

UNIVERSITY SENATE  
ATTENDANCE

Meeting of: May 7, 1990 2:30pm

1989-90 Senate

VNA

Dartie Walker

Grandine Walker

Ed Reilly

Judith Hudson

Paul W. Wallace

~~Jim Brown~~

~~W. O. O'Connell~~

~~Hugh Thomas~~

~~Art Jochim~~

~~W. L. Ladd~~

~~B. S. S. S.~~

K. Stern

W. F. Hammond

Tim LANCE

Jeanne Gullahorn

Robert Farrow

James W. Nelson

UNIVERSITY SENATE  
ATTENDANCE

Meeting of: May 7, 1990 2:30pm

1989-90 Senate

VAT

MICHAEL SATTINGER

Paula Sena

Jeff Kutz

Wald Mirer

Andrea M. Spofford

Meredith Butler

Mitchell D. Drumpton

Walter Miller

Keith F. Galt

Michael Jones

Gregory X. Ferryella

John Melton

Donald Parker

Douglas Christensen

John S. Lavato

Robert W. Gibson

Walter Kohn

Steve Messersmith

Frank D. Steen

Robert W. Orville

Jennifer G. Keifer

Brett G. Reich

Deborah Brighton

Jane S. Spence

John S. Mackinnon

UNIVERSITY SENATE  
Monday, May 7, 1990  
2:30 p.m. -- Campus Center Assembly Hall

Administration 259  
Albany, New York  
12222

AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes: University Senate, April 16, 1990
2. President's Report
3. SUNY-wide Senate Report
4. Chair's Report
5. Council Reports
  - a. Council on Academic Freedom and Ethics – H. Hamilton
  - b. Council on Educational Policy – B. Marsh
  - c. Graduate Academic Council – K. Ratcliff'
  - d. Council on Libraries, Information Systems and Computing – V. Aceto
  - e. Council on Promotion and Continuing Appointment – J. Fetterley
  - f. Council on Research – E. Reilly
  - g. Student Affairs Council – S. Rhoads
  - h. Undergraduate Academic Council – J. Levato
  - i. University Community Council – S. Jones
6. Old Business
7. New Business
  - a. Senate Bill 8990-25: Council on Libraries, Information Systems and Computers
  - b. Senate Bill 8990-26: Inter-Disciplinary Undergraduate Major in Information Science
  - c. Senate Bill 8990-27: Ph.D. Program in French Studies
  - d. Senate Bill 8990-28: Criteria for Promotion and Continuing Appointment
  - e. Senate Bill 8990-29: Assessment Report – University at Albany
8. Adjournment

**UNIVERSITY SENATE**  
May 7, 1990  
1989-90 University Senate

Administration 259  
Albany, New York  
12222

PRESENT: V. Aceto, R. Bosco, L. Brannon, D. Brighton, M. Butler, D. Christiansen, G. DeSole, R. Farrell, M. Femminella, J. Fetterley, R. Gibson, R. Greene, J. Gullahorn, H. Hamilton, W. Hammond, A. Hoffer, J. Hudson, W. Ilchman, J. Jacklet, S. Jones, M. Knee, M. Krohn, T. Lance, W. Lanford, J. Leifer, P. Leonard, J. Levato, M. Livingston, J. Luks, J. Mackiewicz, B. Marsh, D. Meliti, S. Messner, T. Mirer, V. O'Leary, D. Parker, K. Ratcliff, E. Reilly, B. Reish, R. Sanders, M. Sattinger, I. Steen, K. Stern, G. Stevens, L. Tornatore, M. Wahlen, P. Wallace, G. Walker, J. Wessman.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Bosco at 2:40 p.m.

1. Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the April 16, 1990, Senate Meeting was moved and seconded. Senator Levato corrected the minutes under New Business to read "Senate Bill 8990-18 was approved with one against and three abstentions." Everything before that sentence should be deleted. The minutes were approved as amended.

2. President's Report

There was a spirited debate on Division I Athletics at the April 30 Senate meeting, said President O'Leary. There was much concern that the issues be well developed and that there will be other opportunities to discuss this subject.

The President noted that there was nothing more to add concerning the budget.

We have a unique Senate, comprised of students, faculty and professionals, said the President. This is really a University Senate. The Senate has been able to maintain itself as a legislative body. President O'Leary thanked all the Senators for the opportunity to work with them.

3. SUNY-wide Senate Report

Senator Aceto stated there was a meeting last week at the College of Technology in Morrisville. The budget was the main topic of discussion. A resolution, relating to tuition, was passed stating that the Faculty Senate of SUNY supported the idea of a tuition increase under certain conditions. The resolution will go before the Board of

Trustees. The Chancellor discussed the activities held during the year.

4. Chair's Report

The Chair's Report will be delayed until the end of the meeting.

5. Council Reports

a. Council on Academic Freedom and Ethics – Senator Hamilton said that the sexual harassment memorandum that was brought to the Council's attention has been withdrawn. The Council reviewed 200 pages of allegations, the results of which will be delivered to the Executive Committee and to the principals.

There are two unfinished items of business: 1) policy of the bookstore will be reported on next year and 2) statement on faculty rights, responsibilities and ethics.

b. Council on Educational Policy – Senator Marsh reported that there was legislation under New Business.

c. Graduate Academic Council – Senator Ratcliff reported GAC held its final meeting of the year on Monday, April 30. Housekeeping chores and the discussion of the Ph.D. Program in French Studies were on the agenda. GAC is now half way through nine new graduate programs and none of them need any new resources, said Senator Ratcliff. The resource issue must be looked at in the future.

d. Council on Libraries, Information Systems and Computing – Senator Aceto had a report of the last meeting at the information table. The Council is struggling with the definition of its relationship with the Senate and with administrative offices.

e. Council on Promotion and Continuing Appointment – Senator Fetterley stated that there was legislation under New Business.

f. Council on Research – Senator Reilly stated the final meeting of the year was held on April 26.

g. Student Affairs Council – There was no report.

h. Undergraduate Academic Council – Senator Levato had nothing to report.

i. University Community Council – Senator Jones read an informational piece relating to this Council. Areas for immediate attention for next year include: 1) funding for maintenance of the physical plant; 2) reduction in support of secretarial staff; 3) reviewing appropriate legislation concerning on campus advertisement in which unlimited alcohol is served; 4) encourage designation and marked areas for smoking. The Council is aware of the budget restrictions in making these recommendations.

Chair Bosco stated that the above is the Council's interpretation of the Faculty By-laws and this is not legislation.

6. Old Business

There was no Old Business.

7. New Business

President O'Leary moved Senate Bill 8990-30: "Principles for a Just Community" be added to the agenda; seconded and carried. The President said that this might develop itself in academic life. He would like incoming freshmen to see this statement immediately. The statement states very simply the ideas of equity and liberty.

Senator Butler applauded the effort. She suggested a friendly amendment in that the words "the library" should be added. This was accepted.

Senator Lanford asked where this statement will appear. The statement will appear in the Handbook for Students, Student Guidelines, and other appropriate official documents.

Senate Bill 8990-30 was passed as amended.

Chair Bosco reminded the Senators that the following bills come to the Senate moved and seconded by the Executive Committee.

a. Senate Bill 8990-25: Council on Libraries, Information Systems and Computers. This came before the Senate last year as a one year experiment, said Senator Aceto. LISC recommends that the policy be continued with periodic review.

How much money was added during this first year, asked Senator Hammond. Senator Aceto replied that additional funds were available for departments that needed it.

Bill 8990-25 passed.

b. Senate Bill 8990-26: Inter-Deiciplinary Undergraduate Major in Information Science. Senator Levato stated that this bill has been in the process for two years. Bill 8990-26 passed.

c. Senate Bill 8990-27: Ph.D. Program in French Studies. The Graduate Academic Council unanimously supports this program, said Senator Ratcliff. Bill 8990-27 passed.

d. Senate Bill 8990-28: Criteria for Promotion and Continuing Appointment. Senator Fetterley stated that the current policy does not include the librarians. The proposal will add language that will specifically address the concerns of the library faculty. Bill 8990-28 passed.

e. Senate Bill 8990-29: Assessment Report - University at Albany. Senator Marsh stated that assessment is an important issue and will continue to be over the next few years. Senator Meyer questioned the undergraduate major. Senator Brannon responded that the Council and committee were sensitive to departments retaining control over the undergraduate major. Departments are encouraged to choose from six possible choices or to choose their own. The accreditation team stated that the University at Albany did not have an instrument for assessment in the majors, said President O'Leary. This bill puts assessment in the department's hands.

Did the committee discuss the possibility of saying no to assessment, asked Senator Fetterley. The assessment panel was asked to look into the four areas which you have before you, said Senator Brannon. The committee did say no to basic skills. A lot of discussion was focused on the undergraduate major. The committee thought assessment might work to our advantage in this area, said Senator Brannon.

Senator Marsh said that it is reasonable to ask how are we doing. We are just suggesting to the departments that this is a reasonable thing to do.

Bill 8990-29 passed with two dissentions and one abstention.

4. Chair's Report

This has been a productive and creative year for the Senate, said Chair Bosco. There were many items of business brought before the Senate. Chair Bosco thanked the following for their help, support and encouragement throughout the year: Madelyn Cicero, Robert Gibson, William Lanford, Gloria DeSole, Bruce Marsh, John Levato and Warren Ilchman, to name a few.

Chair Bosco called President O'Leary to the front of the room. On behalf of the past Senate Chairs, he presented the President with a resolution that does not require a vote or the President's approval. The resolution thanked the President for all his hard work and support during the years.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Gloria DeSole  
Secretary

UNIVERSITY SENATE  
Report of  
Libraries, Computing and Information Systems Council  
May 7, 1990

The Council received a proposal for a proposed Policy on Periodic Review of Journal Subscriptions in the University Libraries from the Collection Development Advisory Committee. After careful review and discussion, the following policy was approved:

It is recommended that the University Libraries engage in an ongoing and continuing review of journal (and serial) subscriptions on a four year cycle to explore areas of cancellation and new possibilities. Such a review would be initiated by subject bibliographers working with academic departments and would include a cross-disciplinary review of all recommendations for cancellation and additions before action is taken by the University Libraries.

Provision is currently and should continue to be made to target subject areas for immediate review in the event of a program review.

Robert Donovan reported that The Library Construction Task Force will be presenting a final report to the President on the plans for the new University Library building. Since the Task Force will be meeting to approve the final report after the Senate meeting, the details of the report are not yet available.

The Instructional Technology Committee has been meeting on a regular basis and is expected to approve a policy statement on instructional computing on May 17. The returns of the recent survey on faculty use of and attitudes toward instructional computing are being tabulated by a sub-committee and will be distributed soon.

The Computing Advisory Committee has continued to meet on a regular basis. Major topics discussed included:

- Plans to replace or upgrade the current GEAC system in the University Libraries by 1994
- Continuing review of the SITE document. The Committee recommended that: scholarly activity replace cost cutting as the first objective for planning; rankings for priorities for future investments be changed to identify installing a campus networking backbone as the top priority and improved access to library resources through library automation as the next highest priority; sections be added dealing with the software environment, student facilities, role of the Computing Services Center, procedures for departmental local area networks.
- The Committee also discussed the recent administrative proposal to establish three electronic classrooms with Macintosh, IBM-PC-clones, and Amiga machines. Concern was expressed about the need for greater input by the Committee in the planning of these classrooms.
- The final meeting of the Committee will be May 17.



## UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY COUNCIL INFORMATION

- 1.7 "The Council may make recommendations to enhance the quality of life on campus. Specifically, UCC will concentrate its activities toward the purpose of fostering a Sense of Community at the University at Albany. Community consists of all elements of the university community including faculty, students, administrators, clerical staff and physical plant. As means towards that goal, UCC will serve as the catalyst for reviewing, monitoring and providing counsel as to programs that foster a sense of community. To achieve this charge, the Council will review copies of all reports related to diversity, racial concerns and a just community; highlight activities which encourages a sense of community; identify and facilitate the coordination of groups, committees, units who are addressing a sense of community and provide counsel and recommendations to the Senate in its ANNUAL REPORT."
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UNIVERSITY SENATE  
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

COUNCIL ON LIBRARIES, INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND COMPUTERS

INTRODUCED BY: Council on Libraries, Information Systems and Computers

DATE: April 24, 1990

IT IS HEREBY PROPOSED THAT THE FOLLOWING BE ADOPTED:

- I. The policy on allocation of main-frame computing resources be continued, subject to periodic review by the Computer Advisory Committee and the Council on Libraries, Information Systems and Computing and that it no longer be designated as "experimental."
- II. That this Bill be forwarded to the President for approval and implementation.

## SUPPORTING STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

The Computing Advisory Committee has reviewed at length the results through January 1990 of the implementation of the experimental policy on allocation of main-frame computer resources.

The Computing Advisory Committee finds no evidence that the experimental allocation policy has had any deleterious effect on the instructional or research programs of the University.

The Computing Advisory Committee and the Council on Libraries, Information Systems and Computing recognize further that:

The provision of main-frame computer resources to support instruction and research represents a significant fixed cost element in the University budget, and that

Responsible management requires that the University be able to account for the allocation of this resource among the several units and functions within the institution, and that

It is educationally desirable that Chairs, Deans, Directors, and Vice-Presidents be able to allocate the main-frame computing resource in support of the programmatic and pedagogical priorities of their units.

UNIVERSITY SENATE  
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

INTER-DISCIPLINARY UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR IN INFORMATION SCIENCE

INTRODUCED BY: Undergraduate Academic Council

DATE: April 16, 1990

IT IS HEREBY PROPOSED THAT THE FOLLOWING BE ADOPTED:

- I. That an Inter-Disciplinary Undergraduate Major in Information Science be implemented.
- II. This major be approved for initiation in the Fall 1990 semester.
- III. This bill be forwarded to the President for approval and implementation.

PROPOSED INTER-DISCIPLINARY UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR IN  
INFORMATION SCIENCE

RATIONALE AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Because more than half of the nation's work force is involved in the acquisition, identification, organization, and use of information, an interdisciplinary undergraduate major in Information Science is proposed for initiation in the fall 1990 semester. The major in Information Science is concerned with five curricular strands. These are:

1. Definition, characteristics and properties of information.
2. Information Chain - the flow of information from its origination to utilization.
3. Personal, economic, political and social value of information.
4. Information Exchange - the cognitive, intellectual and technological structures that govern information transfer.
5. Information Domains - the public and private organizational environments where information exchange takes place. Formal and informal barriers to information access.

This major requires a senior seminar and internship. These two courses provide opportunities to integrate the coursework into a unified, conceptual framework that recognizes the centrality of information in our society.

The rationale for this program is based on a number of factors. These include:

a. Interdisciplinary Nature of Information Science. Information Science is a relatively new field of study that has grown in prominence as we have moved to an Information Society. Its major concerns are with the origination, representation, organization, retrieval, and utilization of information. Its roots are clearly interdisciplinary drawing chiefly from the established disciplines of Cognitive Psychology and Philosophy as well as the more recent fields of Communication, Computer Science, Informatics and Linguistics.

b. Student Interest.

Early last spring several prospective freshmen and their parents were directed to the School of Information Science and Policy by the Admissions Office. They had just returned from a disappointing trip to Oswego State where they were presented with an undergraduate major in information science that strongly emphasized computer programming and higher mathematics. Their sons were interested in a program

that had a broader focus that included the humanistic, cognitive and management aspects of Information Science. This chance encounter was reinforced by discussions with several staff from CUE who identified the lack of a major for students who were interested in computers and the textual rather than numeric analysis of data but who did not want to be programmers. Subsequent discussions with entering M.L.S. students confirmed the potential demand for a program that integrated the various components of Information Science identified above. Information collected on existing undergraduate programs in Information Science around the country revealed all of these programs were heavily grounded in computer science and/or traditional MIS. This is one of the first programs with a broad, general Information Science curriculum.

c. Information as a Paradigm for Understanding the World.

Just as the study of society has been the major focus for viewing the world the past thirty years or so, information in its many diverse interpretations may well be the paradigm for understanding the present and future. This construct is more fully developed in Beniger, J.R., The Control Revolution; Pagels, H.R., Dreams of Reason; Hardison Jr, O.B., Disappearing Through the Skylight; Zuboff, S., In the Age of the Smart Machine.

d. GRI Initiative.

The University at Albany has identified Information Science as one of the primary areas of support under our GRI initiative. Though not intended as a research program of study at the undergraduate level, the proposed interdisciplinary undergraduate major will provide a beginning level of specialization for further graduate study. The presence of an interdisciplinary faculty in Information Science, however, will offer undergraduates a unique opportunity to interact with some "life-ethical models" of this newly emerging discipline. Further, one major accomplishment of the GRI initiative in Information Science is an interdisciplinary Ph.D proposal in Information Science which is awaiting final approval from the State Education Department. The graduate program suggested the adoption of a more general and limited undergraduate program in Information Science.

The skills and knowledge acquired by graduates of the program are an excellent grounding for further study in the liberal arts, as well as professions such as law, public administration, business administration and information

management. The program may also provide some opportunities for employment in the growing information industry in such entry level positions as customer service representative for database vendors, information analyst for database publishers, and other related fields. However, this major is not intended to be a professional degree which prepares students directly for specific jobs as in Business. Rather, the purpose is to provide a knowledge base and level of understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of Information Science and some of the central problems and issues related to information in our society.

Except for a seminar and internship, the program will draw completely on existing courses, faculty and facilities at the University at Albany. There will be no need for additional resources.

Representatives of the following academic units have been consulted and endorse the proposed program: Department of Computer Science, Department of Communication, Department of Linguistics and Cognitive Science, Department of Philosophy, Department of Psychology, School of Information Science and Policy. Staff members from the Center for Undergraduate Education assisted in the preparation of the proposal.

#### CORE FACULTY:

Ann Farmer, Associate Professor and Chair  
Department of Linguistics and Cognitive Science

Thomas Galvin, Professor and Director, PhD Program in  
Information Science  
School of Information Science and Policy

Edwin Reilly Jr., Associate Professor and Director  
Undergraduate Program  
Department of Computer Science

#### PROGRAM COORDINATOR:

Vincent J. Aceto, Professor and Associate Dean  
School of Information Science and Policy

All of the courses below are offered on at least an annual basis.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS: (B.A. in Information Science minimum of 43 hours)

COM466	3	Issues in Telecommunications (prereq COM265 and 270 or permission of instructor)
CSI201Y	4	Introduction to Computer Science
MAT108Y	3	Elementary Statistics or one of the following: CRJ281Y, ECO320Y, MSI220, PSY210, SOC221Y
PSY101M	3	Introduction to Psychology
PSY	3	Elective course in Psychology
RISP201	3	Introduction to Information Science
RISP433	3	Information Storage and Retrieval (shared resource course with RISP533)
RISP468	3	Internship in Information Science
RISP499	3	Seminar in Information Science
PHI	3	One of the following two courses: PHI210Y 3 Introduction to Logic PHI332Y 3 Quantification Theory
LIN	6	Two of the following three courses: LIN220Y 3 Introduction to Linguistics LIN301 3 Introduction to Cognitive Science LIN325 3 Sociolinguistics (Pr req. LIN220Y
PSY	3	One of the following three courses: PSY380 3 Learning (prereq. 6 credits of PSY) PSY381 3 Memory and Cognition (prereq. PSY101M and 380) PSY382 3 Perception (prereq. 6 credits of PSY)
CSI	3	One of the following two courses: CSI300K 3 Social Implications of Computing (prereq. CSI201Y) CSI310 3 Data Structure (prereq. CSI201Y)



E. PROFESSIONAL MENTOR:

All majors during the second semester of their junior year will select professional mentors who are employed in private, governmental or educational information environments in our geographic region. A list of mentors will be provided. The purposes of this requirement are to give students an opportunity to establish a relationship with information professionals, to observe the applications of more theoretical coursework in working information environments, to become aware of the issues, problems, and opportunities in representative areas of the information industry. It is expected that students will do their internships in these environments. Selected mentors will also participate in the Information Science Seminar.

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UNIVERSITY SENATE  
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Ph.D. in French Studies

INTRODUCED BY: Graduate Academic Council

DATE: 1 May 1990

IT IS HEREBY PROPOSED:

- I. That a Ph.D. Program in French Studies be approved by the University Senate and submitted for approval by the New York State Education Department;
- II. That the program become effective September 1, 1991
- III. That the Bill be referred to the President for approval.

3685g

# A Proposal for a Ph.D. Program in French Studies

State University of New York at Albany

## SUMMARY

The proposed Ph.D. in French Studies is an interdisciplinary program that draws upon the existing strength of the Department of French Studies as well as the supporting strength of several departments and schools at the University at Albany. The program is intended to complement rather than compete with existing programs at the Albany campus.

The doctoral program will stress research, teaching and the practical application of French Studies over a wide range of potential career possibilities. It is designed to produce graduates who will be able to assume professorial positions on the university level, as well as appropriate positions in public or private entities.

The program requires the completion of at least 60 credits beyond the baccalaureate degree.

The proposed Ph.D. in French Studies is based upon training in language and linguistics, society and culture, and literature and the arts. A core of graduate courses will address each of these areas. Students will be required to demonstrate competency in all areas before proceeding to specialization.

All students will be required to satisfy a research tool requirement of competency in another foreign language. This requirement may be met in a variety of ways, depending upon the student's preparation and career plans.

All students will be required to complete an Internship or Practicum appropriate to their career plans. Although the Department will actively seek to establish appropriate internship avenues and will help students in devising and executing internships, the ultimate responsibility for its completion will lie with the student.

All students will be required to pass a Qualifying Examination, demonstrating a firm grasp of the problems, issues, and methodologies of the various aspects of French Studies.

The final step in the program will be the proposal, completion and successful defense of a dissertation.

Admission to the program will be selective. Entering students will be expected to have an excellent command of the French language, and reasonable familiarity with French society, culture, and literature. Students at both baccalaureate and master's levels will be considered.

This document does not propose the reactivation of the Doctor of Philosophy in French which, although judged a successful and quality program by the State Education Department's Doctoral Evaluation Project in 1976, was suspended by the campus administration in 1976; rather, it proposes to reactivate a doctoral program in French Studies substantially different from its predecessor in nature and orientation.

