UIC

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Monitoring Report
on
Assessment of General Education

March 1999
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
<th>page number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 1.   Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 2.   External Stakeholders and UIC Information</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 3.   Assessment of Writing</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 4.   Assessment of General Education</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 5.   Assessment of Cultural Diversity</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Attachments</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix from College of Business Administration</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

This is the Monitoring Report in response to the request by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools for “assessment of student academic achievement, limited to general education requirements”. Herein, UIC provides evidence of our assessment plans and the accompanying administrative structures and committees. Major strides in our work on general education have been made under the supervision of the new provost, Elizabeth Hoffman, by the Council of Deans and by two faculty task forces for assessment and for general education. A centralized office in academic affairs coordinates these assessment efforts.

UIC is a large, complex, urban, Carnegie Research I, state university with the largest health science complex in the country. We meet our mission to take ‘special account and advantage of the extraordinary ethnic and cultural diversity of the Chicago metropolitan area’. Assessment shows that our student body is academically strong, racially diverse and highly motivated to learn. The Illinois Board of Higher Education encourages all students to reach their highest academic potential and facilitates transfer of students among associate and baccalaureate degree granting institutions. UIC receives many transfer students, and about 60% of the graduating seniors take some or all of their general education core courses elsewhere. The ramifications are that this complex student pipeline limits our ability to meet the advice of the NCA reporting team that we “undertake a major revision of general education to assure more commonality and synthesis of experience.” We thrive on our diversity and on the multitude of different opportunities for our students. By state mandate and mission, we cannot have, and do not want to have, a ‘commonality’ of experience. However, we can focus on ‘synthesis’ as it applies to students with widely differing goals and requirements. Therefore, we assess general education of our students in two phases: First, we ensure that students who do take courses in general education at UIC are well served by us. Second, we ensure that all students continue to develop intellectual breadth throughout their course work until they graduate.

Major progress has been achieved in reviewing our current goals and processes. The NCA criticized UIC for having a vast “cafeteria” for course selections that were available to meet requirements for general education. But, as in cafeterias, just because an item is offered it does not mean it is consumed. Analysis of enrollment in the general education courses showed that the majority of students limit their selection to a fairly narrow group of 100 and 200 level courses in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and study of cultural diversity. Final decision on a revised scheme for general education is now under scrutiny for content and fit to the curriculum. In the new scheme, we contemplate having an inner core of courses to cover general education. These are also the foundation for the Basic Competencies, including some or all of the following: written and oral communication; reading and listening abilities; logical and critical thinking; and quantitative reasoning and computer literacy. However, we do not intend to rely entirely on a required curriculum, predominantly completed in the first year at the university. We believe that general education continues throughout academic life. Academic growth at UIC will be assured by the addition of a component called ‘Intellectual Development’ of advanced or higher learning. Students also need to know at least one subject in depth; this dimension of their intellectual
growth is achieved through the specialization offered in their major. We will use a department-based system to evaluate components of the impact of all courses that contribute to the ongoing intellectual development of the student.

We assessed the current practices and outcomes in writing proficiency. The startling finding that two thirds of our students speak a language other than English at home appears to have an impact on the writing proficiency, one of our basic competencies. Multiple measures were used to evaluate writing, including alumni and student surveys, analysis of Writing in Disciplines, faculty focus groups, and the report from our tutoring service, the Writing Center. The consensus is that most of our students do write proficiently. However, at least 10% of seniors, mainly science majors, write poorly and need more help. In future, we will assess learning outcomes for the other basic competencies and qualities of intellectual development using appropriate multiple measures for each.

Among the recommendations to implement change in the UIC assessment plans and the accompanying administrative structures and committees are the following:

- Continue deliberations and monitoring of general education by appropriate faculty committees.
- Introduce cyclic assessment of the basic competencies and required courses in general education to ensure that the learning goals are achieved by UIC students.
- Use a department-based system to evaluate components of the impact of all courses that contribute to the sustained intellectual development of the student. Use multiple measures that are appropriate in nature to the major and are approved by the college.
- Develop a monitoring process that passes through the college to central administration in order to co-ordinate implementation of change when necessary.
- Maintain a central assessment office located in academic affairs to co-ordinate numerous existing campus processes. Make assessment data widely available electronically.
- Establish a complete central data base of all UIC alumni. This will be a joint effort between the colleges and the Alumni Office.
- Create a new administrative structure for the teaching of writing to meet campus-wide needs. Introduce and support writing in the disciplines for all majors on campus. Continue to monitor writing proficiency for students UIC through this new office.
Strengthen and improve the Writing Center.

Consider how to extend or expand ways beyond course work through which students may gain experience with cultures other than their own. This includes Study Abroad, internships, and other experiences.
Section 1.

Introduction

A team from the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) visited the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) from April 14-16, 1997. Prior to the visit they received the UIC Self Study (found on the web at [http://www.uic.edu/depts/huminst/nca.html](http://www.uic.edu/depts/huminst/nca.html)). The NCA Report was complimentary and concluded that UIC met criteria one, two, three, four and five. However, the team recommended, and the commission concurred, that UIC provide a Monitoring Report in March 1999 on “assessment of student academic achievement, limited to general education requirements” and the “College of Business Administration.” The Report noted (page 46) that UIC would need to “provide evidence in the monitoring report of the assessment plans in place in specified areas and the accompanying administrative structures and committees.”

In reviewing general education at UIC, the NCA team wrote that "the undergraduate catalog articulates no expected student outcomes in general education or no careful explanation of what specific life skills students are expected to acquire by choosing among all these courses." It stated further that it found "little evidence of systematic effort or accomplishment in mid-level and exit assessment in general education..." The team therefore recommended that the Commission mandate a monitoring report from UIC, due in March 1999, on the assessment of student academic achievement in general education.

The other mandate in the 1997 NCA report pertains to assessment in the College of Business Administration. A separate document is enclosed from the College of Business Administration which responds in detail to the comments made in the 1997 Report.

We now provide evidence of plans in place, with accompanying administrative and committee structures. UIC has taken the criticisms of the NCA team as an opportunity to review and rethink our ongoing assessment of undergraduate programs. Soon after her arrival at UIC in the Fall of 1997, the new provost, Elizabeth Hoffman, began working extensively on many approaches to academic assessment at the university, college and department levels. Provost Hoffman appointed Brenda Russell, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, to oversee assessment of student academic achievement and to provide a centralized office for administrative purposes. Provost Hoffman appointed a major faculty Task Force for Assessment of General Education, chaired by Dr. Russell.

Concern over the general education requirements at UIC antedated by some months the findings of the NCA site team. With the support of Acting Provost John Wanat and then-Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Sidney B. Simpson, planning for a retreat began in the Fall of 1996, involving representatives of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and other colleges with undergraduate degree programs. The retreat itself was held in the early spring of 1997. Out of that event came a detailed analysis of some of the issues raised by the present "cafeteria" structure of general education at UIC. It was clearly impossible to accomplish the task
of rewriting the curriculum at a two-day getaway from campus. The participants proposed that the work begun at the retreat become part of the campus planning process. Administrative transitions in the Office of Academic Affairs resulted in a delay in the appointment of the Task Force until the Spring of 1998. Once appointed, its members began to explore several concerns that had been raised during the retreat (e.g., the inadequacy of the present catalogue justification for general education, the need for progress in assessment, and more provision for curricular experimentation with core courses or clusters providing an alternative to the present distribution system). Though the Task Force cannot finish its own task before filing this report to NCA, the group will serve as an instrument for suggesting not only substantive changes to general education but also better evaluative mechanisms for testing the admissibility of new courses to the general education offerings and for periodic review of the program.

Thus, we now have two committees devoted to the subject of this monitoring report, The Task Force on Assessment and The Task Force on General Education. The interaction between the two committees is fostered by exchange of draft documents and by a few members common to both (Lawrence Poston, who chairs the Task Force on General Education, is also a member of the Assessment Task Force; Brenda Russell who chairs the Assessment Task Force also serves ex officio on the General Education Task Force). There is a constructive tension between the two task forces, one whose goal is to assess what we have now and the other to decide what we ought to have in the future. This makes us all aware that assessment must be an ongoing process that constantly adjusts to change. Together, we are setting up mechanisms and processes by which we can assess, reflect, consider options, change if sensible; then reassess, reflect, consider options, change again if sensible; and so on. To capture this iterative process, the detailed assessments below are organized into three components. First, we discuss how the goals are defined. Second, we discuss how achievement is assessed. Finally, we consider how change will be implemented if necessary. We believe that these processes will not stop now that a Monitoring Report is submitted, but will continue to run through faculty and administrative channels in a steady and consistent manner.

The new administrative structure is that the Provost retains responsibility for assessment, an Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs co-ordinates campus level activities, deans and program directors supervise in the appropriate areas, and senate and faculty committees are involved in decision-making and implementation of change. We have now exciting work to describe in this ongoing process of assessment of student academic achievement in general education.

The Task Force on Assessment.

The Task Force on Assessment comprises 16 members selected from all 14 colleges and chaired by Brenda Russell (Physiology, Academic Affairs). They are Carmel Chiswick (Economics), Julia Cowell (Nursing), Kathleen Crittenden (Sociology), David France (Engineering), Wade Freeman (Chemistry), John Huntington (English), Stephen Kelso (Biology), Louise Nuevo Leon Kerr (History), Jeff Lewis (Mathematics), Larry Nucci (Education), Peggy
In November 1997, the Provost charged the campus-wide task force with assessment of student achievement in the general education programs. She informed the members that the formation of this task force came primarily as a result of the recent report of the NCA site team that visited UIC in April 1997 to evaluate the campus for its ten-year accreditation. In her letter she stated, “I regard this project as of the highest priority” and that, “While assessment measures of student achievement do exist within some programs at UIC, notably those subject to accreditation by professional bodies, we do not have in place any assessment mechanism for general education, that body of courses undergraduates must take to acquaint themselves with disciplines outside their major.” The Assessment Task Force's work began in the 1997 Fall semester and is continuing into the 1998-99 academic year.

The committee began by reviewing the current catalog and requirements for general education at UIC. The selections of specified areas that are addressed in detail in the Monitoring Report below arise out of the UIC mission (page vii in Self Study) and current graduation requirements (UIC Undergraduate Catalog 1997-1999, p 46-47). We focus on the three major areas now required for graduation by all UIC undergraduates: writing, General Education (in disciplinary clusters of humanities, social science and natural science) and cultural diversity.

The committee considered many assessment tools. Selections were based on the value of the information, feasibility of collection, cost, how data can be used and how change can be implemented if sensible. They suggested that we use multiple qualitative and quantitative approaches in each area rather than relying exclusively on one, so that appropriate, continued monitoring can be done. They also considered the time points at which the assessments should be made. The stages to be considered for every assessment tool, if possible, are: freshman entry, mid-level, at graduation, and alumni, several years later. Note that many of our students transfer in after they have taken some general education courses elsewhere and only take a few course distribution credits (CDC) at UIC. Therefore, any assessment of general education must take transfers into consideration.

The Task Force on General Education.

The Task Force on General Education comprises 21 members selected from all colleges across campus and chaired by Lawrence Poston (English and Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences). Members are Mary Ashley (Biological Sciences), Faith Bonecutter (Social Work), Julia Cowell (Public Health, Mental Health and Administrative Nursing), Steve Fanning (History), June Ferguson (College of Liberal Arts and Science), Joan Fiscella (Library), David France (College of Engineering), Wade Freeman (Chemistry), Richard Johnson (Political Science), Richard Kosobud (Economics), Neal Grossman (Philosophy), Peter Hales (Art History), Warren Palmer (Kinesiology), Mrinalini Rao (Physiology and Biophysics), Leslie Sandlow (College of Medicine), Celina Sima (College of Education), John Walsh (Sociology),
Curt Winkle (Urban Planning).

