

Martín-Baró Scholars Program Assessment Report

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Name of Program: Martín-Baró Scholars Program

Type of Program: Non-degree seeking

College of Arts and Sciences Division: Humanities

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Executive Summary

This report describes a unique program for first-year students that earns five cores over one academic year (A1, A2, C1, CD, CEL). It then presents an overview of three relatively new program learning outcomes, in effect since in Spring 2017.

The report offers data that indicates that all students who completed an anonymous 5-point Likert-scale survey of PLOs felt that they had indeed accomplished all three PLOs with a high rate of support (i.e., PLO 1: 4.42; PLO 2: 4.54, PLO 3: 4.31, all out of a possible 5.0). The response rate of 93% (13 out of 14 students) suggests a valid result.

The report focuses on PLO No. 3, which was met in several ways. As evidence we present the number of hours that students spent volunteering as Democracy Coaches for Generation Citizen (440 hours collectively), and we discuss the publication of a 200+ page book project that served the Western Addition community (this, too, met PLO 3 in a big way). There was, however, some dissatisfaction with our community partner, Generation Citizen, so we will carefully consider whether partnering with a national non-profit will best serve our program in the future, especially as it relates to PLO No. 3.

Brief Description of the MBS Program

We are now in midst of working with our 18th cohort of the Martín-Baró Scholars, a program founded by Gerardo Marin, former Vice Provost who had close ties with Martín-Baró. I have served as director of the MBS Program since Spring 2012 and have revised the curriculum significantly over the last eight academic years.

MBS, as we call it, eludes simple description: we are a freshman-only living-learning community, a public speaking class, a composition class, a literature class, a class on cultural diversity, and we perform significant service in one community each year. Yet MBS is truly meant to be a coalescence of all of these endeavors, to be truly interdisciplinary.

We meet the following cores: A1 (public speaking), A2 (written communication), C1 (literature), CD (cultural diversity), and CEL (community-engaged learning, formerly known as service learning).

We strive to meet 20 core learning outcomes each year over our 16-unit curriculum. If your committee is interested, I can provide a document that demonstrates that students felt—at least in their anonymous self-reporting in May 2019—that they did indeed meet all 20 core learning outcomes (which has obviously been my primary concern every year).

Now that we are instituting this annual assessment report, I decided to survey students about whether they feel they met all three of our PLOs. I offer the data below.

The student group under consideration for this report is the 2018-19 MBS cohort. There were 14 students of various majors who completed the program.

BACKGROUND ON THE PROGRAM

For the purposes of this report it might be helpful to foreground our mission statement and program learning outcomes.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Martín-Baró Scholars Program is to introduce students to the complexities of policies that affect the underserved in San Francisco and the Bay Area. This community-engaged program inculcates advocacy and encourages students to act as well-informed, compassionate, and patient agents of change, focusing on long-term goals associated with ethically establishing social justice.*

- Adams, Bell and Griffin define social justice as both a process and a goal: "The goal of social justice is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. We envision a society in which individuals are both self-determining ... and interdependent." (Adams, Maurianne and Lee Anne Bell, Pat Griffin. *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*. New York: Routledge, 2007)

Program Learning Outcomes

These learning outcomes were written in 2017, and approved by Associate Dean Suparna Chakraborty. It is my hope that the PLOs will endure in validity for many years, but this is, after all, just the third year we've put them into place, so we are open to modifying them to best suit the needs of our students and indeed the university. Here are the PLOs as they now stand:

Students who complete the Martín-Baró Scholars Program will be able to:

1. Identify and analyze policies and systems in San Francisco and the Bay Area that have historically created inequities.
2. Research, present on, and work alongside underserved people in at least one neighborhood of San Francisco.
3. Co-create and implement a community-engaged project with enduring impact on the community they serve.

Put more poetically, we aim—as a program, as a community—to cultivate what Henry James once identified as “perception at the pitch of passion.” And while we may lack the assessment acumen needed to turn James’s words into a measurable outcome, we do in any case aim to produce students passionate about creating change, and patient enough to work toward long-term ameliorative goals.

Brief note on our project-based learning approach

We have historically worked on one big project per year. Last year, however, anomalously, the MBS students worked on several projects:

- 1) registering students to vote during the 2018 midterm election cycle (Fall 2018)
- 2) working with Generation Citizen (Spring 2019), and
- 3) finishing up an ambitious project called *Changemakers* (Spring 2019).

