



COUNCIL OF PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES

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Dear Dr. Dyer,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to review the Hutchins School of Liberal Studies. During an earlier visit to Sonoma State University in April 2018, I was fortunate enough to observe a 100-level seminar at Hutchins and was favorably impressed with the students, the faculty, the level of engagement during discussion, and the lively sense of community. This year, as an external reviewer for the program, I spent two days in May visiting three classes plus the senior showcase. I spoke with faculty, students, staff, and administrators. Both visits left me deeply impressed with the quality and commitment of the Hutchins faculty and staff as well as with the caliber of students in this program. I would especially like to thank you and your faculty colleagues who welcomed me to their classes and who generously shared materials, time, and perspectives with me. The caliber of discussion I witnessed in the three classes and the student capstone showcase was exceptional and is a testament to the quality of the Hutchins students and the effectiveness of the instruction they receive as well as give each other. Although I visited 200 and 300-level courses (LIBS 202, 302, and 320), many student contributions were closer to senior-level undergraduate quality.

After examining the program's two-part Self-Study (a 55-page Part 1, a 16-page Part 2, plus appendices) as well as other review materials, as well as visiting with faculty, staff, students, and administrators, my impression is that the Hutchins School is at a critical point in its history. In part, this is due to external factors (e.g., declining enrollments, shifts in interdisciplinary programs across the nation, etc.) as well as to internal factors (e.g., the needs of transfer students, the structure of student advising at Sonoma State, the School's seminar-based model for curriculum delivery, etc.). Any one of these variables creates opportunities; together they also pose significant challenges for the program.

The Hutchins School occupies a rare historical position in American higher education. Established in 1969, the program has survived relatively intact for half a century. I doubt any other academic program at Sonoma State can so easily trace its fifty-year lineage. And I doubt any other academic program at Sonoma State can place its instructors, its students, its alumni, even its physical classroom space in such clear histories decade by decade from the time of that program's establishment up to 2019. Coexistent with this rare, local condition, Hutchins also lives in a very familiar frame of reference. In the broader context, dozens of American

universities have, or have had, interdisciplinary programs. One amazing aspect of Hutchins is that the program has lasted as long as it has, especially in light of what has happened recently to other interdisciplinary programs across the nation, e.g., the closure of interdisciplinary programs at Wayne State University, at Appalachian State, at Miami of Ohio. That, in 2019, Sonoma has a thriving liberal studies program like Hutchins speaks to the strength of its faculty, curriculum, pedagogy, and to the program's effects on its students; it also speaks to a certain benign neglect from SSU administration. As budgets and enrollments force future "cost effective" and "value added" discussions, the Hutchins School needs to be ready to fully engage in long-term planning about the issues raised in those discussions. There is no reason to assume that an emphasis on "efficiency" and the current resource environment in public higher education will change. As it works with those assumptions, Hutchins will have to draw on its talent to innovate and adapt while still supporting its key values.

Moving forward, a variety of issues will need to be addressed by the Hutchins School faculty and staff, as well as by the broader Sonoma State University community (e.g., administration, alumni, admissions office, development office, etc.). These range from strategic planning and curriculum delivery to the School's connections with other programs. The Hutchins School is a distinctive, valuable program. For it to survive and be a "showplace" program for recruitment and alumni relations at Sonoma State, I believe it needs:

- 1) to reframe and capitalize on its extraordinary features, and
- 2) to strengthen connections with other constituencies.

In what follows, I broadly address these two areas first. Then, I separate out some key areas by subheading. However, many of the topics discussed below are interconnected. For example, having assessment data regarding student satisfaction or job placement or alumni satisfaction affects the School's ability to conduct strong strategic planning, or to pursue long-term conversations about curriculum revision or to sharpen alumni relations and financial support. All of these, in turn, help the program represent itself in a position of strength when making a case for scarce resources across the college and university. Thus, while I discuss the areas separately, one area should not be considered in isolation.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1: REFRAME AND CAPITALIZE ON EXTRAORDINARY FEATURES**

To a new member of the SSU community, the Hutchins program must look peculiar. It has multiple tracks, upper and lower divisions, offers teacher training through two pathways, has its own separate academic advising, and employs a local vocabulary associated with all of those (e.g., "teaching pre-credential", "blended", etc.). To make conversations with others easier, Hutchins must convey its vision *simply*. It must also be able to convey that it is a program rooted in the past but not paralyzed by it.