In April 1998, the Provost charged this campus-wide task force with a systematic reexamination of the present general education requirements for graduation. She stated that this should be done with an open-minded attitude “in the light of UIC’s own role as a Research I institution in a metropolitan area, not according to preconceived standards that may reflect the influence of our own educational experiences in other kinds of institutions.” The committee was charged “to go beyond the necessary data-gathering and consider our present system on its own merits, proposing any changes or modifications that seem desirable.” Specifically they were asked to:

1. Examine the present catalogue descriptions of the scope and purpose of general education to see if these adequately convey what we want to do and are doing through that program;

2. Examine general education requirements at a variety of institutions, with particular attention to those most comparable to our own;

3. Identify the principles and procedures that would govern the revision of general education.

The General Education Task Force has devoted the bulk of its attention thus far to the first of these tasks, and a text of its interim report (which is still in progress) is being made available to the NCA (attachment 1). It has also examined recent changes in the general education curriculum within the Illinois State University system, from which it has derived the working concept of "inner and outer cores." It believes these concepts may provide a principle for further curricular revision. The Task Force has yet to propose a new structure both for the overhaul and the periodic review of general education, but this, in fact, may prove to be one of the less controversial of its tasks.

UIC is accountable to many external stakeholders and there is a vast amount of information that impacts what we do here. In order to evaluate how UIC students are doing in meeting the stated goals, we found that we first had to learn more about our student body and how these goals are set. UIC is a large, complex, urban, Carnegie Research I, state university with the largest health science complex in the country. UIC has many external stakeholders and reports to many accrediting bodies, including the North Central Association. A primary source of goal setting comes from the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and this group has been particularly active lately. It recently issued the Illinois Commitment designed to provide a strategic focus for accountability in higher education. We also have many professional and disciplinary accrediting bodies that review colleges or individual programs. Fortunately, these stakeholders are not currently at odds with one another although this can happen. Currently, most of our external reviewing agencies are stressing the same kind of accountability that the NCA has asked for in this Monitoring Report. However, we do have some practical problems that arise from state mandates in articulation of course credits from other Illinois schools that affect transfer students. We use the first section of the report to provide basic information on our students and our other external review bodies and collegial reporting networks. We hope that
Section 2 on ‘External Stakeholders and UIC Information’ will help to orient the reader to understand the work we have been doing for NCA in the context of our entire academic position.

The remainder of the report deals with the assessment of writing (Section 3), assessment of general education (Section 4) and assessment of cultural diversity (Section 5). Each section begins with a summary table that is organized in three columns to emphasize the iterative process of cycling from goals to assessment to implementation of change and to reassessment.
## Section 2.

### External Stakeholders and UIC Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEFINE GOALS</th>
<th>ASSESS</th>
<th>IMPLEMENT CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UIC mission</td>
<td>Student profile</td>
<td>Referred to Provost and appropriate deans or faculty committees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and the Illinois Commitment</td>
<td>Program Reviews at UIC and for IBHE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional and Academic Accrediting Bodies</td>
<td>Professional and Academic accrediting measures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban 13</td>
<td>University of Illinois Alumni Assessment surveys</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC or Big 10+)</td>
<td>Career Outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pew Urban Universities Portfolio Project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Definition of Goals.

The current mission of the University of Illinois at Chicago was approved by the UIC Senate, November 19, 1986 and by the University of Illinois Board of Trustees, January 15, 1987. It states in part that:

UIC seeks to provide its undergraduates with an education which is both broad and deep, to prepare them for responsible citizenship, and to open intellectual and career opportunities which will challenge their abilities. In doing so, UIC takes special account and advantage of the extraordinary ethnic and cultural diversity of the Chicago metropolitan area, which encompasses two-thirds of the population of Illinois and from which it presently draws most of its undergraduate students. Among these students are many for whom a university education is not a long-standing family tradition and who must surmount economic, social, and educational barriers to achieve academic success. UIC endeavors to help these students fully realize their potential. For the growing proportion of its students who are enrolled in graduate and professional programs, both in Chicago and at its regional sites, UIC offers an education which will prepare them to render skilled professional service and to assume positions of intellectual leadership in their disciplines and professions.

We first need to explore how our educational goals are determined. Our direction is ultimately decided by the University of Illinois Board of Trustees but this is influenced in an ongoing manner by numerous internal and external stakeholders. The internal constituency comprises the administration, faculty and student body. Of these, by statute, the Faculty Senate is the place that discusses and approves any new recommendations before they go to the Board of Trustees. One of the external stakeholders is the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The NCA team made suggestions about general education in their report which are being carefully considered at the faculty level now. Another key stakeholder is the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). Because we are a state school, we are accountable to the IBHE and to the legislature which approves our budget. In the past year, IBHE was actively involved in a multifaceted project to learn from the Citizens of Illinois about “the needs of the states’ students and employers, and on the well being of Illinois residents.” At the February 1999 Board Meeting, the IBHE adopted six goals based on this gathering and analysis of information. This project is now called the Illinois Commitment by IBHE (item 7, attachment 2) see web site at http://www.ibhe.state.il.us/. As expected, these goals are concerned with the delivery of high quality education from kindergarten through graduate school to every qualified Illinois citizen. The most recent guide from the IBHE continues to emphasize diversity which as stated in Goal 4, “Illinois shall increase the number and diversity of citizens completing training and education programs.” Goal 5 of this agenda is highly relevant to the NCA because it states that IBHE “will hold students to even higher expectations for learning and be accountable for the quality of academic programs.” The action items from this goal include incentives for development of assessment tools, bench marking, and quality assurance processes and provision of more support (item 8, attachment 2). Systematic assessment of student learning will be required by the state by 2004. Thus, both IBHE and NCA encourage a shift from the current emphasis on processes to one of learning outcomes.
Other external stakeholders are important to UIC because we have many programs and colleges that are also regulated by professional and academic accrediting bodies. These cover disciplines as diverse as Engineering, Education, Social Work, Chemistry and many health related fields. We find that most of our external stakeholders now insist on measures of competence of the students before certification by the accrediting body. In future, we realize that we will not be asked so much about course work but asked more about what does the student know and what can the student do.

There are several academic networks with whom UIC voluntarily affiliates. These peer groups are constantly devising benchmarks for academic achievement and success. UIC belongs to the Urban 13 that is focusing on the theme of ‘Great Cities, Great Universities.’ The Urban 13 members are University of Alabama at Birmingham, University of Cincinnati, Cleveland State University, Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University, Georgia State University, University of Houston, University of Illinois at Chicago, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, University of Massachusetts at Boston, University of Memphis, University of Missouri-St. Louis, University of Missouri-Kansas City, University of New Orleans City College of New York, University of Pittsburgh, Portland State University, Temple University, University of Toledo, Virginia Commonwealth University, Wayne State University and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

UIC also belongs to the “Big 10+ Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) that is the academic consortium of twelve major teaching and research universities. Its programs and activities extend to all aspects of university activity except intercollegiate athletics. The chief academic officers of the CIC institutions meet three times annually to establish CIC guidelines and procedures, to discuss proposed initiatives and evaluate existing programs, and to address collective concerns and policy issues common to these institutions. The CIC institutions’ members are the University of Chicago, the University of Illinois (Chicago and Urbana-Champaign campuses), Indiana University, the University of Iowa, the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, the University of Minnesota, Northwestern University, Ohio State University, Pennsylvania State University, Purdue University, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

UIC is one of the six partner universities in a project funded by the Pew Foundation in the Urban Universities Portfolio Project and the American Association of Higher Education. The goal of this project is to create a profile of the urban universities to inform the internal and external communities about many aspects of university life, including the academic. The other five universities are California State University-Sacramento, Georgia State University, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Portland State University, and the University of Massachusetts-Boston. This Pew assessment will be in the form of a portfolio that is presented in a web-based format to show who we are and how we are doing. UIC will take a lead in this project and it will provide a modern way to inform students, faculty and the public at large. We are excited to be part of this Pew Portfolio activity and refer the reader to the pilot web site (http://www.imir.iupui.edu/portfolio/). Note that this site will be constantly updated and will
provide the platform for continual and readily accessible reporting. We feel that this will serve our numerous stakeholders more effectively and be an added benefit to the cyclic reviews and self studies that were required by NCA and other accrediting bodies.

Assessment.

We have been making the various kinds of assessment measures to help us to know how we are doing with the present system, and how to change if necessary. In this section, we assess the student demographics relevant to general education in the student profile, the assessment done by our feeder schools in the credit transfer system via the Illinois Articulation Initiative, the UIC program review and the eight-year cycle set by IBHE, additional professional and academic accrediting measures, University of Illinois assessment surveys of all graduates, and career outcomes.

Student Profile.

In order to understand how we plan to assess undergraduate general education, we first need to take the profile of our student population into consideration. Who are the present undergraduate students at UIC? Although written a decade ago, our student body still matches the description in our mission statement. We still draw from the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Chicago metropolitan area and many students surmount economic, social, and educational barriers to achieve academic success. We continue to receive many transfer students from junior college under the Illinois Articulation Initiative (http://www.itransfer.org/) as strongly encouraged by the IBHE.

Let us look at the complexity of our student pipeline (see Figure 1 on page 15 for the Snapshot of the Graduation Pipeline at UIC. The actual data is given in the support material in attachment 4). Note that in the illustration the status of the student is not based on the chronological time they spend at UIC but on the number of credit hours that they have accumulated. We do this to compensate for the part-time student, perhaps working their way through college. We use the word “snapshot” because the numbers used were based on the probability of graduation for the various groups. This is a very fluid population with people coming and going for various reasons. We hope to improve the retention of the first year students as we explain below (Section 3) but we will always have a large cohort of transfer students. There are two main reasons for the transfer population; (1) majors admitted into the junior year, e.g., nursing, physical therapy, education, pharmacy; and (2) students transfer from other 2 year and 4 year programs as part of the Illinois Articulation Initiative. The fact that almost 60% of the graduating class took some, or all, of their core courses in general education outside UIC has a major impact on the way we plan to assess general education. The Task Force on Assessment and the Task Force on General Education are both aware of the ramifications that this complex student pipeline introduces. It certainly limits our ability to implement changes to meet the advice of the NCA reporting team that we “undertake a major revision of general education to assure more commonality and synthesis of experience.” We thrive on our diversity and on the multitude
of different opportunities for our students. By state mandate and mission, we cannot have, and do not want to have, a ‘commonality’ of experience. However, we can focus on ‘synthesis’ as it applies to students with widely differing goals and requirements.
This figure graphically depicts the complexity of our student pipeline. The numbers used were based on the probability of graduation for the various groups. The status of the student is not based on the chronological time they spend at UIC but on the number of credit hours they have accumulated, for example, it takes 60 credit hours to become a junior. We do this to compensate for the part-time student, perhaps working their way through college. Note that 1232 students out of the graduating cohort of 2951 (or 41.8%) had begun at UIC as freshmen while the remainder (almost 60%) took some, or all, of their core courses in general education outside UIC.

We assess general education of our students in two phases:

First, we ensure that students who do take core courses at UIC in general education are well served by us.

