

Academic Matters

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ACADEMIC AFFAIRS:

Margaret Cleek,
Provost/Vice Chancellor
(608) 263-1794

Gregory P. Lampe
Associate Vice Chancellor
(608) 263-7217

Rex Hieser
Coordinator
Professional Development
(608) 262-7558

Patricia McGregor
Registrar
(608) 262-9652

Nora McGuire
Chief Student Affairs
Officer
(608) 263-0476

Gregg Nettesheim
Senior Information
Manager
(608) 263-5991

Diane Pillard
Director
Continuing Education &
Extended Services
(608) 263-5393

Barbara Stinson
Director
Distance Education
(608) 265-0659

Joey Whitcomb
Assistant Registrar
(608) 262-9652

FROM THE VICE CHANCELLOR:

The mission of the Office of Academic Affairs is to provide leadership and service to faculty, staff, and students in their roles as members of the UW Colleges' community.

The Office promotes and ensures academic quality in the UW Colleges and encourages the efficient use of resources to achieve that end. It does so through a variety of programs, ongoing activities, and special projects designed to achieve excellence in instruction, curriculum, and the academic environment. These initiatives aim to engage students in their pursuit of learning. The Office strives to be student-centered in all its work, while at the same time being responsive to the needs of faculty, instructional academic staff, staff, and administrators.

A draft mission for Academic Affairs was shared with departments and campuses last fall as Greg Lampe and I began our first year in Academic Affairs without the interim titles in front of our names. The mission above is the result of the good thinking of many colleagues. It follows from our institutional mission and seeks to clarify the role of the UW Colleges Office of Academic Affairs in carrying out the institutional mission.

There are many important concepts in the statement above. One that has been a key for us is that our programs, activities, and initiatives are aimed at student engagement. While Academic Affairs had many important activities underway when Greg and I officially took our positions, we wanted to clarify the relationship among these activities and set a course for further initiatives. The institutional mission, the yearly institutional priorities, and the Academic Affairs mission, helped us to do that. The desire of all our colleagues in the UW Colleges to facilitate student success, the institutional priority to

increase our rates of retention, the research literature on student success and retention, all led us to the theme of student engagement.

In his article in this newsletter, Greg reviews the specific activities in which we have engaged with our campus and department colleagues to promote student engagement, and previews the upcoming Colleges-wide spring conference. We have also improved our databases and data reports so that we can better track student retention and evaluate whether these institutional initiatives are making a difference. We have collected data this semester from our students regarding their perceptions of their engagement. We have continued to assess student learning in the classroom and across the associate degree program (see Carolyn Polodna's article on assessment).

We know, however, that the real work of the institution occurs on the campuses and in the classrooms. None of these initiatives would have a positive result without your hard work. The members of the Office of Academic Affairs would like to thank you for those efforts in the past academic year. We look forward to 2002-2003.

Student Engagement and the First-Year of College

By Greg Lampe

Over the last two years, the Office of Academic Affairs has sought to promote student engagement efforts across the institution by providing a number of conferences and programs to support that end. For instance, Dr. James Anderson, University of North Carolina, addressed members of the Colleges at the 2000 Fall Convocation and returned to our institution in June 2001 to discuss building communities for diverse learners; John N. Gardner, Executive Director, Policy Center on the First Year of College, spoke to us at the 2001 Fall Convocation about student engagement and the freshman year experience; in fall 2001, the Office of Academic Affairs developed an internal grants program, Grants to Increase Student Engagement (GISE), to provide the support needed to move beyond discussions and proceed to actual implementation of new or enhanced first year college experience programs, learning communities, and/or programming for diverse student populations on the campuses; and during the fall 2001-spring 2002 semesters, two Colleges-wide compressed video Town Meetings featured five of our campuses and their best practices for engaging students. This spring, the Colleges participated in the study for a new national survey focusing on teaching, learning, and retention in two-year institutions. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) contains items examining student engagement and retention issues. This survey will assist us in identifying where we are and what further action may be helpful in our continuing work to support and strengthen teaching, learning, and student engagement. Perhaps most important, the results should help to inform our decisions about the nature and scope of a first-year program. Given these activities, we are now ready to move toward implementation of a comprehensive Colleges-wide first-year experience program.

Currently, the Office of Academic Affairs is hard at work planning the June 6 University of Wisconsin Colleges Spring Conference: Initiating a First Year College Experience at the UW Colleges. The conference will take place at the UW-Fox Valley campus and will focus on the planning and implementation of a comprehensive Colleges-wide first year program. The June conference will be funded by an UW System Conference Development Grant and funds remaining from the conference grant that brought Dr. James Anderson to the Colleges.