Dr. James Hall noted in his 2013 Program Review that the Hutchins faculty "are primarily concerned about maintaining a liberal arts delivery system that prioritizes intimate scale and the

values/skills of critical thinking, life-long learning, and active citizenship.” My sense is that, six years later, the faculty continue to value this. And rightly so. But, given 1) the pressure to deliver content through larger course sizes, and 2) any perceived haziness by others about what the School does, Hutchins faculty and staff need to be clear about the program’s value added – what can students, faculty, and staff gain through participating in *this* program? I am convinced that the School can and has answered that question; it needs to streamline its response and ensure the elements are woven into plain, accessible narratives.

## **Possible Strategies**

Clarify what is being told. Looking at the previous and at the just-updated websites (autumn 2019) as well as at promotional materials, I easily find information about the three tracks in the Hutchins School. I don’t see a brief, comprehensive “structure” or “schematic”, however -- something that can be used when talking with prospective students, transfer students, administrators, donors, colleagues, etc. On the website, the “[Degree Programs](#)” page, for example, immediately moves to three ways I can experience Hutchins. But the page lacks a narrative frame. It doesn’t establish a single clear thread for this story: For instance, it could say something like:

“Hutchins offers two alternatives to familiar experiences at American universities. Both highlight integrated, holistic education. 1) For first-year and sophomore students, Hutchins offers an alternative to traditional general education. Students chose one of three interdisciplinary pathways through general education requirements. And 2) For junior and senior-level students, Hutchins offers an alternative to the traditional major: students build on lower-division interdisciplinary work to produce a personalized, Liberal Studies major – learn alternatively, learn integrated.”

In other words, invest time and discussion in a “values map” or a “mission map”. Talk about what you believe is the core of the School -- “integrated studies”, or “intimate scale”, or “alternative”, or “clarified values”, or “interdisciplinary”? If the identified core is “critical thinking”, students can get critical thinking in many other courses, what is it about curricular design and pedagogy in Hutchins that makes its approach to critical thinking consequential? What do alumni say about that approach? What do current students say about that approach? Or, if the identified core is “alternative”, then why does alternative matter in 2019 and what value does “alternative” bring to mainstream/traditional SSU programs in return? I don’t wish to suggest that these discussions aren’t already happening or that these areas are mutually exclusive, but I encourage the faculty to talk openly about what stakeholders identify as the center of the program and to weave that center intentionally into the website narrative, the advising narrative, the syllabus narrative, the assessment narrative, the capstone narrative, etc. The new website (autumn 2019) is more informative and easier to navigate than the previous version. Congratulations on a useful, user-friendly, and fuller website! The inclusion of “The Benefits of Hutchins” and “Career Prospects” are great additions. There is still a need, however, to take the multiple parts and connect them to one simple, pared down point for the narrative. To repeat, I believe presenting the program’s core values is already going on (e.g., this is very clear in the “program action plan for the next five years” section of the Self-Study, Part 2); it could go on more accessibly, more repeatedly, more visibly. A prospective student, transfer student, upper-

division student, department chair in another program, new administrator should be able to grasp the concept of Hutchins immediately. It should be clear to all what Hutchins' extraordinary features are and how its curricular and pedagogical components relate directly back to its core value(s).

