

2007

Standard Four: The Academic Program

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/accred_neasc

Recommended Citation

"Standard Four: The Academic Program" (2007). *New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) 2006/2007*. 10.
http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/accred_neasc/10

Standard Four

The Academic Program

I. The Academic Program at the University of Connecticut and Undergraduate Education (4.1-4.19)

As a Research Extensive State Land and Sea Grant institution, the University of Connecticut offers a wide array of degree programs, primarily at the main Storrs campus and the Health Center in Farmington, but also at five regional campuses (Avery Point, Hartford, Stamford, Waterbury, and Torrington), the Law School campus, and the School of Social Work campus. At the undergraduate level, there are seven bachelor's degrees and the two-year Associate of Applied Science degree from the Ratcliffe Hicks School of Agriculture. The one hundred and eight (108) undergraduate majors are organized into eight schools and colleges. Sixty-six undergraduate minors are also available. The Graduate School oversees several master's degrees, the Doctor of Musical Arts and the Doctor of Philosophy degrees. There are seventy (70) fields of study at the master's level and sixty (60) at the Ph.D. level, including several professional graduate degrees, e.g., the M.B.A., M.S.W., and M.P.A. A range of certificate programs allows graduate students to focus their studies in particular areas. The University of Connecticut Health Center has M.D. and D.M.D. programs (UCONN is the only public School of Dental Medicine in New England). The Law School offers J.D. and LL.M. degrees. The Health Center and the School of Social Work offer a Ph.D. degree under the direction of the Graduate School, which can be pursued independently or jointly with their professional programs. There are minimum requirements of attendance for at least a year for degree programs, at the sites of that program. (4.1)

Oversight of these programs resides with the faculty within the departments, schools and colleges of the institution. Many departments have a Curricula and Courses committee. Each school or college has a Curricula and Courses committee, which receives proposals from departments and programs. The University Senate has its own Curricula and Courses committee, which is responsible for all courses open to freshmen and sophomores, as well as all contained within the undergraduate general education program. The General Education Oversight Committee has particular responsibility in this area. Other Senate committees, notably the Scholastic Standards committee, play a role in ensuring the academic integrity of the programs and its oversight by faculty. The Dean of the Graduate School, together with the Graduate Faculty Council, oversees the graduate fields of study. Policies and procedures to guide these committees are set out in the part of the *Laws, By-Laws and Rules of the University of Connecticut* that applies to the University of Connecticut Senate. (4.2)

Proposals for new academic programs are initiated by the faculties of the academic departments, interdisciplinary programs or non-departmentalized school that will offer them. These programs must be approved by the department and by the faculty and dean of the relevant school or college. The Graduate School has purview over graduate programs that are not under the auspices of the Medical, Dental and Law Schools, and these graduate programs must be approved by the Graduate Faculty Council, a body elected by the faculty of the Graduate School's constituent academic units, through its Executive Committee. All proposals from any program, undergraduate or graduate, that reports to the Provost must go through the Provost's Office and comply with its procedures before submission to the Board of Trustees. The Medical and Dental Schools have parallel approval processes, which require ultimate approval by the Vice President of the Health Center, and the approval processes for their programs then fold into the university process at the Board of Trustee level. For interdisciplinary programs, approval by the faculty and deans of all the schools or colleges involved in the program is necessary. Once new undergraduate programs have been proposed and approved by the relevant departments and Deans, they are forwarded to the Provost's office to a committee specifically charged with new program review. In addition to ensuring that the appropriate departmental and college reviews have occurred, this committee considers the impact of the new program on the university as a whole. Graduate programs, as mentioned above, are approved for academic merit by the Executive Committee of the Graduate Faculty Council, circulated for informational purposes to the Dean's Council, and then transmitted to the Provost's Office, which then takes the programs to the University of Connecticut Board of Trustees for approval.

All graduate and undergraduate programs then must be licensed, and ultimately accredited, by the Connecticut Department of Higher Education (CDHE), in compliance with its guidelines for program approval (see the CDHE website at <http://www.ctdhe.org/Regs/PDFs/ProgramApplication.pdf>). Under CDHE guidelines, the University of Connecticut may not confer degrees until final CDHE accreditation is obtained. Substantive revisions of existing undergraduate accredited programs are normally approved at the school and college level, with the approval of the dean, and approval by the Provost's Office. Graduate program revisions are directed through the Graduate Executive Committee to the Provost's Office. The procedures to be followed for new program approval, together with the required approval form, may be found on the Provost's website (http://www.provost.uconn.edu/program_approval/). (4.3, 4.5)

Between 1998 and 2004, Academic Program Reviews were carried out for departments and non-departmentalized schools, using a procedure developed by a faculty/administrator Task Force in 1996. The Report of the Program Assessment Task Force, which outlines the procedure, is contained in Appendix 2.1 and is on the Provost's website at www.provost.uconn.edu. The heart of the procedure was a self-study, followed by a visit by a team of outside evaluators. The outcomes of these assessments are used to revise, or even eliminate, programs as needed. These program reviews are significant, and the evaluations of the departments have had significant effects on a number of programs. For example, such a review resulted in the dissolution of the Geology and Geophysics department and redeployment of departmental faculty into other academic units. In addition to these University of Connecticut initiated reviews, many programs, particularly in the professional schools, are evaluated by accreditation bodies. This self-study's planning and evaluation section also discusses the academic program review process.

Departments are aggregated into schools and colleges, and further assurance that programs are meeting institutional standards can be found at this level. This occurs on an annual basis, when the dean meets with each department head to review progress and possibilities for improvement. Annual reports are required that contain metrics, which enables progress to be assessed. In addition to these departmental/program level review and planning activities, schools and colleges and the institution as a whole engage in strategic planning. An example of these planning activities can be found at <http://www.canr.uconn.edu/5yearplan.pdf>. (4.3, 4.5, 4.8, 4.9)

These planning and review processes may frequently result in recommendations for change, but any such recommendations go through multiple levels of review before they are put into place. A specific change might be reviewed by the Department, the School or College, the University Senate, the Provost, the Board of Trustees, and the CDHE. Major changes in academic offerings go through all of the processes outlined above, culminating in approval by the CDHE. Changes that do not require approval at that level are still reviewed by faculty at the departmental and school/college level and sometimes by the Provost, before being implemented. (4.10)

At the undergraduate level, the catalog in operation at the time a student enters a program at the University of Connecticut is considered binding on the institution. Thus, while programs may be changed or eliminated, the requirements articulated at the point of entry are maintained and the courses required made available. For example, the General Education Requirements were recently revised at the university, but the former requirements remain in force for students who entered a program under the old catalog. Note, however, that there is a limit of eight years on the applicability of courses toward degree requirements. (4.11)

Schools and colleges, in association with the Division of Enrollment Management, have policies and procedures governing undergraduate admission and retention. Academic support services are collected together within the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Instruction. The Institute for Student Success includes the Academic Center for Exploratory Students, the First Year Programs and the Center for Academic Programs, all of which are designed to support students particularly when they are new to the institution and at greater risk. An early alert system notifies advisors by the sixth week of the semester when students are not performing well in individual courses. Support services to both faculty and students are provided by the Institute for Teaching and Learning. The Writing and Quantitative Centers offer workshops for faculty and tutoring services for students. Other units offer support around technological issues, course and program design and teaching skills. Enrichment programs (which include Honors, Individualized Majors, Undergraduate Research and Study Abroad) collaborate with departments, programs, schools and colleges to provide additional opportunities to expand and deepen student learning. These centralized resources are extremely valuable for sustaining and improving undergraduate academic programs. (4.3)

The University of Connecticut sets minimum standards for graduation at the Bachelor's level. These include at least 120 credits, completion of at least two semesters of academic work at the University of Connecticut, a GPA of at least 2.0 and fulfillment of the General Education Requirements, outlined below. Individual program requirements, all of which have to be approved by the schools and colleges, determine the distribution of courses to be taken for a given major. The Graduate School sets minimum credit requirements for its degree programs, e.g. 15 credits for a Plan A (with thesis) Master's and 24 credits for a Plan B (without thesis) Master's. Individual students' advisory committees oversee their programs, which must also meet the requirements of the relevant Field of Study. Advisory Committees may include individuals from outside the institution, particularly at the Ph.D. level. Ph.D. dissertation proposals require additional review from outside of the Advisory Committee. All of these requirements are published in the Undergraduate or Graduate catalogs, which are available in print form. All language in the catalog has to be approved by the faculty bodies relevant to the program in question. (4.4)

The University of Connecticut Libraries attempt to provide a broad and deep collection of resources, in both print and electronic formats. In addition to the Homer Babbidge Library, there are several specialized libraries at Storrs and libraries at each of the regional campuses. Assistance in using these resources is provided at multiple levels. Basic information literacy is taught in first year English classes as part of the general education program. Computer technology competency is checked with online modules taken by all incoming students and both electronic and in

person resources made available to remedy any shortcomings. Operating under the auspices of the division of Undergraduate Education & Instruction, the Learning Resource Center housed in the Homer Babbidge Library offers and coordinates these services for students. A library liaison is provided for each major and graduate field of study. These individuals work closely with faculty and students to ensure that the more advanced and specialized needs are met. Each undergraduate major has produced an information literacy plan for its students that articulates requirements and how they will be met. (4.6)

Instruction in English writing and literature is provided to undergraduates in the freshman English seminars. These are followed by the requirement that all undergraduate students must successfully complete two writing intensive or "W" courses. While most courses require students to write, W courses emphasize writing instruction, have enrollment capped at 19 and include the provision that students must pass the writing components to attain a passing grade in the course as a whole. One of these W courses must be approved specifically for the student's major, to assure that the writing skills specific to particular disciplines are learned. W courses focus in particular on writing, but other language skills (listening, reading and speaking) are integral to most courses and all programs at the university. While graduate students as a whole do not receive classroom instruction in English, all work closely with their advisors to produce a dissertation, thesis or other written work. In addition, programs are in place to improve the English proficiency of graduate students whose first language is not English, and successful completion of these programs is required of such students who wish to serve as teaching assistants, unless they have shown an appropriate level of proficiency through testing upon entry into the program. (4.7)

The University, with very minor exceptions, e.g., teaching a continuing education course on site in a corporate facility, has direct control of its physical resources. (4.12)

Undergraduate Degree Programs

Undergraduate degree programs are governed by the schools and colleges and are comprised of three sets of interlocking requirements. All students must meet the same set of general education requirements, outlined below. Schools and colleges can add to these requirements and do so in a variety of ways. The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences requires additional study in many of the areas covered by the general education system, for example with additional courses in defined areas of the arts and humanities. The professional schools often have specific courses required of their students for accreditation purposes. For example, for ABET accreditation purposes Engineering students are expected to complete an ethics course offered by Philosophy. Finally, come the degree requirements for each specific major, consisting of preparatory work, often in other departments, and then advanced course work in the major. All programs require a coherent and extensive body of coursework in the major and related disciplines. Generally, requirements include at least eight courses within the major, plus at least four courses in closely related fields. At least 120 credits are required by all programs; the requirements of the professional schools often exceed this number. These sets of requirements are communicated clearly to students in the print and electronic catalogs, and in a series of advising documents prepared by the various academic units. Students supplement these required components and follow their own interests by choosing electives to make up the total number of credits required for their degree. Students must file a Plan of Study, which details how they will meet the standards for their degree. All students are required to have a grade point average of at least 2.0 at the time of graduation, with some schools and colleges requiring higher averages. (4.13-4.14)

General Education

The University of Connecticut has had a comprehensive set of General Education Requirements (GER) for undergraduate students in place for decades, with an extensive revision occurring in 1987. The university recently (May 2005) launched a newly revised general education system. The new system evolved from an extended series of discussions about general education and a review of the efficacy of the 1987 GER that lasted almost two years and involved faculty, students, advisors and academic administrators. These deliberations culminated in the approval of the new guidelines by the University Senate in May 2003. Integral to the new requirements was the creation of a General Education Oversight Committee (GEOC), representative of all schools and colleges and chaired by a faculty member given fifty percent release time from normal duties. The Senate charged this committee not only with the task of instituting the new system but also with its ongoing oversight, building in the expectation for evaluation and adjustment.