Second, we ensure that all students continue to develop in intellectual breadth until graduation.
We plan to solve the inherent difficulties of assessment for our current system in two ways. First, we concentrate on the review of our current general education and the expected outcomes for the freshman who will stay at UIC. Second, we focus on how all students may continue to strengthen their academic attributes by an ongoing component of general education that runs throughout the entire academic experience. We are still actively discussing exactly what all the goals of general education should be and how they will be assessed. Nevertheless, it is clear that some assessment component will reside within the major discipline at the end of the academic pipeline through which all students must pass. We expect to introduce some external measures in addition to those within the major itself. For example, because of our participation in the Pew Portfolio Project, we have been invited to participate in the Pew Survey of Student Engagement. This is being organized by Peter Ewell, Senior Associate at the National Center for Higher Education, who is enthusiastic about the possibility of the Pew Urban Portfolio Group of universities being included in the pilot survey scheduled for Fall 1999. All direct costs of survey administration will be handled by the Pew grant that is funding the survey. The draft instrument is still being developed but will have many items dealing with students' assessments of learning outcomes in general education.

Let us now consider the quality and the potential challenges for the general education of the UIC students. "Our incoming freshman class is academically strong, racially diverse and highly motivated to learn," said Chancellor David Broski. He based this partly on information collected as part of a national survey conducted by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program of the University of California-Los Angeles that gauges students' attitudes, educational and cultural background and college choices. About 80 percent of the 2,947 members of the 1998 fall freshman class was surveyed, compared to about half of last year's group (complete CIRP survey data are in attachment 5). These were collected by student affairs and analyzed under the supervision of Michael Kelly, assistant dean of student affairs and co-chair of the research and assessment committee in student affairs. The key findings of this 1998 report are summarized in the next few paragraphs.

UIC freshmen are academically strong and are becoming stronger. In the past ten years the mean ACT score has risen from 20.6 to 22.8 (Figure 3 in attachment 6) and the mean high school percentile rank has gone from 73.8 to 76.0 (Figure 5 in attachment 6). The full distribution of these data show that the improved quality has been achieved both by a reduction in the number of weaker students and in the addition of an elite group at the higher end.

When we assess how well our students write (Section 3), we need to make note of the language backgrounds of our students. UIC's student population includes more immigrants; nearly 19 percent of UIC students said they were non-U.S. citizens, compared to 4 percent nationally. Thirty-six percent of UIC freshmen are nonnative English speakers; at the average American university, that figure is only 7 percent. Further data from the surveys in English Composition classes reveal that almost two thirds speak another language at home, in addition to being fluent in English.

UIC ranks high in diversity when compared to other institutions and this is an important feature when we attempt to assess cultural diversity requirements of general education in Section 5 below. At UIC, 43 percent of freshmen listed themselves as Caucasian, while the national average was 80 percent. There were 9.3 percent African-American, while the national average was 6.5 percent, and 31 percent Asian American/Asian at UIC, compared to 6.8 percent nationally. The UIC freshmen class was 18 percent Hispanic, compared with the national figure of 7 percent.
UIC students are more likely to be first-generation college students with only 58 percent of 1998 entering freshmen having at least one parent who attended college or who held a college degree compared to 74 percent for university freshmen nationwide. UIC students come from less privileged families; only 11.5 percent of freshmen nationwide reported a parental annual income of less than $25,000, compared to nearly a quarter (23.5 percent) of UIC first-year students. Nationally, 33 percent of freshmen reported family income of less than $50,000, compared to 55 percent of UIC students. According to the figures, UIC students are less likely to receive financial aid from their parents to cover educational expenses, and when they do, the assistance is less substantial. As a consequence UIC students are more likely to hold jobs. In fact 55% of UIC freshmen worked more than 10 hours a week for pay. That's nearly seven points higher than the national figure. The whole student body reports an even higher proportion of time working. A survey done by academic affairs showed that two thirds of all our undergraduates work more than 15 hours a week.

**Illinois articulation initiative.**

We need to examine our transfer students as well as our freshmen because these transfers comprise about 40% of the graduating seniors. In January 1993, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Illinois Community College Board, and the Transfer Coordinators of Illinois Colleges and Universities jointly launched the Illinois Articulation Initiative to facilitate the transfer of students among Illinois institutions--public and independent, associate and baccalaureate degree-granting. The Board's policies contain two key concepts around which the Initiative was designed: first, that "associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions must be equal partners"; and second, that "faculties must take primary responsibility for developing and maintaining program and course articulation." The Illinois Articulation Initiative is a complex undertaking. From the outset, it was agreed that the first task was to develop a transferable general education program, because all associate and baccalaureate degrees require a general education component. It was also agreed that the articulation of curricula and courses is never done. Curriculum, and the courses within it, continues to change in response to new knowledge and new discoveries. Thus, the Initiative must be permanent, with processes established for continuous review and revision. The transferable General Education Core Curriculum was adopted, institutions have identified their courses, and freshmen began enrolling Summer 1998 under the automatic transfer of credit through the Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS). Twenty-four panels are in the process of developing or have already completed curriculum recommendations for a baccalaureate major or cluster of majors. UIC faculty sit on these panels and are actively involved in approval of acceptable transfer credits from community colleges and other schools.

As we stated above, IBHE strongly encourages the transfer of students from junior college and regulates acceptable transfer credits under the Illinois Articulation Initiative ([http://www.itransfer.org/](http://www.itransfer.org/), attachment 7). In fact, almost 80% of the transfers come from Illinois with 58% from 2 year and 22% from 4 year colleges. An analysis of the impact of these automatic transfers by DARS was presented to the Assessment Task Force in October 1998. The sample analyzed was taken from students in the College of Business Administration (attachment 8) showing typical transcripts for a students from our referring schools.

**Program Reviews at UIC and for IBHE.**

UIC recently undertook a major project to restructure how programs are reviewed. All activities of academic programs and academic support programs are subject to review; however,
Program reviews are conducted for three main purposes. First, the Illinois Board of Higher Education requires that academic programs be reviewed on an eight-year cycle. UIC program reviews coincide with these cyclical reviews. Some of the data generated from UIC program reviews will be used for IBHE reporting purposes. Over and beyond the IBHE mandate, the review process serves the additional purposes of generating data for internal strategic decision-making. UIC program reviews are used as a tool for making decisions associated with resource allocation and reallocation. It cannot be assumed that all programs currently in operation at UIC will be continued or maintained at the current level of support. Decisions about the viability of academic programs must be made on the basis of careful, systematic review. Second, program review data are used to make recommendations for self-improvement. Recommendations emanating from the various committees involved in program review are expected to be followed. The UIC Strategic Oversight Committee, comprising the Office of Academic Affairs, the Senate's Standing Campus Priorities Committee and the Graduate College, will make periodic checks on progress made in addressing recommendations. Subsequent program reviews of given units will place special emphasis on previous recommendations. We extract here the section that relates to the quality of an undergraduate program:

**Quality of Undergraduate Programs (For Undergraduate Program Review)**

1. If this unit offers courses taken by substantial numbers of students with other majors, the items below should be addressed. Otherwise, continue to question 2.
   a. What has been the planning process for these courses? How are such offerings coordinated with other courses taken by these students, and with courses offered for students majoring in this field?
   b. Who teaches these courses, and what is the evidence of instructional quality for these courses? How is their quality assessed? What plans are underway to strengthen these offerings?

2. The undergraduate major(s) curriculum and courses:
   a. How are the courses in the undergraduate major(s) coordinated? What evidence is there of sufficient offerings and balance among the various specialties to meet student needs and interests -- is there sufficient breadth of course offerings as well as sufficient depth for specializations?
   b. What specific efforts are made to incorporate new knowledge and perspectives into the curriculum, and to consolidate or eliminate outdated views? What efforts are made to involve students actively in their learning through such opportunities as internships, practica, work-study, seminars?
   c. How is the assessment of student learning used to improve courses and programs of courses?
   d. What is the quality of advising for undergraduate majors? How has the advising process been evaluated?
   e. In general, what plans are underway to change or strengthen the undergraduate major(s).
3. Undergraduate Students:

a. How does the quality of students selecting this major compare with the quality of students in other fields at UIC? In what manner, and how well, do students demonstrate their overall command of the field. How does the quality of students graduating in this field compare with student quality in this field nationwide?

b. What efforts are underway to attract and retain well qualified undergraduate students?

c. Describe graduation rates for this program. Do you see room for improvement? If so, what courses of action need to be taken?

d. What efforts are underway to attract and retain well qualified transfer students from community colleges?

4. Are there accreditation requirements for this program? If so, what were the major outcomes from your last assessment? If any deficiencies were noted, what efforts have been made to remove them?
We have completed the first cycle of the new system and find that it allows for assessment of student learning as well as of the program itself, its faculty, and its academic standing. This is a twofold evaluation with both an internal self study and analysis by external reviewers. The outcome of student learning is captured in different ways by different programs but includes, as can be seen above, assessment of teaching and learning as an integral piece. Some programs are major contributors to courses that meet the undergraduate writing, general education or cultural diversity requirements. All programs are responsible for their major. The current discussion of general education by the faculty task forces appears to be heading in a direction that will have a basic inner core of general education with continuing development throughout the entire college experience. Therefore, all programs (except graduate and professional) will have elements of the inner core, the major, or both under consideration during the IBHE cyclic review. The IBHE requires program evaluation that clusters the members of each discipline together. For example, last year the IBHE reviewed all language programs, and future years will cover social sciences, or life sciences, etc.. By clustering strategically, one can produce more meaningful assessments of performance specific to the discipline. It makes sense for UIC to concentrate our analysis with the IBHE cluster review in conjunction with our other reviewing activities. This offers one possibility for the timing of a thorough assessment of every program with respect to the general and specific knowledge that is imparted to students.

We give you one example of how this cyclic review process is impacting the outcome of student learning. The language programs reviewed in 1997-1998 shared common problems with lower student achievement in oral language skills lower than desired by the faculty. Analysis revealed that the language departments had not upgraded the technology to assist student learning. Therefore, we are now evaluating how modern computer-assisted technology can help students with pronunciation and oral skills in the foreign languages.

Professional and Academic Accrediting Measures.
Professional accreditation cycles vary and programs/colleges do their own evaluation as needs indicate. UIC has a large number of students covered by external professional accrediting bodies in addition to the internal UIC review process described above. We have a major health science contingent of undergraduate and graduate programs that are extensively regulated. For example, pharmacy, nursing, public health, medicine, physical therapy, occupational therapy and dentistry, all have professional accreditation bodies. In the Liberal Arts and Sciences, many departments, such as chemistry, are accredited professionally. The College of Education is moving rapidly to meet the demands of more stringent accreditation for teachers, and Engineering is similarly occupied with a major revision of the requirements and assessment by their professional body. We give you the report in detail from the College of Business (Appendix 1) that was done for their accreditation in 1998. The college presents documentation to show how the NCA concerns for their college were met within the context of their professional accreditation review.

The Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) will change its accreditation criteria as of the year 2000. In addition to endorsing a greater flexibility in curricula for the B.S. degree in engineering, ABET is now requiring assessment of outcomes. In the area of outcomes assessment, ABET has specified 11 areas in which we must determine what our students have learned, and we must change our programs in an attempt to make improvements (attachment 9). All of this must be done on a yearly basis. Six of the 11 areas are nontechnical, and general education is one of these six. The next accreditation visit at UIC will be in the year 2002. Consequently, we are just starting the process of formalizing assessment plans for our programs. The College of Engineering will have an initial version in place sometime during the next academic year that will give us time to go through one or two cycles of gathering data, assessing data, and making changes before our next review.

University of Illinois Alumni Assessment Surveys.