Whereas the former version of the Ph.D. was oriented toward literary criticism and the literary history of continental France, the proposed program in French Studies is interdisciplinary in nature. It will comprise the integrated study of French-speaking societies; that is, their cultures, cultural productions and linguistic varieties. The originality of the proposal and the department's ability to implement it arise from the strength and unusual variety of the faculty.

The department is in an excellent position to offer such a broadly-based program, since its roster includes specialists covering major periods of the civilization of the French-speaking world, including its literature, history and linguistics. Related fields of interest among the faculty include comparative literature, literature and philosophy, literature and the fine arts, cinema, music, and art history. Without exception, members of the departmental faculty are active in publication and research, and have amassed a distinguished record of awards, grants, fellowships, and prizes. By any standard it is a faculty fully capable of presenting an outstanding program in French Studies.

The new doctoral program is based upon the premise that cross-cultural studies must be wholistically approached, and that no one area can be legitimately analyzed in a vacuum.

The Department has chosen this moment to submit this proposal for two substantial reasons. The first is the on-going rebuilding of the Department after major retrenchments during the past decade. This rebuilding has reached the point where the Department now possesses the professional resources for high quality doctoral work. The second reason is the dramatic turn-around in state and national statistics on foreign-language instruction and the concomitant rise in interest in all aspects of foreign cultures.

These orientations within the Department fit very well with the general aims of the Graduate Research Initiative. Two major themes of the G.R.I., Writing and Literacy, and Teaching Effectiveness, are self-evidently implied in the Department's programs; a third major theme, Humanistic Studies, is particularly relevant since the proposed Ph.D. will focus to a great extent on its three subsidiary concerns -- textual analysis, poetics and creativity, and the relationship of the arts to the humanities.

## Formal Structure

The program will admit only those graduate students who possess sufficient background to successfully pursue an interdisciplinary program relating to French Studies. Normally this would take the form of a baccalaureate degree in French. Other possibilities, however, will be sympathetically entertained: a strong minor in French with a relevant major (art history, for example); a strong liberal arts undergraduate degree followed by considerable residence in France; etc. We assume that graduates of the program will find careers either in higher education or in public and private entities engaged in international activities of some sort, and will base admissions partially upon our perception of the student's likelihood of being able to fulfill such career plans.

### First-Level Requirements

The first level of the program will consist of a series of core courses required of all applicants holding the baccalaureate degree and required as advised of all holders of master's degrees, plus a further selection of 500-level courses. These courses are currently being offered at the Master's level, but will be revised and adjusted in view of their place in the doctoral program. All students are expected to pass these courses with the grade of "B" or higher.

The three Core Courses (carrying 4 credits each and required of all students) introduce the three major areas of French Studies and are offered every year.

#### 1. French 505: Approaches to French Society and Culture

Training in the systematic observation and analysis of written, oral and visual documents concerning social, political, economic and cultural phenomena in contemporary France. Survey of the basic bibliography in the field, with emphasis on the use of the analytical tools necessary for further study.

#### 2. French 510: The Linguistic and Social Evolution of the French Language

Introduction to the linguistic description of present-day French through an examination of the historical, geographical and social forces contributing to its development. Survey of the basic bibliography in the field, with emphasis on the use of the analytical tools necessary for further study.

#### 3. French 512: Approaches to French Literature and the Arts

Study of the interrelationships of literature and the other arts in French culture, and of critical and theoretical responses to the arts at selected moments in French history. Survey of the basic bibliography in the field, with emphasis on the use of the analytical tools necessary for further study.

(Candidates for the Ph.D. may take no more than a total of 30 credits at the 500-level). The remaining 30 credits required of doctoral students will be chosen from the seminars listed below under the section "Specialization."

## Comprehensive Examination

Students not holding the master's degree will pass a Comprehensive Examination upon completion of these courses and thereby qualify for the master's degree. Students already holding the Master's degree from other institutions will normally have attained this degree of competence; in contrary cases such students will be required to take those master's level courses deemed necessary by the department.

The Comprehensive Examination will be based upon a Reading List one half of which will be prescribed by the Department and one half of which will be chosen by the student with the approval of the Department. The List must reflect the broad range of French Studies. The examination itself will aim at establishing the candidate's general acquaintance with the overall field and his or her grasp of basic concepts. The examination will consist of three written examinations of no more than two hours each. These will be followed by an oral examination which will be devoted to discussion and elaboration of materials from the written essays. Students must pass all four parts in order to earn the Master's degree. In case of failure, any part may be retaken, but no more than twice. Upon completion of the Comprehensive examination, students will be advised whether or not their performance warrants continuation on the doctoral level.

Successful completion of the Comprehensive Examination will qualify the students to move on to the next level. Students deemed to have failed the Comprehensive Examination or to have passed it with a minimum level of competency will be advised to leave the program with the Master's degree.

## Research Tool Requirement

All doctoral students will be required to demonstrate a reading competency in a language other than English or French. The level of competency required will be that necessary for the student to follow scholarship and criticism in his or her field of specialization. The precise language chosen will be decided upon by the student, in consultation with the graduate director and/or the dissertation committee.

UNIVERSITY SENATE

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Criteria for Promotion and Continuing Appointment

INTRODUCED BY: Council on Promotion and Continuing Appointment

DATE: April 30, 1990

IT IS HEREBY PROPOSED:

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- I. That the changes to Bill 7980-30 be approved.
- II. That the Bill be referred to the President for approval and implementation.

## CRITERIA FOR PROMOTION AND CONTINUING APPOINTMENT

Proposed Changes to Senate Bill 7980-30:

(Please note: Proposed additions or changes in wording are in boldfaced type and contained in brackets.)

### Section I. Criteria

A. Recommendations [for teaching faculty] shall be based primarily upon a careful deliberation concerning the effectiveness of the candidate within each of the three following categories as are appropriate to the position of the candidate within the university.

Categories 1, 2, and 3 follow as written.

Proposed additional section to read as follows:

[Recommendations for library academic faculty shall be based primarily upon a careful deliberation concerning the effectiveness of the candidate within each of the three following categories as are appropriate to the position of the candidate within the university.]

1. Effectiveness in Librarianship as documented by such things as peer and professional colleague evaluations of quality of performance, knowledge, skill, and innovation; faculty and student evaluation; evidence of significant contributions to library collections or services for the benefit of library clientele.
2. Scholarship as documented by evaluations of such things as success in developing and carrying out significant research work in the field and by the mastery of subject matter as demonstrated by advanced degrees, certificates, or other continuing education.
3. Service as demonstrated by such things as participation in the profession of librarianship, in departmental, library, and university duties and governance, professional society activities, and such public and community service as is related to the candidate's area of expertise.]

### Section IV. Administrative Procedures and Responsibilities

#### A. Definition of Levels of Academic Review

1. Throughout this section the term "department" shall mean the academic unit which constitutes the "initial academic review committee" as defined in the current union agreement. [In the case of the Library, the initial academic review is constituted by all members of the library academic faculty acting as a committee of the whole.]
- 2a. No change.
- 2b. In those schools or colleges having fewer than three academic departments [and in the case of the Library], the Council on Promotions and Continuing Appointments shall be the "subsequent academic review committee."



B. Department

1. The department chair [(in the case of the Library, the Dean of Library Faculty is understood to be the chair)] shall inform a faculty member that he/she is being considered for a promotion and/or continuing appointment when the process of assembling evidence is initiated. The chair [(Dean of Library Faculty)] shall make sure that all evidence in the case is presented to the members of the department as well as to the dean/provost.
2. No change.
3. An important datum [in the case of the teaching faculty] for the decision on promotion and/or continuing appointment is information about how students view the teaching of a faculty member. ...

D. Council on Promotions and Continuing Appointments

2. Remove the words: "except for members of the library faculty", as well as the last sentence of the paragraph because the information is out of date. All library faculty cases are now transmitted to the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.
3. Remove the sentences: "In the case of members of the library faculty, the Vice President for Academic Planning and Development shall review the case and transmit all materials to the President along with his/her recommendation. Copies of the recommendation shall be forwarded to the University Libraries Director and the candidate."

With the above changes, these two sentences are unnecessary.

UNIVERSITY SENATE  
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY  
STATE UNIVERSITY AT NEW YORK

Assessment Report - University at Albany

INTRODUCED BY: Council on Educational Policy

DATE: April 18, 1990

IT IS HEREBY PROPOSED:

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- I. That the report of the Assessment Panel submitted to, amended and approved by the Council on Educational Policy be adopted as the University's Assessment Plan.
- II. That this plan be forwarded to the President for approval.

University at Albany

REPORT OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

March 29, 1990

AS AMENDED AND APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY

APRIL 18, 1990

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**Assessment Panel Members:**

Lilian Brannon (Chair) – English  
John Aronson – Chemistry  
Cynthia Fox – French  
Rodney Hart – Student Affairs  
Andrea Hoffer – (Student Association)  
William Holstein – School of Business  
Alice Jacklet – Biology  
Peter Johnston – Reading  
Sara Kavner – (student member of EPC)  
Marvin Krohn – Sociology  
Ronald Ley – Educ. Psychology  
Betty Shadrick – EOP  
Malcolm Sherman – Math  
Leonard Slade – African & Afro-American Studies  
Richard Teevan – Psychology

**Ex Officio**

Bruce Marsh – Chair, EPC  
Warren Ilchman – Academic Affairs

**Staff Support**

Fred Volkwein – Institutional  
Research  
Barbara Schoonmaker – Student Affairs  
Gail Richardson – Academic Affairs

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION. . . . . 1

ATTAINMENT IN THE UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR. . . . . 2

ASSESSING GENERAL EDUCATION AND INTELLECTUAL GROWTH. . . . . 5

PERSONAL/SOCIAL ASSESSMENT. . . . . 6

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BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENT. . . . . 7

CONCLUSION . . . . . 12

## INTRODUCTION

### The Basis for the Assessment Panel's Recommendations

President O'Leary appointed this panel in the Fall of 1989 to propose a comprehensive plan for assessment in four areas: basic skills, general education, attainment in the major, and personal and social growth. This report and its thirteen recommendations respond to the President's charge. We spent the academic year examining the nature of teaching and learning and student growth on this campus. While this report represents the product of our work during 1989-90, it builds on the work of the 1988-89 Committee on Evaluation Policy. That Committee's April 1988 report (see Appendix A) provides the foundation and the context on which this report and its recommendations are based.

Additional source documents gave shape to our work. Joseph C. Burke addressed a memorandum to campus Presidents in December 1988. The SUNY Provost called for the formulation of outcomes assessment plans, provided a philosophical defense of campus based assessment aimed at improving undergraduate education, and issued helpful guidelines (see Appendix B). We also found encouragement from the "Statement of Principles on Student Outcomes Assessment" developed by the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges. (See Appendix C). Finally, a recent journal article by Patrick Terenzini, "Assessment with Open Eyes: Pitfalls in Studying Student Outcomes," proved to be a rich source of wisdom (Appendix D).

## ATTAINMENT IN THE UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR

Educational assessment gives us at least some insight into the complex cognitive and social processes by which students come to know a subject. Any one kind of assessment must always be seen as part of a complex web of understanding that a faculty generates through its practices of teaching and evaluating student progress and performance. Multiple measures provide more useful and valid indicators of student development than any single measure, such as a grade in a course. Our proposed plan for assessment in the major must be connected to a comprehensive departmental plan of self study, one that enhances our interest in the intellectual lives of our students as they relate to our own practices, course offerings, and course sequences within the disciplines.