The new guidelines (<http://geoc.uconn.edu/geocguidelines.htm> and Exhibit 4.1) state the following:

The purpose of general education is to ensure that all University of Connecticut undergraduate students become articulate and acquire intellectual breadth and versatility, critical judgment, moral sensitivity, awareness of their era and society, consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience, and a working understanding of the

processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge. It is vital to the accomplishment of the University's mission that a balance between professional and general education be established and maintained in which each is complementary to and compatible with the other.

These overall goals were not new to the system. Rather what changed were the means to their end and a renewed commitment to their execution. Principles articulated for the new system were that the requirements should be common to all schools and colleges of the university and that courses in most categories should be accessible to entering students and therefore have limited prerequisites. In addition, wherever possible, general education courses should be taught by tenure-track faculty, rather than graduate students or adjunct faculty. The new general education system has a similar number of courses but in fewer categories than the curriculum it replaced. In addition schools and colleges are not allowed to restrict student options within the system. This results in greater student choice, allowing students to follow their own interests. (4.15)

The new system is described in terms of *four content areas* and *five competencies*. The four content areas are Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, Science and Technology, and Diversity and Multiculturalism and students are required to take 6-7 credits in each of these areas. The five competencies are Computer Technology, Information Literacy, Quantitative Skills, Second Language and Writing. There is variety in the ways these competencies can be fulfilled, but, in general, they are described in terms of basic or entry requirements, common to all students, and then advanced or exit requirements that are specific to each major. Thus, for writing, all students must take freshman English (4 credits) and then two additional W courses, which emphasize writing instruction, one of which must be in the major. The enrollment cap of nineteen for W-Courses ensures individualized feedback for each student. (4.16, 4.18)

The GEOC established clear criteria for courses to be included in each content area and competency. Faculty and departments were then invited to submit both existing and new courses for inclusion in the general education curriculum. There was no automatic rollover of courses from the previous system. Course proposals are required to outline how the objectives of the specific content area or competency will be met and also which of the overarching goals of general education are addressed. Subcommittees established for each content area and competency review the proposals and then recommend disposition to GEOC. Currently, about two-hundred and fifty courses have been approved for the content areas and four-hundred courses have been designated for teaching quantitative or writing skills. (4.15)

The general education program requires a total of approximately forty-nine credits. However, in some cases a single course may be used to meet more than one requirement (e.g., a content area course may also be a writing intensive course) and so the total number of credits is usually less than this. A survey of the plans of study followed by the different schools and colleges showed that the number of general education credits is always at least forty. (4.17)

Despite being in a transition period, since many students still fall under the previous system of requirements, the new system appears to have the capacity to meet the needs of the undergraduate student population. As registration proceeds each semester, enrollments in each course and sets of courses are monitored and additional sections organized as needed. Currently GEOC is articulating clear learning outcomes for each content area and competency. Assessment of student learning outcomes is in the early stages. In some cases, these are already clear, e.g. information literacy, and evaluation tools are being designed or evaluated to measure the extent to which they are being met. (4.15, 4.18)

The Major or Concentration

Requirements for each major are clearly articulated in the catalog and often in the plan of study forms completed by junior/senior students. The school or college containing the major sets minimum standards for the numbers of credits to be included. For example, in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the field of concentration for each major must include at least thirty-six junior/senior course credits, twenty-four of which are within the major itself and twelve in closely related areas. A grade point average of 2.0 is required in these courses, which must be described in an approved plan of study, come from two or more subject areas of the University and be completed with a GPA of at least 2.5. The Individualized Major Program (<http://www.imjr.uconn.edu/>) also requires thirty-six credits. Majors must have a plan of study that includes courses from two or more departments, is endorsed by three faculty members, and is approved by the Individualized Major Committee.

Academic departments determine the sequencing of courses within their majors. The university is currently renumbering its courses, partly in order to improve the communication of recommended course sequences to students. Departments are also responsible for articulating learning objectives for their majors and mapping out the achievement of these objectives across their curriculum. Each department is required to consider the writing,

information literacy and computer technology requirements of its graduates and develop plans for meeting those requirements. These plans have to be approved at the school or college level and, in some cases, by GEOC. Many departments have capstone courses, designed to integrate learning across the major. Professional schools link academic learning in the classroom with practical experiences in the field. For example, Neag School of Education students engage in a series of supervised practica in local school districts, beginning with observation and ending with full responsibility for the classroom. In general, the professional schools are accredited by their cognizant agencies, ensuring that graduates meet standards appropriate to the field. (4.19)

In addition to their major, students may also elect to complete a minor field of study at the University of Connecticut. A minor consists of 12-18 credits of related coursework, usually at the junior/senior level, that can be used to complement or extend a student's major. The precise requirements are set by the faculty originating the minor and are then approved by the relevant departmental and school/college Curricula and Courses committees. These approvals are then communicated to the Provost's office, which is responsible for informing the Board of Trustees and the Department of Higher Education. Because these programs do not exceed eighteen credits, approval by these bodies is not required. These programs are evaluated as part of the normal process of departmental review.

Appraisal

The University has the structures and organization in place to assure the rigor and integrity of the academic programs it offers. The administration works closely with the faculty, in particular the University Senate and the Graduate Faculty Council, in the oversight of its programs. Considerable power is devolved to the academic departments to determine their own goals and programs, as is appropriate since this is where the relevant academic expertise is to be found. In addition, departments are organized into schools and colleges, which have oversight responsibilities and all are following policies and procedures set by the *Laws, By-Laws and Rule of the University of Connecticut* and by the Provost.

The University recently completed a series of self-studies and reviews of all of its academic departments. These reviews were extensive and rigorous and resulted in discussions with the Provost about future directions. However, the extent to which agreements based on these discussions have been carried out has varied. It is clear that the University must continue the process of regularly reviewing its academic programs, including academic centers and institutes, as well as developing a plan for systematically implementing the resulting recommendations.

The move to a more systematic approach towards the assessment of institutional effectiveness is in progress at multiple levels within the University. The success of these assessment efforts depends on the continued involvement and support of faculty and the provision of sufficient resources.

Undergraduate Degree Programs

As a result of recommendations in the 1995 University of Connecticut Strategic Plan, *Beyond 2000: Change*, the position of Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education was created. Undergraduate Education is one of the six Areas of Emphasis in the University of Connecticut Academic Plan adopted by the Board of Trustees in 2003. To further these strategic plans, a Center for Undergraduate Education (CUE) has been created and is housed in its own building. Due to the implementation of these plans, the University has been extremely successful at attracting students over the past decade such that admissions are now capped at the Storrs campus, with only a small divergence allowed above the 3200 freshman cap. However, the numbers of faculty and support staff have not kept pace with the growth in student numbers. This has resulted in larger class sizes and an increased likelihood that classes will be taught by adjunct faculty and graduate students, rather than tenure-track faculty. For example, thirty-four percent of freshmen and sophomore undergraduate classes at the Storrs campus were taught by graduate students in 2004/05. See Exhibit 4.2 for statistics. The use of graduate teaching assistants and adjunct instructors requires good communication between these individuals and the regular appointment faculty of the department to ensure consistency between different offerings of a course and high quality of instruction. It appears likely that this communication does not always occur, particularly with adjuncts at the regional campuses, who are often not well integrated into their Storrs-based departments. The University needs to ensure that there are enough permanent faculty for the University to carry out its dual educational mission at the undergraduate and graduate levels and that mechanisms are in place to evaluate the effects of staffing decisions on the quality of its academic programs. The drive for the highest quality instruction and linking of faculty scholarship with undergraduate teaching requires both a reduction in class size and an increase in the percentage of classes taught by permanent faculty.

The improvement of the University's undergraduate programs has been assisted by the development and consolidation of the Institute for Teaching and Learning, the Enrichment Programs and the Institute for Student Success, all within the Center for Undergraduate Education. This consolidation gives greater visibility to these

programs and easier access for both students and faculty. The Enrichment Programs are strong and growing, involving greater numbers of students. For example, participation in Study Abroad rose from 7.2 percent in 2003 to twelve percent in 2006.

General Education

The University's general education program is substantial, well constructed and broadly based. The content area requirements ensure a breadth of learning for all students at a basic level, while allowing students to follow their own interests. These courses, when combined with the competency requirements, result in students from all programs meeting the forty credit requirement. The integration of advanced competency requirements into the offerings of each major program assure advanced skills in these areas and provide links between the general and more specialized curricula. The general education curriculum could be strengthened by creating thematically organized cross-disciplinary clusters of courses that would reinforce and complement each other, providing students with the opportunity for a more coherent general education experience.

The system of oversight via a General Education Oversight Committee (GEOC), recently established, assures that the general education curriculum is under the control of a group of faculty, who are responsible for monitoring its function and making recommendations about its improvement. The systems developed for review of courses prior to acceptance into the program are rigorous and clear, and appear to be functioning well. They have resulted in a rich menu of courses from which students can select. This curriculum is being strengthened on a regular basis by the availability of course development grants from the Provost's office, which allows the introduction of new courses or the improvement of existing ones on an annual basis.

GEOC has taken the first steps towards oversight to ensure that courses are being taught in a manner that is consistent with the guidelines under which they were approved. For example, the Registrar reports to GEOC on the size of all sections for writing intensive classes whose enrollment has recently been restricted to a capacity of nineteen students. In addition, departments are currently being asked to revisit their plans for writing and information literacy in order to reveal problems and share best practices. However, these are just the beginnings and many more procedures need to be put in place to ensure appropriate oversight.