At some point, I suspect conversations about Hutchins' core value(s) will involve "intimate scale." Given the pressures on small courses at any university, a conversation about intimate scale needs to move beyond a discussion of course caps. What does intimate scale produce that is consequential for students and faculty? How does intimate scale affect the program's goal to enhance student and faculty and promote diverse perspectives? Does it make students and faculty feel "seen"? That their ideas are heard? That they mentor each other? That they notice "community" and practice "citizenship" together more easily? If those are the results of "intimate scale", then what, other than "classes capped at 15 students", can highlight those extraordinary features? In future conversations, Hutchins must continue to identify what its features are and how they are produced. It will also need to identify at what key points during a students' time at SSU those features can be highlighted — at three key points? at four key points? It will need to be innovative about *where* and *how* it can adapt to current pressures and new realities. For example, Hutchins does address large-scale instruction through several of its classes (e.g., the LIBS 202 symposium class; LIBS 204, 205, 208, 209 are large lecture courses; 304, 312, 327, 330 in the teacher tracks are 25-40 person courses; and the 402 capstone typically has 25-45 students enrolled). As an external reviewer, what was less clear to me is how the program sees its larger courses fitting into the School's "values map/mission map" – the School stresses "intimate scale" but what makes its several large courses part of the "Benefits of Hutchins" – do these offer a balance of small and large-scale experiences and multiple perspectives and learning environments, all grounded in closeness between people and knowledge? Do they offer increased opportunities for group projects (one of the School's stated areas for improvement in the Self-Study)? Do these large courses show that Hutchins understands how to make closeness between people scalable – from neighborhood to society? Does course assessment data show the small seminars and larger classes and symposium are efficient ways of helping student retention at SSU? Does course assessment data show increased comfort with interdisciplinary issues through this mix of large and small groups?

No doubt some of these discussions will center on what is distinctive to the Hutchins School and what can be shared from other programs at SSU to meet graduation requirements in four years. With regard to curriculum, that will involve assessing sustainability and distinctiveness – the School's small group, discussion-based pedagogy is an effective but expensive way of delivering a curriculum. Curriculum reform is discussed more below, but here, let me stress, that the faculty may need to survey alumni and current students about what were meaningful experiences during their education, as well as consult with how other interdisciplinary programs across the country work with sustainability, program design, and staffing. Not only will the School need to build on its extraordinary features but also be flexible at other points as it looks at curriculum design, course sizes, and how offerings from other academic programs at Sonoma State can be incorporated into or interact with Hutchins' offerings. To advance, the School

needs to reframe how its features are seen and take every opportunity to connect the program's parts to a consistent, accessible main narrative about its core value(s).

## **RECOMMENDATION 2: STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER CONSTITUENCIES**

A critical determinant to moving the School beyond the status quo is faculty and staff engagement in turning outward and in strengthening *strategic*, co-ordinated connections. Traditional university structures with schools and departments can sometimes be chary of interdisciplinary programs — how do they contribute to credits generated; who oversees their budgets or hiring or performance reviews; don't they compete for students, space, resources, etc. And, for their own part, some interdisciplinary programs emit a sense of being *sui generis* — detached from other programs while simultaneously integrating the methodologies, knowledge, and creativity from other disciplines. At no point have I had the impression that SSU is hostile to Hutchins nor that Hutchins has closed itself off from the university community. Still, any program not readily understandable risks being misunderstood at best and prompting misgivings at worst. I believe reframing a clear narrative about the Hutchins School will help avoid this; a second strategy is to strengthen connections with other constituencies. The School must turn outwards.

It is clear that the Hutchins School faculty are dedicated to teaching and that they value interdisciplinary work. And the School is very fortunate to have a chair so actively committed to shared decision making. Moreover, faculty, students, staff, and administration gave strong expressions of regard and collegiality during my visit. The faculty do not seem to skirt discussing difficult questions of change or adaptation – the “opportunities” and “action plan” sections of the Self-Study, Part 2 clearly show this skill. Nor do the faculty seem to express that such conversations might adversely affect the friendly relations they share with each other. In short, the School seems willing and able to meet both the challenge of clarifying a message about this extraordinary program and of connecting to other groups and broader contexts.

### **Possible Strategies**

Build bridges. Broadening the curricular, advising, historical, programmatic, and pedagogical contexts for Hutchins could be accomplished in multiple ways. The School is already a close community of teacher scholars and student scholars. To move the program forward, I believe the School needs to be confident in placing the work it already does in broader contexts and connect that work to regional/national/international discussions about interdisciplinary curriculum and pedagogy. That means faculty and staff talk about where they see the School in relation to the history of interdisciplinary programs. That means faculty and staff make Hutchins a *strong* presence at interdisciplinary organizations and conferences like the Association of Interdisciplinary Studies (AIS) or the Research Association of Interdisciplinary Studies (RAIS). Hutchins should be intentional about telling its story, about sharing its scholarship and creative work, about teaching and learning with practitioners across the globe. That means faculty proactively connect with other academic units across SSU; that academic advising is not

sequestered; that alumni are tracked. Connect with others. Identify what is already being done and craft an intentional campaign to build understanding, get serious about self promotion, advance external collaborations, and increase allies.

