

Part II. Educating the Generations

A. The Present Generation—Undergraduate Teaching and Learning

A.1. Background

- A.1.a. UO Philosophy
- A.1.b. The previous Accreditation Self-study and Review
- A.1.c. The “Process for Change”
- A.1.d. UO response

A.2. General Education

- A.2.a. Overview
- A.2.b. Encouraging intellectual connections: The Pathway Project

A.3. Majors and Elective Study

- A.3.a. Overview
- A.3.b. How students select majors
- A.3.c. Majors and careers
- A.3.d. Challenges and Opportunities: Majors

A.4. Special Educational Opportunities

- A.4.a. Honors work
 - Clark Honors College
 - Society of College Scholars
 - Departmental Honors and Undergraduate Research/Scholarship
 - Distinguished Scholarships
- A.4.b. Overseas Study

A.5. Academic Advising

- A.5.a. Background for recent improvements
- A.5.b. Overlapping Advising Organizations
- A.5.c. Central advising services
- A.5.d. Advising within academic units
- A.5.e. Assistance to advisors and outreach to Students
- A.5.f. Electronic systems for Degree Audits and Course Availability checks
- A.5.g. Specialized Advising Services
- A.6.h. Challenges and Opportunities: Advising

A.6. Introduction to the Academy

- A.6.a. New student Orientation
 - Background for recent improvements
 - The current program
 - Challenges and Opportunities: Orientation
- A.6.b. First-year Programs
 - Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs)
 - Freshman Seminars
 - Challenges and Opportunities: First-Year Programs

A.7. Program Evaluation

- A.7.a. Background

- A.7.b. Assessing the quality of the General Education Curriculum
- A.7.c. Assessing the quality of Majors Programs
- A.7.d. Grades as assessment throughout the curriculum
- A.7.e. Assessment of programs that promote academic engagement
- A.7.f. NSSE: An overall measure of student engagement

II. EDUCATING THE GENERATIONS

A. THE PRESENT GENERATION—UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING AND LEARNING

A.1. BACKGROUND

A.1.a. UO Philosophy

The education of undergraduate students is a central activity of the UO. At a comprehensive research institution like ours, undergraduate education must offer a wide range of subject areas that correspond to faculty expertise, as well as opportunities to hone communication and quantitative reasoning skills. It must give students the experience of focused work in one area, and ask them to explore the key ideas in that field in some depth. In addition, an effective undergraduate program helps students appreciate the insights and approaches of fields outside their areas of specialization, and develops the habits of mind that underlie professional success and responsible citizenship. Coursework in all three segments of a UO undergraduate program (General Education, Major, Electives) encourages these habits, and links among them can increase their effectiveness. In addition, students at a research university should have the benefit of learning from faculty who are active scholars -- faculty who can communicate both the delight of original discovery and the sustained intellectual engagement it requires. An ideal undergraduate program would

- Emphasize challenging coursework that develops the capacity to reason and encourages individuality and creativity
- Offer thoughtfully constructed programs of study that show students the relationships among ideas, in addition to the ideas themselves
- Encourage students to participate in research or other creative work and to apply what they've learned in the classroom
- Insure that student work is evaluated with care and candor

This part of the self-study examines the extent to which these ideals shape our undergraduate academic programs. UO undergraduate programs were strong to begin with, but they've been enhanced by insights and recommendations that emerged from two processes: the previous Accreditation Self-study and Review, and the University's "Process for Change" [[Link to summary of Process](#)]. These are summarized as follows:

A.1.b. The Previous Accreditation Self-Study and Review

The 1997 review team made two General Recommendations that applied to the Undergraduate Program:

- Consider the General Education curriculum, with the aims of clarifying the criteria for courses within it and of fostering cohesiveness.

- Employ assessments that focus on outputs, and that gauge quality rather than quantity, alone.

In addition, the reviewers suggested that the University review academic advising to ensure campus-wide effectiveness.