As is true in other areas of the academic program, there are concerns about insufficient resources for general education, especially faculty resources. Instructing many general education courses are particularly challenging, especially in situations like W courses, where students are required to work with the faculty member to do multiple revisions of a long paper. While a regular process assures the addition of course sections in an attempt to meet the required capacity for general education courses, this process is only partially successful. For example, many general education classes are very large and therefore limit faculty-student interaction and pedagogical approaches. In addition, fewer than half (42.7 percent overall) of general education classes were taught by "regular" faculty in spring 2006, ranging from a high of 45.5 percent in Storrs, to a low of 9.4 percent in Torrington. The term "regular faculty" includes tenured, tenure track, in residence faculty, instructors and lecturers on regular payroll; the "other instructor" categories include visiting faculty, graduate assistants, adjuncts, and professional staff who hold appropriate advanced degrees. See Exhibit 4.3 for a statistical breakdown by campus of types of instructional faculty for academic year 2005-06 overall and general education courses. It should be noted that although the General Education guidelines call for as many classes as possible to be taught by regular faculty, the use of the "other instructor" categories is not inappropriate: each instructor is screened by disciplinary-specific academic officials (such as department heads) to ensure competency to teach the subject matter of the course, and course syllabi are reviewed by appropriate academic officials. Further, teaching introductory undergraduate courses is part of graduate student professional development, and adjuncts, who are chosen for their knowledge of the field, often bring a unique external perspective to the classroom. Overall in an institution such as the University of Connecticut that emphasizes graduate education, one would expect that "regular faculty" would teach almost all upper division and graduate courses. Nevertheless, efforts should continue to be aimed at achieving the goal of having a large percentage of General Education classes taught by regular faculty.

While the requirements for what constitutes a general education course in a particular category are well articulated, it is less clear what students should be able to do after taking these classes. Establishing these learning objectives is a prerequisite for assessing the effectiveness of the system as a whole and therefore needs to be a priority. Current assessment efforts are limited to either indirect approaches, for example student perceptions of general education course availability in exit surveys, or direct assessment of abilities only in specific competencies, for example information literacy.

With the advent of the new system, there have been considerable efforts to reach out to university faculty, staff and students to familiarize them with its details and its significance. In particular, September 2005 was designated General Education Month by the Provost and many events were held that drew attention to the value of a general

education. This process needs to continue, with emphasis on students so that they understand the importance of this part of their curriculum and make well-informed choices as they select their own programs. Students often view general education as a series of isolated requirements to be fulfilled and do not understand the relationships between the individual parts. One idea under development at the moment is to create sets of linked courses that are drawn from different content areas, allowing interdisciplinary connections to be made.

The Major or Concentration

Appraisal of the many different undergraduate majors at the University of Connecticut is a challenge. While clear and rigorous procedures are in place for their establishment, the measurement of their effectiveness is uneven. While the program reviews described above address some of these concerns, they are not necessarily targeted at addressing student learning. The professional schools have clear procedures for assessing program effectiveness, thanks to their periodic reaccreditations. However, the University overall needs to develop a system for periodically assessing the effectiveness of majors or concentrations that are not in the professional schools.

The degree of coherence and developmental sequencing of courses within majors and areas of concentration varies across programs, ranging from required course sequences in the professional schools and sciences to more open-ended course selection in the humanities and some social sciences. It may be appropriate to introduce more structure into some programs, particularly by adding senior capstone experiences. Majors and concentrations are also uneven in the opportunities they provide for individualized academic experiences through internships, study abroad programs, or undergraduate research. Optimally, opportunities of this type should be provided for students in any major or concentration offered by the university. The university has recently developed structures through the Individualized and Interdisciplinary Studies Program that facilitate collaborations across departments and schools/colleges for interdisciplinary, team teaching and provide fora for the sharing of curricular innovations and strategies. (<http://www.iisp.uconn.edu>)

A greater number of opportunities for cross-disciplinary or interdisciplinary studies are now available to undergraduate students. These include new majors, for example Cognitive Sciences and Environmental Sciences, and a large number of new minors. Minors are a relatively new addition to the University, having been introduced in 1997. Sixty-six minors are now available and represent a useful opportunity for students to develop a concentrated area of study that can complement, focus or otherwise enrich their major. While interdisciplinary programs represent useful additions, caution is needed to ensure that all appropriate support structures are in place, particularly when they cross departmental and sometimes school or college boundaries.

Projection

In general, the procedures and policies that govern the establishment of academic programs of the University are functioning well and therefore significant change is not required or likely. Evaluation of the operation of programs is less well developed, but progress is occurring and will continue in this area. Assessment of the effectiveness of the recently completed cycle for the evaluation of departments will lead to a process of regular review with clear and immediate feedback on departmental operations.

To address concerns about the quality of undergraduate education that arise from increasing class size and greater reliance on adjunct faculty and graduate teaching assistants, the Provost has begun a campaign to the State for 175 additional faculty lines. Additional faculty lines, if provided, will not only improve the faculty to student ratio, but will also provide the additional personnel who are needed to integrate general education courses across the required content areas and begin implementing the strategic planning goals of the Division of Undergraduate Education and Instruction. Without an appropriate increase in faculty lines, significant progress in the directions discussed below will not be possible.

The Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Instruction lists three goals within its strategic plan. They are:

- a. An individualized experience for each undergraduate, with advising plans and curricula that meet the needs and interests of each undergraduate, including at least one form of experiential learning.
- b. A learning paradigm that shifts the focus from the teacher as instructor to the student as learner, with the ultimate goal of promoting lifelong learning.
- c. An academic culture that promotes global citizenship.

Although this division is not directly in charge of faculty and programs, these three goals resonate with other efforts across the university. Undergraduate Education and Instruction is working with faculty and programs to achieve these goals. Increasing numbers of students will participate in experiential learning opportunities, with the ultimate goal being participation by all students. The benefits of studying within a research extensive university will be more fully realized by creating more opportunities for undergraduate research and engaging students to participate in these opportunities. More courses will include a service learning component as the University builds stronger links with local communities.

The University has also initiated several efforts that will improve the effectiveness of course delivery and the curricula of majors and concentrations. Current efforts to renumber courses into four rather than two undergraduate levels, along with efforts to articulate learning outcomes for courses and majors and concentrations, will lead faculty to think in terms of student learning rather than teaching, and lead to more majors and concentrations exhibiting structured course sequencing with senior capstone experiences. Students and faculty alike will be more aware of learning goals and therefore more likely to achieve them.

The goal of increasing global awareness among the students will be accomplished through several venues. As study abroad opportunities are integrated more fully with the majors, student participation is targeted by the Provost to increase to thirty percent by the year 2011 in contrast to the current participation rate of twelve percent. Creating new courses that emphasize global or international approaches, expanding international content of existing courses, and articulating links between courses will also enable students to become more globally aware. In May 2006, a Task Force established by the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education issued a report on "Developing Global Citizens" (available at www.Provost.uconn.edu) that sets forth a plan for implementing the Division of UE&I strategic plan's third goal. (Appendix 4.1)

Technology is likely to play an increasingly important role at the University. Most courses now include a WebCT/VISTA component to complement classroom instruction. Communication between faculty and students has been revolutionized by email and this is likely to be extended by wider use of chat rooms and other electronic discussion formats. The introduction of e-portfolio, beginning in fall 2006, will provide opportunities for both students and faculty to track student development and link their work across different departments. While few courses are taught totally on-line, this number is likely to increase. As assessment efforts to determine course effectiveness mature, an important component will be the comparison between different methods of course delivery. The University is currently choosing among different Personal Response System technologies and their use will increase to provide further opportunities for interaction, particularly in large classes.

The Task Force on Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, recently formed by the Provost, will develop mechanisms and policies that facilitate the achievement of the second goal articulated by the Division of Undergraduate Education and Instruction. This task force is charged with recommending ways to 1) improve the quality of teaching and learning at the undergraduate and graduate levels; 2) offer opportunities for professional development; 3) develop assessment tools to inform and improve classroom instruction; 4) ensure that quality of teaching will be a strong consideration, along with research, in reappointment, promotion, tenure, and merit, as mandated in the *By-Laws*. As a result the goals of undergraduate education will be stated more clearly across the University and a greater importance will be accorded to them in relationship to the other missions of the institution. See Exhibit 4.4 for the charge and composition of this Task Force.

II. Graduate Degree Programs [4.20-28]

One of the basic tenets of graduate education is that for quality graduate education to thrive, research must coexist with and enhance the process of classroom teaching. Faculty members of the Graduate School, while dedicated to teaching, carry on active research programs. Their research serves many purposes. First, it supports graduate education by developing new knowledge in areas of scholarly interest. Second, it provides training opportunities in research and scholarship for graduate students in residence. Moreover, these programs fulfill the University's obligations as a land-grant, sea-grant, and space-grant consortium institution, by conducting research and disseminating information to the public in areas affecting the nation's welfare. As the state's flagship public research university, the University of Connecticut occupies a unique role. It is a Carnegie Research Extensive university and is the only public institution of higher education in Connecticut whose mission includes offering research-based and professional doctoral degrees. (4.20)

Graduate education at the University of Connecticut is supervised by the more than 1,100 members of the University's Graduate Faculty, which includes a few non-University affiliated persons. The Graduate School is led by the Dean, who is advised by the fifty-five member Graduate Faculty Council. Membership on this legislative body is by election to three-year overlapping terms. Two graduate student representatives also serve on the Council. The Graduate Faculty consists of faculty members who have been appointed on the basis of their professional

credentials, active participation in research, or other professional activities as determined by their respective departments. Criteria for membership at both the master's and the doctoral levels are set by the Graduate Faculty Council. Appointment to the graduate faculty is made by the Dean of the Graduate School upon recommendation by the administration of the department and school or college in which the faculty member is housed. Membership is renewable every seven years, upon review of the person's record of contemporary scholarly activity and his/her record of mentorship of graduate students. (4.22)

Graduate programs in Law, Professional Pharmacy, Medicine, and Dental Medicine are administered independently from the Graduate School. They are all fully accredited by the appropriate national accrediting bodies. The Law School and the Professional Pharmacy administrations report to the Provost at the Storrs campus, while the clinical Medicine and Dental Medicine programs report to the Executive Vice President at the Health Center. Graduate programs at the Health Center include the Ph.D. in Biomedical Science and in Public Health (joint with the Storrs campus), as well as master's degrees in Public Health and in Dental Science. These programs are under the jurisdiction of the Graduate School, as administered by an Associate Dean on the Health Center campus who reports to the Dean of the Graduate School. (4.22)