The one-day meeting will present an important opportunity for representatives from across the institution to engage in dialogue about the nature and scope of a Colleges-wide first year experience. Faculty, instructional academic staff, student services personnel, librarians, students and administrators will have the opportunity to share their perspectives on a first-year program. John Gardner, Executive Director of the Policy Center on the First Year of College, will be the main facilitator for the conference. Over the past nine months, John has been working with the Office of Academic Affairs to plan a Colleges-wide first-year program and he will assist the Office of Academic Affairs Advisory Council in planning the conference. At the center of the planning process will be the responses to the two questions the Office of Academic Affairs sent out to the campuses: What do we want first year students to learn? What strategies or programs would help us achieve the goals identified above? The campus responses will provide the foundation upon which the approach to the conference will be based. More information about the conference will be coming soon. If you have any questions, please contact Greg Lampe, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

Homing In On Assessment **By Carolyn Polodna**

They say you can't go home again, yet March found me once again in Dallas. Once again at an assessment conference. The conference I attended umpteen years ago, heavily attended by teachers in the Dallas Independent School District, had carried a making-lemons-into-lemonade message. Forced to "do assessment," teachers were finding ways to make assessment their own, to do assessment their way to meet their needs. I was surprised by the pressure they faced; inspired by their response. But I faced no such pressure. For me, assessment was a tool revolutionizing my classroom about which I traveled a thousand miles to know more.

Times change. The working conference I attended hosted over 300 university educators now facing their assessment mandate and responding to the challenge. For me, the conference title, General Education and Assessment of Student Learning, said it all. The two are Siamese twins: growing and developing together, inseparable. Each is incomplete without the other. In my own discipline, I discovered that I could not effectively teach the accounting process in isolation. Since accounting is only a process for recording and reporting financial events, it is meaningless without an understanding of those underlying financial events. In the same way, conducting assessment for assessment's sake is meaningless. Assessment is a process for recording and reporting student learning, but we must first be clear about what we want students to learn.

This conviction has been growing on me steadily. In 1996, the UW Colleges General Education Task Force reviewed the general education curriculum and the associate degree and developed

an assessment plan. The plan was to be an integral part of the curriculum and degree. Twelve types of institution-wide proficiencies were developed. These types were not, however, immediately imbedded within the associate degree designations. Instead, they have been progressively associated with individual courses. The difficulty this creates is that while we are assured every student receiving an associate degree has taken all the necessary courses, we are not assured every student has attained proficiency in all the proficiency types. As an example, take self-assessment. Suppose PSY 201, Introduction to Psychology, reports self-assessment as one of the proficiencies taught in the course, conducts assessment, and reports the results. PSY 201 is only one course a student might take in meeting the 9-credit social science requirement. What happens if a particular student doesn't take PSY 201? Is self-assessment taught in other social science courses? In other associate degree courses? Has the student had the opportunity to learn and be assessed on self-assessment?

The Alverno model answers this question by maintaining a portfolio of student assessment results by individual student. This approach has been explored, particularly as technology emerges to support creation of electronic portfolios. But another model is possible. One that imbeds the proficiencies into the associate degree in such a way that no matter what courses are taken by the individual student, each student is assessed on each proficiency. Developing this model is not as difficult as it might appear. In what associate degree designations do we teach quantitative skills, for example? Or socially responsible thought? Or using resources? The answer to these questions is now at our fingertips, in the course transfer guides recently created by all departments for all courses. We can mine that data as a starting point. In doing so, we may identify some proficiencies as taught outside of the classroom. Perhaps self-assessment is learned as a student progresses through advising, registration, and transfer. Perhaps this proficiency should be assessed by student services. One difficulty of this model lies in how to assess a proficiency uniformly within a degree designation or across disciplines or activities. The development of institutional rubrics is one solution with which the department assessment coordinators have and will continue to explore.