A.1.c. The “Process for Change”

In addition to the Accreditation Self-study and Review, the internal examination that occurred during the University’s “Process for Change” (1997-1999) provided impetus for improvement. The deliberate mixing of faculty, students and staff in small discussion groups created human links that had not existed previously, and juxtaposed perspectives that are typically isolated from each other. The groups were particularly concerned with the following aspects of UO undergraduate education:

- Recruitment of intellectually lively students
- General Education that makes effective use of faculty expertise, and encourages both exploration and intellectual synthesis on the part of students.
- Internships, research opportunities and other Participatory Learning Experiences (PLEs)
- Effective academic advising: general and major-specific
- Appropriate orientation to the university for incoming students
- High quality academic programs for Freshmen

What emerged was creative thinking and practical solutions to problems that had seemed intractable. The energy and good will of those early brain-storm sessions has persisted, and some of the best ideas have been successfully implemented.

A.1.d. UO Response

Specifically, in response to the last Accreditation Review and the Process for Change, we have

- Improved the academic advising system, particularly the articulation between the general and major-specific advising
- Developed more effective criteria for Group-satisfying courses
- Improved our communication of the content and purpose of General Education
- Made the intellectual connections within General Education more evident to students
- Instituted a regular system of General Education review
- Solved logistical problems that previously prevented systematic analysis of educational effectiveness (*e.g.* supply of writing classes insufficient to allow timely completion of writing requirement)
- Carried out a pilot assessment in writing
- Instituted regular assessment of student engagement *via* the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
- Determined the extent of grade inflation, with the goal of ensuring that the assessment function of grades is maintained.

We look forward to continued improvement along these lines, and to additional insights that will emerge from this 2007 Self-study and Review.

A.2. GENERAL EDUCATION (Standard 2.C.)

A.2.a. Overview

The University of Oregon prides itself on the breadth of the education it offers undergraduates. The vehicle for much of the academic exploration we encourage is the coursework that makes up the General Education curriculum. The University expects a lot from this curriculum, as indicated by the following description of its purpose, adopted by the University Senate in May, 1999:

General Education at the University of Oregon

The liberal arts and sciences form the foundation of the General Education curriculum at the University of Oregon. The General Education curriculum prizes a common educational experience for all students, and offers opportunities for mastery of linguistic, analytic and computational skills, as well as the development of aesthetic values. It fosters personal development and an expanded view of self. It offers a breadth of knowledge and a variety of modes of inquiry. It strives for coherence of learning through integration and synthesis. It seeks to impart enthusiasm for learning. It emphasizes critical thinking, logic, and effective reasoning along with a healthy skepticism. It encourages appreciation of heritage and culture and examines values and controversial issues.

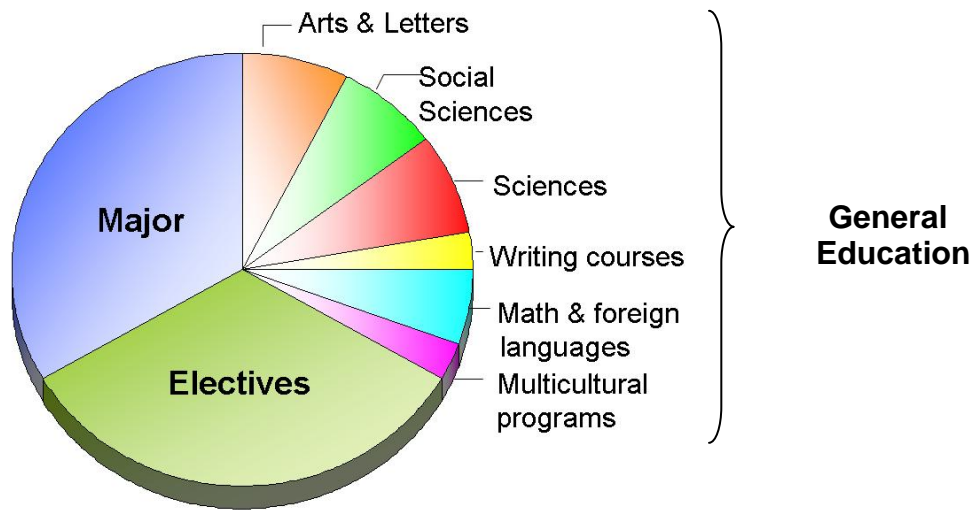
The University of Oregon, as a comprehensive research university, offers opportunities through General Education to develop an understanding of and appreciation for:

1. the centrality of effective communication and language facility
 - * oral and written communication
 - * group, interpersonal and technological communication
2. the moral foundations of human interaction
 - * ethical judgment, personal and social responsibility
 - * the increasing interdependence and diversity of world cultures
 - * the consequences of current actions and policies
3. the nature of the historical past and its relationship to the present
 - * the common concerns and diverse responses of societies, past and present
 - * historical approaches to understanding contemporary issues
4. the diversity of human experience through the study of various cultures
 - * culture and its tangible achievements
 - * creative expression
 - * critical approaches
 - * aesthetic standards
 - * oral and written histories
5. the importance of modern sciences and technology
 - * science as an interrelated body of knowledge, rather than a collection of isolated facts
 - * scientific methods of discovery
 - * scientific perspectives on major problems facing society
 - * quantitative reasoning and computational skills

6. the fundamentals and interrelationship of the human mind and body

- * human behavior
- * perception and cognition
- * diverse modes of thought and creativity
- * self awareness
- * health and physical activity

The General Education Curriculum consists of courses (15-20 for most students) that are intended to achieve two broad goals: 1. development of fundamental skills and 2. introduction to the richness and breadth of what we, as humans, understand and create. The fundamental skills are reasoning and effective communication, and these are honed through courses in writing, mathematics, foreign language and multicultural perspectives. Introduction to human knowledge is done through courses in each of three broad areas: Arts and Letters, Social Science, and Science. The pie chart below illustrates the relative amount of coursework in each part of the General Education curriculum, and also shows that this curriculum contributes significantly to the total coursework (approximately 45 courses) required for a baccalaureate degree.



A precise description of the number and kind of General Education credits required for graduation can be found in the University Catalog [\[link to Catalog\]](#) and the *Student Handbook* [\[link to Handbook\]](#), but one of our goals has been to communicate the rationale and appeal of this curriculum more effectively. Therefore, when explaining the curriculum to students and parents, we've found it useful to focus on courses, a familiar idea, rather than credits, which are abstract. We initially developed the pie chart illustration to give clarity and simplicity to these explanations, and have found it useful in many settings.

We strenuously avoid presenting General Education as a checklist, and instead, emphasize the rich opportunities for personal exploration it provides. We count ourselves successful when students (and parents, too) are intrigued enough to dig into course descriptions on their own and come to advisors with long lists of courses they'd like to take. This happens frequently now, and is promoted by the longer, more interesting course descriptions that we're able to include in *Chart Your Course*, the *Student Handbook* and in the on-line class schedule <http://classes.uoregon.edu/>. These convey interesting ideas to both beginners and experts far more effectively than the 25-word snippets in the Catalog. The online class schedule enables students to readily peruse the universe of available General Education courses. We (Registrar's Office, UO Library, and Undergraduate Studies) are collaborating on a project that will present all Group-satisfying courses, and eventually all UO courses, in the attractive, illustrated format shown in the prototype at <http://ocw.uoregon.edu>

A.2.b Encouraging Intellectual Connections: The Pathway Project

One of the calls that emerged repeatedly during the Process for Change was for greater intellectual coherence in the General Education curriculum provided to undergraduates. Ideally, we wanted to offer students the excitement and challenge of being in a major research university, but foster the sustained examination of key ideas that characterizes education at a first-rate liberal arts college. A possible way to do this emerged during the implementation phase of Process for Change as the "Pathways" project. A Pathway was intended to satisfy at least half of the Group requirements (four courses in each of three areas: Humanities, Social Science and Natural Science) which make up the bulk of the UO's General Education curriculum. Each Pathway was expected to serve approximately 50 students, in groups no larger than 25, and thus to offer close contact with the professors who taught and advised in it.

An essential feature of the approach was that each Pathway was proposed by a group of self-selected faculty. The idea was that the faculty interest and communication patterns necessary to create significant intellectual links among Pathway courses would be built in from the beginning. With the support of University donors and a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Pathway project was launched in Fall 1999 and expanded thereafter so as to discover the strengths and weaknesses of various Pathway topics and designs. Each Pathway approached General Education with a spirit of inquiry shaped by a particular theme. For example, the Human Nature Pathway asked what it means to be human – from the perspectives of psychology, philosophy, literature and genetics. All of the Pathways are described in [\[link to Pathway Descriptions\]](#).