Admission to the Graduate School is both limited and competitive, and is based upon academic qualifications *and* scholarly potential. Especially at the doctoral level, evaluation includes a rigorous assessment of the applicant's projected ability to succeed in the research enterprise by performing at the highest level of independent scholarship. All applications are processed initially by the Graduate School, at which time the applicant's academic transcripts are evaluated for authenticity (accreditation status of the schools attended) and qualifications exceeding the minimum criteria for admission eligibility (GPA of 3.0 or better in all courses taken). International students must present evidence of English proficiency (minimum TOEFL scores of 550 paper, 213 computer-based, or 80 for the internet-based test, or an IELTS overall band score of 6.5). This proficiency is subsequently reviewed by a committee of graduate faculty members in the respective program. (4.23)

Graduate School admission decisions are determined primarily by the academic qualifications of the applicant and the ability of the program to accommodate the interests of the student. Each applicant is considered individually by a faculty admissions committee and the applicant's complete profile is evaluated. This profile is based on a combination of metrics, which includes the grades earned at all previous institutions, a personal statement of purpose, at least three letters of recommendation, and for international students, test scores providing evidence of English language proficiency. Many programs also require scores of other standardized tests, including the GRE, MAT, GMAT, etc. The Graduate School also encourages submission of scholarly works or other documents that illustrate the applicant's qualifications for graduate study and where possible, a personal interview and visit to campus. (4.23)

Fully qualified applicants are admitted with *Regular Status*. In those cases where a domestic applicant's qualifications (particularly grade point averages) are slightly low but there is other evidence of scholarly potential, he/she may be admitted with *Provisional Status*, but only at the master's level. The academic performance of each provisional student is reviewed after completion of twelve graduate credits and if the student has performed at the level of B or better in all courses, he/she is granted Regular Status. Otherwise, the student is subject to dismissal. (4.23)

Two other admission categories exist but are used infrequently. *Language Conditional* status may be granted to an international student who is fully qualified academically but needs a period of time to meet the Graduate School's English language requirements. *Visiting Student* status is granted to students who seek a period of advanced study but are not seeking a University of Connecticut graduate degree. Typically these latter students are matriculated at another institution and are studying here with a specific faculty member for a finite period of time before returning to their home institutions to complete their degrees. (4.23)

The graduate degree program requirements at the University of Connecticut vary by discipline. Master's degree programs may be either professional or academic, with the degree requirements varying with the purpose of the program. For example, master's programs in nursing, education, social work, and music contain practicum, internship or performance requirements as part of the degree. Programs designed for mid-career professionals like the Master's in Public Health and the Executive Master's in Business Administration tailor course offerings to meet the schedules of those working full-time at managerial-level jobs. (4.26)

Master's degrees are awarded with or without the thesis option (Plan A and Plan B, respectively), depending on the nature and purpose of the program. The Plan A master's degree is typically in an academic, rather than a professional, field of study. It requires a minimum of fifteen didactic graduate credits, along with nine credits of thesis research, and the completion and defense of a thesis. The Plan B master's degree requires a minimum of twenty-four graduate credits followed by a comprehensive examination. Many focused professional degrees require

substantially more than the minimum credit requirement. For example, the M.P.A. degree requires forty-eight graduate credits, the M.B.A. degree requires fifty-seven credits, and the M.S.W. requires sixty credits. (4.25, 4.26)

Requirements for the doctorate include a minimum of either twenty-four post-master's graduate credits or forty to forty-four post-baccalaureate credits, successful completion of a general examination (which may be written, oral, or both), submission and approval of a dissertation proposal, completion of independent research as outlined in the proposal, writing of a dissertation based on the results of that research, and finally, defense of the dissertation. Some programs include additional requirements, e.g., demonstration of competence in either a foreign language or a related or supporting area of study. Standards for residency and the formation and function of the advisory committee are set by the Graduate School and published in the Graduate School Catalog. (4.25)

Appraisal

Graduate programs have been reviewed as part of the recent seven-year cycle of formal academic unit reviews and have been covered in the resulting discussions and agreements. Unfortunately, this process has not provided a clear picture of graduate program quality since much of the effort in the reviews has been focused on other components of departmental operation. Accordingly, the Graduate Faculty Council (the Graduate School's academic governing body) through its Executive Committee is developing a more focused assessment process, one where a specific set of metrics with high relevance to graduate (especially doctoral) education can be assembled on an annual basis. This assessment covers both the research and graduate education domains. For the doctoral faculty, metrics similar to those used in the NRC doctoral assessment are being compiled. These include rates of scholarly publication and presentation, per capita research expenditures where appropriate, doctoral completion rates, doctoral student retention, and success in diversity initiatives among others. These metrics provide a convenient measure of annual progress, which can be used in any broader assessment as well.

At the master's level, we seek evidence of success, either by continuation to a doctoral degree program or by entering one of the professions. While scholarship is less evident in master's education, the retention and graduation rates, along with time to degree, are important indicators of a well-functioning master's program, along with placement rates and career success.

UConn has pioneered (and is known nationally as a leader in) the establishment of the Professional Science Master's programs. Funded initially through a grant from the Sloan Foundation, these programs represent a new approach to master's education. In addition to solid fundamental science, graduates of these programs receive training in business practices, communication skills, and practical work experience through internships that make them much more competitive and productive early in their careers. Currently there are three of these programs, Applied Financial Mathematics, Applied Genomics, and Microbial Systems Analysis, with more planned. See Exhibit 4.5 or the website, <http://www.smasters.uconn.edu>, for information about the professional Master's programs.

Another indicator of the quality of the UConn graduate education is the sustained high demand for the University's graduate programs and the high yield of students matriculating in the Graduate School each year. The most recent available numbers (for fall 2005) indicate that 2210 of 6009 (thirty-seven percent) of applicants to Graduate School programs were admitted. Moreover, of those admitted, 1865 (eighty-four percent) matriculated. These numbers are averages and some programs are substantially more selective while others are less selective. Nevertheless, the selectivity is greater than many of our benchmark peers (public land-grant universities), while the yield is among the best within this group. The diversity of state and country of origin of the graduate cohort is another indicator of high quality. In fall, 2005, graduate students from nearly all fifty states and several territories along with one hundred foreign countries were matriculating in the Graduate School.

Another important indicator of quality is that graduates from the University of Connecticut's master's and doctoral program continue to find excellent positions in research, teaching, business and industry, health and social service, government, the arts, and the media. A system has been in place for the past two years to track first post-graduation positions for our master's and doctoral graduates and have partnered with the UConn Foundation to track doctoral alumni from the last twenty-five years' graduating classes. This project is still under development, but it is anticipated that within the next year or two there will be enough data to begin to develop a profile of our alumni successes. Career placement is a particularly important measure of graduate program quality – especially at the doctoral level.

Considerable resources have been directed to the support of graduate education, and new efforts continue to be made to ensure the competitiveness of such support. Stipends are increased each year by an amount coupled to the annual increments received by faculty, and this practice will be continued. A portion of the Graduate School's pre-doctoral fellowship pool has been redirected in the past three years to focus more on recruiting the very best and brightest graduate students. Moreover, the Graduate School has funded a competition for grants up to \$10,000 to

develop innovative ways of recruiting domestic students, including underrepresented minorities. This continuing effort, in its second year, is showing positive results to date.

It has been nearly fifteen years since the last National Research Council Assessment of Research Doctorate Programs. In the 1993 assessment the University of Connecticut programs were ranked over a fairly wide range, with some quite competitive nationally and others needing considerable improvement. Since that time major changes have occurred in many programs, including (1) greatly improved physical facilities, (2) better focus on building critical strength in well-focused areas of faculty research expertise, and (3) a greater focus on graduate student preparation and quality, among others. The next cycle of assessment is to take place in 2006-07 and we are looking forward to this external measure of quality of many of our constituent research doctoral programs.

Projection

Research and graduate education will play a major role in advancing the reputation of the University in the next decade and beyond. The Trustees and the administration recognize this and have built a strong commitment to it into the Institutional Strategic Planning documents. Emphasis on targeted areas of excellence in all disciplines will lead to greater research accomplishments, which in turn will lead to a stronger institution in all respects.

New graduate degree programs will continue to be added as the need is identified and the financial and other resources are available. The procedures we follow to introduce such programs assures that every such program is rigorous in quality and well-supported intellectually. Likewise, as the results of the 2006 NRC doctoral assessment are made known and the graduate program review process begins to show trends in quality, it may be expected that some programs will not grow and may even be phased out. Any such actions will be guided by the current University Academic and Strategic Plans and will result from a thorough analysis of each program's place in the overall mission of the University.

III. Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit (4.29-4.43)

Academic degrees and recognition are awarded upon completion of approved academic programs. These programs are proposed by the academic departments and approved following the procedures defined by the Office of the Provost (<http://www.provost.uconn.edu/>). Approval culminates with the Connecticut Department of Higher Education. Programs are also accredited by various agencies, such as professional societies, and are compiled by the Office of Institutional Research. (<http://vm.uconn.edu/~wwwoir/tabcon05.htm>).

The courses offered by the University of Connecticut are described in course catalogs, which are available at the following web site, www.catalog.uconn.edu. (Copies of the Undergraduate Catalogue and the Graduate Catalogue accompany this self study). The catalog is monitored both at the institutional and departmental levels to remove listings of courses that are no longer offered. University Senate policy has established that, with the permission of the appropriate department head, any course not offered during the previous five years may be removed from the catalog (<http://www.senate.uconn.edu/senmin.041204.doc>). (4.30)

Content

The University exhibits its authority over academic elements of all undergraduate and graduate courses through the Curricula and Courses committees of the departments and schools or colleges and (for introductory courses) the University Senate. The Senate Curricula and Courses Committee is charged with oversight of undergraduate courses open to freshmen and sophomores and those courses comprising the general education requirements required of all students. The General Education Oversight Committee (which reports to the Senate Curricula and Courses Committee) provides continuing review of general education courses required of all students. A new course numbering system is currently being implemented. (See the Report of the Course Renumbering Task Force at the Senate webpage, www.senate.uconn.edu). The Graduate Faculty Council oversees graduate courses. The Senate Scholastic Standards Committee is charged with scholastic matters affecting the University that are not assigned to the Senate Curricula and Courses Committee. These include academic programs, the marking system and scholarship standards (academic probation and dismissal, minimum grade point averages, etc.). These procedures are outlined in the By-Laws, Rules and Regulations of the Senate (See Appendix 4.2 or <http://www.policy.uconn.edu/pages/findPolicy.cfm?PolicyID=286>). Graduate courses are reviewed by the Curricula and Courses committees of the constituent academic units at the school and college level, and then forwarded to the Graduate School for publication. (4.31)