I share with you the consolation that if we feel tenuous, if we feel confused or overwhelmed, if we feel our progress is slow, we are not alone. University educators from across the country, grappling with both what general education is and how to assess it, expressed such familiar feelings as: "too big, too complex, too ephemeral, " and my personal favorite, "paralysis of analysis." Presented among the principles underlying effective assessment were these: good assessment 1) proceeds by identifying manageable chunks; 2) proceeds by abandoning the fallacy of the perfect measure; 3) begins with questions of greatest interest to the faculty about the curriculum; 4) raises as many questions as it answers; 5) is an interpretive enterprise making optimal use of existing data; and 6) is tied to local culture and meaning making. Every year, I have observed the Colleges assessment practices become clearer and more focused. Not that we don't have miles to go before we sleep. This description by Karen Schilling may help,

We might think of our assessment agenda as working toward a CAT scan of our educational process--a three-dimensional picture composed by assembling thousands of slices taken at varying angles. Each slice adds a bit more clarity and acuity to our view of the overall process. We should not be daunted by the total number of slices we will need 'at the end' to make the definitive diagnosis, rather recognize that each slice adds that much more to our total understanding.

One easy way to improve our assessment process in the Colleges is by merely reporting the many assessment activities that now go unreported. I know I have received grant funds for a specific project, conducted assessment and reported results to the granting institution, but then have not shared them with my department assessment coordinator for inclusion in the annual report. The assessment of my project is just another slice in the CAT scan, missing from the institutional picture if I don't provide it.

I agree that good assessment begins with questions of greatest interest to the faculty about the curriculum. At your spring department meeting, you were or will be asked for input. What assessment projects are important to you? What resources do you need to conduct them? What training? Out of your responses, the Colleges plan will continue to grow. Thanks for your ideas and insights. They will be shared and discussed this summer at our DAC meeting. Then stay tuned.

Faculty College Participants By Rex Hieser

Sponsored by the UW System Office of Professional and Instructional Development, Faculty College provides an annual opportunity for UW System faculty and academic staff to unite in concentrated study and discussion aimed at improving undergraduate teaching and learning. Some 100 participants attend three days of intensive, interdisciplinary seminars on topics related to teaching and learning. The experience of the College enhances collegial interchange on teaching, contributing to a systemwide network of faculty and academic staff committed to educational excellence.

This year, the UW Colleges will have 10 participants: Kim Dirlam-Schatz, Chemistry, UW-Fox Valley (Wisconsin Teaching Fellow); Larry Gomes, Business and Economics, UW-Washington (Wisconsin Teaching Scholar); Sondra Gates, English, UW-Fond du Lac; Mark Hall, Computer Science, UW-Marathon; Richard Krupnow, English, UW-Fox Valley; Annette Kuhlman, Anthropology and Sociology, UW-Baraboo.

As the host site, UW-Richland is allowed to have four participants: Jerry Bower, History; Marnie Dresser, English; Gail Halink, Physical Education; Wava Haney, Anthropology and Sociology.

Blackboard Users Showcase By Pat Fellows

On Friday, April 26, fifty-seven faculty and staff from the thirteen UW Colleges campuses participated in a Placeware conference showcasing faculty who have found creative and effective uses of Blackboard in their teaching. Blackboard is course management software that provides an online site for courses where faculty can store digital media, engage students in synchronous and asynchronous discussions, and do online quizzing and surveys.

Special thanks to the following individuals for their participation.

Berel Lutsky	Asst. Professor Art	UW Manitowoc	Visual Imagery in Blackboard
Andrew Collins	Lect. Anthropology	UW Waukesha	Interactive PowerPoint Quizzing
Mike Jurmu	Asst. Professor Geo/GLG	UW Fond du Lac	Enhancing your course using External Links
Sue Patrick	Assoc. Professor History	UW Barron	Creating dialogue using the Discussion Forum
Linda Straubel	Lecturer English	UW Rock	Using Blackboard and MS Word to teach Composition
Jane Crisler	Assoc. Professor History	UW Waukesha	Using Blackboard to connect with professional colleagues.
Christa James-Byrnes	Asst. Professor CSEP	UW Baraboo	The Virtual Classroom – synchronous tutoring in engineering economics
Marnie Dresser	Assoc. Professor English	UW Richland	Using surveys to assess teaching and learning
Larry Gomes	Prof. Business & Economics	UW Washington	The Digital Drop Box
Diana Henke	Assoc. Professor Business & Economics	UW Fox Valley	Integrating Publishers' Online Materials

The program has been archived and can be viewed by going to:
<http://www15.placeware.com/cc/wislineweb/view>

Then follow these directions:

Enter Name

Recording ID: **Blackboard**

Click View

New screen will appear and then click Real Audio

You will need real player (basic). You can get it free at the Real Player web site,
<http://www.real.com>.

Interested in learning to use Blackboard? Contact your campus Instructional Technology
 Support Specialist or e-mail Pat Fellows.

