation: 14%

First-Time Student Suspensions

During the first year of full implementation of the Fulton reform in 2007-2008, there was some concern that a greater number of students—with, in many cases, less class/seat time, and more of their course credit hours being generated via more independent, less directly supervised, schedule-oriented, out-of-class work—had abused the greater independence and self-motivation and that this abuse had resulted in a significantly higher number of social behavior violations and related suspensions. The following numbers show that just the opposite, in fact, has been true:

First-Time Student Suspensions
2006: 0.87%
2007: 1.39%
2008: 0.42%
2009: 0.31%
2010: 0.003%

These numbers might even suggest, indirectly, that the significant increase in the out-of-class work required of Fulton courses may have reduced the opportunities SU students have to get involved in the kind of activities that might lead to suspension; this, if true, would be, again, the exact opposite of what some feared as the reform was launched.

Year Two Retention Rates

The Fulton reform has had no significant effect—in either direction—on Year Two Retention. While Year Two Retention Rates did drop slightly in 2009, immediately following launch of the new course model, similar changes occurred between 2005 and 2006, prior to the reform, and all the figures over the past six years have stayed fairly steady. It would be difficult to suggest that the Fulton reform, therefore, is responsible for the slight rate change between 2008 and 2009, which appears consistent with the natural, for lack of a better term, rather gentle ebb and flow of the rates in question.

Year Two Retention Rates
2005 cohort, 2006 retention: 81.3%
2006 cohort, 2007 retention: 80.5%
2007 cohort, 2008 retention: 82.8%
2008 cohort, 2009 retention: 80.0%
2009 cohort, 2010 retention: 81.0%
2010 cohort, 2011 retention: 82.5%
It should be noted, however, that Year Two retention rates for African-American students have made a steady climb since the Fulton reform/4-credit model was launched, moving from roughly 76% for the 2006 cohort to 84.4% for the 2010 cohort. Whether this is due to the Fulton reform is uncertain; possible, but uncertain.

**Six-Year (and Four-Year) Graduation Rates**

Of all the data gathered for this report, with the Fulton 4-credit course model just being adopted School-wide in 2008-2009, it is most difficult to gauge the potential impact of the reform on six-year graduation rates at this point, since students in the most recent six-year cohort (from 2005) who graduated in four years only had potential contact with reformed/enhanced Fulton courses via one year (2007-2008) of such courses in the three “starter” programs and another year (2008-2009) of School-wide implementation of the new course model; the only students from the 2005 cohort who had up to, at most, three years of potential contact with the full reform are the 20% or so of cohort students who took six years to graduate. Incomplete though the statistics may be at this point, it appears that the potential effect of the Fulton reform has been virtually invisible—if existent at all—at this early point, given that six-year graduation rates have stayed quite steady over the past six years, both pre- and post-reform,

**Six-Year Graduation Rates**

2000 cohort—graduated by 2006: 69.8%
2001 cohort—graduated by 2007: 67.9%
2002 cohort—graduated by 2008: 68.9%
2003 cohort—graduated by 2009: 66.1%
2004 cohort—graduated by 2010: 69.6%
2005 cohort—graduated by 2011: 66.6% (preliminary figure)

Because of the shorter timeframe, the Four-Year Graduation Rates capture more students who have experienced the Fulton 4-credit course model for a longer time. Students in the 2006 cohort had the chance to experience two years of full implementation of the reform, and three years, if they took courses from the “starter” programs in 2007-2008. And students in the 2007 cohort were at SU during three years of full implementation of the Fulton courses model, and all four years of their college career, if they took “starter” courses as freshmen. The Four-Year Graduation Rates for these two cohorts are as higher or higher than for recent pre-reform cohorts.