Delivery

After course approval there is ongoing oversight by appropriate faculty within the program or department responsible for delivery of the course. Teaching by new faculty may be observed and evaluated by department heads or their

designees. GEOC is intended to continue oversight of all approved general education courses. The Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) has resources available to all persons teaching courses, including adjuncts and teaching assistants. See the discussion of the ITL in Chapter 7. Also see the discussion of the PTR (Promotion, Tenure and Reappointment) process contained in Chapter 2 under Evaluation and Chapter 5. The university administers teacher evaluation surveys to students on an ongoing basis. At present, these student ratings are the most important single source of assessment information about course delivery. (4.31)

Selection of Faculty

Faculty are recruited by search committees composed of members of the academic unit as well as expert faculty from other units. Faculty are selected based on both scholarship and communication skills. Oversight is provided by the Office of Diversity and Equity and by Human Resources according to their policies. See Chapter 5 for a discussion of the faculty recruitment process. (4.31)

Evaluation of Faculty

The Office of Institutional Research is charged with the administration of a campus-wide student evaluation of teaching program. Each department's teaching faculty are assessed in at least half the courses they teach. The evaluation consists of fourteen standard Likert-like evaluation scales and three to five open-ended free response items. These open-ended response sheets are returned to the instructor by the Office of Institutional Research along with a summary of the responses to the standardized questions (See Appendix 4.3 for a sample evaluation form, plus the data about university rating averages). The statistics are used by faculty as a basis for improvement of their classroom performance. They are also used by the various Promotion, Tenure and Reappointment (PTR) committees at the Department, College and University level in arriving at their decisions. While some departments supplement these procedures with classroom observations and interviews by PTR Committee and/or Department Heads, in many cases these statistics are the only systematic examination of teaching. The Office of Institutional Research has not examined the reliability of the scores from administrations of these instruments. Classes with fewer than five registered students are not regularly evaluated in this process. Part of the charge of the Task Force on Teaching, Learning and Assessment appointed by the Provost is to consider potential changes in the course evaluation system to enhance their usefulness in both formative and summative applications. (4.31)

Admission & Registration of Students

It is the function of the Undergraduate Admissions Office, a part of the Division of Enrollment Management, to admit qualified new undergraduate students at the University. To support this goal, the office works with interested students and guidance counselors through Open Houses, as well as participating in regional and national college fairs (<http://www.lib.uconn.edu/online/research/specilib/ASC/findaids/Admissions/MSS19980236.html#d0e3>). A separate, independent process occurs at the graduate level under the auspices of the Graduate School. (4.31)

As of fall 2005, the University of Connecticut enrolled 20,525 undergraduates and 7,558 graduate and professional students in seventeen Schools and Colleges. Enrollment statistics are collected, maintained and reported by the Office of Institutional Research (OIR). OIR maintains an expansive website with a number of valuable statistics. (www.oir.uconn.edu) (4.31)

The Office of the Registrar compiles information about undergraduate courses and programs. The staff registers students, creates and maintains their records, provides certified documents, issues transcripts, processes grades, monitors NCAA student athletes' academic progress, and audits degrees (<http://www.lib.uconn.edu/online/research/specilib/ASC/findaids/Registrar/MSS19840018.html#d0e57>). (4.31)

Services also include course record management, classroom assignment, final exam scheduling, academic and administrative policy monitoring, and information dissemination. Detailed information regarding the Registrar's Office location and services is available on their webpage (<http://www.registrar.uconn.edu>). (4.31)

Student Retention

The University of Connecticut has a Division of Enrollment Management, under the leadership of the Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, whose charge is to admit high quality students and facilitate their retention. The university ranks well with respect to retention. Currently more than nine out of ten freshmen return to UCONN in their sophomore year. To avert freshman attrition, communication early, often and at key junctures is imperative. A mid-term grade program calls on faculty to provide the registrar's office with a list of all undergraduate students who are struggling in their freshman-level courses after six weeks of classes. The registrar, in turn, notifies each student's advisor, First Year Experience instructor, and residence hall director, who direct the student to the range of academic support resources available at UConn (from the *Advance*: <http://www.advance.uconn.edu/2003/030908/03090802.htm>). (4.31)

For undergraduates, the University's Retention and Graduation Task Force has been successful in promoting a campus culture that values the importance of providing proactive and reactive support services for freshmen so that they persist toward their degree in a timely fashion. For undergraduates, a measure of the opportunity to graduate within an appropriate time is the length of time to degree. This is reported by the Office of Institutional Research. The most recent information (fall 2004) is that seventy-one percent of all freshmen graduate within six years and sixty-seven percent of minority freshmen graduate within this time period. This ranks the University 20th and 18th respectively when compared to public research peer universities (<http://vm.uconn.edu/~wwwoir/tabcon05.htm>). See Exhibit 4.6 for a trend data chart on this subject, as well as discussion in Chapter 6.

The University of Connecticut has been nationally recognized for its achievements in undergraduate retention. At the "RETENTION 2006 Conference" in Las Vegas, the Educational Policy Institute (EPI) awarded our Retention and Graduation Task Force with its initial "Outstanding Student Retention Program Award" that will be presented annually to a higher education institution that exhibits excellence in developing and implementing a student retention program. By honoring excellent work being done to create programs that use innovative means to help students realize their goals, EPI is furthering its mission to create opportunities for minority students at post secondary institutions. (4.29)

The Graduate School currently allows six years for a master's degree and eight years for a combined master's and Ph.D. degree. With the implementation of the PeopleSoft Student Records system in 2001, the ability for students to self-monitor their progress toward meeting degree requirements was provided online via "advisement transcripts" or degree progress reports. Monitoring enrollment within subject areas, with particular attention to General Education course offerings, is continually done by the Office of Undergraduate Education & Instruction which reallocates resources to provide additional course sections as enrollment trends for certain majors shift, thereby ensuring a timely completion of degrees by undergraduate students. (4.30)

A major factor in undergraduate freshman retention success is the First Year Experience (FYE) program that enrolls the majority of first-semester freshmen each fall and acclimates students to the challenges of the freshman year, both academic and non-academic. UCONN Connects provides intervention during the semester, intersession and post-freshman year. This program helps students academically by pairing them one-on-one with a peer mentor.

Adjustment issues affect many freshmen. Students who are no longer academically the big fish in a small high school pond may feel apprehensive. To exacerbate the situation, many who participated on high school athletic teams or activities are unable to do so in college, also leading to anxiety. Nurturing student involvement in intramural activities or clubs and organizations increases a sense of belonging and contributes to academic success and retention. The Division of Student Affairs also has a student counseling program for students who find adjustment difficult or experience other social adjustment challenges.

The Institute for Student Success (<http://uei.uconn.edu/iss.html>) provides a variety of programs to support undergraduate students. These include the Academic Center for Entering Students that provides academic advising for students entering the University without a designated major and those yet to choose a major. The First Year Experience program provides an array of one-credit courses, a network for personal support, interactive online resources, and special living/learning experiences. Peer Education Programs is a collection of campus programs and resources for students interested in making connections with new people, gaining valuable experience and skills for future career opportunities, enriching the UConn community, and making a difference in the lives of other students. UCONN Connects provides one-on-one support to students to get them on the right track to success in school and in life. The University supports several multicultural centers including the African American, Asian American, and Puerto Rican and Latino Cultural Centers, and the International, Rainbow and Women's Centers. See the Students chapter for more information on retention issues. (4.31)

Transfer Credit and Evaluation of Prior Learning

The university policy for transfer of credit from other institutions is articulated on the web site (<http://web.uconn.edu/transfer/guidelines.htm>). The University has "Guidelines for Evaluating Undergraduate Course Work to be Transferred from Other Colleges and Universities to the University of Connecticut" available at <http://web.uconn.edu/transfer/guidelines.htm>. Articulation agreements exist with several colleges or schools and with Connecticut Community Colleges. Over the past decade, the University of Connecticut has continually worked with the Community Colleges to facilitate transfer articulation agreements. Many of these are for specific programs. The University of Connecticut is presently entering into a new round of discussions with the Connecticut Community Colleges to facilitate transfer credit pathways. See articulation agreement discussion guidelines in Appendix 4.4. It is also actively engaged in conversations with Community Colleges who are not part of the Pathway Program to update existing transfer agreements. (4.32 & 4.41)

The University accepts up to six credits of advanced course work (with a grade of B or better) taken at another institution to be included on a Master's degree plan of study (Graduate Catalog, p.28). Up to two years of graduate

work completed at an accredited institution may be accepted for a doctoral program with certain provisions (Graduate Catalog, p. 32). (4.43)

Selected courses are offered through the Early College Experience program that allow advanced high school students to receive credit for University courses offered in their high school. Their instructors, the ECE Faculty, are adjunct professors who are certified by UConn's ECE Program Coordinators within the respective departments, who are also responsible for ensuring the equivalence between high school and university offerings of the courses (<http://ece.uconn.edu>). (4.32)

Service Learning

Service learning – an academic program that includes both off-campus experience and classroom reflection – involves students leaving campus to work in the community. The work may be local, statewide, or even international. The faculty member then helps the students learn more from the experience by encouraging them to reflect on it in a structured way – through journal assignments, for example, or class discussion. A service learning component may be added to courses in any discipline (<http://www.advance.uconn.edu/2004/041025/04102510.htm>).

In addition to programs under the auspices of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Instruction, the Office of Community Outreach, a program within the Department of Student Activities of the Division of Student Affairs, regularly provides students with service learning opportunities, on a volunteer basis. See the Community Outreach website at http://www.studentactivities.uconn.edu/co_index.html.