This plan for assessment, then, augments our habitual ways of assessing students' progress within a major by asking that as a faculty we regularly reflect on, and if necessary act on, our evaluation of students' progress in constructing their knowledge of a discipline. This panel believes additional forms of assessment in the major are necessary because our two currently dominant means of assessment do not give us a complete understanding of our work with students, nor do they require that we discuss ways of revising our curriculum in order to strengthen student achievement. First, one widespread form of assessment, program reviews, gives us only a broad measure of our programs' and departments' needs and intellectual viability. While we profit from them, program reviews are more summative than formative, more oriented toward external accountability than toward internal program enhancement. Our second mode of assessment, student grades in specific courses, gives us only individual faculty estimates of student performance in a particular course, not a comprehensive view of student achievement in our discipline. The assessment plan proposed here offers a more diverse and effective approach, one that is locally important, that departments compose for themselves, and that aims to stimulate conversation, thought, and action on matters pertaining to strengthening the undergraduate curriculum. Assessment in this context means the continual audit of our educational practices with the aim of enhancing the teaching and learning of a discipline. We suspect that the best assessment will serve multiple purposes, evaluating both the student and the curriculum. This panel, then, has designed this plan for the twin purposes of becoming more accountable to ourselves and improving the impact we have on our students.

### Recommended Assessment Plan in the Undergraduate Major

**Recommendation 1:** Each department or program should be required to construct a means for evaluating student attainment in the undergraduate major. We offer seven assessment alternatives for departments to consider. In so doing, we endorse the philosophy contained in last year's Report to the EPC: Stating educational objectives is a necessary first step in measuring student attainment. Before assessment can be fully effective, departments will need to articulate what it is they expect their graduates to know and understand and what students can be expected to do with that knowledge.

**Recommendation 2:** During Fall 1990, departments should review their goals for the major and develop assessment plans based on those goals. A budget for the development of a final assessment plan should be submitted to the Academic Vice President, along with a timetable for implementation. For example, funds could be requested to support departments who wish to develop their own comprehensive exam or to pilot test the ETS Major Field Achievement Test. Other departments could receive an additional TA to coordinate the development of senior portfolios and essays. During the Spring Semester 1991, pilot assessments should be undertaken and evaluated. Final plans for departmental outcomes assessment can be revised during Fall 1991.

The following assessment alternatives are constructed to offer a broad range of possible assessment designs. In some departments where the numbers of majors are small, the faculty might choose to focus on the achievement of all students. Other departments, perhaps with large numbers of majors, may decide to study representative groups of students. The aim of this assessment is not to magnify any particular student's success or failure, but rather to judge in whatever ways we can the interdependence between students' abilities to construct knowledge for themselves and our work as a faculty in nurturing, enhancing, and enabling those abilities. Our assessment goal is to ask faculty to examine what it is that students are acquiring when they major in a particular discipline and to use that information to enhance the learning experience for future students.

#### Plan 1: Senior Thesis/Research Project

Several departments at Albany already require that all their seniors, or in many cases only honors students, complete a senior thesis or research project. We recommend that departments with this requirement for some students expand it to others and that where feasible, other departments and programs consider this option. Such a requirement encourages students to use the tools of the discipline on a focused task as the culmination of their undergraduate academic experience. Under ideal conditions, each department or program uses the students' work to reflect on what students are achieving with the aim of evaluating, and if necessary strengthening, the curriculum and experiences of students within that major.

#### Plan 2: Performance Experience

In some fields it is appropriate to ask students to demonstrate in some practical, or even public way, the knowledge and skills they have learned and acquired. Such a requirement may be especially fitting in professional and performing arts fields. Examples include student recitals, exhibitions, practice teaching, and supervised field experiences. The emphasis should be on the integration of the separate facets of the academic major.

#### Plan 3: Capstone Course

In this plan, departments require a "capstone" course designed to integrate the study of their discipline. A few departments at Albany now have such a course, and it often has a heavy research and writing component. Such courses offer ideal opportunities both to assess student learning and to strengthen the curriculum of that major.

#### Plan 4: Comprehensive Exam

Assessment in the major on some campuses has taken the form of comprehensive exams administered to all seniors. When such exams are designed locally by the faculty, they have the advantage of being shaped to fit the department's curriculum. Departmental exams have the disadvantages of needing annual revision by the faculty, of requiring local scoring, and of lacking a comparison group. Standardized instruments provide more reliable and valid comparison groups and scoring services, but may or may not fit the department's curriculum, and are not useful in disciplines wishing to go beyond a multiple choice format.

Some campuses use the GRE Advanced Test to measure student attainment in the major. This is not generally recommended by most assessment researchers because the comparison group is graduate school applicants, rather than all seniors, and because the GRE tests give only relative, rather than absolute scores (i.e., there is no indication of the number of items correct and incorrect, only an indication of each student's score relative to others).

Working with faculty across the country, ETS has designed achievement tests which are recommended for departmental assessment purposes. Available in 15 fields of study, the "Major Field Achievement Tests" provide subfield scores as well as totals and may be of some interest to departments which want to try this approach. In addition, the professional associations in some fields, such as chemistry, physics, and education, have developed or are developing comprehensive exams for use by campuses. Departments might wish to investigate their suitability.

#### Plan 5: Student Portfolio

Under this option, a portfolio of student work is collected, analyzed, and discussed. In this mode of assessment, students collect systematically the work that they have completed in their study of a discipline. They undertake and write a self-examination of the material, demonstrating how they have constructed the discipline through their writing and thinking over two years of study. Afterwards, faculty meet with students to go over this portfolio. The faculty then could use their own and the students' analyses of portfolios, coupled with their perceptions of the student conferences, as bases for conversation among faculty about the curriculum and practices within a discipline. In departments selecting this option, all faculty responsible for undergraduate education should be a part of this process, but the plan becomes difficult to implement if each faculty member has to interview overly large numbers of students (three to five students is a reasonable number).

#### Plan 6: Senior Essay and Interview

Many departments we contacted would like more qualitative information from their seniors. Grades in courses and student responses to multiple choice questions do not provide the desired breadth of information about student performance. On the other hand, large departments might find the qualitatively rich construction and review of student portfolios to be too arduous. Accordingly, we recommend that departments consider the possibility of requiring a short senior essay which works roughly as follows: The faculty construct probing questions that ask students to demonstrate their conceptual understanding of the discipline, and to reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of their programs at Albany. (See Appendix E for sample questions.) The students respond in writing and subsequently meet with faculty to discuss their written statements. The faculty, then, meets to discuss the results of their conferences with students for the purpose of strengthening the major. Large departments may sample a cross-section of seniors rather than the entire population. The Panel suggests that all departmental faculty responsible for undergraduate education be part of the process, but that no one faculty member needs to be asked to interview large numbers of students (three to five students seems reasonable).

If a large department should decide to use a cross-section of students, some steps might be taken to compensate students for the extra work involved in the assessment. In this way the students would be giving their best efforts and would not see this procedure as an unfair add-on. An alternative might be to require all seniors to write the essay but only a stratified random sample would be interviewed. All essays could be filed in department or university folders and used as a resource for career advisement and reference letters.

#### Plan 7: Departmental Alternative

Finally, departments may propose their own alternative plan for assessment in the major which meets the approval of the Council on Educational Policy. Alternative plans might combine some of the elements discussed above, or might include a new idea, not considered by the Committee.



## ASSESSING GENERAL EDUCATION AND INTELLECTUAL GROWTH

The assessment of general education skills and other measures of intellectual growth among Albany students has been based almost entirely on self-reported responses to a series of items developed by Patrick Terenzini and now used at a variety of colleges across the country. As noted in last year's report to the EPC, the Albany campus has been a leader in developing these measures, and Assessment Reports #2, #4, and #6, published by the Office of Institutional Research, each investigates various aspects of general education outcomes among Albany students.

Support for the Albany outcomes approach (i.e., student self-reported measures) has been reinforced by two educational research discoveries. First, Robert Pace, a distinguished researcher at UCLA, found a correlation between student self-reported measures of their own growth and their growth measured by other more objective (and more expensive) means. The evidence is that self-reported measures are only moderately reliable for an individual student but highly reliable for groups of students such as freshmen, transfers, seniors, women and minorities. Second, a recent nationally funded multi-campus study of college students in the State of Washington casts doubts on the value of the existing national instruments which purport to measure general education skill attainment and student growth. The researchers conclude that the current outcomes tests published by ETS and ACT primarily measure verbal and quantitative aptitude and the results essentially reiterate what is already known from student course grades and admissions test data.

This background, then, shaped the Panel's attitude toward assessing general education at Albany. On the one hand, our existing studies of freshman-to-senior-year cohorts using self-reported general education scales constitute adequate, if not ideal, measures of student growth and intellectual attainment. On the other hand, our General Education Curriculum is in a state of re-evaluation and transition.

We believe there exists a faculty consensus that the General Education Curriculum at Albany, while sound in design, needs improved implementation. During the Fall of 1988, two committees, the Arts and Sciences Curriculum Advisory Council and the Curriculum Committee of the Undergraduate Academic Council, began discussions concerning the evaluation and possible revision of the general education program. In March 1990, the President appointed a special task force, comprised of members of these two committees, a representative from the Assessment Panel, and representatives from the university at large to conduct a complete evaluation of the general education program and make recommendations by the Spring of 1991 for its continuance or revision. New initiatives for assessing student growth in General Education skills seem pointless in the face of a major program reevaluation and in the absence of clearly articulated program goals. However, the current mode of assessment using self reported measures should continue as a point of reference for examining the impact of future changes.

**Recommendation 3:** Continue the existing studies of student intellectual growth, using self-reported responses to scales administered to freshmen and transfer cohorts every four years. A more complete General Education Assessment Plan should await the completion of the General Education Task Force's final report.

## PERSONAL/SOCIAL ASSESSMENT

Last year's Assessment Report to the EPC noted the continuing efforts to measure the growth and maturity and satisfaction of Albany students over the past dozen years. Our studies of freshmen, transfers, seniors, and alumni have given the University a good deal of self-reported information from our students and graduates. The students we know the least about are those who leave the institution. We need to administer both **exit interviews** and **satisfaction surveys** to students who indicate their intention to withdraw and/or do not reenroll for subsequent semesters. These activities will be in addition to ongoing student assessment activities which will be enhanced this year to include an examination of several non-cognitive variables as predictors of retention, academic performance and growth.

In recognition of the institution's need to track student attrition and to collect and analyze data to support enrollment management retention efforts, the University recently brought together within one office retention-related functions which had previously been carried out in three different locations by three different units. The resulting Office of Withdrawal and Reentry will be situated in the Campus Center as a constituent unit within the Department of Student Services. Its immediate charge is not only to assist students who find it necessary to depart (short- or long-term) from the University and to facilitate their reentry, but also to "collect, analyze, and distribute data regarding student withdrawals, leaves of absence, reentry and degrees in absentia for use in institutional assessment, policy-making, and enrollment management."<sup>1</sup>

**Recommendation 4:** The University should develop an exit interview and/or survey, and, to the extent possible, administer it to each student who declares an intention to leave. Information to be determined from this instrument should at a minimum include the reason(s), primary and otherwise, for taking leave; whether the leave is temporary or permanent; and, if temporary, the expected date of return; other information can be collected for improving campus programs and planning.