The School already uses a learning community model for curriculum planning. As a suggestion, might this vibrant model also be adapted to co-ordinate professional development and build connections? On a large scale, it might facilitate a kind of writing group in which to share abstracts for interdisciplinary conference presentations, review creative project proposals, or peer edit grant RFPs or applications to fund new initiatives for the School/augment its current work or share best practices (the School has faculty who have been nominated for university-wide excellence in teaching awards and have won excellence in scholarship awards. So what are those faculty's best practices? Are they scalable? In what ways can other faculty highlight their teaching and scholarship/creative practices? In short, make visible what Hutchins is already doing). On a small scale, the School might dedicate a portion of future meetings to briefly discussing a focused reading or present work related to liberal studies. Despite the examples below being somewhat dated, they offer observations relevant to Hutchins and I would still encourage the School to look at and discuss these or similar studies. Studies like these should help the faculty and staff's messaging as they decide what narrative points to emphasize, how to adapt to tensions, and which initiatives to prioritize.

1) Stuart Henry's "Disciplinary Hegemony Meets Interdisciplinary Ascendancy: Can Interdisciplinary/Integrated Studies Survive, and If So, How?" (2005). Attached to this report. Henry offers insights into the organizational structures that house interdisciplinary programs, their relations with other academic programs, and the primary characteristics of a quality interdisciplinary program. This last area might be particularly helpful to the Hutchins School as it focuses its narrative, tells its story to internal and external constituencies, seeks grants and donors, etc.

2) Paul Burkhardt's "Administering Interdisciplinary and Innovative Programs" (2006). Attached to this report. The author uses the University of Arizona's closure of the Arizona International College as a cautionary tale. A number of the issues Burkhardt cites in the article are or could come into play in charting the future for the Hutchins School, viz., the innovative unit outside more traditional departmental structures, departmental suspicions about interdisciplinary communities in general (lacking disciplinary foundations and "rigor"), lacking direct knowledge of the innovative unit's quality, role, attraction in recruitment and retention for diverse learners, transfer students, etc., structural and cultural connections between an independent program and other academic departments.

3) Tanya Augsburg's *The Politics of Interdisciplinary Studies: Essays on Transformations in American Undergraduate Programs* (2009). A book length study of programs across the United States.

As another suggestion, students, faculty, staff, and administration should understand how Hutchins' curriculum fits into the broader university system. This is familiar territory for any interdisciplinary program and Hutchins will need to look at external examples and decide how to navigate this. Program review materials suggest that Hutchins' interdisciplinary faculty interact well with their "academic discipline's home department". Moreover, the 2013 Program Review made a similar recommendation: increase campus visibility and co-operation. I would only suggest that Hutchins faculty lose no opportunity to cultivate connections with other academic units at SSU — committee work or promotion/tenure review or program assessment or invitations to LIBS 402 capstone presentations or internship evaluations or external evaluators of Track I capstone projects, etc. Hutchins will need strong connections with other academic programs at Sonoma in order to be sustainable. It appears to have done this best, not unexpectedly, with the School of Education. On the one hand, Hutchins offers two tracks toward teacher certification; on the other hand, at some institutions that could be seen as a threat to the School of Education or an area for turf war regarding the number of majors or allocation of resources, etc. The California state requirement for a post-baccalaureate multiple subject teaching credential before becoming an elementary education has certainly helped Hutchins; the School, nevertheless, seems to have walked a fine line here of presenting itself as "different" rather than as "better" than other SSU programs feeding into the School of Education. Hutchins' teacher education model highlights a cohort that takes several, multi-disciplinary, discussion-based courses together. Some students will want that. Others will not. Both the School of Education and Hutchins appear to respect that difference and work together. This model might be more intentionally and strategically integrated with other academic programs. In short, identify key departments to work with and develop strategies for engaging more with them — by promoting their events, by sponsoring joint speakers, by inviting their faculty to review Hutchins capstones, by holding teaching observations and asking those faculty to come in and offer observations, by developing a clear messaging strategy when interacting with other departments. Data-based messaging about Hutchins (recruitment, retention, time to degree, satisfaction with curriculum, with SSU experience, insight into material in other courses, etc.) should help this. Messages about "different" but not "better": if Hutchins' assessment data shows that some students find their work in other programs enriched through their experiences with Hutchins, then highlight that data in messages about how the School hopes to work with students in other programs to continue to provide that enrichment.