The University of Illinois has conducted an annual survey of graduates at all degree levels since 1973. This can be found at [http://www.pb.uillinois.edu/gs/html/about_the_survey.htm](http://www.pb.uillinois.edu/gs/html/about_the_survey.htm), (attachment 10). As of 1991 it has participated in the Illinois Board of Higher Education's Baccalaureate Graduates' Follow-Up System, while continuing to survey alumni at all degree levels. The survey provides information on the outcomes of a University of Illinois education from the best possible authority: the graduates themselves.

The survey asks graduates for information on their employment and educational experiences following graduation, for their assessment of various aspects of their U of I education, and for information on the relationship between their U of I education and subsequent career and educational paths (attachment 11). The information from the survey is used in the continuing review of the University's educational programs and for students' career and educational planning. Additionally, the Illinois Board of Higher Education combines results from the University of Illinois survey with those from the other public senior universities in Illinois to aid in statewide planning and evaluation of programs. A summary of the highlights of the statewide survey of public university seniors in Illinois is available from IBHE (item 6, attachment 12). These data were analyzed for the cost-benefit returns of education at the U of I graduates of Chicago and Urbana and show comparable life-time earnings from both schools (attachment 13).

Each year, the University Office for Planning and Budgeting designs a questionnaire, including the core questions required by the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and a longitudinal database of questions on student satisfaction and outcomes. The survey is mailed to the entire graduating class in order to provide reliable department-level data. Two follow-up
mailings of the questionnaire are sent to nonrespondents in order to make the results as representative as possible. The overall response rate averages around 50%.

Since 1991, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) has determined the schedule of surveys. The schedule calls for a one-, five-, and ten-year-out survey to be conducted every three years, respectively, with adjustments to allow for longitudinal tracking of cohorts where possible. For example, the 1997 survey was originally scheduled to be a ten-year-out survey, but was changed to a nine-year-out survey of the class of 1988 since this class has previously been surveyed (in 1993). The schedule is at [http://www.pb.uillinois.edu/gs/html/survey_schedule.htm](http://www.pb.uillinois.edu/gs/html/survey_schedule.htm), and in attachment 10.

The current survey questionnaire includes questions related to writing, general education and cultural diversity (attachment 11). In Section III: Attitudes and Perceptions, the questions of most interest to us here are about: acquisition of knowledge and skills applicable to the present career; gain of a broad general education in different fields of knowledge; improvement in ability to write clearly and effectively; improvement in ability to comprehend written material; and improvement in ability to accept and understand people with different values and beliefs. Relevant detailed analysis is found in Sections 3, 4 and 5 below.

**Career Outcomes.**

Surprisingly, UIC does not have a complete central data base of all its alumni, although this is one of the main goals of the alumni office. We find that many colleges or programs have more up-to-date information on their graduates than the central office has. Clearly, we need to build this base up before we can address questions that are not covered in the UI survey discussed above. Two avenues are being explored here. One is to have the deans and programs provide their information to a centralized system that is part of the deans’ project on faculty productivity data in the college template (attachment 14). A second is to have a smaller task force on career outcomes based in Academic Affairs. One goal is to review whether and to what extent general education is genuinely meeting the needs that can only be recognized over time. We are in the process of forming a planning committee to determine how best to proceed with members drawn from academic affairs, student affairs, the UIC Alumni Office, the UIC Career Placement Office, and Public Affairs.

**Implementation of Change.**

Implementation of the changes proposed by us or by external stakeholders in something as fundamental as general education cannot be made without extensive, thoughtful deliberation by the appropriate faculty committees of the senate. This must be followed by ratification by the Board of Trustees. What we present hereafter is a discussion of our progress to date to meet the requirements of various regulatory bodies, including NCA, and to meet our own high standards for undergraduate education. In a university it is always the faculty that finally deliver the changes in the curriculum. They must be involved in the educational decisions in order to accomplish plans in an effective manner. UIC does this by Task Forces appointed by the Provost or deans; and by appropriate faculty committees, such as the Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP), and similar committees at the departmental and college levels.

**Centralized Assessment and Data Base.**
UIC is committed to the establishment of a central assessment office located in academic affairs. One responsibility of the central assessment office would be to distribute information in a timely and convenient manner so that the faculty committees are in a good position to make the wisest of choices. For example, we recently explained the UI Alumni survey at Dean’s Council (January 1999) with data broken down within their college to the department level. In this way, deans can judge which of their majors are above or below the mean with regards to general education and writing.

The initial spearhead for this project will be done in conjunction with the Pew portfolio project that encourages web-based postings. Links to the key assessment sites, such as UI alumni outcomes, are already on this site. On-line access provides the most effective way to inform students, faculty and the public at large about assessment activities. The goal is to make this site user-friendly so that anyone can find out about the present situation and question whether changes are needed. Note that this site will be constantly updated and will provide the platform for continual and readily accessible reporting. We believe that this will serve our numerous stakeholders and be a complement to the cyclic reviews and Self Studies required by NCA and other accrediting bodies.

Academic Affairs is now better organized to co-ordinate numerous existing campus data bases centrally. Provost Hoffman has been instrumental in gathering data about many aspects of university life. One ambitious project was developed by the Dean’s Council. To date, the deans have identified a college template of numerous indices that evaluate items ranging from academic quality to physical plant. In part II B of this template (attachment 14), item 2 is ‘Results of outcome assessment’ and item 3 is ‘Changes in outcomes assessment goals and measures’. These will be collected by the deans from each of their units and be updated annually in a central data base.

Recommendations.

Among the recommendations under consideration for the administrative structure at UIC are:

! Continue extensive, thoughtful deliberation on general education by the appropriate faculty committees, such as the Senate Committee on Education Policy, or new standing committees proposed by the present Task Forces on General Education and Assessment.

! Maintain a central assessment office located in academic affairs to co-ordinate numerous existing campus processes. Make data widely available electronically.

! Establish a complete central data base of all UIC alumni. This will be a joint effort between the colleges and the alumni office.
## Section 3.

### Assessment of Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEFINE GOALS</th>
<th>ASSESS</th>
<th>IMPLEMENT CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provost, Academic Affairs Faculty Task Force on Assessment and writing subcommittee Senate Committee on Educational Priorities</td>
<td>Alumni Surveys Freshman placement tests Student surveys Class registration analysis, Class scheduling survey and class availability Retention data after English 161 Survey of Writing in Discipline courses Faculty focus group Student focus groups Writing sample analysis Writing Center Report</td>
<td>Deans Program directors of majors Writing Center Faculty participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Definition of Goals.

As in the section above, the existing goals for writing were set in place by the our faculty, administration and governing bodies. Proficiency in writing is one of the fundamental core competencies required by IBHE as well as most other external accrediting bodies (see Section 2). It is also a current requirement for graduation at UIC. Discussion at UIC on general education has covered much territory but always maintains writing proficiency as essential for graduation (see Lake Geneva Retreat, attachment 15, and latest draft from The Task Force on General Education, attachment 1). Our current Undergraduate Catalog (1997-1999) states that:

**English Composition Requirement.** The student must demonstrate proficiency in written English by earning passing grades in English 160 and English 161 or by achieving proficiency in one or both of these courses certified in writing by the Department of English. The Department of English reserves the right to require a student to take a preparatory course as a prerequisite for English 160 if the student's score on the Composition Placement Test reveals the need for such a course. Whenever questions arise with regard to the fulfillment of the University's English composition requirement through transfer courses, CLEP examinations, and proficiency and other examinations, the Department of English will determine whether to grant a student an exemption from the requirement.

The student population at UIC is probably one of the most linguistically diverse in the US. When asked “Do any of the people who raised you speak a language other than English?” nearly two thirds of the students in the English composition class answer ‘Yes’. This remarkable fact was obtained in a survey given by Ann Feldman to students in English 161 (attachment 16). Thirty-six percent of UIC freshmen are non-native English speakers themselves; at the average American university, that figure is only 7 percent. The UIC freshman survey finds that the student population includes many immigrants; nearly 19 percent of UIC students said they were non-U.S. citizens, compared to 4 percent nationally. This is not to imply that all bilingual students have trouble writing or that native English-speaking students all write well. It is well known that the Chicago area schools have been attempting to upgrade the writing skills of the students but those in college now may not have benefitted from the recent emphasis on basic skills. Taken together, these baseline demographics alert UIC to the need to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed in writing, despite any earlier deficiencies. UIC students are very bright, highly motivated and hard working. They are eager and willing to learn something that they understand to be a core skill essential for all careers. There is no doubt that our students, our faculty and our public define writing as a crucial requisite of an educated person.

At the time of the NCA visit, we had the placement tests and English core courses for freshmen. We have had many reasons to flag English for special attention. We originally found students who failed to complete English Composition 161 in their first year as freshmen had a higher rate of dropping out. We now find that acquisition of this skill in the first year is one factor helping to increase the GPA of the student and increase the retention rate of freshmen (attachment 17). Note that in the past six years we have nearly doubled the number of seats available to students so that all can complete mastery of these basic skills in a timely fashion. This addition of sections in English has been achieved by the addition of $352,000 to the budget of the English department (attachment 18). Every student passing English 161 is a competent writer as judged by the standardized proficiency test and portfolio generated in the course. Thus, it has been well worth spending time and money to strengthen the service to our freshmen.

However, as we have pointed out in Figure 1 on page 15 above, nearly 60% of graduates do not take all their core course work at UIC, and freshman English cannot provide assurance for students educated elsewhere. How can we know that our transfers write well when they arrive?
The obvious answer is to give a special placement test to transfers. Note that DARS does not permit us to re-evaluate our transfer students unless the same test is given to UIC continuing students. Transfers receive exemptions based on course work taken elsewhere in accredited Illinois schools via the automatic grade transfer mandated by DARS. No matter where these initial experiences occur, all students need to keep practicing their writing skills to sustain proficiency. This can best be done by encouraging the students to write in the course work relevant to their major. We will continue to assess of writing for all ongoing students. Some colleges do indeed require a component of writing in the discipline of their major which is called WID in the college of Liberal Arts and Sciences. At present, we find that we do not evaluate the writing ability of graduating seniors but we are beginning to do this.

The Task Force on Assessment appointed by the provost quickly determined that more data were needed on student writing and formed a writing subcommittee to pay close attention to this matter. What we report here is the ongoing work from this sub-committee. We have made considerable efforts to assess the quality of student writing so that we can learn how our strong writers learned and why our weaker writers had trouble. Please note that here and elsewhere in this document, we are reporting ongoing assessment and tentative plans for implementation of change. Any substantial change must go through many levels of review within the university, including our faculty Senate Committee on Educational Policies (SCEP).

Assessment.

Alumni Surveys on Writing.

We find that our alumni indicate they are content with their education in writing. However, the faculty focus groups (see below) sensed that science majors write less well than those in the humanities. In case there are pockets of deficiency, perhaps in science majors, we analyzed the Alumni Surveys to the department level. These results were tallied by department and given to the deans at January deans council (attachment 19). As expected majors in the humanities think write well while those in the sciences are less confident. Note that when 1997 graduates were asked in 1998 did UIC “improve your ability to write clearly and effectively”, with the top score of one, graduates from English majors score 1.3, while History and Spanish, French, Italian and Portuguese score 1.8 and 1.3, respectively, while Engineering and math majors have a mean of 2.5 (1 = strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree). However, the lowest score from any program reporting was from Medical Lab Science at 2.8. One conclusion for the discrepancy between the opinion of the faculty and the alumni could be that our faculty have higher standards than students. The average ratings for the colleges and UIC as a whole have held steady with time. It will be interesting to see whether there are some improvements that reflect the increase in the numbers of students in the English Composition series. Only 60% of freshmen were served in 1993 and this has now reached 92% (attachment 20). When 1994 freshmen begin to be surveyed we might see gains. Recall though that freshmen only make up 40% of the graduating cohort so that improvements in writing due to the English Composition series cannot ever be reflected in ratings for the 60% of transfer students who bypass these classes.

