

October 2001

## Minutes October 29, 2001

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MINUTES OF AN ADJOURNED MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

1. The regular meeting of October 15, which adjourned to meet on October 29, reconvened at 4:06 p.m. in Room 7, Bishop Center, with Mr. Palmer, Moderator, presiding.

He stated that the agenda of the meeting would be limited to consideration of the Proposal for General Education Requirements dated May 3, 2001 and any amendments pertaining thereto. The proposal will be considered one section at a time.

2. Mr. English introduced the May 3, 2001 Proposal for General Education Requirements and **moved** approval of Part One Competencies. (See Attachment #8)

Discussion ensued with the moderator balancing pro and con comments.

Mr. James Green was granted the privilege of addressing the Senate. He distributed and discussed a report entitled "OIR Alumni Survey and 'W' Courses", dated August 3, 2001. (See Attachment #9)

Ms. Hiskes **moved** to amend the motion according to the document entitled CLAS W AND Q AMENDMENT. (See Attachment #10)

The effect of the amendment would be to remove the requirement that the "W" or "Q" designation be attached to the proposed "content area" GER courses and that the W and Q requirements of the current GER be retained.

Discussion continued.

At 5:30 p.m. Ms. Adams replaced Mr. Palmer as moderator.

Mr. Zirakzadeh **moved** to adjourn and to continue the discussion of the GER Proposal at a meeting to be held on November 26, 2001 at 4:00 p.m.

The motion to adjourn was approved.

3. The meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David Jordan, Secretary



The following members and alternates were absent from the October 29, 2001 meeting:

Alissi, Albert	Gramling, Lawrence	Paul, Jeremy
Allenby, Edward	Halvorson, Peter	Reis, Sally
Anderson, Thomas	Hart, Ian	Saternow, Timothy
Armstrong, Lawrence	Hightower, Lawrence	Schwab, Richard
Aronson, Lorraine	Hussein, Mohamed	Sehulster, Jerome
Austin, Philip	Kelly, Judith	Smith, Winthrop
Bowman, Larry	Kendall, Debra	Spiggle, Susan
Bravo-Ureta, Boris	Kobulnicky, Paul	Triponey, Vicky
Brown, Scott	Maresh, Carl	Usher, Kathleen
Cromley, Ellen	Miniutti, Peter	Wang, Tixiang
Dreyfuss, Dale		Wisensale, Steven



## ATTACHMENT #8

- **Part One Competencies:**

The University of Connecticut places a high value on the ability of its undergraduates to demonstrate competency in five fundamental areas -- computer technology, writing, quantitative skills, second language proficiency and information literacy. The development of these competencies rests on establishing clear expectations for students both at entrance and upon graduation, and on constructing a framework so that our students can reach these competencies.

With the exception of information literacy, the structure of each competency involves two parts -- one mandating the establishment of an entry-level expectation and the second mandating the establishment of a graduation expectation. The entry-level expectations apply to all incoming students. The writing and quantitative expectations are consistent with our current entrance requirements. The expectation concerning second language proficiency is consistent with the current recommendation that students complete three years of a single language in high school. The character of the baseline expectations in computer technology remains to be fully fleshed out, but it is clear that the majority of our students enter the university with skills in this area. Lacking a demonstration of the requisite entry-level competency, students will have the opportunity to bring their skills to the appropriate level. The exit-level expectations for all five competencies, on the other hand, will vary with each major.

It is unreasonable to place the institutional responsibility for developing these competencies solely on individual courses. Therefore, a plan has been developed to enrich the instructional environment through the development of a Learning Center, a place where students can come for asynchronous learning supported by tutors, advisors, teaching assistants, peer preceptors and faculty as well as through the use of technology. Faculty members should begin undergraduate classes with a summary of the competencies and proficiencies that a student will need to bring to the subject matter. Students can avail themselves of the services within the Learning Center to bring their skill levels up to faculty expectations.