**Recommendation 5:** Active measures need to be taken to identify, as early as possible, continuing students who are "no shows" for their next eligible semester of study; to categorize them appropriately as leaves or withdrawals; and to administer the survey noted above. Attempts by telephone or mail should be made to obtain similar information from those students for whom an exit interview is not possible or feasible.

**Recommendation 6:** Incentives (and/or sanctions) should be developed to reduce the number of students who leave without formally withdrawing or who fail to respond to these requests for information.

**Recommendation 7:** Staff from Institutional Research and from the research unit within the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs need to be consulted on the development, administration and compilation of data from this process. In turn, findings need to be widely shared with appropriate governance and administrative bodies and tied closely to campus planning processes.

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<sup>1</sup> Five Year Plan, Office of Withdrawal and Reentry, 1989-93

## BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENT

### Introduction

Basic Skills Assessment aims to determine whether students, in the opinion of faculty, possess a threshold level of skills necessary for success in college; and if not, whether instructional services can be provided for those who need them. Therefore, faculty must first define what is "basic" before determining the nature of support services. Yet defining a "basic skill" for this Panel proved more difficult than we initially thought. For example, common definitions of what count as basic skills seem to involve reading, writing and math. However, in the university setting, it is not clear that these are always easily separated from content knowledge. It is unquestionably easier to write well on a topic which is well understood, and similarly easier to read material which relates to relatively familiar concepts. In addition, what kind of performance counts as "basic" is determined, at least in part, by the demands placed on students by course instructors and by the support provided to help them meet those demands. The recommendations of this panel, then, developed out of our understanding of what the faculty consider to be students' necessary prior knowledge and skill before entering beginning level courses and our understanding of the support services available to assist students who fail to meet this threshold level. Our recommendations, therefore, must be seen in the light of the diverse array of instructional support services supplied on campus for students who feel that they need academic support. Educational Opportunity (EOP) students, indeed, are admitted to the university contingent on their using many of these services. The academic support for basic skills include the following:

1. **Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (C-Step).** Sponsored by the Department of Student Services, and aimed at underrepresented students moving toward careers in scientific, technical and health-related fields, this program provides tutoring, study groups, counseling, seminars, workshops, field trips, and graduate school test preparation.
2. **Minority Assistants Program.** The Minority Student Services Office arranges tutorial assistance for those who need it. In addition there is a Residential Life Program which helps students of color develop peer support networks.
3. **Educational Opportunities Program (EOP).** This program provides counseling, developmental courses in reading, writing, math and science, and personal growth workshops.
4. **Mathematics Tutoring Program.** Staffed by graduate students in the Department of Mathematics, this lab provides one-on-one help with the entry level math courses including pre-calculus and calculus.
5. **Writing Center.** Provides one-on-one help with any type of writing project at any stage of development. The lab is staffed by faculty and students in the English Department.
6. **Chemistry Tutoring Program.** Staffed by graduate students from the Department of Chemistry, support is provided for students in Chemistry 120, 121, and 216.
7. **Biology Tutoring Program.** Provides assistance for students in Biology 110 and 111. The lab is staffed by graduate students in Biology and provides tutorial assistance as well as review sessions. This lab has just been introduced and is in the trial stages.
8. **Physics Learning Center.** This center provides tutoring in physics.

9. **Study Group Plan.** Instructional Services helps organize study groups for many first and second year courses. Each study group is provided with a facilitator and two undergraduate honors student tutors who can also provide individual assistance on occasion.
10. **Middle Earth.** This program provides counselling and workshop packets for staff or students to provide assistance with study skills. This is a volunteer organization of students helping students, located in the Health & Counseling Services Building.
11. **Studying and note-taking workshops** are also provided through the Office of Academic Support Services.

An increasing number and diversity of students avail themselves of these services. For example, the study group program has been in operation for only two years, and the number of students using it has doubled to 550. The University has in place advisement services and an "Academic Early Warning Program," in which professors participating in the Study Group Program develop a list of students at risk of failing and circulate it to the Center for Undergraduate Education advisors, EOP Counselors, and Student Services Officers who contact the student and help arrange for support. It appears, however, that there is room for improvement in the coordination among these programs and in their advertisement. Many faculty and students appear unaware of the diversity of available programs. Steps should be taken to inform faculty and students about the available support services.

Students enter the University at Albany through several different routes, bringing different histories with respect to basic skills. The majority of students enter the University through the regular admissions procedures. A second group of students enters through the Educational Opportunity Program. These students are different from the mainstream students in terms of their educational and economic histories. A third major group of students transfers to the campus from other colleges and universities bringing yet another, perhaps more heterogeneous, set of educational experiences to their course work.

### Reading

**EOP Students.** By virtue of the nature of their admission to the university, Educational Opportunity students present themselves with potential difficulties in the area of reading. These students enter with an average total SAT score of 790. The EOP program uses a standardized test, The Nelson-Denny Reading Test, to identify the difficulties of individual students and to document their development in reading as they are tutored within the program. This evaluation system currently appears to serve the purposes of both students and instructors, and to provide data on the effectiveness of the EOP program.

**Regular Admissions Students.** Students admitted through the regular admissions program to The University at Albany have an average SAT total score of approximately 1150. This alone suggests that few have "basic" reading difficulties. Given the status of the majority of our students, it does not seem reasonable to propose the expense and time of testing all entering students in any manner. Beyond a basic level of reading ability, problems almost certainly arise for students, but they are more likely to stem from reading about content with which they are not especially familiar. This type of difficulty is essentially indistinguishable from content knowledge in the domain of study, and its evaluation would be hard to separate from general education knowledge or attainment in the major.

**Transfer Students.** Students transferring to our campus do not bring with them data such as SAT scores which allow simple comparisons with the native freshmen. Studies of this group do not allow analyses of their "basic skills" as such. However data which are available show that their retention and graduation rates are comparable to those of regularly entering freshmen, and over twice the national average. Although there are initially differences between the two groups' G.P.A.'s, there are no reliable differences by the end of their degree programs. This lack of difference cannot be accounted for by differential attrition rates. Apparently, whatever the basic skills required of these students, they either have at entry or, through the existing support systems, acquire them during their studies.

**Recommendation 8:** The EOP procedures for assessing reading skills should remain as they are. No additional assessment is needed in this area for students admitted through the regular admissions procedures or for transfer students. Students at risk, on probation, or otherwise suspected of reading deficiencies ought to be referred to Academic Services for testing and skill building, as they are now.

### **Mathematics**

**EOP Students.** Just as in the area of reading, students entering the university under the EOP program have already demonstrated a probable difficulty in the area of math, and the EOP program currently handles this well, through a program of assessment and tutoring. Their assessment procedures also provide data on program effectiveness.

**Regular Admissions Students.** Students entering the university through regular admissions, arrive with an above average range of quantitative SAT scores. Although a small group of students may have less than adequate skills in math for particular courses, the Math Department appears to have in place a program of assessment which examines the minimum skills of those students who intend to enter programs with heavy mathematics demands and advises them accordingly. A large group of students enter programs which have limited or no math requirement.

**Transfer Students.** The data available on this group of students suggests a diversity in math background with an average slightly less than that of the native freshmen. Again, however, by the end of their program, they are essentially indistinguishable from the native freshmen in their G.P.A.s. (Moreover, this research finding occurred before the establishment on campus of our increasingly extensive support services. Pretesting all students in math, even though a large group of them will not need a great deal of mathematical sophistication, seems an unnecessary expense in both time and money. Individual programs have considerable diversity in their math requirements, and departments could sensibly handle any testing as part of their own programs. Currently, departments with limited demand on math competence seem to handle the diversity of student background in sensible ways.

**Recommendation 9:** The math assessment within the EOP program, and the existing testing for math placement should remain as is. No further math assessment seems appropriate, as distinct from attainment in the major.

## Writing

Writing is somewhat similar to the areas of reading and math, and is an important concern for many departments. Once again, however, we have different groups of students.

**EOP Students.** The EOP students are admitted to the university having already demonstrated a probable difficulty in writing. Their writing is evaluated when they first come to campus, and they are given instructional support in that area. Writing samples are also collected prior to their exiting the program which allows the EOP program to provide for students' needs and to evaluate the program's effectiveness.

**Regular Admissions and Transfer Students.** It appears from discussions with faculty in general and directors of the writing program in particular, that we have very few new freshmen and transfer students admitted through regular admissions who fail to exhibit basic writing skills.

Thus, the enormous expense of administering a writing test to all entering freshman appears to be ill-advised. In the first place, it would pose a heavy drain on already scarce resources. Second, most students who need basic writing instruction are either identified through the EOP admissions program, or become apparent when they take an intensive writing course which is already a requirement on campus. Third, we already have campus mechanisms for faculty referral of individual students to the Writing Center. Moreover, the bulk of students need to develop their writing in a specific domain, and to learn about writing in the academy, which is exactly what is supposed to occur in the writing intensive courses. Last, a general writing test would give us no information on how to improve the writing component of instructional programs. Writing, like reading, becomes specialized within particular domains in terms of the conventions, the audience, and the logic. Thus, writing attainment also becomes tied ultimately to attainment in the major.

**Recommendation 10:** Existing writing assessment and remedial support services should continue. Students who need basic writing skills should continue to receive them through the EOP Program, through referral to the Writing Center, through writing intensive courses, and through their majors.

## CONCLUSION

### Common Concerns Among All Four Assessment Areas

Our thinking about issues of assessment was necessarily shaped by prior thinking both in the professional literature and within our own University. The boundaries among these four assessment areas, then, were selected primarily because of custom, our habitual ways of demarking curricular areas and student achievement. As our thinking progressed over the course of this year's work, however, we began to understand how fluid the boundaries are among all the areas of this report — how, in fact, this institution creates an ecologically interdependent environment. For example, student attainment in the major grows directly out of student reading and writing and mathematics skills. Further, the educational breadth of our General Education program and the intellectual depth of the major are mutually reinforcing. Moreover, students must assume personal responsibility for their own growth in order to meet their responsibilities to the faculty. A student's intellectual development cannot be easily separated from personal and social development, nor can liberal learning and disciplinary expertness be independent. As a university community committed to excellence, we must be willing to call into question our customary ways of organizing teaching and learning; we must examine how limited and limiting any division of responsibility for assessment is; we must be willing to see ourselves implicated in the success or failure of our students whether it be in terms of admission, advisement, instruction, support services, or administrative oversight. Our concluding recommendations, therefore, provide a means to continually audit our existing practices, to raise questions about the categories contained in this report, and to assist us in discovering new directions for improving the quality of the intellectual lives of those within our university community.

**Recommendation 11:** The University should undertake appropriate studies which examine the qualitative experiences of students. At least three concerns should be addressed by such research:

- (a) Concerns about how basic skills, general education, personal and social growth, and attainment in the major interact;
- (b) Concerns about student writing development;
- (c) Concerns about student advisement.