Freshman Placement Tests and Student Surveys.

We have been assessing the writing ability of our incoming freshmen by evaluation of a short essay coded according to a simple rubric (attachment 21) that is used to determine placement in the English composition courses (ESL, 150, 160, 170). This rubric permits placement into courses for students who need English as a second language (ESL), or for students who still
require introductory material and experience (English 150, 151). The 170/114 and 171/115 are taken by advanced placement students, usually in the Honors College. The writing skills of our entering students are improving over the last six years as judged by the changing proportions of students in the classes. Note that the numbers of students in ESL and the introductory 150 series is declining (attachment 20).

Students were surveyed during the last course in the required series, English 161. Almost all (98%) of the students said they wrote a documented research paper by the end of the course. More interestingly, self reporting showed that about two thirds agreed that their writing ability had improved, that they better understood how to conduct academic research, and how to write academic papers. Technical skills showed great improvements in library research skills, inclusion of supporting details, and how to edit and revise texts.

During the spring semester of 1998, the UIC Counseling Center conducted a survey of student needs to gain a more thorough understanding of the problems affecting our students, and to identify areas in which they need the most help. Survey respondents were asked to indicate the degree of need for assistance in 52 areas. These included Personal Concerns, such as overcoming shyness, coping with loneliness, and handling anger; Career Issues, such as selecting a major, career uncertainty and anxiety over finding a job; and Educational Issues, including improving reading, writing and study skills. In each of these areas students were asked to indicate whether they had a high, moderate, slight or no need for help. The survey was conducted by identifying a sample of UIC courses which would produce a distribution of students that would be representative of all UIC students across grade levels. The sample was selected to include first-year through graduate/professional students in the same proportions as their enrollment at the University. A total of 2400 questionnaires was distributed in 105 classes. All surveys were completed during class time and 1429 completed surveys were returned, for a response rate of 60%. Approximately 45% of our freshmen express no need for help in writing skills and this improves 57% of seniors with no need. The other side is that about 10% of all students at all levels report that they have a high need for ‘improving English writing skills’ and a further 15 report a moderate need. This means we have almost a quarter of UIC undergraduates express a need for more help with writing.

Faculty Focus Groups.

We often hear from employers and university faculty that graduates do not write as well as they would like. We substantiated this view by faculty in two focus groups conducted in December 1998 by an external moderator, Charles Leeks. The goals was to evaluate the proficiency of writing by UIC seniors and discuss barriers to writing well and possible ways to improve matters at UIC (attachment 22). UIC faculty members were divided into two groups. The first group – Science Faculty – was composed of ten members from diverse programs such as Nursing, Physical Therapy, Biology, Bioengineering, Earth Sciences, and Psychology. The second group – humanities faculty – was composed of eight faculty members from such departments as Philosophy, Spanish, English, Slavic and Baltic Languages and Literature. A consensus emerged from both focus groups that there is indeed a problem with the writing abilities of UIC students in upper division courses. Most participants, in both groups, believe problems exist with the written expression of UIC seniors. When asked to quantify the percentage of students who write poorly, or well, there was no consensus. One faculty member estimated ten percent of his students write poorly, another estimated fifty percent. Overall, there was not deemed to be a serious writing problem for students majoring in the humanities. The belief was that many of these students have honed their writing skills by the time they reach upper division courses.
The faculty were asked to identify barriers to effective writing. Many of these cannot be changed by UIC. Among those listed were the following: (1) the way students are taught to write by poor school districts or by inferior freshman experiences elsewhere, (2) English as a Second Language (ESL), and (3) Students do not necessarily appreciate the value of writing well nor the amount of time required in becoming an effective writer.

Many recommendations were suggested by the faculty to help students write better. These split into three major areas, dealing with faculty, students or campus support. Because a majority of the faculty is on going, but ill-informed about how to handle poor writing, the university should be more aggressive in providing support and training with the resources available. Faculty development in the teaching of writing skills should be done, by continuation of group discussions and team learning approaches to foster cross-fertilization. Students should be made aware of the impact effective writing will have on their career opportunities; hopefully this will make them be more motivated to participate. Students need more opportunities to write. It might help to have students work together to critique each other. The focus group suggested that the university, having made a commitment to improve the quality of writing of its students, should provide incentives for faculty working with and coordinating writing intensive courses. The support for individual tutorial help in the Writing Center is advocated. The need for help in science writing was recognized by the focus group who suggested that a satellite to the Writing Center should be established on the west side and staffed with workers familiar with writing styles prevalent in the sciences. This would be helpful as many students on the west side have difficulty making and keeping appointments on the east side of campus.

Survey of Writing in Discipline in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Writing in the Discipline, WID, has been required in LAS for many years. The goal of these courses is to ensure that all students are proficient in writing by the time they graduate, and to provide the opportunity for students to write in a style appropriate to their scholarly area. The WID courses were originally supervised by a faculty member from the department of English but presently are under the oversight of the education policy committee (EPC) of LAS. In the Spring of 1998, Lawrence Poston, associate dean of LAS, conducted a survey of all the WID courses to solicit comments, criticisms and suggestions. This WID report (attachment 23) lists information about the current WID courses and verifies that most are taught by tenured or tenure-track faculty. A major problem is in finding faculty who are willing to teach WID because are unsure of the pedagogy of how to teach writing, but are aware that this activity take much more time and resources that a multiple choice quiz. Recommendations include the suggestion that UIC develop some kind of faculty development or support program, or produce a practical manual on how to teach students to write. More ongoing discussion about the nature of the program, and how to monitor the student achievement was raised.

The faculty focus groups also discussed the WID courses in LAS. Most focus group participants in both the humanities and the sciences were very knowledgeable about the WID program. Typically, participants were aware of how the program was being incorporated into courses within their departments; however, they had little information regarding consistency of the program across disciplines. These faculty participants appreciate the goals of the WID program, although they believe the results are somewhat mixed. The humanities group was particularly supportive of the WID program, believing it to be very helpful in general, and perhaps more important to UIC students not majoring in the humanities. This appeared to be a function of a consensus that senior level humanities students were generally writing well because of the attention to writing throughout the student’s academic career.
Because there is little uniformity with the WID program, students may find ways of avoiding writing, or not fully realizing the benefits such a program can offer. Additionally, since different faculty members within a department teach courses seen as meeting WID requirements, the approaches taken to teaching such a course can vary widely. There is a sense among younger faculty that an additional burden is being placed upon them since such courses might require more time than typical courses within the department.
**Student Focus Group on Writing.**

We will shortly hold a focus group for senior students to determine their thoughts about the quality of their writing. The subcommittee on writing wanted to have the faculty reports in hand, especially with the recommendations suggested to improve matters. Some of these suggestions will be incorporated into the student survey to help determine which approaches might be most effective.

**Writing Sample Analysis.**

Samples for assessment were obtained during fall 1998 from 400 levels in the major, and in Writing in the Discipline, WID. The sample population included majors from all three general education clusters (humanities, social and natural science). Faculty were asked to submit the writing assignment and three samples from their class selected to be from a high, moderate and poor writer. We intend to analyze writing samples obtained from seniors. We have delayed assessment pending development of the appropriate rubrics that will be based on information obtained from the faculty and student focus groups. We could start with the simple rubric used as the freshman English placement criterion but would extend this to coherence, organization, content and appropriate structure. The information would be useful for identifying students at risk for graduating with ineffective skills and ensuring the quality of writing for all. Writing sample analysis is on the agenda of the writing sub committee for review.

The Task Force on Assessment has rejected the use of standardized tests. We considered paying some seniors be paid to take the new GRE writing assessment, and ETS was willing to use UIC as an “adopting test school.” The assessment task force disapproved of this because its members thought students would not perform at a high level unless it would be in their own academic interest to do so. Also, this test is designed for students going to graduate or professional school but does not necessarily test the kind of writing that the diverse student body at UIC needs to master. We choose instead to concentrate on strengthening and assessing the writing in the disciplines program.

**Writing Center Report.**

The Writing Center reports to the Department of English by whom it is currently administered. We attach reports from the 1997-1998 academic year and for fall 1998 (attachment 24). The goal of the Writing Center is to provide individual tutorial help to students who need to learn how to be successful writers in academic settings and how to develop the strategies for this. The Writing Center continues to grow with well over 1500 tutorial conferences in the fall of 1998 and nearly 800 students served. The Writing Center also gives training workshops to its tutors and groups of students. Statistics show a widespread use of the center throughout campus with approximately 7% of the UIC students being served annually. Despite the English Department reporting line, only slightly over half (52%) of the conferences were for LAS students. The remainder were from the college of business (18%), health related fields (10%), education (8%), engineering (8%) and graduate students (4%). The form filled in by students (attachment 25) is informative on several issues. It gives data on the major, languages spoken, and also gives data on whether the student has taken, or is in the process of taking, our English Composition series. From this we can deduce who is a transfer student. This will allow us to test the hypothesis posed by the faculty that transfer students have more problems as seniors than continuing UIC undergraduate students. ESL data is also collected but the Writing Center tells us that their service is campus-wide and not concentrated on this ESL group.
The Writing Center makes its services known to students by numerous flyers distributed throughout campus and by its web page [http://www.engl.uic.edu/writingcenter](http://www.engl.uic.edu/writingcenter) (attachment 26). Some faculty focus group participants were familiar with the Writing Center. However, not all faculty knew of this resource. This indicates that more should be done to help inform faculty about services. The view of the Writing Center was quite favorable in both groups, with a few caveats, particularly from the sciences group. Both groups believe the Writing Center serves a valuable function, and can be quite helpful to students, when students take advantage of it. The sciences group expressed several concerns about the Writing Center. As the Writing Center is located on the east side of campus and the health sciences are located on the west side, it is difficult for these students to use the Writing Center. Health science students have rigorous schedules, which consume most of their day. There is clearly more demand for help than is being provided with present resources.

**Implementation of Change.**

We conclude that there is a problem in the writing proficiency of at least 10% of UIC seniors. Specific **recommendations** to help UIC students write better are:

1. Create a new administrative structure for the teaching of writing to meet campus-wide needs. Consider a joint arrangement between the Department of English and Academic Affairs so that central supervision is available and resources can be more effectively used.

2. Strengthen, expand and improve the Writing Center. Establish a branch of the Writing Center on the west side, staffed with workers familiar with writing styles prevalent in the sciences. Improve campus knowledge of tutorial services on campus so that faculty and students know where to get help.

3. Introduce Writing in the Disciplines, WID, for all majors on campus. Provide support and training for faculty teaching WID courses. Encourage faculty in the majors to make students more aware of the importance of effective writing for their career opportunities.

4. Continue to monitor writing proficiency of UIC students.
## Section 4.

### Assessment of General Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEFINE GOALS</th>
<th>ASSESS</th>
<th>IMPLEMENT CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chancellor, Provost, Deans</td>
<td>Alumni surveys on general education</td>
<td>Task Force on General Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Frequency analysis of courses used in general education</td>
<td>Provost and deans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty report from Lake Geneva Retreat</td>
<td>CDC syllabus analysis</td>
<td>Senate Committee on Educational Priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Force on General Education</td>
<td>Department-based assessment of general education.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple measures to assess Majors in LAS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Definition of Goals.