#### Skill Codes

The C and C committee has adopted the view that skill designations are inappropriate drivers of enrollment with the result that most students take "W" or "Q" courses for no other reason than the skill designation. At the same time, however we find the Task Force recommendation for eliminating all skill codes and requiring all GER courses to require a major writing component to be unduly burdensome. In addition, we view quantitative reasoning skills to be as important as written communication skills. We are therefore propose that both writing and quantitative skills be imbedded into the various courses offered within the content areas of The GER.

Courses approved for the content areas of the GER will have a significant writing requirement OR a component that deals with quantitative reasoning. Each GER course will be designated as either a "W" or a "Q" course. Each student will be required to take at least two courses designated as "W" and two courses that are designated as "Q". The remaining two courses may be taken at the student's discretion. (Thus, a given student might take three "W's" and three "Q's", or four of one designation and two of the other.) This allows for flexibility relative to the individual interests of the students.

Computer Technology

a. Entry Expectations. Baseline expectations will be established for entering students in regard to the use of computers. While we would expect that many students will enter with skills at or above the baseline expectations, the university will have to be prepared to address the needs of those who do not. These needs may be met in a variety of ways (for example, during the First Year Experience). The General Education Oversight Committee, (GEOC) will establish a sub-committee to determine in more precise terms exactly what these expectations will be.

b. Exit Expectations. Each major will establish expectations about the information technology competencies of its graduates and will build the development of these into the major curriculum. These departmental requirements must be approved at the college or school level, in the same way that new upper-division courses are approved.

Writing

## a. Entry Proficiency. Freshman English

## 1. Placement options for first year students at all University of Connecticut campuses:

AP Scores: Students who receive a 4 or 5 on the English Composition Advanced Placement Exam or the Literature Advanced Placement Exam receive 4 credits for Freshman English, thereby fulfilling the requirement.

Honors: Honors Students may choose English 250, a three-credit seminar taught by full-time faculty, to fulfill the Freshman English requirement.

SAT Placement Scores: Students with a Verbal SAT (VSAT) score of 430 and below are automatically placed in English 104. There is no pre-class appeal. Student writing is evaluated after the first week of the term. In rare cases it is possible, based on that writing and with the approval of the Director of Freshman English, for a student to be moved into an English 110 or 111 section.

Students with VSAT scores of 440-540 have the option to enroll in either English 104 or English 110 or 111. Student writing is evaluated after the first week of the semester and all inconsistencies brought to the attention of the Director of Freshman English. At this point a student may be placed in a course more appropriate to his or her writing. All students who remain in English 104 must pass that course in order to move on to English 110 or 111.

Students with VSAT Scores above 540 may enroll in either English 110 or 111.

## 2. Connecticut Community College Transfer Students:

There is an articulation agreement with each community college that prescribes which two, three-credit community college courses fulfill UConn's Freshman English requirement. (Four of these six credits count toward the four credit Freshman English requirement; the other two credits come in as elective.)

### 3. Transfer students from other Connecticut colleges and from out-of-state:

These students will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Director of Freshman English.

#### b. Writing in General Education:

The C and C Committee has considered very carefully two fundamentally different approaches regarding writing: first, the proposal for a writing requirement to be imbedded in the general education curriculum as suggested by the Task Force Report; and second, the maintenance of separate "W" requirements as proposed by CLAS.

We agree with the Task Force Report that skill codes are inappropriate drivers for enrollments. It has been demonstrated many times that there have never been sufficient "W" seats available to UCONN students. In addition, the current "W" designation often drives students into courses in which they have no interest in the content. By most accounts it is a system that is broken and not likely to improve.

We are unconvinced, however, that a "Writing Across the Curriculum" model as proposed by the Task Force is workable, or even appropriate in all areas of study. Therefore, we propose an alternative approach to "Writing Across the Curriculum" which includes a "W" component.

In each 3-credit general education course designated as a "W" course there will be a minimum of 12 pages of writing. While instruction in writing need not be an intrinsic element of such courses, instructors will make clear their expectations that student writing meet a standard of performance based on the type of writing done in that field. In an effort to improve the students' writing and critical thinking skills, students will be expected to make use of feedback from their instructors, either through the revising and resubmitting of papers or through the completion of a number of short writing assignments (such as lab reports). In most cases the writing will be in English; when appropriate, some percentage of this writing may be completed in another language.