Our theme for most of the history of the program centered around poverty and the underserved in San Francisco. Under that theme we worked with the Raphael House (a family homeless shelter), with Rosa Parks Elementary School, and with the Magic Zone after-school program, among others. Since Fall 2018, however, we switched to a theme of Democracy in Crisis, necessitating different projects to best suit our theme. This current year, for example, we are supporting efforts to promote the US Census as well as promoting voter registration. The result of this shift in theme on our program learning outcomes can be found in the discussion section below.

Survey Data Suggests That Students Believe MBS Meets All Three PLOs

During the last week of classes of the Spring 2019 semester I administered an anonymous survey of all 20 core learning outcomes for my program (not included here) as well as a survey asking students about all three of our Program Learning Outcomes (fully included in an appendix). I absented myself from the room to encourage honest narrative feedback (rather like we used to do in the old SUMMA days, when we would need to be out of the room). In any case, for the purposes of this report, the results appear to indicate that students felt strongly that they met all three PLOs.

I used a 5-point Likert-scale survey for all three PLOs. Here is a sample student entry:

MBS PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

During my academic year in the Martín-Baró Scholars Program, I have:

... identified and analyzed policies and systems in San Francisco and the Bay Area that have historically created inequities.

1 Strongly disagree 2 Disagree 3 Uncertain 4 Agree 5 Strongly Agree

During my academic year in the Martín-Baró Scholars Program, I have:

... researched, presented on, and worked alongside underserved people in at least one neighborhood of San Francisco.

1 Strongly disagree 2 Disagree 3 Uncertain 4 Agree 5 Strongly Agree

During my academic year in the Martín-Baró Scholars Program, I have helped to:

... co-create and implement a community-engaged project with potentially enduring impact on the community we serve.

1 Strongly disagree 2 Disagree 3 Uncertain 4 Agree 5 Strongly Agree

Please see a separate 13-page appendix with all the student responses, which would be cumbersome to include here.

Survey Results on Program Learning Outcome 1

Students who complete the Martín-Baró Scholars Program will be able to . . . identify and analyze policies and systems in San Francisco and the Bay Area that have historically created inequities.

For the question regarding PLO 1, we had a response result of 4.42 out of a possible 5.0

Survey Results on Program Learning Outcome 2

Students who complete the Martín-Baró Scholars Program will be able to . . . research, present on, and work alongside underserved people in at least one neighborhood of San Francisco.

For PLO 2, the response result was 4.54 out of a possible 5.0

Survey Results on Program Learning Outcome 3

Students who complete the Martín-Baró Scholars Program will be able to . . . co-create and implement a community-engaged project with enduring impact on the community they serve.

For PLO 3, the response result was 4.31 out of a possible 5.0

The response rate of 93% (13 out of 14 students) suggests a valid result.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS WITH A FOCUS ON PLO 3

For this assessment report, I'd like to focus primarily on PLO 3: "Students who complete the Martín-Baró Scholars Program will be able to . . . co-create and implement a community-engaged project with enduring impact on the community they serve."

Likert-scale survey results of 4.31 out of 5.0 indicate that students felt we met our ambitious goal on this item, but there was clearly some reluctance for students to score this item as a 5 out of 5 (as they did the previous year).

One significant factor to consider this past academic year was that we had several projects, rather than just one. Again, our new theme was Democracy in Crisis, necessitating a new approach. But we still had one legacy project to finish as well.

Our first project, designed to align with our new theme, was voter registration. We performed this work in close association with USF Votes, directed by the incredibly talented Angie Vuong at the McCarthy Center. We were part of large group that helped register 3,814 USF students to vote in 2018. Unfortunately, we have no way of disaggregating the data to determine with any precision how many students that my students in particular registered—but we can safely assume it was a lot—**MBS collectively performed 140 hours of registration work**. Naturally with a November election date, we did not register voters after the election, so we decided to work with a national non-profit called Generation Citizen (GC) for the second semester.