Internships and Experiential Learning

Internships and Independent Study are encouraged by specific programs to broaden student experience. The requirements for credit are overseen directly by the specific programs. Establishment of internship programs goes through the same process as establishment of a new academic course. Note that not all degree programs grant credit for internship experiences. The Department of Career Services manages cooperative education work program experiences for students in coordination with academic departments. Experiential learning is an important part of the curricula of many professional schools, including business, education, law, nursing, social work, medicine and dentistry. (4.33)

Currently, the University of Connecticut does not award credit for prior experiential or non-collegiate sponsored learning that did not occur under its auspices. The only limited exception involves the Bachelors of General Studies degree. In this case, some transfer students can include credits for experiential and non-collegiate sponsored learning for their first sixty credits of course work if (and only if) a previous accredited institution of higher education had awarded credit. This BGS exception occurs on an ad hoc basis; trained professional staff members in the Admissions Office make the decisions about the appropriateness of accepting transcript credits for experiential learning from other institutions; and currently no written rules are used to guide this practice. Experiential learning is an important part of the curricula of many professional schools, including business, education, law, nursing, social work, medicine and dentistry. (4.34)

Study Abroad

The study abroad program maintains a list of approved courses. These courses have been previously reviewed by the faculty for awarding of credit here at UConn. Courses not listed are evaluated by appropriate faculty in the program for which credit is to be awarded (<https://secure.sa.uconn.edu/sap/studioabroad/>). See the discussion above under Undergraduate Education for a description of the Global Citizens initiative. (4.33)

Academic Standing Rules

The institution publishes requirements for continuation in, termination from, and readmission to the University in the Undergraduate Catalog. The catalog is available both electronically and in print form. (www.registrar.uconn.edu) (4.35)

Rules governing academic integrity, cheating, and plagiarism are articulated in the University Senate By-Laws (sections E-10 and E-13) and also in the University's Student Code of Conduct. The University Senate, under advisement by its Scholastic Standards Committee, is contemplating additional policies regarding academic misconduct. (4.36)

Evaluation of Course Offerings

Monitoring of the appropriateness and timeliness of course content for all courses offered at the University of Connecticut is the responsibility of the programs, departments, and schools or colleges offering the courses. In addition to the "traditional" semester-long offerings, UConn offers undergraduate and graduate programs and courses for abbreviated or concentrated time periods and via distance learning. Individual programs offering the

courses are in charge of assessment of the effectiveness of these “non-traditional” modes of teaching. The GEOC does require additional approval for general education courses to be offered in intensive sessions. These shortened offerings are evaluated through faculty report. (4.37)

The University has a system of course teacher evaluations that has been in place for many years. By University Senate mandate, every course is mandatorily evaluated on alternating semesters, and the Office of Institutional Research makes available the option of every-semester evaluation. Almost all academic departments opt for the every-semester evaluation cycle, which applies to courses taught by adjuncts. The large majority of courses offered at the regional campuses, especially those with “traditional” course structures, use the same system of teacher evaluations as at the main campus in Storrs, as does the Center for Continuing Studies. In 2006, the Provost appointed a Task Force on Teaching, Learning and Assessment whose charge includes reviewing the present course evaluation system. The University Senate, which has jurisdiction over teacher evaluation policies, is expected to make recommendations for change in the present system after consideration of the Task Force’s final report, which is expected early in 2007. (4.38)

At the moment, the University’s technologically mediated courses and programs (both undergraduate and graduate) are offered primarily through the Center for Continuing Studies, the Institute for Teaching and Learning, the School of Business, and the School of Education. All these academic units provide faculty members with technical support for course design and development. Furthermore, students can learn how to use these programs through websites established and managed by the sponsoring academic units, such as the Distance Education Office in the Center for Continuing Studies (www.continuingstudies.uconn.edu) and the Accounting Department of the School of Business (www.business.uconn.edu/msaccounting). (4.38)

The creation of off-campus courses and distance learning courses is subject to the *By-Laws, Rules and Regulations* of the University Senate. Each course is subject to review and approval by the appropriate school or college curricula and courses committee. (4.39)

Certain individual programs seek advice from the business community and other external groups to assure that program graduates have appropriate job skills. Many programs formalize this in the form of external advisory boards. (4.32)

The Curricula and Courses committees of the various schools and colleges and the University Senate and its Curricula and Courses Committee and Scholastic Standards Committee oversee the courses and academic requirements of undergraduate programs as well as the marking systems. The faculty are expected to provide a course syllabus to the students that sets out the objectives and specific subject matter of the course as well as the grade standards. (4.32)

At least ten graduate-certificate programs officially exist. Most are listed in the annual graduate catalog. Some typical certificate programs include “International Studies,” “Music Performance,” “Nursing—Acute Care,” and “Public Financial Management.” University policies governing the creation, academic expectations, and graduation standards for the graduate certificate programs can be found at <http://www.grad.uconn.edu/faculty/forms.html>. The certificate programs vary in admissions criteria because of the relevance of students’ professional experiences, but all programs require that students have already completed their baccalaureate degrees. The admissions standards for a specific academic program can be found on the web site of the sponsoring academic unit, usually a department. The University periodically evaluates all graduate certificate programs, and the review schedule is determined by the Graduate Faculty Council. (4.40)

Residency

All undergraduate students must complete the last two semesters (30 degree credits) of their work at the University. The graduate student residence requirements are stated in the Graduate Catalog. For example, for students in a Ph.D. program, during the second or subsequent years of work in the field, at least two consecutive semesters in residence must be completed. (4.42)

Appraisal

The University oversees the integrity in the awarding of credits. Programs at the University receive review and evaluation routinely and at several levels. Naming of programs is appropriate. In addition, forty individual programs are independently accredited by their appropriate professional societies. Thus for those programs for which this is available, there is external validation of the program. While a few programs are overdue for accreditation, in general these have a long history of successful prior accreditation by external professional societies. (4.29)

Information regarding courses is readily available in a variety of media. The Undergraduate and Graduate catalogues that govern degree program completion requirements and course offerings are available in both print and electronic versions at Storrs and the regional campuses, and in electronic versions for degree programs offered under the auspices of the Health Center. The Registrar and appropriate academic officers, including the Provost, Deans, and Department Heads, are responsible for ensuring that there are sufficient germane course offerings to allow students to graduate in a prescribed period of time. In 2005, the Provost's Office charged the Vice Provost for Enrollment Management and the Registrar to work together to identify specific course "bottlenecks" (i.e., lack of sufficient course offering seats or inability of students to make timely course completions) that seemed to be impeding timely graduation for a number of students. The Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and the Registrar, working together and with pertinent academic department heads, have been able to address these "impedance" issues within lower division offerings. The University has a mechanism to address staffing issues for required upper level courses, but this has not received the same amount of attention as lower division staffing (see discussion in the Faculty Standard chapter). With the implementation of the PeopleSoft student records system, it is now possible to track efficiently which courses have not been regularly taught in recent years. The Registrar has identified these courses. Deans and department heads are working on making sure that all listed courses are either taught or rescinded. (4.30)

Assessment of instruction procedures and a standard "student evaluation of teaching" survey instrument are governed by University Senate policy and cannot be modified without approval of that body. An adequate and reliable procedure to assess instruction is needed. The Provost's Teaching, Learning & Assessment Task Force is currently working on this issue.

The Office of Institutional Research (OIR) maintains the results of the student evaluation of teaching surveys (<http://vm.uconn.edu/~wwwoir/facev.html>). In the most recent university wide summary of evaluations (fall semester 2005) the overall student rating was quite good. The median of eleven teaching criteria ranged between 8.6 and 9.1 on a scale of 1 (unacceptable) to 10 (outstanding).

The University has attracted highly qualified students based on high school class rank and SAT scores. The University ranks 17th compared to other public research peer universities based on students scoring in the 25th SAT percentile. (<http://vm.uconn.edu/~wwwoir/tabcon05.htm>). The University student retention and graduation rates are good. As of the fall 2005, at the Storrs campus seventy-two percent of students graduate within six years (<http://vm.uconn.edu/~wwwoir/tabcon05.htm>). However, this drops to between 37% and 46% at the other campus sites, in large part due to transfers out of the University of Connecticut system.

Each program is logically constructed and leads to "mastery of the knowledge, methods and theories" of the particular discipline at the undergraduate level. The most obvious testimony to program effectiveness is among the professional programs that require periodic reaccreditation by professional societies. The OIR also conducts an annual survey of recent graduates to evaluate their academic experiences. The Department of Career Services receives both formal and informal feedback from employers seeking qualified candidates for Cooperative Education and internship assignments as well as for full-time employment upon graduation. The Department also sponsors events which bring together employers, faculty, staff, and students for the purpose of discussing students' preparedness for the work force, any changes in needed skills and abilities, and ways in which industry can help the University perform its basic mission. The feedback regarding students' knowledge and experience (general preparedness) has consistently been positive. (4.32)

Currently there are no official University rules governing the acceptance of transfer credits awarded for experiential learning. As noted above, the general university policy is not to allow such credit. Also noted above, for the Bachelors of General Studies program, decisions are made ad hoc by seasoned Admission Department officers. Some guidelines for the Admissions Department should be drafted, to give the admissions officers clarity as to when and when not to award credit.

Oversight of regional campus and distance learning courses formerly under the purview of the Dean of the College of Continuing Studies was moved in 2006 to the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Regional Campus Administration.

Satisfaction among students with instructor accessibility based on the most recent 2004 Alumni Survey is 5.9 for courses in the major and 5.1 for all other courses (<http://vm.uconn.edu/~wwwoir/alumsuvy.html>). The scale ranges from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 7 (very satisfied). (4.39)

A process to develop a comprehensive University-wide articulation agreement for the Connecticut community colleges has begun. (See Appendix 4.5)

Projection

The University will maintain its existing well designed policies and procedures to ensure the quality, integrity, etc., of its degree programs.

The University will continue to validate all programs internally and, where possible obtain additional accreditation through professional societies. The seven year cycle academic unit assessment model is to be revised and reinvigorated, and a new round started after completion of program assessment of centers and institutes. (4.29)

Departments should be encouraged to remove course listings as soon as it is clear that there is little likelihood that the course will be offered. (4.30)

Retention and graduation rates for the University of Connecticut are very good, compared to our peers. Minority retention and graduation rates, after lagging behind the student body overall, are now on a par or in excess of the overall number. However, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Instruction and the Office of Enrollment Management are actively working to achieve even more impressive retention and graduation rates.

The University is currently investigating alternative ways to centralize the development, support, and assessment of all courses, offered at Storrs and the regional campuses, and through distance learning.

The University will continue to develop new graduate-certificate programs according to publicized rules and procedures, and to evaluate their academic quality through periodic internal reviews. A comprehensive articulation agreement with the Connecticut community college system will be approved.

IV. Assessment of Student Learning [4.44-50]

The institution is committed to assessment and is moving to make existing assessment efforts more systematic while at the same time embarking on new initiatives to strengthen student learning outcomes assessment as part of its overall approach to institutional effectiveness.

The Provost, with support of the central administration and Deans, is firmly behind efforts underway dealing with the assessment of student learning. The Provost has committed to assessment of student learning through the following:

- Emphasized the institution's commitment to assessment through a policy document "*Assessment: A UConn Priority*" (See Exhibit 4.7) containing the following expectations:
 - by the end of academic year 2006-2007, all departments will have developed means of measuring the learning outcomes of their undergraduate majors, as well as complete assessment plans
 - in the academic year 2007-2008, actual assessment, data collection, and reporting will take place
 - for the next several years, assessment efforts will focus on undergraduate education; after that, we will consider how best we should expand our efforts into graduate education and elsewhere

The Provost gives assessment high priority in departmental responsibilities.

- Established a *Task Force on Teaching, Learning and Assessment* (See Exhibit 4.4) charged with recommending ways to
 - improve the quality of teaching and learning at the undergraduate and graduate levels
 - offer opportunities for professional development
 - develop assessment tools to inform and improve classroom instruction
 - ensure that teaching has a status equal to that of research and will be considered with research in reappointment, promotion, tenure, and merit, as mandated in the by-laws

This Task Force has been focusing on ways to better evaluate teaching and ways to shift the institution to being more of a "learning paradigm" university.