Because there will in all probability continue to be General Education courses with large enrollments, such writing instruction will demand administrative backing in order to provide the necessary instructional support. In such cases, an appropriate number of teaching assistants or graders must be supplied on all University campuses for meaningful evaluation of student writing to take place. The faculty member in charge of each course will be expected to inform the assistants of the writing expectations for that course and to monitor the grading of student assignments.

The Curricula and Courses Committee has serious concerns regarding implementation of this portion of the proposal, particularly with respect to the financial considerations implied in the assignment of graduate assistants.

#### c. Upper-division Writing and Exit Expectations:

Each school, college, and major will mandate writing for its upper-division students. This requirement can be met in a number of ways --- for example, a discipline-based course with an intensive writing component, a senior research project or capstone experience, or the development of a writing portfolio based on writing assignments completed across the major courses. In all cases the expectation is that students will graduate with the writing and critical thinking skills appropriate to their field.



d. University Writing Center

Any comprehensive restructuring of UConn's undergraduate writing requirements must include the creation of a University Writing Center. A tenured faculty member whose specialty is writing instruction will be appointed by the English Department to run this Center, which will be included within The Learning Center. The Writing Center will provide tutorial support for undergraduate and graduate students in every school and college. The Director of the UWC will recruit and train graduate and undergraduate tutors from across the disciplines, and, working with the Linguistics Department, will develop an ESL Center to provide writing support for students and faculty members experiencing difficulties with writing English as a second language. All instructors will be able to refer undergraduate and graduate students with serious writing problems to the University Writing Center.

Quantitative Skills

a. Entry Expectations.

The present admission requirement for quantitative skills is the satisfactory completion of second-year high school algebra and first year geometry. Students are strongly encouraged, however, to take four years of mathematics in high school. This proposal does not modify current admission requirements. All entering students who have not demonstrated entry-level proficiency in mathematics with a math SAT score of 650 or higher, or who have not earned university credits in mathematics through a UCONN COOP course, or an appropriate score on the mathematics AP exam, will be required to take a quantitative placement test. Students who do not attain a passing grade on the quantitative placement test will be required to enroll in Mathematics 101 to satisfy entry level expectations in mathematics proficiency.

b. Quantitative skills in General Education.

In each 3-4 credit general education course designated as a "Q" course there will be an expectation of some major component of quantitative reasoning. This is not to be confused with a mathematics requirement, strictly speaking. In an effort to improve the students' quantitative thinking skills, the courses will incorporate issues such as problem solving strategies, externalization using pictures, graphs and charts, probability, statistical analysis, mathematical modeling, deductive reasoning, hypothesis testing, etc. A sub-committee of Faculty appointed by the GEOC will be asked to set specific criteria for courses with a "Q" designation.

c. Exit Proficiency.

All students graduating from the University of Connecticut are expected to demonstrate proficiency in quantitative reasoning. Majors in particular schools and colleges may require proficiency at a more advanced level.

d. University Learning Center.

The University will provide resources for the support of tutors, advisors and faculty well-versed in quantitative skills as part of a University Learning Center.

## Second Language

### a. Entry Expectations.

The present admission requirement for second language skills is two years of study in a second language in high school or the equivalent. Students are strongly encouraged, however, to take three or more years of the same second language by the time they complete high school. This proposal does not modify current admission requirements.

### b. Exit Proficiency.

By graduation from the University, students must have achieved language proficiency in speaking, listening, reading and writing consistent with 3 years of second language study in high school. This may be demonstrated in one of the following ways:

1. an AP score of 3 or higher or a score of 4 or higher on the BYU Computer Adaptive Placement Examination -- no additional course work is required to meet the university requirement, although some degree programs may specify more advanced work;
2. completion of the second semester of elementary language study, which may be taken for credit.
3. a minimum of one semester study abroad in a language program approved by the appropriate language department as the equivalent of second-semester skill level.

American students who are native speakers of languages other than English (including American Sign Language) will be accommodated by the appropriate department. International students who are native speakers of languages other than English may fulfill the second language requirement through proficiency in English.