In summary, connect Hutchins with communities — tell the story about its curricular and pedagogical context; tell that story in research, creative, and scholarly work at professional conferences and at exhibitions and at readings; tell that story to other programs at SSU as they work with Hutchins students; tell that story as other program's courses compliment Hutchins and vice versa. More academic advisors should be qualified to tell that story. More students and alumni who participated in that story can be celebrated. More alumni tracked and invited to tell that story. Strategically and incrementally turn Hutchins outward. As the School celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I would encourage the chair, faculty, and staff to use this turning point and engage vigorously in collective and collaborative strategic planning, assessing and presenting its work to outside constituencies, and strengthening old and building new ties to communities.

As part of the program review, I move now to these sub-areas which, I hope, are seen as directly related to the two main recommendations above.

### **SUB-AREA A: PERSONNEL AND STAFFING**

During both my brief visit with the School's faculty in 2018 and again during this program review visit in 2019, I was impressed with the strong camaraderie and mutual respect the faculty manifested. The program is fortunate to enjoy this degree of mutual interest and support. Its use of a learning community model for curriculum planning appears to work well. Moreover, the faculty come from a suitable range of academic areas and, judging from the summary information included in the two-part Program Review, most seem keenly involved with scholarship, creative, and research work. Where there are lulls, re-engagement with research, scholarly, or creative work can easily be encouraged, resumed, and fed back into the program's teacher-scholar model. In addition, I did not note any particular difficulties or irregularities with regard to hiring, promotion and tenure, or support for professional development. As the current Program Review noted, Hutchins had a wave of retirements over the past ten years and has had a challenge keeping pace with replacing full-time faculty. While it has been able recently to hire faculty directly into its own program, the School has also increased its reliance on part-time lecturer faculty. Thus, the areas of concern I note are familiar — how to adequately compensate part-time lecturer faculty and how to staff courses fairly. Future discussions among the faculty and subsequently with administration will need to address this.

The School's chair seemed well supported by professional staff to manage the paperwork and record-keeping. Creating an associate chair position might be useful here, but I mention that only if it would help with succession planning for the School's leadership or if such a position might serve as a liaison for relations with other departments/offices (inward facing) while the chair works with alumni/donors/internships/grant agencies, etc. (outward facing).

Given the program's emphasis on transfer students and on teacher certification, advising is crucial. For the former, it is a vital means of integrating students into the Sonoma State community and moving them *smoothly* toward graduation at a new, unfamiliar institution. For the latter, advising is a chief link to state-mandated certification requirements. Many universities have a designated advisor who focuses on the complex requirements for teacher-certification. Hutchins is in familiar territory here: the School has one primary academic advisor. My understanding is that major advising is handled in other departments mostly by the department faculty. In short by multiple people. On the one hand, having one advisor for Hutchins provides continuity in messaging and efficiency -- one person works with common issues and common checkpoints and common requirements. On the other hand, having one advisor is at best "monocropping" and at worst facilitates an impression that the program tracks are so complex that they are illegible to faculty advisors or any outside professional academic advisors. Moreover, the Self-Study, Part 2 notes that Hutchins' 40:1 SFR in major advising is the second highest in all Arts & Humanities departments. Major advising is one area where Hutchins



should think carefully about the pros and cons of its existing structure and should respond to the assessment data it has regarding student dissatisfaction with current advising. This might mean either having a few faculty advisors in addition to the one primary academic advisor (increasing advising options for students) or simplify the messaging about the program's structure so that it is easier for students to understand (less frustrating for students and advisors). Finally, relating to earlier points – perhaps use this as an opportunity to build bridges with the larger SSU community and tell your story. What can Hutchins learn about how other programs streamline and make their advising effective (where is the greatest student satisfaction with advising on the SSU campus?)? What are advising best practices on campus? Then, how can Hutchins work with its advising and let other programs and/or the main campus advising center know what's going on with advising structures at Hutchins. In a word: associate and resist being enisled.