Results. Although the idea of Pathways was appealing to many faculty and some students, and evaluations of the program indicated that students appreciated the connections among courses [\[Link to Pathway evaluations\]](#), the program proved impractical. Student enrollment was never as high as initially anticipated (50 students/pathway), and in some instances it dropped to fewer than a dozen. One reason for the low enrollment was the restrictive nature of the program, which was not appealing to most students after the first year. Although the designers had considered this structure a positive feature of the program, we found that many academically engaged students did not want or need such guidance for very long. They learned about, and then pursued, other academic opportunities very early. For example, the Pathways encouraged

students to explore possible majors, and when they did so, the demands of the major course work often precluded continuing with the Pathway. Students also left the Pathway to study abroad, which was highly encouraged but tended to disrupt Pathway cohorts. In addition, although the academic achievement of Pathway students was high, it was not noticeably higher than that of students in Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs) (see section D.2 below and [\[link to FIG and Pathway data\]](#)). Given the cost of a single Pathway (\$12,500/cohort/year), we concluded that investment of these funds in the FIG program, particularly residential FIGs, had the potential to benefit a larger proportion of UO undergraduates.

Although Pathways themselves are no longer a regular part of the curriculum, the project has had significant influence on at least two important elements of the undergraduate curriculum. First, it provided the inspiration to remodel the FIG program with an eye to emphasizing intellectual connections between the two FIG courses. The Pathway experiment and the evolution of the FIG program proceeded simultaneously, with detailed comparisons and deliberate adoption of successful aspects of both programs. As it turned out, the short duration of FIGs made them more practical than Pathways, but the intellectual cohesiveness of Pathways now enriches FIGs.

Perhaps the most important result is that one Pathway, Elementary Education, has evolved to become a stable feature of teacher training in the College of Education. That Pathway's strong science and math courses, along with special seminars co-taught by Arts and Sciences and Education faculty, will become the new required curriculum for students planning to teach at the elementary level. Many on this campus have long wanted to strengthen our preparation of teachers, especially those who will influence very young students, and we are pleased and proud that the intellectual and personal connections fostered by this Pathway achieved the breakthrough.

A.3. MAJORS AND ELECTIVE STUDY (Standard 2)

A.3.a. Overview

UO undergraduates have many possibilities for concentrated study. There are 79 different majors, offered by the College of Arts and Sciences and each of the professional schools:

<u>School or College</u>	<u>Number of Distinct Majors</u>
College of Arts and Sciences	46
School of Architecture and Allied Arts	15
Lundquist College of Business	2
College of Education	3
School of Journalism and Communication	7
School of Music and Dance	6

There are also 56 minors, similarly distributed among the College of Arts and Sciences and the Professional Schools, and 5 certificate programs available to undergraduates. Each major requires significant coursework in its area (the credit requirements range from 44 to 104), but

each of them also requires a balanced curriculum that includes General Education, as well as focused disciplinary or pre-professional course work. Thus, each program promotes liberal education, and fosters an appreciation for it.

Students are encouraged to use elective coursework to explore possible majors, and many do so – frequently deciding to earn Minors or additional Majors in related, or even disparate, fields. The statistics for the Spring 2005 graduating class tell the story:

Total students earning bachelor’s degrees: 2139

Number earning:

1 Minor	817 (38%)
2 Minors	114 (5%)
2 Majors	273 (13%)
3 Majors	19 (~1%)
1 Certificate	31 (~1%)

Students also use elective credit to take individual classes that are simply appealing or useful on their own, or to engage in research or internships. More than 20 % of UO undergraduates have some sort of experience abroad as part of their UO education (study, internships, or work), and although some may count toward Major requirements, these activities earn elective credit for many students. Foreign language majors have been studying abroad for some time, but increasingly, students in other majors deliberately build this experience into their plans. For example, in 2005-06, the top 5 Majors with respect to studying abroad were: Business, Journalism, Architecture, International Studies, and Spanish. Science students have been historically been under-represented, but the increased variety and length of programs is making participation possible for students in these majors, as well.