Many majors expect students to attain a higher level of second language proficiency than the minimum for graduation. Each school or college will determine the level of proficiency; the demonstration of proficiency should not be tied exclusively to seat-time.

All students are strongly encouraged to integrate their second language with their major or other studies, and departments are strongly encouraged to develop such opportunities for their students. Mechanisms for doing so will be developed and overseen by the student's major department in collaboration with Modern and Classical Languages. Students may link their second language to their major, to elective courses, or to co-curricular interests. Such mechanisms may include but are not limited to the following: Linkage Through Language courses, research involving use of the second language, internships and other work experience, travel, immersion courses, or study abroad.

All students who meet a level of language proficiency beyond the minimum needed for graduation will have that level noted on their transcript. In addition, students who have successfully integrated language with other elements of their education will have this noted on their transcript.

Because a demonstration of second language proficiency is a change from the current situation, a transition period is necessary. For the next two years, students will be required either to take the AP test before entrance or to take the BYU test at entrance, with the goal of gathering data on their proficiency. This data will measure the impact of the proposed change and will also allow the University to pass information about the results of language instruction to the high schools. Before the new requirements are permanently adopted, an assessment of their impact will be made and the units delivering language instruction will certify that they can handle the outcome of the change.

The University acknowledges that second semester proficiency in a language is not optimal. Our long-term goal is to produce graduates who can use a second language to accomplish career or personal goals. This will require, however, that there be more attention to second language study in elementary and secondary schools. Thus, we encourage the University to work with the appropriate organizations to improve K-12 second language instruction. When this collaboration improves the language abilities of incoming students, third or fourth semester proficiency should become the standard.

#### Information Literacy:

Information literacy implies a general understanding of and competence in three integrally related processes:

Information generation -- an understanding of how Information is created, disseminated and organized;

Information access -- an understanding of knowledge communication processes and a facility with the tools required to tap into these knowledge communication processes;

Information evaluation and integration -- an ability to evaluate, synthesize and incorporate information into written, oral and media presentations.

#### Exit Expectations.

Our graduates will be competent in information generation, information access, and information evaluation and integration. The University Libraries will create a series of interactive learning modules that will equip students with the information competencies that they need to succeed at the University of Connecticut. These modules will be integrated into the orientation program, the First Year Experience program and/or the first year composition courses. They will also be available for asynchronous learning at any time in the Library or The Learning Center, and at the regional campuses.

Each major program will consider the information literacy competencies required of its graduates and build those expectations into the upper level research and writing curricula of the major. The subject area specialist at the University Library will provide support.

## ATTACHMENT #9

## Memorandum

Date: 8/3/01  
 To: Rob Henning, Head, CLAS C&CC  
 From: Jim Green  
 RE: OIR Alumni Survey and 'W' courses

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You asked if I would look over the OIR Alumni Survey data, specifically in regard to students' perceptions of the 'W' requirement. As background, we looked together at a recent article in the Advance, (May 8, 2001) in which it was asserted that "the 'W' system has proven to be unsatisfactory," based on an analyses of the last 3 years of alumni survey data. Because I teach research methodology and statistics at both the graduate and undergraduate level, I feel comfortable providing a summary of these data.

Every Fall, the OIR sends a survey out to the previous year's graduates; "non-respondents" are sent a follow-up letter two months later. According to OIR data, the response rate using this procedure varies between 40% and 45% every year (see <http://vm.uconn.edu/~wwwoir/Alum99.doc>). This kind of response rate is pretty much expected for survey research. From the above web site, we can estimate that the sample size for the 1999 data was approximately 1,183. One would expect the sample size to be quite similar for the 1998 and 2000 data. I was able to examine summary data from the 1998, 1999, and 2000 surveys.

As part of the Alumni Survey, UConn graduates are asked to rate 21 different benefits of a college education (see attached page reprinting a portion of the survey). One of these 21 benefits was "write clearly and effectively." This item was rated on two different scales:

- (1) The importance to you of these skills as a new graduate,
- (2) The extent to which UConn enhanced your abilities in these areas.