During my visit, I was greatly impressed with the faculty, staff, and students who took the time to share their thoughts and concerns with me. It was clear that all of these people were profoundly invested in the Hutchins School and its mission to educate students in interdisciplinary studies with a focus on small-group, discussion-based instruction. There was an even investment of concern in the program review process among faculty members. Likewise faculty showed an even investment of pride and interest in their students' work, particularly in the capstone showcase, which I was fortunate enough to see. The faculty do not seem to be disengaged at all from the School's' work; however, there does seem to be some degree of readiness to maintain the status quo. Regardless of its intent, the School needs to adapt and move forward. That said, its strong sense of camaraderie puts it in good stead to do this effectively.

## **SUB-AREA B: CURRICULUM/ASSESSMENT**

The School has clear-cut outcomes expressed across the program (p. 27 of the Self-Study, Part 1) and these are expressed in many of its course syllabi so that students know the consistent narrative/core value discussed above. Specifically the Program Learning Outcomes (PLO) appear as Student Learning Objectives on syllabi associated with major courses (pp.27-28) and the School is aware that the PLOs are not listed in the SSU 2018-2019 catalogue (a minor oversight that goes back to Recommendation 1 — keep telling the story). However, direct assessment data (as opposed to the indirect, self-reported data from student surveys) should be implemented for LIBS 402 the Capstone course (infra). Such direct assessment data can be a powerful tool in future conversations about any changes the School wishes to make to its curriculum as well as a powerful tool in arguing for resources, applying for grants, or working with donors and internship providers. This is yet another reason for faculty to choose to invest their time in measuring the consequences of the program's features and for SSU to support and compensate faculty who participate in assessment labor. Most of the evidence provided in the Self-Study points to the fact that the program meets important learning objectives for students (pp. 29-47). The School's Program Learning Outcomes and Student Learning Objectives demonstrate that students feel positively about their Hutchins experiences. And the Evergreen survey, which compares Hutchins to other learning community programs nationwide, reflects that Hutchins students perform well in areas where one would expect interdisciplinary majors to

demonstrate strength (e.g., critical thinking) and less well in areas Hutchins' seminar-based pedagogy and curriculum does not currently emphasize (quantitative reasoning). That said, the assessment data could be reframed for external consumption into something like a short SWOT analysis so that external constituencies (administrators, admissions, high school counselors, accreditation agencies, employers, internship providers) have a quick, accessible understanding of what story assessment data points tell about Hutchins students and their experiences in the program.

Anent direct assessment of LIBS 402, the capstone course: this is already a large course (25-45 students per section) with significant writing and self-assessment components. Assessment is crucial to students and the program at this point. Identify a few direct assessment data points (3 - 4 points) that can demonstrate how the School meets objectives. In turn, a few direct assessment data points can provide information about questions the faculty care about and that satisfy administration, donors, external grant funding agencies, etc., and that offer a quantifiable view of the School and its effects on faculty, staff, and students. I would encourage the program to look hard at its assessment process here — work smarter, not harder. Faculty might consider no more than 2 or 3 areas where they wish to examine student outcomes and spread looking at those issues out across the portfolios, presentations, and poster session, and use a simplified rubric to provide quantitative data rather than move toward generating written reports for each LIBS 402 student. Faculty will need to have a serious conversation about which outcomes they feel are most significant, explicitly or implicitly in the curriculum overall.

Regarding curriculum in general, my understanding is that at this juncture, radical change is not something that is widely desired. *Vis-à-vis* what is available at peer institutions to Sonoma, the current curriculum is one that offers a good deal of flexibility, in particular with the three tracks which allow students to pursue teacher certification or a personalized liberal studies major. At the same time, the required capstone course enables students to have a critical common experience. While the current curriculum does not need a major overhaul, it could use some “polishing” to make it a course of studies that continues to attract a strong, diverse group of students and continues to satisfy faculty desires to teach courses that match their interests and expertise and is easy for students to navigate (see student comments about program advising for Track I, Track II, and transfer students. *Self-Study, Part 1*, pp. 49-52 and *Self-Study, Part 2*, pp. 6-7, 12). Using the Program Review and assessment data to inform program design is where courses, modules, intentional links to co-curricular experiences could be worked on incrementally. Connect Hutchins to feed into other SSU graduate programs (e.g., MBA, CRM, Film Studies, MPA, Organization Development). Connect Hutchins with diversity issues and initiatives (the Program Review notes the low number of students of color; at what points do students of color see themselves in the seminar-based curriculum or its intentional connections to co-curricular opportunities?). Connect Hutchins' lower-division and LIBS 302 to Track I (this is already being done. Again, talk with peer interdisciplinary programs and survey Hutchins students/alumni to find out how to increase recruitment to Track I). Connect Hutchins with TRIO and McNair and Upward Bound (consult with their directors and alumni. What does Hutchins bring to student experiences in these programs and how can Hutchins tweak its curriculum and pedagogy to optimize work with students in these important programs?).