- Appointed an *Assistant Vice Provost* to lead assessment efforts and provided resources which include shared staff support, technical assistance from University Information Technology Services, and a small budget to

maintain the assessment online reporting system software/hardware and promote/assist assessment efforts throughout the university. The Assistant Vice Provost, along with a senior faculty member in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, have

- developed an informative website (<http://assessment.uconn.edu>)
- worked with academic departments and faculty to help educate them about assessment of student learning outcomes
- established departmental faculty Assessment Liaisons who have worked to articulate the goals and outcomes of their respective programs, and are now poised to draft assessment plans
- worked with the General Education Oversight Committee on establishing learning objectives/outcomes for the content areas comprising the general education core curriculum
- implemented the hardware/software infrastructure for a web-based system for student learning outcomes assessment plan reporting

Much of this recent activity formalizing a solid infrastructure for continued ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes has evolved from past practice in the areas of “program review”, “instructional design”, “student satisfaction surveys”, etc. Comments on these areas of assessment are provided in the following sections.

Being a large public university, the institution utilizes a variety of means to assess student learning experiences. Several approaches are institution-wide, while many others are specific to a student’s major or academic department. Some of these are regular ongoing activities, while others are episodic, often related to internal program review self-studies or in response to external program-specific accreditation agencies. (4.44)

As indicated in the inventory of existing assessment practice (see Appendix 4.5), there are many different approaches utilized by the academic programs to help them understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students. Use of this assessment information has led to curricular review, course changes, teaching changes, etc., as one would expect from such efforts. (4.45, 4.50)

Assessment within Program Review

The institution’s approach to program review includes a focus on understanding the connection between the unit’s goals and the mission of the institution. Program review, following a five- to seven-year cycle, also asks each unit to provide information on assessment of student learning. Specifically, in the self-study analysis done by each unit undergoing program review (see http://www.uc2000.uconn.edu/strategicplan/reports/program_assessment.html), the following items are included: (4.46, 4.48)

Unit Mission, Goals, and Recent History

- What are the major goals of the unit? How have these evolved through recent years with respect to the unit’s mission statement? How are they expected to change in the future?
- How do these goals relate to the strategic plan and mission of the University as expressed in the University of Connecticut strategic plan?
- Describe the process for reviewing the unit’s strategic plan and assessing its achievements and goals.

Student Outcomes Assessment

There is growing national awareness of the need to articulate clearly what skills and content students should expect from their post-secondary education, and to assess how effective programs are at giving students those skills. Answer the following questions for both the undergraduate and graduate cohorts, as appropriate:

- Describe what the graduates of the program should know and be able to do when they leave the university, and how the unit measures or otherwise assesses actual student achievement. How do you use assessment of student learning outcomes to make curricular offerings more effective at meeting the goals set for the students?
- Specify how student outcomes are related to the mission and goals of the unit, the college (if appropriate), and the University.

- Describe how the data are collected to ensure reliability and validity. For example, are the data collected from a representative sample of students?
- How will the results of the student outcomes assessment be incorporated in strategic planning and curricular review process?
- Provide a list of all graduates from the last three to five years (both graduate and undergraduate) and indicate to the extent possible where they have been placed. How do graduates of the program view their experience, and how are their views solicited? What program modifications do these views suggest?

In addition, the program review process asks each department to indicate how its programs help support school/college and University educational programs. Specifically, the program review self-study has a focus on: (4.48)

Undergraduate Programs

- Describe the unit's role in college and University general education programs. What has been the planning process for these offerings and how are they coordinated with other general education courses, and with courses offered for students majoring in the field. How is the quality of instruction assessed?
- With respect to an undergraduate major curriculum and courses: How does the undergraduate major reflect the basic goals of the academic program? What evidence is available to compare the curriculum with that of similar programs nationally? How are courses in an undergraduate major coordinated? What evidence is there of sufficient breadth and depth of course offerings, as well as balance among the various specialties to meet student needs and interests? What specific efforts are made to incorporate new knowledge and perspectives into the curriculum? What efforts are made to involve students actively in their learning through internships, research projects, seminars, independent study, studio courses, etc.?

Graduate Programs

- How do the graduate programs reflect the basic goals of the academic program? What evidence is available concerning the quality of the unit's graduate program(s)? How is this information used to strengthen the graduate program(s)?
- What evidence is there of sufficient offerings and balance among the unit's various specialties? Is there a sufficient breadth of course offerings and a sufficient depth for specialization? How are the courses in the graduate program coordinated? What plans are underway to modify the graduate curriculum in light of available information? What evidence is there of whether the courses meet student needs? In what ways besides individual thesis or dissertation research are students involved actively in their learning? For example, through internships, practicum, and/or graduate assistantships?

See Chapter Two, Planning and Evaluation, for further discussion of University program, center and institute reviews. Programs offered within the institution are consistent with the expectations of the University Mission Statement which addresses the land and sea grant, public, research nature of the institution. (4.45, 4.48)

Indirect Assessment of Learning via Student Surveys

A variety of national student surveys are used to obtain indirect evidence of student learning: (4.45, 4.50)

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) has been administered several times, most recently in 2004. NSSE is designed to obtain information about student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college. Survey items on NSSE represent empirically confirmed "good practices" in undergraduate education. That is, they reflect behaviors by students and institutions that are associated with desired outcomes of college. NSSE data has been used to identify aspects of the undergraduate experience inside and outside the classroom that can be improved through changes in policies and practices more consistent with good practices in undergraduate education. Appendix 4.6 (*Mapping NSSE to NEASC Standards*) provides information on which of the NSSE items pertain to NEASC accreditation standards.

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) is a national longitudinal study of the U.S. higher education system. The annual CIRP Freshman Survey provides institutions with a detailed profile of their entering freshman class, as well as national normative data for students in similar types of institutions. The information contained in the

CIRP Freshman Survey helps in planning activities in areas of admissions and recruitment; institutional self-study and accreditation activities; public relations; and retention studies.

Your First College Year (YFCY) is a national survey designed specifically to assess the academic and personal development of students over the first year of college. Developed through a collaboration between the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA and the Policy Center on the First Year of College at Brevard College, YFCY enables institutions to identify features of the first year that encourage student learning, involvement, satisfaction, retention and success, thereby enhancing first-year programs and retention strategies at campuses across the country. The most recent administration of YFCY was in 2005.

Institution-wide surveys are also used on a regular basis to provide information on the experiences of students: (4.45, 4.50)

The UConn Recent Alumni Survey, administered each year by the Office of Institutional Research, asks graduates for feedback on their educational experience. This survey is one of the few outcome measures the University of Connecticut has for its educational process. While the questionnaire focuses primarily on the academic experience of graduates, it also allows them to report their current activities. Some items obtained from the survey relate to the 'Helpfulness of UConn' – the three most highly rated potential benefits of a UConn education, in terms of UConn's helpfulness in providing them, are: Learn on your own, pursue ideas and find information you need; Understand and be able to get along with different kinds of people; and, think analytically and logically. Others are 'Satisfaction Ratings' whereby respondents are asked to rate their satisfaction in the areas of general education requirements, required courses outside of their major field, and required courses in their major field – typically, for each school, 'Overall experience with courses in your major field' receives the highest average rating.

The UConn Official Student Evaluation of Faculty process is mandated by the University Senate and takes place each spring and fall semester. The Office of Institutional Research has the responsibility to carry out this evaluation in conjunction with the guidelines set by the University Senate. Items in this survey ask students for feedback on the delivery of courses, some of which address how well the instructor meets the objectives established for a course.

The Enrollment Management division of the University has regularly conducted incoming first-year, mid-career, and senior-year student satisfaction surveys. The Orientation Survey has questions focusing on the advising and course selection process during the orientation period for new students. The Questionnaire for Entry Level Students has questions on student expectations for their experience at UConn. The Student Satisfaction Survey has questions on the quality of instruction, availability of courses, and student services. All of these surveys provide the institution with information on how satisfied students are in regard to their experiences both before and after matriculation. Some of these survey items relate to the environment in which student learning is to occur and use of the survey results leads to improved student support services and learning environments.

In the spring of 2004, the institution administered a paper version of the Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (SAILS) resulting in 245 useable responses. The SAILS item bank consisted of 124 whole items which were in multiple choice format. The average student at UConn performed on all standards and on all skill sets at about the same level as the average student from all institutions combined, though at UConn the test was administered relatively early to second semester students. 4.45, 4.50

Many departments conduct regular formal and informal evaluations of their services and activities to ensure that students' needs are met. Utilization of student satisfaction surveys at points throughout students' undergraduate career and senior exit surveys provide a way in which many programs indirectly assess a variety of items pertaining to the success of students completing their degree. Direct evidence of student learning outcomes assessment in use across the campus includes capstone courses or a major culminating project as well as certification exams in those disciplines requiring such activity. Indirect indicators include job placement of graduating students, exit interviews, student satisfaction surveys, student course evaluations, internship evaluations, alumni surveys, employer surveys, focus group discussions, and certification exams. 4.44, 4.50

Please see Appendix 4.7 for a Compendium of Sources of Evidence regarding Assessment at the University of Connecticut.

Assessment as Part of Instructional Design

The Promotion, Tenure & Reappointment (PTR) guidelines (see <http://www.provost.uconn.edu/ptr/>) ask each faculty member to reflect on his/her teaching:

PTR Instructions

Briefly describe your teaching program, your goals relative to your instructional responsibilities, and any activities you have undertaken to enhance your pedagogical capabilities.

Faculty members are required to make statements pertaining to their teaching philosophy and in doing so reflect upon ways in which they promote learning among the students they teach.

Through the oversight of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Regional Campus Administration, the Institute for Teaching & Learning (ITL) is actively helping faculty and programs in designing/redesigning courses and curricula. Central to the activity is the Instructional Design & Development (IDD) unit, which helps faculty in determining course/curriculum objectives and how best to deliver course material to ensure the desired student learning is attained. (4.47)

The IDD unit also serves as a resource for course assessment and evaluation. The IDD unit helps faculty determine which kind of assessment will best evaluate student learning objectives and help develop alternative assessment tools. Traditional forms of assessment usually include quizzes, mid-terms, papers, and finals. Capstone projects, oral presentations, poster sessions and portfolios are examples of alternative methods. There are also several instances where student portfolios have been included in a designed course to assess students. This form of assessment complies more closely with a constructivist, student centered model of learning, which is the theoretical optic that informs the IDD design process.

The IDD unit also evaluates how well the design of the course has been able to address the course objectives. The IDD instructional design process is a “front-end analysis” for course design and this is complemented by a “back-end analysis” which measures the success of a course in fulfilling its course objectives. Courses developed with the help of the IDD unit undergo a three-step evaluation process consisting of an initial, a formative and a summative survey which are administered to the students. Data gathered from these surveys are used to redesign the course.