Both scales used a numerical response scale ranging from 1 to 7.

The only data available were the average rating of importance and helpfulness for the 21 items, including the "writing item." What OIR reports for 1998-2000 is the following:

	Writing Item			All 21 Items		
	1998	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000
Importance (Average)	6.41	6.20	6.19	5.90	5.80	5.80
Helpfulness (Average)	5.05	5.19	5.11	4.77	4.84	4.84
Importance (Rank out of 21)	1	7	7			
Helpfulness (Rank out of 21)	4	3	4			

To put the responses to the "writing" item in the context of all of the other individual items, I am attaching bar charts of the 1998, 1999, and 2000 survey results for the "helpfulness" scale. As you can see, writing has consistently been rated as a skill that recent graduates believe UConn was most helpful in enhancing, ranking 4<sup>th</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> in helpfulness out of the 21 benefits listed.

The Advance article correctly noted that writing was perceived to be important in these survey data, ranking 1<sup>st</sup> in importance in 1998, and 7<sup>th</sup> in importance in 1999, and 2000. The article did not, however, provide the ranking of writing on the helpfulness scale, which, as just noted, is consistently very high.

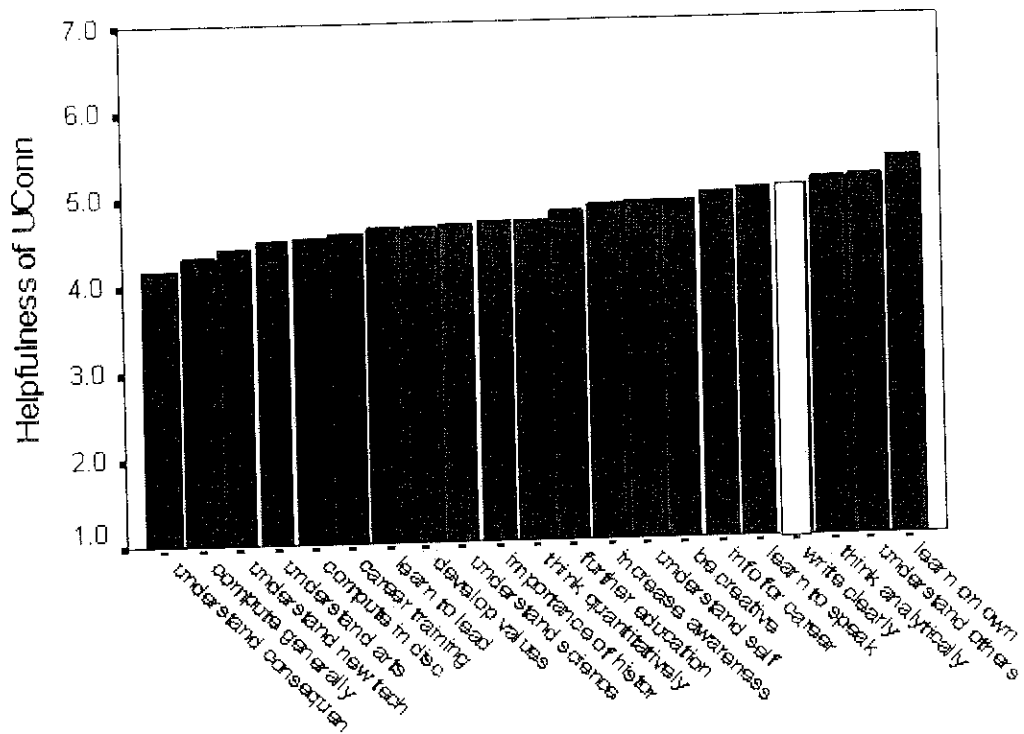
As you pointed out, the Advance article also implies that these data are longitudinal or cohort data, with the same students being tracked from entering Freshman year to post-graduation. Clearly, this is not the case.