## **SUB-AREA C: INFRASTRUCTURE**

Classes are not simply words on a syllabus or shared assignments. They occur in physical spaces and make use of multiple resources. Similarly, infrastructure is not just the physical space where teaching and learning happen, it is also the processes that facilitate the day to day operations of an institution and its technological interactions inward and outward.

During my visit I was the guest at two excellent seminars, at one large project presentation, and at the Senior Capstone Showcase. The students were impressive in their command of concepts and sensitivity to textual/data nuances. The first seminar I visited was an LIBS 320 class, engaged in a lively discussion of philosophy. The second seminar was an LIBS 302, which had both a vibrant discussion of student experiences in the liberal arts *and* an end-of-semester potluck featuring a pie with the course number baked onto the crust (See Appendix 1). Both seminars were small (~15 students) and everyone in both seminars contributed more than once during the period. The third class I visited was a LIBS 202 symposium class, with more than ~70 students present. I was impressed that the students were so involved as the room was crowded and the project presentations fast paced. Even in these cramped conditions, the faculty member led a discussion-based class which allowed the majority of students to contribute, several more than once.

The admirable discussion in these classes occurred despite the welcoming, but cramped physical space. Both office/seminar rooms appeared to have sufficient media resources with monitors and projectors. More advanced media resources were both on full display and fully used in the library classroom for the LIBS 202 symposium class. Seminar instructors seem to have adequate media resources to engage students and use other media to supplement and enhance discussions. However, given how many students major in Tracks II and III (teacher preparation), I am surprised that there were few smartboards, a resource that seems common in many school districts. If California school districts have better technology than Hutchins and the other feed programs for the School of Education, then students' teaching experience will occur in more technologically sophisticated spaces than their own education at SSU. Limited technology does not seem to be the case across Sonoma State (Stevenson Hall, by comparison, appeared to be state of the art). Hutchins should be sure to have all of its teaching spaces equipped with technology equal to that found in the future employment settings of its own graduates.

I regret not asking why the Senior Showcase was held in Beaujolais Village. I understand now that this was the best available space at no charge. Even so, it was refreshing to have the showcase in a space so clearly marked with student residence life. My suggestion here would be to also mark such space externally for the Hutchins School — get a banner to hang out front or push social media about it (in part, the Showcase was a pop-up event. Here and gone. Build on that appeal in marketing the event). Likewise, I regret not asking how the School uses technology for advising information, early warnings, registration deadline reminders, etc.,

particularly given student comments about Track I advising support. And finally, I urge the School to review its media presence. Help the best Hutchins School to step forward. The old website has been refreshed and looks good and has interactive features (e.g., the alumni map). Still, it can be used more to highlight student successes, faculty research/creative work, alumni profiles, etc. Again, be courageous about being visible and telling your important story. I suspect that web design and social media accounts are outside the School's immediate purview, but it should push for refurbishment.

Thank you again, Dr. Dyer, for the opportunity to review the Hutchins School. As I noted above, this program has the potential to be a "showplace" for Sonoma State, and it is even more remarkable to me that the department has been able to achieve as much as it has in the midst of numerous financial, administrative, and broader challenges in higher education. I sincerely hope the School continues its collaborative approaches to ensuring quality student learning and to developing the extraordinary interdisciplinary opportunities that Hutchins offers to SSU.

Yours faithfully,

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Cc: Dr. Hollis Robbins, Dean of the School of Arts & Humanities

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#### APPENDIX 1