How does UIC decide what an educated person needs to know? Do all educated people need to have a common core of knowledge? And if so, what is it? Who decides on the balance among all the competing possibilities? How do we know that graduating seniors have acquired this body of knowledge and the basic competencies? We now give you the details of our ongoing process for making these decisions and evaluations in general education. In essence, this is a working report from our two major task forces: the Task Force on General Education, formed in Spring 1998, is actively discussing what should be included in general education. The Task Force on Assessment, formed in Fall 1997, is providing assessment of what we now have in place. We know that we are assessing a moving target but that is the nature of any good assessment process.

Faculty and administration know that it is essential to adjust education to meet a changing world. One thinks of the instruction of computer literacy as an example of a change driven by an external reality. Faculty also know that “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” The importance of general education is a high priority at UIC, supported by Chancellor Broski, Provost Hoffman and the deans. The new dean of LAS, Stanley Fish is quoted in the Chicago Tribune, March 21, 1999, as saying that among his priorities are “rethinking Liberal Arts and Sciences 100, the required orientation course all freshmen take at UIC, and reconsidering the general education requirements” (attachment 27).

Concern over the general education requirements at UIC is a never-ending task. The current round of interest was initiated by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in the Fall of 1996. General education was the subject discussed at the Retreat at Lake Geneva in the Spring of 1997, mainly involving representatives of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences with smaller contributions by faculty from non-LAS undergraduate degree programs. The North Central Report appeared to be unhappy with the "cafeteria" structure of general education at UIC which is not surprising because it was a concern raised at the Lake Geneva Retreat by our own faculty, too (attachment 15). Naturally, we recognized that more needed to be done, and that a campus-wide approach was needed to cover all students, not just those from LAS. The newly formed Task Force on General Education has been working steadily for almost a year now and is progressing well. Something this important takes time to do thoroughly and the work is not yet complete. However, the NCA asked for demonstration of the status of our present work. Therefore, we present to you an interim report, dated 3/5/99 (attachment 1). Please note the disclaimers on these materials. The committee is still actively debating the contents, and even when they do have a proposal, it will not be the end of the process. Next, it will be widely disseminated to all UIC faculty through the Academy Listserv, and presented to the Senate Committee on Educational Policy. One never knows how long these processes will take, but it is unlikely to be completed within this academic year. You will see that we are contemplating some major changes in general education, some of which may impact the budget, and, therefore, must be discussed and ratified by the Board of Trustees. We stress again that what we are providing to NCA in March 1999 is still in its embryonic stage of development. Nonetheless, we hope that it demonstrates the seriousness with which we are approaching substantive changes to general education. Note too that we plan to build in better evaluative mechanisms. We are setting up an iterative process by which we can assess, reflect, consider options, change if sensible, and so on. Our goal is to have the monitoring of general education continue to run through faculty and administrative channels in a steady and consistent manner.

This is an NCA Monitoring Report, so we will start by telling you what we have now and how we have evaluated it in the past 18 months. Assessment data have been an integral part of the
discussion of the General Education Task Force. We present and discuss the new Interim Draft General Education proposal. In the last part of this section we make recommendations for implementation of change.


First let us remind you what we had in place when the NCA site visit came here in 1997. The Undergraduate Catalog for 1997-1999 lists the following General Education Requirements. Students are required to complete a minimum of 24 semester hours of general education course work, distributed as follows: six hours in approved courses in the humanities; 6 hours in approved courses in the social sciences; 6 hours in approved courses in the natural sciences; and the remaining 6 hours in one or more of these three areas.

The general education requirements give students an opportunity to explore the major areas of study--humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. These requirements are designed to help the student achieve an intellectual breadth and perspective which will complement the specialized knowledge acquired in their studies. They introduce students to some of the major works, persons, ideas, methods of inquiry, and modes of expression associated with the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

Each of the three broad areas of knowledge (humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences) has its own specific subject and approach. Humanities courses teach students to interpret, assess, and appreciate ideas and values in literature, the arts, history, and culture. These courses usually require students to write essays and to take essay examinations. Social science courses introduce students to the study of individual and collective human behavior in various past, present, and potential social settings. These courses emphasize appropriate analytical methods ranging from statistical techniques to case studies. Courses in the natural sciences acquaint students with the major ideas and methods of investigation in these disciplines. Except for courses in mathematics, these courses include a laboratory experience that emphasizes experimentation, critical observation, and the collection and interpretation of data.

We now report the assessment of the current system and follow with the tentative draft proposal from the Task Force on General Education.

Alumni Surveys on General Education.

The UI Alumni survey data of 1998 shows that graduates from the 1997 year are satisfied with their general education. Overall, UIC alumni agreed that they had ‘gained a broad, general education in different fields of knowledge’. The overall rating was 2.1, where 1= strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree. The college with the highest rating was Liberal Arts and Sciences with a 1.8 rating. The college with the lowest rating (2.5) was the College of Associated Health Professions (recently renamed to College of Health and Human Development) but one could argue that these students were more engaged in gaining professional credentials. The individual programs with low ratings were Mechanical Engineering (2.8), Human Nutrition and Dietetics (2.9) and Physical Therapy (2.7). These college and department scores were brought to the attention of the deans for conveyance to the home programs. Units are now in the position to rectify any problems the surveys have identified. We do not judge any ratings to be a cause for concern because almost all are well above average.

Frequency Analysis of Courses Used in General Education.

The NCA criticized UIC for having a vast “cafeteria” for course selections that were available to meet the course distribution credits (CDC) for general education and we attach a list of all the currently approved CDC courses in general education (attachment 28). But, as in
cafeterias, just because an item is offered it does not mean it is consumed. The humanities offer the largest range of courses with 104 having enrollees in the 1997 fiscal year. However, this does not mean that students are evenly distributed with 1% in each of the 104 courses. When we analyzed the actual distribution, we find a very different picture (attachment 29) The top twelve courses accounted for nearly half (51.4%) of all credit hours, while the top 22 courses covered two thirds (66.6%) of the consumption. Remarkably, the remaining 82 courses together only account for one third of the general education credits. This concentration of actual student enrollment allows us to evaluate the top courses with a level of detail that would have been overwhelming for all 100 courses. The top 50% of course in the humanities are Theater 109, English 101, 105, Philosophy 100, 103, 104, History 100, 101, 114, Latin American Studies 101 and Art History 110. The next group of courses spans the range to include two thirds of the students and these are Art History 100, Music 100, 107, Linguistics 150, English 103, 171, Spanish 210, African American Studies 101, Polish 115 and Philosophy 115.

The social sciences displays a similar concentration of actual CDC course registration (attachment 30). Here there were 64 courses taken by students in the 1997 fiscal year. However, only six courses accounted for half (49%) of CDC hours while the top 11 courses covered two thirds (65.9%) of the registration. That again leaves the large majority of the courses with small enrollments, so that 54 courses had the remaining one third of the students. In the social sciences 50% of the CDC credit hours are in Psychology 100, 270, Communications 100, Sociology 100, Political Science 101 and Economics 130. The next batch of courses that bring the enrollment up to two thirds of the students are Psychology 210, 231, Criminal Justice 101, Geography 100, and History 103.

Finally we analyzed the frequency of registration in the natural sciences (attachment 31). Here, only 30 courses were taken by students in the 1997 fiscal year. The top seven courses accounted for half the students (51.5%), and the top 13 covered two thirds (67.8%). The last 17 courses were taken by the remaining one third of the students. The top 50% of courses in the natural sciences are Chemistry 112, 114, Biology 100, 101 and Mathematics 160, 180, 181. Bringing up the list to cover two thirds of the credit hours taken, we add Anthropology 105, Mathematics 165, Chemistry 100, Physics 101, 141 and Geology 107.

Several conclusions are immediately obvious from these data. The majority of students limit their selection to a fairly narrow group of 100 and 200 level courses in the major disciplines. At first this might seem to be explained by the number of seats being offered in any one semester. That begs the question of why have we already chosen to offer more seats in some courses than others. The answer lies in the content and relevance of the course to the process of general education: all are substantial “core” courses by any reasonable definition of the term.

Our evaluations have revealed a weakness in our system. Currently we have a strict, formal process for consideration of a CDC course when approval is first sought. The syllabus and need for the course are reviewed by the department, college and by SCEP. However, once accepted there is no mechanism for removal, unless it has not been offered for three years. We have no cyclic review and no analysis of the clusters within each classification (writing, humanities, social sciences, natural science, and cultural diversity). This oversight has been brought to our attention now, and we will remedy it.

The goal of assessment is to gather data that can guide others on campus in the decisions about the nature and extent of general education. Given UIC’s mission and resources, it seems likely that UIC will continue to have many courses that meet the general education requirements.
and that a student will make an individual selection from a large menu of options. We must ensure
that every component is excellent and meets our goals. At present the Senate Committee on
Educational Policy (SCEP) does an excellent job of the initial review for inclusion of a general
education course. The course must meet academic standards set for the disciplinary cluster and
must include either proficiency in writing and oral communication, or quantitative and symbolic
manipulations, or both. However, we must have a mechanism to recertify individual courses at
regular intervals. We propose that this be done by SCEP with all courses being reviewed at
regular intervals, perhaps to coincide with cluster program reviews by IBHE or on some other
scheme. We think that it is important that there also be assessment of the disciplinary cluster taken
as a whole and not only of single courses in isolation.

**CDC Syllabus Analysis.**

As a follow-up to the analysis of CDC distribution, LAS requested departmental executive
officers to supply copies of recent syllabi for frequently taken CDC courses. The Task Force on
General Education is in the process of reviewing these syllabi to check for course content and
determine whether the present general education requirements are being met. For instance,
humanities courses usually require students to write essays and to take essay examinations so the
writing component will be checked. Do the social science courses emphasize appropriate
analytical methods ranging from statistical techniques to case studies?
Do courses in the natural sciences include a laboratory experience that emphasizes experimentation (except for mathematics)?

**Department-Based Assessment of General Education.**

The picture of our student pipeline (Section 2, page 15) illustrates that only 40% of our graduating cohort were at UIC as freshmen. This means that emphasis on a first year core of a general education curriculum will never be able to ensure that the remaining 60% of transfer students have acquired what we deem important for them. It is clear that we need some measure to assess progression through the system. One suggestion coming from the Task Force on General Education is that courses beyond the CDC requirements include features that continue to add to core skills and general education goals. We already have discussed how Writing in the Discipline uses this approach. In order to monitor how the student perceives the value of this ‘added’ piece, we might include questions in the students evaluation sheet at the end of each course. These evaluations are presently used to help rate the teaching ability of the faculty member but can easily be used to help us know about the self evaluation of student learning. Work is underway in our Council for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) to consider this aspect more carefully. It is premature now since we have not finalized what, beyond writing, might be included in these characteristics of general education.

At UIC, we have very strong majors that monitor the progress of the students through required course work and ancillary activities, depending on the program. The major department is in the best position to know how we have served our students elsewhere in their academic life. Thus, we recommend use of a department-based system to assess general education for senior students. This way the department can learn how its own students are being served by the general education provided by others and influence change on behalf of its students. The department must use information from faculty as well as students in this process of evaluation. We expect further discussion of this idea, so that practical implementation of change can be realized. We have done some pilot testing of this to see how it might work.