- 2001 cohort: 45.4%
- 2002 cohort: 45.9%
- 2003 cohort: 45.7%
- 2004 cohort: 46.6%
- 2005 cohort: 46.2%
- 2006 cohort: 48.3%
- 2007 cohort: 46.4%

**Fulton Class Minutes per Credit Hour**
With the fourth credit of Fulton courses being delivered, predominantly, via outside-of-class, more independent (though still “documented” and “supervised”) work, the average number of in-class minutes per credit hour in the Fulton School has dropped significantly since prior to the adoption of the 4-credit course model. This is seen in the overall Fulton numbers below:

*Overall average class minutes per credit hour*
- 2004-2005: 54.69
- 2005-2006: 53.97
- 2006-2007: 54.07
- 2007-2008: 55.38
- 2008-2009: 46.43
- 2009-2010: 46.65
- 2010-2011: 46.97

The reduction in class minutes per credit hour is even more dramatic when one looks only at the 80%+ of Fulton courses, post-reform, that do not require additional seat time as part of the fourth credit hour. For such courses, class minutes per credit hour have dropped from 50 minutes to 37.5, or one quarter, as one might expect with the move from three credit hours to four, without adding seat time. This means that the Fulton School, following the full-scale launch of the new course model, has been delivering—both course by course and collectively—more credit hours via less class time per credit hour, as well as via less use of classroom space. Though an unintended result of the Fulton reform, this fits very nicely within the USM’s Effectiveness and Efficiency (E&E) initiative.

(Note: The above list stops at AY 2009-2010, the second year of full implementation of the 4-credit model, because nothing suggests that further statistics would reveal any change from the first two years of School-wide implementation; the one significant change in the numbers listed is the one that marks the transition to the new model in 2008-2009.)

*Fulton Course Sections per Course Credit Hours*

Not only has Fulton been delivering more credit hours in less class time and use of classroom space, by adding a fourth credit to all of its formerly 3-credit courses, the Fulton School has also delivered significantly more course credit hours via fewer course sections since full-fledged adoption of the reform began in 2008-2009. The numbers are as follows:

- 2004-2005: 1,100 sections / 3,244 course credit hours
- 2005-2006: 1,149 sections / 3,413 course credit hours
- 2006-2007: 1,173 sections / 3,452 course credit hours
- 2007-2008: 1,106 sections / 3,466 course credit hours
- 2008-2009: 1,027 sections / 3,887 course credit hours
- 2009-2010: 1,024 sections / 3,916 course credit hours
- 2010-2011: 1,079 sections / 4,047 course credit hours

Once again, though an unintended goal of the reform, the results here are profoundly E&E-friendly.
(Note: As with the statistics regarding “Class Minutes per Credit Hour,” the numbers in this list also stop after 2009-2010, as the significant change in “Course Sections per Credit Hour” is revealed in the decrease in course sections and the spike in credit hours that occurs once the new course model is adopted School-wise in 2008-2009.)

The Fulton Curriculum Reform: Three Years After School-Wide Launch

The intent of the Fulton reform and its 4-credit course model was, as stated above, to “provide all Salisbury University students taking Fulton courses—via majors, minors, General Education and electives—with an enhanced, deeper, more focused, more engaged and more rigorous learning experience,” and in so doing, “invigorate the liberal arts at SU and revolutionize how both students and faculty work—and work together—in the Fulton School setting.” Student and faculty feedback collected to date strongly suggests that the new course model has been performing as intended in most cases. Data also shows that the reform has been doing so without having any of the negative effects on retention rates and other keys areas that some were concerned it might. Data also shows that the new 4-credit model is delivering Fulton credit hours much more efficiently than its 3-credit predecessor. While there is still room for improvement, as student culture and faculty experience with the new model continue to evolve, it is safe to say that the reform and the 4-credit course model are meeting expectations at this point, if not exceeding them.

For further information on the Fulton Curriculum Reform/4-Credit Course Model—including the original proposal, transition documents, and FAQ—please visit www.salisbury.edu/fulton/curriculum/4-creditmodel.html.

A Final Note

An early draft of the present report began, in 2010, as an initial report requested by the Provost’s Office. As mentioned above, then-Associate Provost Dr. Robert Tardiff, UARA Director Dr. Kara Siegert and Fulton Associate Dean Dr. Keith Brower developed the basic design for the report and selected most of the data to be included, in consultation with Fulton Dean Dr. Maarten Pereboom, and, as also noted above, Dr. Siegert and Ms. Maureen Belich, also of UARA, supplied the data, including updates thereof. The report has evolved and grown a bit since then and will continue to do so as the reform continues and evolves. This report, in other words, like the reform, is a work in progress. Suggestions regarding items to include in future versions of the report and otherwise regarding its content may be directed to Dr. Brower at khbrower@salisbury.edu.