We realize that these sorts of studies are extremely labor-intensive and that they would need to overcome a number of research problems, not the least of which are problems of sampling, anonymity, and staff resources. However, during our year of work, we discovered that the University has already gathered a great many statistics about our students. To reach the next higher level of understanding, we need to examine student experiences in greater depth. How do students spend their time, and which of these "investments" produce learning? At what points in their academic careers do our students take General Education and writing intensive courses? When and how do students discover and use academic support services? In view of widespread student dissatisfaction with advisement, what actions can be taken by the Center for Undergraduate Education and by academic departments to improve it? These issues seem critical to us because we know so little about the dynamics of undergraduate learning and growth. Our existing studies of freshman-to-senior-year cohorts, while they give us important quantitative information via questionnaires, fail to give us the qualitative information that we have discovered is vital.

With respect to the development of writing, we could, for instance, take a small group of students and systematically sample the writing that they do over the course of their careers at the university. Students are required to take at least two intensive writing courses. This provides a natural opportunity to capitalize on existing writing samples produced in the context of normal academic writing, and with a time span between. These records would allow for analyses of the development of writing over the course of a student's time at this institution. At the same time, they might allow departments to study how their students' writing changes, and to make some inferences about what might be done to improve the course of that development.

We are concerned about student advisement both because advisement is a source of student dissatisfaction, and because its effectiveness is a factor in any successful assessment program linked to student development. We need to develop better connections among assessment, student self appraisal, and advisement.

Recently, the Panel learned that the Offices of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs are planning to test a student self-appraisal instrument at freshman orientation. In addition, a study skills software package is being purchased for the Interactive Media Center. By combining the self-appraisal with menu-driven skills lessons on the PC, the hope is that freshmen will receive a potential tool for self improvement. This is one model worth trying and evaluating to see if it has potential value, but other steps ought to be attempted as well. Which modes of assistance promote student growth and skill development? Which students will most benefit from computer assisted instruction, and which need other kinds of interventions? Are there better ways of assisting students to make informed decisions based on realistic self-appraisals? For example, if students entering the university with a math SAT score within a given range knew that students within that range of scores had in the past achieved a grade in math intensive courses of C or worse with x probability, B or better with y probability, then they might be able to make more informed decisions about the use of instructional support. Yet the use of such data depends on the quality of advisement available, and the extent to which students avail themselves of it. What kinds of studies need to be undertaken to help this university better recruit and retain students, advise students, enrich their academic experiences?

Without such studies, key questions remain vexing. To what extent are the large numbers of students on academic probation attributable to lack of basic skills, to poor advisement, to inadequate study habits, or to faculty grading practices (for example, if faculty grade on a curve, then certain numbers of students will always fail)? Which students use the extensive academic support services and does it make a difference in their performance? How do they judge their own abilities and assess their need for support? We hope future studies will provide us with this information, keeping us ever vigilant of our interdependence and our responsibility to each other.

This Assessment Panel carried out its responsibilities during 1989-90 recognizing that our work may continue beyond the boundaries of this academic year. If assessment is to grow at Albany and reinvigorate the curriculum, then ongoing support and organization must be provided by the University. Accordingly, we make the following additional recommendations:

**Recommendation 12:** Ongoing faculty oversight of assessment activity needs to be continued and should be provided either by the EPC, if it elects, or by the continuation of this Panel.

**Recommendation 13:** Incentive funds should be set aside to support assessment plan development.



University at Albany

REPORT OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

March 29, 1990

AS AMENDED AND APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY

APRIL 18, 1990

ADOPTED BY THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

May 7, 1990

Assessment Panel Members:

Lilian Brannon (Chair) – English  
John Aronson – Chemistry  
Cynthia Fox – French  
Rodney Hart – Student Affairs  
Andrea Hoffer – (Student Association)  
William Holstein – School of Business  
Alice Jacklet – Biology  
Peter Johnston – Reading  
Sara Kavner – (student member of EPC)  
Marvin Krohn – Sociology  
Ronald Ley – Educ. Psychology  
Betty Shadrick – EOP  
Malcolm Sherman – Math  
Leonard Slade – African & Afro-American Studies  
Richard Teevan – Psychology

Ex Officio

Bruce Marsh – Chair, EPC  
Warren Ilchman – Academic Affairs

Staff Support

Fred Volkwein – Institutional  
Research  
Barbara Schoonmaker – Student Affairs  
Gail Richardson – Academic Affairs

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION. . . . . 1

ATTAINMENT IN THE UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR. . . . . 2

ASSESSING GENERAL EDUCATION AND INTELLECTUAL GROWTH. . . . . 5

PERSONAL/SOCIAL ASSESSMENT. . . . . 6

BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENT. . . . . 7

CONCLUSION . . . . . 12

## INTRODUCTION

### The Basis for the Assessment Panel's Recommendations

President O'Leary appointed this panel in the Fall of 1989 to propose a comprehensive plan for assessment in four areas: basic skills, general education, attainment in the major, and personal and social growth. This report and its thirteen recommendations respond to the President's charge. We spent the academic year examining the nature of teaching and learning and student growth on this campus. While this report represents the product of our work during 1989-90, it builds on the work of the 1988-89 Committee on Evaluation Policy. That Committee's April 1988 report (see Appendix A) provides the foundation and the context on which this report and its recommendations are based.

Additional source documents gave shape to our work. Joseph C. Burke addressed a memorandum to campus Presidents in December 1988. The SUNY Provost called for the formulation of outcomes assessment plans, provided a philosophical defense of campus based assessment aimed at improving undergraduate education, and issued helpful guidelines (see Appendix B). We also found encouragement from the "Statement of Principles on Student Outcomes Assessment" developed by the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges. (See Appendix C). Finally, a recent journal article by Patrick Terenzini, "Assessment with Open Eyes: Pitfalls in Studying Student Outcomes," proved to be a rich source of wisdom (Appendix D).

## ATTAINMENT IN THE UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR

Educational assessment gives us at least some insight into the complex cognitive and social processes by which students come to know a subject. Any one kind of assessment must always be seen as part of a complex web of understanding that a faculty generates through its practices of teaching and evaluating student progress and performance. Multiple measures provide more useful and valid indicators of student development than any single measure, such as a grade in a course. Our proposed plan for assessment in the major must be connected to a comprehensive departmental plan of self study, one that enhances our interest in the intellectual lives of our students as they relate to our own practices, course offerings, and course sequences within the disciplines.

This plan for assessment, then, augments our habitual ways of assessing students' progress within a major by asking that as a faculty we regularly reflect on, and if necessary act on, our evaluation of students' progress in constructing their knowledge of a discipline. This panel believes additional forms of assessment in the major are necessary because our two currently dominant means of assessment do not give us a complete understanding of our work with students, nor do they require that we discuss ways of revising our curriculum in order to strengthen student achievement. First, one widespread form of assessment, program reviews, gives us only a broad measure of our programs' and departments' needs and intellectual viability. While we profit from them, program reviews are more summative than formative, more oriented toward external accountability than toward internal program enhancement. Our second mode of assessment, student grades in specific courses, gives us only individual faculty estimates of student performance in a particular course, not a comprehensive view of student achievement in our discipline. The assessment plan proposed here offers a more diverse and effective approach, one that is locally important, that departments compose for themselves, and that aims to stimulate conversation, thought, and action on matters pertaining to strengthening the undergraduate curriculum. Assessment in this context means the continual audit of our educational practices with the aim of enhancing the teaching and learning of a discipline. We suspect that the best assessment will serve multiple purposes, evaluating both the student and the curriculum. This panel, then, has designed this plan for the twin purposes of becoming more accountable to ourselves and improving the impact we have on our students.

### Recommended Assessment Plan in the Undergraduate Major

Recommendation 1: Each department or program should be required to construct a means for evaluating student attainment in the undergraduate major. We offer seven assessment alternatives for departments to consider. In so doing, we endorse the philosophy contained in last year's Report to the EPC: Stating educational objectives is a necessary first step in measuring student attainment. Before assessment can be fully effective, departments will need to articulate what it is they expect their graduates to know and understand and what students can be expected to do with that knowledge.

Recommendation 2: During Fall 1990, departments should review their goals for the major and develop assessment plans based on those goals. A budget for the development of a final assessment plan should be submitted to the Academic Vice President, along with a timetable for implementation. For example, funds could be requested to support departments who wish to develop their own comprehensive exam or to pilot test the ETS Major Field Achievement Test. Other departments could receive an additional TA to coordinate the development of senior portfolios and essays. During the Spring Semester 1991, pilot assessments should be undertaken and evaluated. Final plans for departmental outcomes assessment can be revised during Fall 1991.

The following assessment alternatives are constructed to offer a broad range of possible assessment designs. In some departments where the numbers of majors are small, the faculty might choose to focus on the achievement of all students. Other departments, perhaps with large numbers of majors, may decide to study representative groups of students. The aim of this assessment is not to magnify any particular student's success or failure, but rather to judge in whatever ways we can the interdependence between students' abilities to construct knowledge for themselves and our work as a faculty in nurturing, enhancing, and enabling those abilities. Our assessment goal is to ask faculty to examine what it is that students are acquiring when they major in a particular discipline and to use that information to enhance the learning experience for future students.

#### Plan 1: Senior Thesis/Research Project

Several departments at Albany already require that all their seniors, or in many cases only honors students, complete a senior thesis or research project. We recommend that departments with this requirement for some students expand it to others and that where feasible, other departments and programs consider this option. Such a requirement encourages students to use the tools of the discipline on a focused task as the culmination of their undergraduate academic experience. Under ideal conditions, each department or program uses the students' work to reflect on what students are achieving with the aim of evaluating, and if necessary strengthening, the curriculum and experiences of students within that major.

#### Plan 2: Performance Experience

In some fields it is appropriate to ask students to demonstrate in some practical, or even public way, the knowledge and skills they have learned and acquired. Such a requirement may be especially fitting in professional and performing arts fields. Examples include student recitals, exhibitions, practice teaching, and supervised field experiences. The emphasis should be on the integration of the separate facets of the academic major.

#### Plan 3: Capstone Course

In this plan, departments require a "capstone" course designed to integrate the study of their discipline. A few departments at Albany now have such a course, and it often has a heavy research and writing component. Such courses offer ideal opportunities both to assess student learning and to strengthen the curriculum of that major.

#### Plan 4: Comprehensive Exam

Assessment in the major on some campuses has taken the form of comprehensive exams administered to all seniors. When such exams are designed locally by the faculty, they have the advantage of being shaped to fit the department's curriculum. Departmental exams have the disadvantages of needing annual revision by the faculty, of requiring local scoring, and of lacking a comparison group. Standardized instruments provide more reliable and valid comparison groups and scoring services, but may or may not fit the department's curriculum, and are not useful in disciplines wishing to go beyond a multiple choice format.

Some campuses use the GRE Advanced Test to measure student attainment in the major. This is not generally recommended by most assessment researchers because the comparison group is graduate school applicants, rather than all seniors, and because the GRE tests give only relative, rather than absolute scores (i.e., there is no indication of the number of items correct and incorrect, only an indication of each student's score relative to others).

Working with faculty across the country, ETS has designed achievement tests which are recommended for departmental assessment purposes. Available in 15 fields of study, the "Major Field Achievement Tests" provide subfield scores as well as totals and may be of some interest to departments which want to try this approach. In addition, the professional associations in some fields, such as chemistry, physics, and education, have developed or are developing comprehensive exams for use by campuses. Departments might wish to investigate their suitability.