The Chemistry department undertook exit interviews of the graduating seniors in the Spring of 1998 (attachment 32). Question 6 deals with general education and the CDC as required by LAS and responses are found with this attachment. The Chemistry department found these answers to be revealing with regard to general attitudes and specific information about general education. Student comments include: “All of the classes have exerted an influence”; “The philosophy courses helped me to express myself better in writing”; “English Lit 101 taught me to read more critically.” However negative comments also were made and sometimes criticized specific courses. Comments were ‘boring’, ‘no big insights’, ‘just didn’t get the subject’. At least one student remarked that these courses were taken elsewhere. At present there is no mechanism for giving these comments back to the providing CDC departments in order to pass along constructive comments, criticisms, or compliments.

One department makes it easier for its graduating seniors to comment on specific courses by giving them a list of all the courses they took and then asks for retrospective evaluations of them. This sheet has a rating scale and a space for comments. We show a compilation of all evaluations for one faculty member that was used for teacher evaluation (attachment 33). This mechanism could be used for each contributing CDC provider. The sheets could be returned to the CDC provider as feedback to them.
It would seem that some step through central administration will be necessary to co-ordinate an output if a problem resides outside the major. Therefore, one suggestion is for the Dean to submit a brief written report to the Provost annually. The Provost’s office would make relevant information available to the provider of the general education course and initiate a dialogue between interested parties when sensible.

**Multiple Measures to Assess Majors in LAS.**

LAS determined how its majors assess student learning as requested for the NCA Monitoring Report. As long ago as August 1997, department heads in LAS were asked to consider multiple measures for the Assessment of Educational outcomes for students (attachment 34). Extensive discussions in LAS led to a formal evaluation at the end of the 1997-1998 academic year. A report from Associate Dean Poston on assessment in the LAS majors (attachment 35) shows that a variety of the potential measures are indeed being used in different programs. Please be aware that the LAS programs cover a vast array of academic areas and would be inadequately assessed by a few common measures. Therefore, a great range of measurement tools are found that match the assessment to the nature of the discipline of the major. These measures include, but are not limited to, entrance/exit comparison, gateway course, student/faculty evaluations, minimum GPA requirements, faculty midstream evaluation, assessment of internship performance and field work, capstone courses, senior oral or written exams, senior projects, student portfolios, standardized tests (GRE, LAST, MCAT), competency or general knowledge exams, summary statements by advisor, exit interviews, exit questionnaires, external advisory boards and tracking of students post BA. The selection of these criteria has been left to the major, so that they can choose the most valid combination of measures for their discipline. The details of the measures and who uses which is given as part II of the Assessment of the Majors (attachment 35). The responsibility for evaluation and acceptability of these measures is lodged in LAS. Note that these measures will also form part of the IBHE program review at the cyclic intervals discussed above (Section 2).

**Implementation of Change.**

**Task Force on General Education.**

The General Education Task Force has not yet completed its work, and, as said before, this will be the beginning not the end of an adoption process. Nonetheless, we share with you the progress to date. Note that we do not intend to rely entirely on a core curriculum, predominantly completed in the first year at university. This is done both in recognition that transfer students skip year one, and in our belief that general education continues throughout academic life. That is why we are making proposals that include the major as well as a core experience. Note that the four Basic Competencies include some former components but add some additional ones. The first item covers written communication as before but is extended to include oral competency. Reading and listening abilities comprise the second competency, while only the reading component is in existence now as an integral part of the English composition syllabus. We add logical and critical thinking and extend quantitative reasoning to include computer literacy to round out the four Basic Competencies. The text below is taken from the interim draft version 3/5/99 (attachment 1).
sum total of all work taken toward the baccalaureate degree, including work in the major, will satisfy, or move in the direction of satisfying, these objectives. We do not wish to attach specific courses to specific goals because we hope that any course satisfying either the general education requirement or work in the major will fulfill as many of the following goals as is consistent with the particular subject matter and focus of the course. For example, it is not just English composition courses that contribute to writing skills, or history courses that inculcate a sense of the past.

A. Basic Competencies
1. Written and Oral Communication. Students should learn to speak and write clearly and persuasively. Speaking and writing clearly and persuasively require not just precision in the mechanics of writing and in grammatical speech but the ability to construct an argument coherently in written or oral discourse, and to understand what a particular rhetorical occasion demands. In short, students need to learn to shape speech and writing to the nature of the audience.

2. Reading and Listening Abilities. Reading and listening so as to understand the ideas of another involve the ability not only to comprehend what is said in writing or orally, but to engage with the ideas of another speaker, and to weigh points of view critically. Effective reading and listening also require one to exercise habits of critical and independent thought to evaluate what is said in both traditional forms of written discourse and in the mass media.

3. Logical and Critical Thinking. The development of adequate writing, speaking, and listening requires higher-order skills of logical and critical thinking. Students must learn to ask questions to discover meaning, to differentiate between objective information and subjective points of view, and to identify ways of making provisional judgments in the absence of definitive evidence.

4. Quantitative Reasoning and Computer Literacy. The development of quantitative reasoning, in mathematics or statistics, is an essential skill in today's technological world. Quantitative and related skills also include, though they are not confined to (and are not coterminous with) computer literacy.

The committee realized that a new way is needed to reflect the desire for university-long and eventual lifelong general education. This is being accomplished by the addition of a component called Intellectual Development where advanced or higher learning can be adequately described. The section covers intellectual flexibility, breadth of mind and cultural awareness; ethical reasoning; aesthetic appreciation; understanding of the scientific method; appreciation of the natural world and technology; historical awareness and citizenship for today and tomorrow; and finally, the role of the major itself is acknowledged by a need for acquisition of knowledge of a subject in depth.

The relevant text with details about the extended period of intellectual development from the 3/5/1999 interim draft version is given below:

B. Intellectual Development

1. Intellectual Flexibility, Breadth of Mind and Cultural Awareness. Literacy and critical thinking should be supplemented by an openness to new ideas and information, a sensitivity to others' views and feelings, and an ability to look beyond one's own background, upbringing and experience to understand culturally-different values and perspectives. This means not just becoming informed about cultures different from one's own or the perspectives of different groups within American society, but acquiring the ability to cooperate with others of differing perspectives in the accomplishment of common tasks.

2. Ethical reasoning. Students should be able to engage in reflective reasoning on the nature of moral choice. It is not the task of UIC, as a public institution, to inculcate particular doctrines on issues; rather, it is its task to contribute to the making of an informed citizenry aware of the ethical dimensions of decision-making. This includes the ability to recognize the authenticity of a well-considered ethical code that may differ from one's own, and to weigh the implications of moral choice in both the public and private spheres.
3. Aesthetic Appreciation. The intelligent appreciation and evaluation of works of literature and the arts and the cultivation of aesthetic awareness are inherently liberating traits that help to contribute to the quality of life.

4. An Understanding of Scientific Method. UIC’s graduates, whether or not they major in the sciences, should understand scientific method and how it guides the formation, testing, and acceptance of theories. They should be able to develop and test hypotheses, and to distinguish those conclusions that rest on unsupported assertion from those verified by sound scientific reasoning.

5. An Appreciation of the Natural World and Technology. In addition to the understanding of scientific method, education in the sciences involves not only an appreciation of the natural world but the weighing of moral and ethical issues in the light of the findings of science and vice versa. Understanding something of the content of the sciences contributes to informed choice and decision-making in such areas as health, technology, and public policy.

6. Historical Awareness and Citizenship for Today and Tomorrow. UIC’s graduates should be able to view the present within the context of the past, appreciate both the liberating and the constraining features of tradition, and understand what historical forces have affected their own lives as well as those of peoples in different cultures. In addition to understanding American traditions and institutions, they should understand their futures as citizens of an increasingly interdependent global order.

7. Acquisition of Knowledge of Subject in Depth. The context provided by the foregoing goals should enable a UIC graduate not only to acquire and employ a coherent, sophisticated understanding of major subject matter, but to see its relationship to other fields of study and to grasp its limitations as well as its range.

Recommendations.

Among the recommendations under consideration to improve general education at UIC are:

! Develop mechanisms for approval and removal of general education CDC courses based on assessments of learning outcomes and fit to the curriculum. Introduce a cyclic reevaluation to be done by faculty of all general education courses both individually and with respect to their disciplinary clusters.

! Use a department-based system to assess the general education acquired by senior students. Assess seniors by multiple measures that are appropriate in nature to the major and are approved by the college.

! Develop a mechanism to feed back constructive comments, criticisms, or compliments to the providing CDC departments.

! Develop a monitoring process that passes through the college to central administration in order to co-ordinate implementation of change when necessary.

! Develop a strategy to evaluate components of the impact of multiple courses that contribute to the intellectual development of the student.
## Section 5.

### Assessment of Cultural Diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEFINE GOALS</th>
<th>ASSESS</th>
<th>IMPLEMENT CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provost, Academic Affairs</td>
<td>Alumni Surveys on Cultural Diversity</td>
<td>Provost and Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Demographics of Student Body Diversity</td>
<td>Task Force on General Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus leaders of under-represented groups (Staff 2)</td>
<td>Frequency analysis of cultural diversity courses</td>
<td>Senate Committee on Educational Priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois Board of Higher Education</td>
<td>Participation in cultural diversity courses by student ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Force on General Education</td>
<td>Study Abroad Program Analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student Affairs surveys</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Definition of Goals.

In our mission statement, we say “... UIC takes special account and advantage of the extraordinary ethnic and cultural diversity of the Chicago metropolitan area, .....” We require that all students take at least one course in which they study “the cultures, social, and political institutions and value systems of social groups, regions, or nations different from those present in the dominant American culture”

The goals for the requirements in cultural diversity are determined in the same way as for goals in writing and general education explained above in the Introduction (Section 1). UIC is subject to both internal and external forces. In the case of cultural diversity the internal drive comes from our own pride in our diverse student body as well as state guidelines. Our campus leaders of the under represented groups at UIC meet monthly with Academic Affairs administrators (Staff 2) to discuss common issues and concerns. Included are members from the African-American Academic Network; African-American Cultural Center; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns; Latin American Recruitment and Educational Service; Rafael Cintron Ortiz Cultural Center; Student Affairs and Enrollment Management; Women's Affairs and the Urban Health Program. We also have the Institute for Race and Public Policy which is housed in the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs. Several academic programs cover religions, such as Jewish and Catholic Studies. Input from this group of leaders representing cultural diversity on campus is very valuable when we consider making changes to our curriculum and requirements.

Our present system was adopted in 1991 in response to student government and legislative concerns at that time. We still have a state mandate that requires education in the general area of multicultural sensitivity. In the 1997-1999 Undergraduate Catalog, the requirements for all students (page 47) are:

**Cultural Diversity.** All students at UIC are required to fulfill the Cultural Diversity requirement by studying the culture, social, and political institutions and value systems of social groups, regions, or nations different from those present in the dominant American culture.

To fulfill this requirement, students must choose one course from the list of approved Cultural Diversity courses (refer to the Cultural Diversity List in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences section of this catalog). Some of the courses on the Cultural Diversity list may also satisfy program major requirements or other University general education requirements in the humanities or social sciences, or may count as an elective.

We scrutinized how the current system is serving the intended goals. Some of this material has been used by the Task Force on General Education in their deliberations of potential improvements in the education in cultural diversity. Their latest suggestions are included in the implementation of change section below.

This monitoring report hopes to provide a view of what we have been doing and in which direction we are going. Thus, we first tell you how we have been assessing what we have been doing and then tell you about tentative steps in future directions. Evaluation of cultural diversity of the present system took several avenues of exploration. We analyzed the students’ own views by the UI alumni surveys, and by survey data from student affairs. We reviewed the frequency analysis of approved CDC courses and the ethnicity of enrolled students. Finally, we looked at the Study Abroad program because this also meets the cultural diversity requirement.