Electronic Transfer Advising for UW Colleges Students **By Gregg Nettesheim**

The Special Role of the Colleges in UW System Transfer Enrollments

During the 2000-2001 academic year, over 2000 students transferred from a UW Colleges campus to one of the UWS comprehensive institutions. This accounted for 36% of the total new transfer enrollment within the UW System. We are an important part of the UWS transfer picture in another way as well, taking 564 transfers from other UW institutions. This is the fourth largest number in the system behind Madison, Oshkosh and Milwaukee.

The Importance of Transfer Advising

Given the transfer mission of the Colleges and the large numbers of transfer students leaving or entering the Colleges, we have long recognized the importance of transfer advising. This advising includes helping students learn what courses they will need to take after transfer, and whether any of those courses can be taken before transfer.

The UW Colleges/UW River Falls Pilot

Since 1998, the Colleges and UW-River Falls (UWRF) have cooperated on an electronic transfer advising pilot. The goal of this pilot is to improve the electronic advising tools available to students who are planning to transfer. Part of this pilot includes enhancing the Course Applicability System (CAS) software used by River Falls in conjunction with their degree audit system. It is the CAS software that enables production of transfer student degree audits.

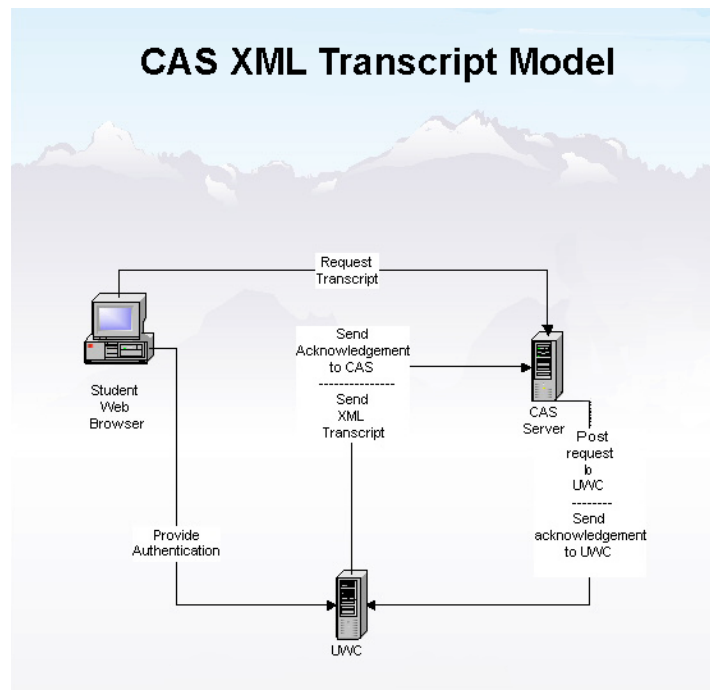
As a result of improvements made over the past two years, the CAS system in production at River Falls will now allow students to enter the courses (with grades) they have taken outside of the UWRF, and have these included in a UWRF degree audit. As you can guess, for students with two or more semesters of coursework to enter, this can be a cumbersome and error prone process.

In the fall of 1999, the Colleges began work on a system for web based delivery of an electronic transcript to take the place of this manual entry of courses. At that time the only standardized electronic transcript utilized a format called "EDI." The EDI transcript (called SPEEDE) has been around for many years; however very few schools use it for any significant amount of transcript processing – none within the UW System. Upon completion of the pilot we could see why. The EDI format for an academic transcript is extraordinarily complex, using formats that are no longer commonly used for exchanging information over the web. Upon completion of the pilot one of our recommendations was that CAS be enabled to use current technology for exchanging academic transcripts; for example, the now common XML format. The CAS developers at the University of Ohio agreed that this was the direction they wanted to go.

We have now begun work on the next phase of this pilot, incorporating an XML transcript into the degree audit exchange in place of the old EDI format. By the end of

summer the CAS developers hope to have the new capability incorporated into their product and delivered to UWRF for testing. We could then begin testing our ability to accept requests for transcripts that would be used for creating a transfer degree audit, and that would be delivered to the requesting school in XML format. The picture below illustrates this process.

We are hopeful that by using current data exchange technology we will develop a model that will be adopted by other UW institutions in the coming years. As more universities implement systems that allow this or some other form of automated transfer advising, UW Colleges students will have access to better information regarding transfer, resulting in better decisions and fewer surprises after transfer.





Have a Great Summer!!!