#### Plan 5: Student Portfolio

Under this option, a portfolio of student work is collected, analyzed, and discussed. In this mode of assessment, students collect systematically the work that they have completed in their study of a discipline. They undertake and write a self-examination of the material, demonstrating how they have constructed the discipline through their writing and thinking over two years of study. Afterwards, faculty meet with students to go over this portfolio. The faculty then could use their own and the students' analyses of portfolios, coupled with their perceptions of the student conferences, as bases for conversation among faculty about the curriculum and practices within a discipline. In departments selecting this option, all faculty responsible for undergraduate education should be a part of this process, but the plan becomes difficult to implement if each faculty member has to interview overly large numbers of students (three to five students is a reasonable number).

#### Plan 6: Senior Essay and Interview

Many departments we contacted would like more qualitative information from their seniors. Grades in courses and student responses to multiple choice questions do not provide the desired breadth of information about student performance. On the other hand, large departments might find the qualitatively rich construction and review of student portfolios to be too arduous. Accordingly, we recommend that departments consider the possibility of requiring a short senior essay which works roughly as follows: The faculty construct probing questions that ask students to demonstrate their conceptual understanding of the discipline, and to reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of their programs at Albany. (See Appendix E for sample questions.) The students respond in writing and subsequently meet with faculty to discuss their written statements. The faculty, then, meets to discuss the results of their conferences with students for the purpose of strengthening the major. Large departments may sample a cross-section of seniors rather than the entire population. The Panel suggests that all departmental faculty responsible for undergraduate education be part of the process, but that no one faculty member needs to be asked to interview large numbers of students (three to five students seems reasonable).

If a large department should decide to use a cross-section of students, some steps might be taken to compensate students for the extra work involved in the assessment. In this way the students would be giving their best efforts and would not see this procedure as an unfair add-on. An alternative might be to require all seniors to write the essay but only a stratified random sample would be interviewed. All essays could be filed in department or university folders and used as a resource for career advisement and reference letters.

#### Plan 7: Departmental Alternative

Finally, departments may propose their own alternative plan for assessment in the major which meets the approval of the Council on Educational Policy. Alternative plans might combine some of the elements discussed above, or might include a new idea, not considered by the Committee.

## ASSESSING GENERAL EDUCATION AND INTELLECTUAL GROWTH

The assessment of general education skills and other measures of intellectual growth among Albany students has been based almost entirely on self-reported responses to a series of items developed by Patrick Terenzini and now used at a variety of colleges across the country. As noted in last year's report to the EPC, the Albany campus has been a leader in developing these measures, and Assessment Reports #2, #4, and #6, published by the Office of Institutional Research, each investigates various aspects of general education outcomes among Albany students.

Support for the Albany outcomes approach (i.e., student self-reported measures) has been reinforced by two educational research discoveries. First, Robert Pace, a distinguished researcher at UCLA, found a correlation between student self-reported measures of their own growth and their growth measured by other more objective (and more expensive) means. The evidence is that self-reported measures are only moderately reliable for an individual student but highly reliable for groups of students such as freshmen, transfers, seniors, women and minorities. Second, a recent nationally funded multi-campus study of college students in the State of Washington casts doubts on the value of the existing national instruments which purport to measure general education skill attainment and student growth. The researchers conclude that the current outcomes tests published by ETS and ACT primarily measure verbal and quantitative aptitude and the results essentially reiterate what is already known from student course grades and admissions test data.

This background, then, shaped the Panel's attitude toward assessing general education at Albany. On the one hand, our existing studies of freshman-to-senior-year cohorts using self-reported general education scales constitute adequate, if not ideal, measures of student growth and intellectual attainment. On the other hand, our General Education Curriculum is in a state of re-evaluation and transition.

We believe there exists a faculty consensus that the General Education Curriculum at Albany, while sound in design, needs improved implementation. During the Fall of 1988, two committees, the Arts and Sciences Curriculum Advisory Council and the Curriculum Committee of the Undergraduate Academic Council, began discussions concerning the evaluation and possible revision of the general education program. In March 1990, the President appointed a special task force, comprised of members of these two committees, a representative from the Assessment Panel, and representatives from the university at large to conduct a complete evaluation of the general education program and make recommendations by the Spring of 1991 for its continuance or revision. New initiatives for assessing student growth in General Education skills seem pointless in the face of a major program reevaluation and in the absence of clearly articulated program goals. However, the current mode of assessment using self reported measures should continue as a point of reference for examining the impact of future changes.

**Recommendation 3:** Continue the existing studies of student intellectual growth, using self-reported responses to scales administered to freshmen and transfer cohorts every four years. A more complete General Education Assessment Plan should await the completion of the General Education Task Force's final report.

## PERSONAL/SOCIAL ASSESSMENT

Last year's Assessment Report to the EPC noted the continuing efforts to measure the growth and maturity and satisfaction of Albany students over the past dozen years. Our studies of freshmen, transfers, seniors, and alumni have given the University a good deal of self-reported information from our students and graduates. The students we know the least about are those who leave the institution. We need to administer both exit interviews and satisfaction surveys to students who indicate their intention to withdraw and/or do not reenroll for subsequent semesters. These activities will be in addition to ongoing student assessment activities which will be enhanced this year to include an examination of several non-cognitive variables as predictors of retention, academic performance and growth.

In recognition of the institution's need to track student attrition and to collect and analyze data to support enrollment management retention efforts, the University recently brought together within one office retention-related functions which had previously been carried out in three different locations by three different units. The resulting Office of Withdrawal and Reentry will be situated in the Campus Center as a constituent unit within the Department of Student Services. Its immediate charge is not only to assist students who find it necessary to depart (short- or long-term) from the University and to facilitate their reentry, but also to "collect, analyze, and distribute data regarding student withdrawals, leaves of absence, reentry and degrees in absentia for use in institutional assessment, policy-making, and enrollment management."<sup>1</sup>

Recommendation 4: The University should develop an exit interview and/or survey, and, to the extent possible, administer it to each student who declares an intention to leave. Information to be determined from this instrument should at a minimum include the reason(s), primary and otherwise, for taking leave; whether the leave is temporary or permanent; and, if temporary, the expected date of return; other information can be collected for improving campus programs and planning.

Recommendation 5: Active measures need to be taken to identify, as early as possible, continuing students who are "no shows" for their next eligible semester of study; to categorize them appropriately as leaves or withdrawals; and to administer the survey noted above. Attempts by telephone or mail should be made to obtain similar information from those students for whom an exit interview is not possible or feasible.

Recommendation 6: Incentives (and/or sanctions) should be developed to reduce the number of students who leave without formally withdrawing or who fail to respond to these requests for information.

Recommendation 7: Staff from Institutional Research and from the research unit within the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs need to be consulted on the development, administration and compilation of data from this process. In turn, findings need to be widely shared with appropriate governance and administrative bodies and tied closely to campus planning processes.

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<sup>1</sup> Five Year Plan, Office of Withdrawal and Reentry, 1989-93



## BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENT

### Introduction

Basic Skills Assessment aims to determine whether students, in the opinion of faculty, possess a threshold level of skills necessary for success in college; and if not, whether instructional services can be provided for those who need them. Therefore, faculty must first define what is "basic" before determining the nature of support services. Yet defining a "basic skill" for this Panel proved more difficult than we initially thought. For example, common definitions of what count as basic skills seem to involve reading, writing and math. However, in the university setting, it is not clear that these are always easily separated from content knowledge. It is unquestionably easier to write well on a topic which is well understood, and similarly easier to read material which relates to relatively familiar concepts. In addition, what kind of performance counts as "basic" is determined, at least in part, by the demands placed on students by course instructors and by the support provided to help them meet those demands. The recommendations of this panel, then, developed out of our understanding of what the faculty consider to be students' necessary prior knowledge and skill before entering beginning level courses and our understanding of the support services available to assist students who fail to meet this threshold level. Our recommendations, therefore, must be seen in the light of the diverse array of instructional support services supplied on campus for students who feel that they need academic support. Educational Opportunity (EOP) students, indeed, are admitted to the university contingent on their using many of these services. The academic support for basic skills include the following:

1. **Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (C-Step).** Sponsored by the Department of Student Services, and aimed at underrepresented students moving toward careers in scientific, technical and health-related fields, this program provides tutoring, study groups, counseling, seminars, workshops, field trips, and graduate school test preparation.
2. **Minority Assistants Program.** The Minority Student Services Office arranges tutorial assistance for those who need it. In addition there is a Residential Life Program which helps students of color develop peer support networks.
3. **Educational Opportunities Program (EOP).** This program provides counseling, developmental courses in reading, writing, math and science, and personal growth workshops.
4. **Mathematics Tutoring Program.** Staffed by graduate students in the Department of Mathematics, this lab provides one-on-one help with the entry level math courses including pre-calculus and calculus.
5. **Writing Center.** Provides one-on-one help with any type of writing project at any stage of development. The lab is staffed by faculty and students in the English Department.
6. **Chemistry Tutoring Program.** Staffed by graduate students from the Department of Chemistry, support is provided for students in Chemistry 120, 121, and 216.
7. **Biology Tutoring Program.** Provides assistance for students in Biology 110 and 111. The lab is staffed by graduate students in Biology and provides tutorial assistance as well as review sessions. This lab has just been introduced and is in the trial stages.
8. **Physics Learning Center.** This center provides tutoring in physics.

9. **Study Group Plan.** Instructional Services helps organize study groups for many first and second year courses. Each study group is provided with a facilitator and two undergraduate honors student tutors who can also provide individual assistance on occasion.
10. **Middle Earth.** This program provides counselling and workshop packets for staff or students to provide assistance with study skills. This is a volunteer organization of students helping students, located in the Health & Counseling Services Building.
11. **Studying and note-taking workshops** are also provided through the Office of Academic Support Services.

An increasing number and diversity of students avail themselves of these services. For example, the study group program has been in operation for only two years, and the number of students using it has doubled to 550. The University has in place advisement services and an "Academic Early Warning Program," in which professors participating in the Study Group Program develop a list of students at risk of failing and circulate it to the Center for Undergraduate Education advisors, EOP Counselors, and Student Services Officers who contact the student and help arrange for support. It appears, however, that there is room for improvement in the coordination among these programs and in their advertisement. Many faculty and students appear unaware of the diversity of available programs. Steps should be taken to inform faculty and students about the available support services.

Students enter the University at Albany through several different routes, bringing different histories with respect to basic skills. The majority of students enter the University through the regular admissions procedures. A second group of students enters through the Educational Opportunity Program. These students are different from the mainstream students in terms of their educational and economic histories. A third major group of students transfers to the campus from other colleges and universities bringing yet another, perhaps more heterogeneous, set of educational experiences to their course work.

### Reading

**EOP Students.** By virtue of the nature of their admission to the university, Educational Opportunity students present themselves with potential difficulties in the area of reading. These students enter with an average total SAT score of 790. The EOP program uses a standardized test, The Nelson-Denny Reading Test, to identify the difficulties of individual students and to document their development in reading as they are tutored within the program. This evaluation system currently appears to serve the purposes of both students and instructors, and to provide data on the effectiveness of the EOP program.