A.3.b. How Students Select Majors

Students learn about possible majors from a variety of sources. The application and admissions process includes workshops, for applicants and their parents, that survey available majors and introduce faculty. During IntroDUCKtion and orientation, students who enter with a declared major see an adviser from that field, who discusses the major and provides assistance in course selection. For students who enter without a declared major, or decide to change majors, the General Education curriculum is often an entry-way into a major. In addition, students consult the Office of Academic Advising (OAA) which, in addition to one-on-one advising, maintains an extensive library of information on majors and careers, and provides regular workshops on choosing a Major. Each Spring, a campus-wide “Majors Fair” provides information on the entire array of Majors and enables students to compare them in a central location that is accessible and highly visible. Departments and Colleges also provide advising and informational materials, both in person and through their Websites. OAA cooperates with Departments and Colleges to

provide pre-professional advising in the fields of medicine, nursing, physical therapy, dentistry, education, engineering, pharmacy, social work, and law.

A.3.c. Majors and Careers

Some students enter the university with a specific professional goal in mind, and choose majors in professional schools, such as Business or Architecture. For these students, the link between their undergraduate courses and their future work is obvious. Even for students who are not in professional schools, but who are majoring in fields whose content is directly required for a profession (e.g. biological science for medicine, or economics for financial analysis), it is easy to see how work toward the degree serves as preparation for a job in the real world. For students in other majors, the links between college and career may seem less clear. The links exist, of course, because the undergraduate curriculum is based on the idea that grappling with fundamental ideas in any field sharpens the mind, and teaches the thinking skills needed for creative and analytical work later on.

Professional Distinctions Program: The addition of certain areas of concentration to the requirements of a Major can help undergraduates think about the future and take practical steps toward a satisfying career. This is the goal of the Professional Distinctions Program [[Add link to website](#)], which enables students to develop and enhance professional skills that complement their Majors and are relevant to their long-term aspirations. For instance, a business major interested in international trade might earn a Professional Distinction in the language, culture, and history of a particular region of the world. Possible areas of concentration range widely and include analytic reasoning; arts management; cross-cultural literacy, data analysis, GIS and technology, information ethics, information research and management, international communication and culture, leadership management, professional research and presentation, and written communication. In addition to upper-division coursework, students get practical field experience through an internship in their junior or senior year, participate in professional training workshops, and create a professional resume with the help of a Career Center counselor.

Career Center: All students at the University, not just those in the Professional Distinctions Program, have access to the resources of the Career Center [[Link to website](#)]. Career Counselors work with students individually, to assess interests and provide information tailored to those interests and ambitions. At the small group level, the Center's Career Success Seminars cover topics such as networking, resume-writing, and interview strategies. An important event each year is the Center's Career Fair, which brings dozens of local, national, and international companies and organizations to the UO. Career Success seminars prior to the Fair prepare students to make the most of the opportunity. The Career Center also has a Campus Interview Program to give students interview experience and a UO Mentor Program that links students with professionals in fields they're considering.

A.3.d. Challenges and Opportunities: Majors

An important feature of some UO majors is a culminating experience that promotes intellectual synthesis. Only about 20% of majors currently do this, but its value is widely appreciated by faculty. Responses from academic units also indicate widespread appreciation of the power of

internships, research experience, and other opportunities for students to apply what they've learned in classes. More than half listed these as the most distinctive features of their major. Most majors are constructed so as to give students a common core of disciplinary knowledge and to connect the topics in specialized courses to fundamental principles. The recent efforts of the Sociology Department to increase the structure and coherence of its major [\[Link to web page\]](#) are an example of thoughtful and practical response to the need for synthesis. Sociology, like many departments with popular majors, is unable to offer capstone experiences to more than a small subset of its majors, but the overall design of the major encourages all students to connect ideas.

Still, it is unfortunate that true capstone experiences are relatively rare, and it is worth considering how they could be made available to a larger proportion of students. One possibility is to consider study abroad as a kind of culminating experience for students in a wide variety of majors – not simply foreign languages. The UO is already known for its vigorous international programs, and thus has the capacity to make overseas study a regular part of its undergraduates' education. One way to do this would be to make overseas study an explicit part of the General Education curriculum. Some students already use approved courses taken abroad to fulfill a few of their Group requirements. Better information about interesting combinations of courses to take through study abroad in particular locations could help students design individually-rewarding and coherent plans for their education.