Professional programs responding to accreditation needs, such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) for Education, ABET, Inc. (formerly the Accreditation Board for Engineering & Technology) for Engineering, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International) for Business, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), etc., typically have learning goals established which reflect accreditation standards associated with the discipline and an expectation that the program is assessing student success in meeting these goals. As an example for the School of Nursing, the NLNAC Standard VII Educational Effectiveness states “There is an identified plan for systematic evaluation including assessment of student academic achievement.” Some of these accreditation agencies, such as ABET for Engineering, have expectations that the learning outcomes for the programs flow from the mission of the institution. Others have expectations that the learning outcomes are more reflective of the discipline than the mission of the institution. Institutional support may be provided in a variety of means to aid those programs undergoing accreditation reviews; e.g., the Office of Institutional Research often provides necessary data for accreditation self-studies and may assist in survey analysis. Other support may include funds being made available from the Provost’s office to aid in the self-study activity. (4.47)

Curricula & Courses Committees within each school/college, as well as that of the University Senate, review proposed course offerings. This review often includes curricular mapping thereby linking the learning objectives of new courses submitted for approval with the goals and objectives of the curricula as a whole. Self-studies done in preparation for program review often include a similar approach to seeing how individual course objectives fit within the overall program learning goals. Classroom assessment techniques are utilized by faculty in a formative manner to help ascertain how well students are learning the objectives associated with the course lecture material. (4.45, 4.46)

Students have opportunities to learn important skills in a manner using regular constructive feedback to help them improve their achievement in a variety of ways. For example, writing intensive courses (W-courses) are now required within each major and these courses have an expectation of reviews of draft versions of documents leading to a finished report. Similarly, capstone experiences in many professional programs involve formative review of intermediate work leading to the final project report. Many of these professional programs have course work specifically sequenced so as to culminate in a significant senior year learning experience. Consistent with its Mission, the institution’s research-based faculty bring state-of-the-art material into the classroom so as to engage students with their studies. (4.49)

In summary, there is a variety of assessment activity underway – though most of this is providing indirect evidence of student learning outcome achievement.

Appraisal

There is a wide variation in how strongly departments embrace the philosophy of assessment. Student learning outcomes assessment is established in some programs where accrediting bodies have mandated such activity, but is not widespread across the institution. Knowledge of student learning outcomes and assessment varies across the schools/colleges and across departments within each school/college. Professional degree programs are more in tune with assessing the effectiveness of their graduates, but often this is done via episodic surveys of alumni or employers rather than obtaining any direct evidence of whether learning outcomes have been achieved by the graduates of a program. Most departments have learning objectives, but only a few have them formalized.

While there is a renewed administrative commitment and considerable effort underway leading toward systematic assessment, formal ongoing assessment has yet to be embraced by the entire institution. Nevertheless, there have been efforts made by programs to judge how well their students are doing in a variety of areas, some of which pertain to student learning. An inventory of existing practice among the schools/colleges during the 2005-06 academic year revealed that many programs have used both direct and indirect approaches to help shed light on the success of their programs. Results of the inventory show that assessment efforts vary greatly across all the academic disciplines; some efforts are mature, while others are in development. Surveys, focus groups, performance on certification exams, analysis of performance in capstone experiences, alumni feedback, student course evaluations, etc., have been used to help schools/colleges assess the effectiveness of their programs. As indicated in the inventory of existing assessment practice, there are many different approaches utilized by the academic programs to help them understand the experiences and learning outcomes of their students. Use of this assessment information has led to curricular review, course changes, teaching changes, etc., as one would expect from such efforts.

Use of the information gained by analyzing the results of these efforts has varied. Some programs have focused on teaching effectiveness, while others have made curricular changes in response to what was discovered. Discontinuation of majors, new course creation, curriculum restructuring, etc., have occurred as a consequence of programs doing assessment activities. While not all programs are fully involved, the inventory does show that a fair amount of assessment has occurred despite doing so in an episodic, non-formalized manner. Unfortunately, much of the assessment activity has been indirect in nature and not administered in a systematic fashion.

The institution realizes the benefits of student learning outcomes assessment. Deans are enthusiastic about the movement toward a more formal non-episodic approach toward student learning outcomes assessment. Deans and Department Heads have been supportive about the creation of Assessment Liaisons within each program. A greater use of direct methods of assessing student learning needs to happen; i.e., movement toward means of authentic assessment rather than a dominant reliance on student satisfaction surveys needs to occur.

While there has been some existing work on assessment within the schools/colleges, at the institution level there has been primarily a reliance on student satisfaction information to help in planning activities. Institution-wide surveys, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), do have items which pertain to several of the NEASC standards. Use of these surveys, however, tends to be done at the "support unit" level, such as within the Undergraduate Education & Instruction units such as the Institute for Student Success, the First Year Programs, or the Honors Programs office.

The institution is committed to continual program improvement and has started to embrace student learning outcomes assessment as a vital means to ensure quality in the delivery of its educational programs. Senior administrative personnel have been tasked with moving forward with student learning outcomes assessment and work is underway to shift the culture from the "instructional paradigm" to that of a "learning paradigm" in which assessment forms a key component. Assessment Liaisons have been identified in undergraduate programs to lead in the development of assessment plans. These Assessment Liaisons are working on program assessment plans, some by modifying existing assessment efforts tied to accreditation needs and others starting from ground zero where assessment of student learning outcomes had been missing or too sporadic.

The Provost and other senior administrators are strongly in favor of current efforts to raise the culture of assessment within the institution. Funding to support assessment activities has allowed work to be done to help educate the Assessment Liaisons who may be new to the topic of student learning outcomes assessment. Funds have been spent to send faculty and administrators to national assessment conferences; particularly some of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) events associated with general education assessment, the former American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) Assessment Forum, the Indiana University/Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) Assessment Institute, and the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) Annual Forum. Similarly, attendance at local conferences/workshops, such as the New England Educational Assessment Network (NEEAN) events and NEASC events pertaining to assessment, has been occurring over the past few years and is expected to continue.

During the 2005-06 academic year, two major presentations dealing with assessment were made on campus by national leaders. The Division of Student Affairs and the Neag School of Education Master's Program in Higher Education and Student Affairs sponsored "Why Assessment is Important: A Conversation with Dr. M. Lee Upcraft" which helped introduce faculty and student affairs personnel to the importance of assessment. Additionally, as part of "General Education Month" in September of 2005, Andrea Leskes, Vice President for Education and Quality Initiatives with the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), made a presentation titled "General Education: Shifting the Paradigm from Teaching to Learning." Andrea Leskes also met with groups on campus to discuss ways to assess student learning, with an emphasis on assessing general education outcomes. George Kuh, Director of the Center for Postsecondary Research, which is home to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), met with faculty and staff at UConn and made a presentation at a July 2006 conference jointly sponsored by the First Year Programs and Early College Experience offices.

Subcommittees associated with the General Education Oversight Committee have embarked on determining the learning outcomes associated with each of the General Education content areas and competencies. These subcommittees will further work on establishing suitable assessment strategies to be used to determine the success of students in meeting these learning outcomes and the success of the General Education program. An inquiry-based approach to looking at the effectiveness of the General Education curriculum is anticipated from these efforts.

The Mission Statement of the institution was recently revised and programs have yet to reaffirm how their learning objectives/outcomes align with this revision.

Course renumbering, facilitated by the implementation of the PeopleSoft Student Administration system, has provided the opportunity for subject areas to reexamine their course offerings, so as to renumber courses in a logical fashion such that sequencing of subject matter, as determined by the learning objectives of each course, may be made more explicit to students progressing through a major.

Currently, the fiscal state of the University has left little room to pursue new initiatives. Many programs related to the success of students in meeting expected learning outcomes are eager to continue improving delivery of services, but have been forced to deal with realities of limited resources. Nevertheless, some notable activities are underway. A movement to WebCT VISTA provides an opportunity for enhanced student contact and monitoring of student usage of course material; i.e., engagement with learning. A new open-source ePortfolio system is evolving and its use for student learning outcomes assessment is under consideration in some areas.

More importantly, however, funding for the creation of an assessment web site to provide training material for faculty and staff was committed resulting in a comprehensive assessment website (<http://assessment.uconn.edu>) which has been used to help educate those new to student learning outcomes assessment. Significant funding has also been set aside to work on an Assessment Database Repository based on the Online Assessment Tracking System (OATS) developed by Georgia Tech University for program assessment plans. This new system will have dedicated hardware servers supporting a ColdFusion/Oracle-based web application allowing programs to track assessment activities as well as share assessment plans, methods, tools, etc., with other programs. It is hoped that this system is in place and in use at the time of the NEASC visit.

Projection

As stated earlier, the short-term goals established by the Provost include the following:

- by the end of academic year 2006-2007, all departments will have developed means of measuring the learning outcomes of their undergraduate majors, as well as complete assessment plans
- in the academic year 2007-2008, actual assessment, data collection, and reporting will take place
- for the next several years, assessment efforts will focus on undergraduate education; after that, we will consider how best we should expand our efforts into graduate education and elsewhere

The infrastructure recently set in place to move the institution forward in the area of student learning outcomes assessment will enable the University to achieve these goals as a means to institutionalize ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its overall plan for institutional effectiveness.

The institution will continue to follow the mission of an excellent public land and sea grant research university. Strategic planning recently undertaken by the schools/colleges and divisions within the University may yield new directions, but these will continue to follow the overall mission/goals established for the University. Assessment will fit

into the future path of the University as a key component of the decision making process for continual improvement of the academic programs offered in support of the institution's mission.

The institution can do more to strengthen its assessment activities, which are already well underway. Assessment Liaisons have been created in each program and they are working with senior level administrators to create assessment plans. An assessment database repository for assessment plan information is being implemented. Through a better sharing of data obtained via the web-based repository, assessment activities will be enhanced.

The institution is well aware of the need for student learning outcomes assessment to move from an episodic activity undertaken in some programs to that of an ongoing way of doing business in all degree programs. Steps have been taken to begin to create such a culture within the institution.

It is anticipated that the University will increase its commitment to assessment resource allocation as more and more assessment-related activities evolve as part of the culture shift toward a "learning paradigm" institution. For assessment to become an ongoing way of doing business, the institution will need to ensure that the resources allocated to current efforts increase at the pace necessary to ensure sound assessment practices and appropriate administrative coordination and oversight.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The University of Connecticut and its faculty are dedicated to the quality, integrity and effectiveness of all academic programs. A strong shared governance model that empowers faculty to maintain academic control has assisted the University in ensuring that academic program content and pedagogy is of the highest caliber. The University is constantly and consistently evaluating its endeavors using a variety of assessment mechanisms and is committed to continuous improvement in the areas of student learning outcomes and programmatic offerings.