Generation Citizen (<https://generationcitizen.org/>) prioritizes what they call “action civics”—and their work seemed to be perfectly aligned with our democracy in crisis theme. Their mission is “to ensure that every student in the United States receives an effective action civics education, which provides them with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in our democracy as active citizens.” My students, after an all-day training, were deputized as Democracy Coaches. They were expected to meet with middle or high school students once a week, aid them in research, and make sure these younger students were on track to research and present on an action item at Civics Day. Sounds perfect, yes? We discovered, however, that my students were somewhat dissatisfied with the curriculum they were expected to teach to the middle and high school students they were assigned to coach. Thankfully, our partners at GC were very understanding, and were actually in the midst of redesigning their curriculum. In any case, my students did wonderful work with the kids they were assigned to help. According to my records, **MBS students completed 440.5 hours collectively, working as Democracy Coaches.** And Civics Day, which took place during our finals week in May, was certainly a success. The young people we worked with were clearly engaged and were pleased to meet with civic leaders and city supervisors at the State of California Building. I could sense genuine enthusiasm at the awards ceremony—which is not always common among middle school and high school students as we know. In any case, despite the flaws, I thought it was a very worthy project. Students, too, in their candid reflections underscored the worthiness of the overall project but again they felt a bit constricted by the Generation Citizen curriculum and meeting structure, which they felt was not necessarily tailored to best meet the needs of our communities. Thankfully, I was able to convey these students’ concerns directly in face-to-face meetings with Generation Citizen leaders and they have already instituted curricular changes.

Finally, during this most recent academic year we were also duty-bound to complete our *Changemakers* biographies book project, while also working within our new theme of Democracy in Crisis. I had my students work on the polishing the book during Black History Month (Feb. 2019). Briefly described, the *Changemakers* book invited students to research and write biographies for 95 African American leaders, all featured on the Inspiration Murals, found on the walls of the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center in the Fillmore/Western Addition. The project, initiated in Fall 2015 by Dr. Stephanie Sears, Sociology Professor and Director of the Esther Madriz Diversity Scholars, called upon students to preserve the history and stories of all the people on the walls. Initially, the project consisted of oral histories and some written reports, but the project expanded into a book project when the Martín-Baró Scholars joined in Fall 2016. The project was a community-identified need, and sprang from conversations with community leaders Altheda Carrie, Lynnette White, and Karin Cotterman of Engage SF at the McCarthy Center. We finally completed a 200-page book in September 2019 and held a well-attended public book launch at the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center.

All told, this was a five-year, 87-student, 3-program, graduate and undergraduate, multi-valenced project that my 2018-19 students joined as the book was nearing completion. And I must say my students really helped make the book better, even if they were not primary authors. Their careful eye helped polish the final work. However, because of the lead time necessary for printing the book, they did not get to see the final results during the semester. The

eventual September 12 book release and the book's warm reception by the community exceeded all expectations. We had hundreds in attendance at our book release, and hundreds of copies of the book were distributed (about 400 copies). With the help of Engage San Francisco, a part of the Leo T. McCarthy Center, we secured a \$20,000 grant from the Walter and Elise Haas fund to print the book and promote its release, and indeed to ensure that the community received copies for free. Mayor London Breed was our keynote speaker and we heard from Rev. Arnold Townsend and Rev. Amos C. Brown, highly respected fixtures in the Western Addition community. (Our own President Paul Fitzgerald was also in attendance for the entire program.) The event was, by any measure, a great success. This multi-year project clearly met our PLO No. 3 about as well as we could ever hope.

Students were thrilled to see their names in print, and moreover to see the strong support of the community for the work they had done. There is no measuring the impact of the book. It was off the charts.

Indeed that book was the most ambitious project I will likely take on as a USF instructor—simply because it is obviously best to work within the limits of the academic year with our students. In some way it's sad that we won't be able to take on anything of this scope in future, but again it is probably more pedagogically sound to limit—or very carefully choose—any multi-year projects in future.

Recommendations / Closing the Loop

It appears that we have, at least according to anonymous survey data, plus the number of student volunteer hours (440 hours for Generation Citizen, and 140 more hours in voter registration), plus the completion of our ambitious book project, met our primary goals for this year, particularly for PLO 3.

My perennial concern with this program, however, is that I will need to ensure that any future community-engagement projects are carefully curated to align with PLO 3 ("Students will . . . co-create and implement a community-engaged project with enduring impact on the community they serve"). Our first experience in working with a national non-profit showed mixed results, so our future selectivity will be crucial.

I do incidentally have abundant evidence for having met PLOs 1 and 2, but have chosen not to focus on them this year, but will do so next year.

I thank your committee for reviewing the above materials and invite your feedback and dialogue.

—David Holler