Alumni Surveys on Cultural Diversity.

The University of Illinois Alumni Survey was sent to 1997 graduates in 1998. It asked students to rate the comment “While at UI, I improved my ability to accept and understand people with different values and beliefs.” UIC graduates responded with a rating of 1.9 (1= strongly agree, and 5 = strongly disagree). They were also asked to rate how well they “gained insight into values and ethical standards.” Here the rating was 2.2. These responses indicate an acceptable level of sensitivity to cultural diversity at UIC (attachment 19).

Demographics of Student Body Diversity.

We presented some data above (Section 1) showing that our freshman population is very unusual compared to most US universities. Here we give some more detailed information about the student demographic characteristics for the whole campus (figure 5, attachment 36). We confirm that no ethnic group is in the majority but that all are well represented. In the whole undergraduate population, two groups have been rising over the past decade, one falling and one remaining steady. The Latino population has risen to 21.6% and the Asian population has risen to 19.9%. The Caucasian population has fallen by about 15% in the past decade and is now 45.2%. The African-American population has held steady and is now 10.3%. Freshmen surveys and those from the English composition were cited above and show that UIC has a high percentage of students who are first or second generation in the USA, many of whom speak English as a second language (attachment 5, 16). The mean ACT of our entering freshmen is 22.8 and the mean high school rank is 76.0%. All racial/ethnic categories are in a similar range (table 4, attachment 37) and are academically strong.

State mandates require that we carefully monitor the participation and success of the students from under-represented groups and submit an annual report to the IBHE (attachment 38). UIC is recognized for success in the education of a diverse student body with high numbers of these students being graduated from all our programs compared with most universities. US News and World Report in its latest rankings for “America’s Best Colleges” places UIC as seventh in the country among national universities for campus diversity. Thus, our students have the opportunity to learn about cultural diversity from each other as well as in the formal course requirement. This will make it difficult for us to know how much impact the required course work has for UIC students.

Frequency Analysis of Courses Used in Cultural Diversity.

A complete list of approved cultural diversity classes is attached (attachment 39). Note that in the system we now have, the requirements for cultural diversity can overlap with general education credits, as many CDC courses are included on both lists. We recognize that overlap
between the cultural diversity courses and the general education course confuses any analysis considerably. This cultural diversity list contains 102 courses; yet only 51 were actually taken by students in the last academic year (attachment 40). Of this list of 51 classes, about half the students (51.19%) selected from only nine courses, and two thirds were accommodated in the top seventeen courses. The top half of the courses were Geography 101, 151, Latin-American Studies 101, Anthropology 101, Womens’ Studies 102, Nursing 204, Sociology 225, Occupational Therapy 304, and Polish 115. The next group, bringing the list to cover two thirds of the student credit hours, includes Anthropology 270, 280, History 241, 261, 262, 272, Russian 116, and Latin American Studies 106. The frequency analysis suggests that a faculty review of the current offerings is necessary, with a view to limiting the number to reflect the desired goals and bringing the approved group in line with those actually being taken.

*Participation in Cultural Diversity Courses by Student Ethnicity.*

We analyzed the racial/ethnic composition of the top CDC classes (attachment 41). We find that the classes are enriched with students of the same ethnicity as the course subject area. Thus, 70 to 88% of the African-American Studies classes were African American students, well above the proportional UIC enrollment of about 10%. The Hispanic classes were more heterogeneous in student body composition with about half the enrollees being Hispanic while the student population at large is about 20%. Note that this table shows that there is crossover with nearly 7% of these credit hours in LAST classes being African American students and 1.3% of Hispanic students taking AAST courses. Note too, that all course have Caucasian and Asian students in them.

Some faculty were surprised that relatively few students were taking courses in African American and Latin American Studies. These subjects are offered with a dual role in mind. First they strengthen the understanding of students from that ethnic group of their own heritage; second, and they extend the sensitivity and understanding of others in these fields. This distribution in class participation has led the members of the Task Force on General Education to consider whether one course is sufficient to cover all the things it is intended to do. There needs to be a review of the curriculum after the university decided exactly what the courses are intended to provide. Furthermore, we are raising questions of effective ways for our students to learn more about US ethnicity in class given that they also have interactions with fellow students.
Study Abroad.

Students may meet the requirements of cultural diversity by studying abroad. The current catalog states:

Students also may fulfill the Cultural Diversity requirement by completing an academic year abroad in a non-Western country. Foreign nationals and students who have received their high school education (or its equivalent) in a non-Western country are exempt from this requirement.

The Study Abroad program has increased in size since 1994 when it began with under ten students. It grew to about eighty students in the 1996/1997 year and we anticipate that the 1999-2000 year will have 200 participants. It will certainly continue to grow as returning students tell their classmates about their positive experiences. We know that the students are enthusiastic about their travels because the Study Abroad Office gives a survey to every returning student (attachment 42). The students say that they meet a wide variety of different people and gain a new perspective on the U.S. and their own culture while they are away. One student, who spent a summer in Barcelona, said of her experience, "This program, especially living in a different culture, really changed my life. I now see things back home very differently." Another, who participated in a summer Parliamentary internship, reported that he "was able to gain very insightful perspective not only on how different Australian culture is from ours, but more importantly how they value that difference." The survey also helps the office the quality of the overseas programs to guide direction of other students.

One recommendation that is under discussion by the Task Force of General Education is to extend fulfillment of the cultural diversity requirement to any country outside the United States and to include certain approved internship or cooperative experience in addition to formal college course work abroad. UIC students can select from more than 100 programs in 48 countries. The most popular destinations now are (in order) England, Spain, Mexico, Italy, France, Germany, Australia, and Korea. Students have literally circled globe, studying on all five continents through programs in Argentina, Chile, Ghana, Turkey, Egypt, Russia, China, Hong Kong, and the Philippines, among others. The ethnicity of the students who go reflects the UIC demographics with 11% African-American, 13% Hispanic, 19% Asian and the remainder Caucasian.

Student Affairs Surveys.

The CIRP surveys distributed by the assessment office of student affairs (attachment 5) asks incoming freshmen and transfer students about their activities in the past year. At UIC 78% of the students say they have socialized with a different ethnic group than their own, compared to the 64% reported by nationally for 4 year schools. Students were asked about objectives that they consider to be essential or very important. Promotion of racial understanding was listed by 38% of UIC students compared with 32% of public 4 year colleges nationally. Thus, our
students already arrive with greater than average experience with students other than themselves, and this will undoubtedly increase while here given the diverse make-up of the UIC student body.

The Chronicle of Higher Education (3/18/99) reported a study from the University of Michigan showing that students who attend racially diverse institutions are more likely to live, work, and socialize with people from a variety of backgrounds. This conclusion was based on data that included survey results of 9,316 students collected by the UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute, and information gleaned from the Michigan Student Study, which asked 1,321 students on the campus about the educational dynamics of diversity, first when they entered the university in 1990 and again at the end of their first, second, and senior years.

Implementation of Change.

The Task Force on General Education.

In the working document from The Task Force on General Education (Section 4 above), you may have noticed that the definition of cultural diversity is expanded. The new DRAFT General Education copy reads:

Courses fulfilling the cultural diversity requirement include the study of the people and cultures of Asia, Africa, and Central and South America as well as of American descendents of persons from these regions and Native Americans, their various cultural heritages, and their influences on the development of the United States. Issues of age, gender, and sexual orientation may also be appropriate for inclusion in courses fulfilling the cultural diversity requirement.

It is not yet clear how the new recommendations for inclusion of cultural diversity will be implemented. The twofold aims are exposure to cultures around the world as well as within one’s own society. In our new system (General Education Draft, IV.A and B, attachment 1), these goals may be partly met by core courses but will also be a part of the ongoing learning components in Intellectual Development. For example, cultural exposure is expected to contribute to the development of intellectual flexibility, breadth of mind, and cultural awareness (1) as well as to a growth in historical awareness and citizenship (6). While the encouragement of such development is therefore implicit in many of the courses now listed in general education, it is specifically embodied in the requirement that students take a course explicitly satisfying the cultural diversity requirement. The exact implementation of change for cultural diversity is actively being discussed.

Study Abroad and Internships.

The Task Force on General Education is seriously considering whether and how to extend or expand ways beyond course work through which students may gain experience with cultures other than their own. It is not clear at this time how these will be implemented and assessed, but we feel we need to mention the possibility that non-course work activities may need review too. The DRAFT copy from the Task Force in this regard currently states:

Students may also fulfill the cultural diversity requirement by completing one academic semester of study, including internship or cooperative experience, outside the United States. Specific questions regarding the interpretation of this option may be handled at the discretion of the affected college and department.

Cyclic Review of Courses at the Campus-level.
Our present system is careful about inclusion of courses into the CDC list but has no mechanism for review of course content or for removal of the course. Thus, we cannot be sure that the characteristics do not drift from those that led to its acceptance for general education in the first place. The Task Force on General Education is likely to recommend not only a more exacting procedure or set of conditions for the admission of new courses to the general education curriculum, but a procedure for periodic review, a form of zero-based (course) budgeting according to which courses must periodically justify their continued inclusion in that curriculum. The cyclic review must be sited at the campus not the college level because students graduate from units throughout the university. Therefore, we expect that the oversight will be under the provost in academic affairs with the participation of faculty, especially SCEP to monitor academic offerings in diversity and evaluate the outcome of these. They will certainly need to be thoroughly reviewed as soon as the recommendations come from the Task Force on General Education to the campus at large. We anticipate that some courses will no longer be dual listed, new courses might be needed, and other experiences may play a role in meeting these requirements in cultural diversity.

**Oversight of the Extracurricular Component to Cultural Diversity.**

We should consider forming an interdisciplinary campus committee on diversity to include the role played by both course work and by extra-curricula activities. This would certainly involve student affairs, which is presently assessing the attitudes and experience of students outside classes. We also know that we need input from diversity leaders on campus such as members of the Staff 2 committee in academic affairs.

**Recommendations.**

Among the recommendations under consideration for improvement in cultural diversity are:

- Expand the definition of cultural diversity to be more inclusive and to provide exposure to cultures around the world as well as within U.S. society.
Consider how to extend or expand ways beyond course work through which students may gain experience with cultures other than their own. This includes Study Abroad, internships, and other experiences.

Consider forming an interdisciplinary campus committee on diversity to include the role played by both course work and by extra-curricula activities involving student affairs and diversity leaders on campus.
List of Attachments

1. Interim Report from the Task Force for General Education.
4. Snapshot of the Graduation Pipeline at UIC.
6. UIC Freshmen Are Academically Strong and Are Becoming Stronger.
8. Degree Audit Reporting System.
9. Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology.
14. Faculty Productivity Data: College Template.
17. Retention Rate of Freshmen.
19. Analysis of the UIC Alumni Surveys to the Department Level.
20. Registration in English Composition.
21. Rubric to Determine Placement Level in English Courses.
22. Focus Group Report: Faculty Assessment of UIC Students’ Writing Abilities.
25. Writing Center.

26. Writing Center Information.

27. Article on Dean Fish and UIC in Chicago Tribune, March 21, 1999.

28. Currently Approved CDC Courses in General Education.

29. Humanities CDC Distribution Analysis.

30. Social Sciences CDC Distribution Analysis.

31. Natural Sciences CDC Distribution Analysis.


33. Retrospective Course Evaluation Survey for Seniors.

34. Assessment of Educational Outcomes for Students.

35. Assessment in the LAS Majors.