Note also that for all 21 items, the "helpfulness" scores average about 1 point lower than the "importance" scores. These differences are hard to interpret and could be due to any number of factors. Of most interest is the fact that the question about "importance" specifically asked about importance "as a new graduate." Although the question is somewhat ambiguous, my guess would be that the respondents (all of them new college graduates) interpreted the item to mean "now that you have graduated from college, how important do you find the following benefits of a college education." Clearly, this is not the kind of question that should be directly compared with the question of the extent to which UConn enhanced these skills, that is, by subtracting one score from another. No doubt, this is why the OIR ranked the items in importance, which is one way of removing the average difference in scale values.

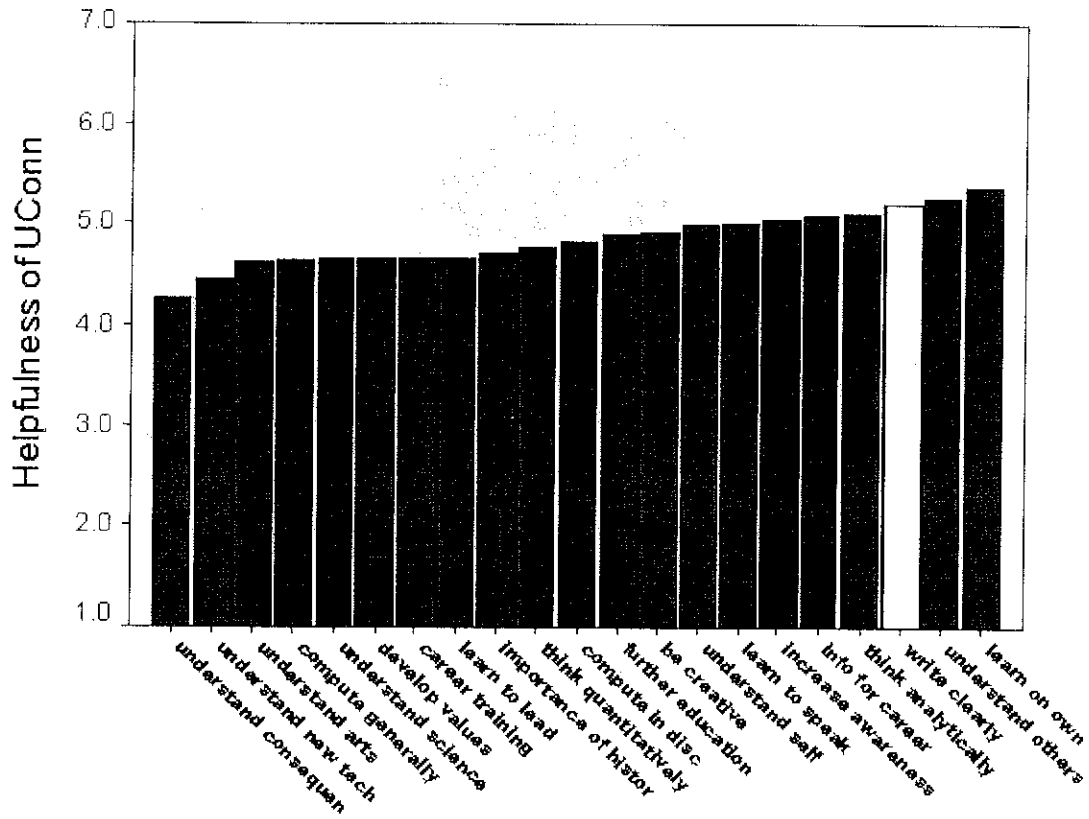
As you note, the February 2001 report of the Board of Governors for Higher Education (available at <http://www.ctdhe.org/dherpts/pdfs/Accountability2001.pdf>, page UConn 4) stated that the survey response to the writing item "has been very positive." I would basically concur with this summary. However, I would also point out that a program evaluation should never be based on the response to a single item in a retrospective survey. To my knowledge, a methodologically sound evaluation of the effectiveness of the "W" courses (or of any of UConn's General Education requirements) has not yet been done.