**Regular Admissions Students.** Students admitted through the regular admissions program to The University at Albany have an average SAT total score of approximately 1150. This alone suggests that few have "basic" reading difficulties. Given the status of the majority of our students, it does not seem reasonable to propose the expense and time of testing all entering students in any manner. Beyond a basic level of reading ability, problems almost certainly arise for students, but they are more likely to stem from reading about content with which they are not especially familiar. This type of difficulty is essentially indistinguishable from content knowledge in the domain of study, and its evaluation would be hard to separate from general education knowledge or attainment in the major.

**Transfer Students.** Students transferring to our campus do not bring with them data such as SAT scores which allow simple comparisons with the native freshmen. Studies of this group do not allow analyses of their "basic skills" as such. However data which are available show that their retention and graduation rates are comparable to those of regularly entering freshmen, and over twice the national average. Although there are initially differences between the two groups' G.P.A.'s, there are no reliable differences by the end of their degree programs. This lack of difference cannot be accounted for by differential attrition rates. Apparently, whatever the basic skills required of these students, they either have at entry or, through the existing support systems, acquire them during their studies.

**Recommendation 8:** The EOP procedures for assessing reading skills should remain as they are. No additional assessment is needed in this area for students admitted through the regular admissions procedures or for transfer students. Students at risk, on probation, or otherwise suspected of reading deficiencies ought to be referred to Academic Services for testing and skill building, as they are now.

### Mathematics

**EOP Students.** Just as in the area of reading, students entering the university under the EOP program have already demonstrated a probable difficulty in the area of math, and the EOP program currently handles this well, through a program of assessment and tutoring. Their assessment procedures also provide data on program effectiveness.

**Regular Admissions Students.** Students entering the university through regular admissions, arrive with an above average range of quantitative SAT scores. Although a small group of students may have less than adequate skills in math for particular courses, the Math Department appears to have in place a program of assessment which examines the minimum skills of those students who intend to enter programs with heavy mathematics demands and advises them accordingly. A large group of students enter programs which have limited or no math requirement.

**Transfer Students.** The data available on this group of students suggests a diversity in math background with an average slightly less than that of the native freshmen. Again, however, by the end of their program, they are essentially indistinguishable from the native freshmen in their G.P.A.s. (Moreover, this research finding occurred before the establishment on campus of our increasingly extensive support services. Pretesting all students in math, even though a large group of them will not need a great deal of mathematical sophistication, seems an unnecessary expense in both time and money. Individual programs have considerable diversity in their math requirements, and departments could sensibly handle any testing as part of their own programs. Currently, departments with limited demand on math competence seem to handle the diversity of student background in sensible ways.

**Recommendation 9:** The math assessment within the EOP program, and the existing testing for math placement should remain as is. No further math assessment seems appropriate, as distinct from attainment in the major.

## Writing

Writing is somewhat similar to the areas of reading and math, and is an important concern for many departments. Once again, however, we have different groups of students.

**EOP Students.** The EOP students are admitted to the university having already demonstrated a probable difficulty in writing. Their writing is evaluated when they first come to campus, and they are given instructional support in that area. Writing samples are also collected prior to their exiting the program which allows the EOP program to provide for students' needs and to evaluate the program's effectiveness.

**Regular Admissions and Transfer Students.** It appears from discussions with faculty in general and directors of the writing program in particular, that we have very few new freshmen and transfer students admitted through regular admissions who fail to exhibit basic writing skills.

Thus, the enormous expense of administering a writing test to all entering freshman appears to be ill-advised. In the first place, it would pose a heavy drain on already scarce resources. Second, most students who need basic writing instruction are either identified through the EOP admissions program, or become apparent when they take an intensive writing course which is already a requirement on campus. Third, we already have campus mechanisms for faculty referral of individual students to the Writing Center. Moreover, the bulk of students need to develop their writing in a specific domain, and to learn about writing in the academy, which is exactly what is supposed to occur in the writing intensive courses. Last, a general writing test would give us no information on how to improve the writing component of instructional programs. Writing, like reading, becomes specialized within particular domains in terms of the conventions, the audience, and the logic. Thus, writing attainment also becomes tied ultimately to attainment in the major.

**Recommendation 10:** Existing writing assessment and remedial support services should continue. Students who need basic writing skills should continue to receive them through the EOP Program, through referral to the Writing Center, through writing intensive courses, and through their majors.

## CONCLUSION

### Common Concerns Among All Four Assessment Areas

Our thinking about issues of assessment was necessarily shaped by prior thinking both in the professional literature and within our own University. The boundaries among these four assessment areas, then, were selected primarily because of custom, our habitual ways of demarking curricular areas and student achievement. As our thinking progressed over the course of this year's work, however, we began to understand how fluid the boundaries are among all the areas of this report — how, in fact, this institution creates an ecologically interdependent environment. For example, student attainment in the major grows directly out of student reading and writing and mathematics skills. Further, the educational breadth of our General Education program and the intellectual depth of the major are mutually reinforcing. Moreover, students must assume personal responsibility for their own growth in order to meet their responsibilities to the faculty. A student's intellectual development cannot be easily separated from personal and social development, nor can liberal learning and disciplinary expertise be independent. As a university community committed to excellence, we must be willing to call into question our customary ways of organizing teaching and learning; we must examine how limited and limiting any division of responsibility for assessment is; we must be willing to see ourselves implicated in the success or failure of our students whether it be in terms of admission, advisement, instruction, support services, or administrative oversight. Our concluding recommendations, therefore, provide a means to continually audit our existing practices, to raise questions about the categories contained in this report, and to assist us in discovering new directions for improving the quality of the intellectual lives of those within our university community.

Recommendation 11: The University should undertake appropriate studies which examine the qualitative experiences of students. At least three concerns should be addressed by such research:

- (a) Concerns about how basic skills, general education, personal and social growth, and attainment in the major interact;
- (b) Concerns about student writing development;
- (c) Concerns about student advisement.

We realize that these sorts of studies are extremely labor-intensive and that they would need to overcome a number of research problems, not the least of which are problems of sampling, anonymity, and staff resources. However, during our year of work, we discovered that the University has already gathered a great many statistics about our students. To reach the next higher level of understanding, we need to examine student experiences in greater depth. How do students spend their time, and which of these "investments" produce learning? At what points in their academic careers do our students take General Education and writing intensive courses? When and how do students discover and use academic support services? In view of widespread student dissatisfaction with advisement, what actions can be taken by the Center for Undergraduate Education and by academic departments to improve it? These issues seem critical to us because we know so little about the dynamics of undergraduate learning and growth. Our existing studies of freshman-to-senior-year cohorts, while they give us important quantitative information via questionnaires, fail to give us the qualitative information that we have discovered is vital.

With respect to the development of writing, we could, for instance, take a small group of students and systematically sample the writing that they do over the course of their careers at the university. Students are required to take at least two intensive writing courses. This provides a natural opportunity to capitalize on existing writing samples produced in the context of normal academic writing, and with a time span between. These records would allow for analyses of the development of writing over the course of a student's time at this institution. At the same time, they might allow departments to study how their students' writing changes, and to make some inferences about what might be done to improve the course of that development.

We are concerned about student advisement both because advisement is a source of student dissatisfaction, and because its effectiveness is a factor in any successful assessment program linked to student development. We need to develop better connections among assessment, student self appraisal, and advisement.

Recently, the Panel learned that the Offices of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs are planning to test a student self-appraisal instrument at freshman orientation. In addition, a study skills software package is being purchased for the Interactive Media Center. By combining the self-appraisal with menu-driven skills lessons on the PC, the hope is that freshmen will receive a potential tool for self improvement. This is one model worth trying and evaluating to see if it has potential value, but other steps ought to be attempted as well. Which modes of assistance promote student growth and skill development? Which students will most benefit from computer assisted instruction, and which need other kinds of interventions? Are there better ways of assisting students to make informed decisions based on realistic self-appraisals? For example, if students entering the university with a math SAT score within a given range knew that students within that range of scores had in the past achieved a grade in math intensive courses of C or worse with x probability, B or better with y probability, then they might be able to make more informed decisions about the use of instructional support. Yet the use of such data depends on the quality of advisement available, and the extent to which students avail themselves of it. What kinds of studies need to be undertaken to help this university better recruit and retain students, advise students, enrich their academic experiences?

Without such studies, key questions remain vexing. To what extent are the large numbers of students on academic probation attributable to lack of basic skills, to poor advisement, to inadequate study habits, or to faculty grading practices (for example, if faculty grade on a curve, then certain numbers of students will always fail)? Which students use the extensive academic support services and does it make a difference in their performance? How do they judge their own abilities and assess their need for support? We hope future studies will provide us with this information, keeping us ever vigilant of our interdependence and our responsibility to each other.

This Assessment Panel carried out its responsibilities during 1989-90 recognizing that our work may continue beyond the boundaries of this academic year. If assessment is to grow at Albany and reinvigorate the curriculum, then ongoing support and organization must be provided by the University. Accordingly, we make the following additional recommendations:

Recommendation 12: Ongoing faculty oversight of assessment activity needs to be continued and should be provided either by the EPC, if it elects, or by the continuation of this Panel.

Recommendation 13: Incentive funds should be set aside to support assessment plan development.

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

UNIVERSITY SENATE

I. IT IS HEREBY PROPOSED:

That the attached "Principles for a Just Community" be endorsed by the University Senate, and that these principles be included in all appropriate publications and otherwise disseminated throughout the University Community.

II. That this bill be forwarded to the President for approval.

## PRINCIPLES FOR A JUST COMMUNITY

The University at Albany, State University of New York, is an academic community dedicated to the ideals of justice. A university is above all a place where intellectual life is central and where faculty, staff, and students strive together for excellence in the pursuit of knowledge. It is a particular kind of community with special purposes. Moreover, this academic community, if it is to support our broader ideals, must also be just.

There is no definitive theory of justice. The differences in these theories are to be respected. However, among all democratic theories of justice, the principles of equality and liberty are basic. These principles are no less central to a free university.

Equality is a necessary part of any university that claims to be a democratic institution. Distinctions based on irrelevant differences are ruled out. Ascriptive characteristics such as race, religion, gender, class, ethnic background, or sexual preference, determine neither the value of individuals nor the legitimacy of their views. Only the merit of the individual as a participant in the life of the academic community is worthy of consideration. Bigotry in any form is antithetical to the University's ideals on intellectual, political, and moral grounds and must be challenged and rejected.

Liberty is an equally precious academic principle because the free expression of ideas is the central part of university life. To sustain the advancement and dissemination of knowledge and understanding, the University must allow the free expression of ideas, no matter how outrageous. Protecting speech in all its forms, however, does not mean condoning all ideas or actions. The University sets high standards for itself and denounces the violation of these standards in unequivocal terms. Harassment and other behavior that intrudes upon the rights of others is unacceptable and subject to action under the guidelines of the institution.

There is no guarantee that the principles of justice, once stated, are realized. The University must constantly remind itself that its mission and ethos must evolve within the context of justice. A just community is always on guard against injustice, always struggling to move closer to the ideal of justice, always asserting its dedication to justice. The assertion of justice takes place in every part of the community: in the classroom, the lecture hall, the Library, the residence and dining hall, wherever members of the University come together. It is the responsibility of all faculty, staff and students to keep the ideals of justice uppermost in the minds of the members of the University so that they may be achieved.

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