JG

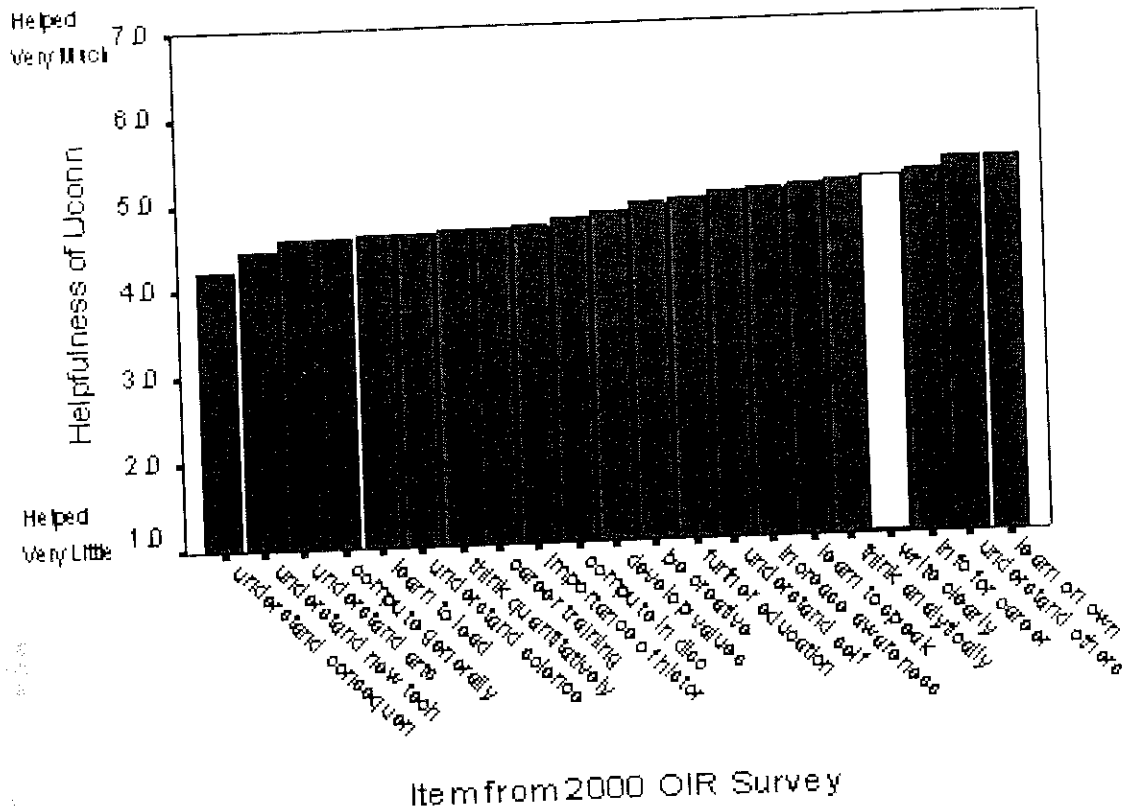
Attachments



Item from 1998 Annual Survey



Item from 1999 Annual Survey





**ATTACHMENT #10**

**Presented Oct. 29, 2001 to the University Senate.  
Rationale for the CLAS amendment on W and Q skill courses.**

**Members of the CLAS C&C committee agree that the current system of W and Q skill courses has not lived up to its initial, laudable goals, and needs improvement. We support that part of the current Senate C&C committee proposal which recommends an oversight committee, believing that such a committee should address important issues concerning quality, efficacy, and resources.**

**The proposed CLAS amendment is motivated by the belief that the arguments against the current system of W and Q requirements are flawed. For example, the May 8, 2001 Advance claimed that post-graduation surveys show that students believe the W courses to be ineffective. This interpretation of the data is simply false.**

**Ghettoization of W courses within CLAS is presented as another argument against the current system. Ghettoization is indeed undesirable, but by itself does not qualify as a good argument against the current system. Ghettoization is an argument for the need - as recognized by the Senate C&C committee itself - for all the schools and colleges to do their part in developing writing skills.**

**The CLAS amendment is also motivated by the belief that linking the goals of W and Q courses to required general education courses creates unrealistic and unfair expectations and goals for the instructors and students, which as a consequence does everyone a disservice.**