One problem that is widely felt is the lack of information about graduates. Less than a third of our programs have systematic methods for learning what their students actually do with their educations once they leave. Another 12% do exit interviews or surveys, and the remainder maintain loose contact through newsletters, or have no contact at all. Nearly everyone recognized the value of tracking the professional activities of graduates, but lack of resources precludes it for most. Ultimately, alumni success and satisfaction is an excellent gauge of educational quality, and a systematic central effort to obtain these data would assist everyone.

A.4. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

A.4.a. Academic Honors

Clark Honors College: The Robert D. Clark Honors College [\[Link to webpage\]](#) offers an intensive, integrated liberal arts curriculum for academically gifted students. In Fall 2006, the entering class of _____ students had a median combined SAT score of _____ and a median high school GPA of _____. The Clark Honors College differs from honors programs at most other universities because it has a resident faculty and a dedicated space for classrooms, informal study and lounge spaces for students, and faculty offices. The result is the creation of an effective community of scholars, in which intellectual effort and creativity are encouraged, and in which students work closely with faculty. In many ways, students in the Clark Honors College have the best of two worlds – the close mentoring and structured General Education curriculum of a small liberal arts college, combined with access to the wide range of majors and opportunities for research and scholarship characteristic of research universities.

Clark Honors College students fulfill their university General Education requirements through coursework in the College, the foundation of which is a pair of year-long lower-division sequences in Literature and History. There are also General Education science courses designed for non-science majors, although these are not arranged sequentially as the other lower-division courses are. The success of the Literature and History sequences has inspired interest in creating an integrated General Education science sequence, and Honors College faculty are consulting widely to determine the best way to do this. Such a sequence is not needed for students majoring in a science, but could be effective in addressing the lack of science literacy among non-scientists, which is unfortunately not uncommon even in this highly-selected group.

Honors College students choose majors outside the Honors College, in regular university departments, but maintain strong connection with the College through required upper-division Seminars. In the Seminars, students in a variety of majors focus on a topic at an advanced level (e.g. The Human Genome Project, Historical Conflicts and Moral Dilemmas, Crime and Criminals in 19th Century Fiction) and enrich the class with the perspectives they bring from their studies elsewhere in the University. Development of a lower-division science sequence (described above) would ensure that Seminars with a science focus would be accessible to all students. Because these Seminars are taught by both Honors College and non-Honors College faculty, they provide a vehicle for maintaining intellectual links between the College and the University at large.

Perhaps the most significant formative experience for Honors College students is the required thesis they write as seniors. The thesis work is typically done outside the College, in the students' major departments, but Honors College classes help students pose clear questions, delineate approaches, and communicate findings. Each thesis is defended before a committee that includes Honors College, and non-Honors College faculty, and the range of topics, as well as the depth and sophistication of the work, is impressive.

Society of College Scholars: Incoming Freshmen with strong high school records are invited to enroll in the College Scholars Freshman Colloquium, a 1-credit elective course through which they learn first-hand about faculty research and scholarship [Link to web page]. A Colloquium is offered in each of three broad disciplinary divisions (Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences), and students are encouraged to sample multiple areas, if they wish. Participation opens a further opportunity, in the Sophomore year, to participate in discussion-oriented courses taught for College Scholars by distinguished faculty members. Juniors and Seniors are encouraged to do honors work within their major departments.

Departmental Honors and Undergraduate Research/Scholarship: Most academic departments within the University offer the possibility of graduating with honors to undergraduates who meet appropriate academic criteria. In most cases, this means that the student has excelled in coursework and has also carried out some sort of independent work. In some departments, the opportunity for independent work requires a certain level of proficiency but is not strictly tied to an honors program, thus expanding the opportunities for undergraduates

to discover their aptitude for original thinking. Although research and creative work for undergraduates is widely available in the University, the information is not well-organized and undergraduates must be enterprising to find it. This is not a great problem in the sciences, where students are often in small classes or lab sections, where they learn about research through direct conversation with faculty. In other areas, communication is more difficult and students with no previous exposure to original scholarship are less likely to discover it. One approach to this problem is the one that the Library is taking – namely, to collect information centrally and make it accessible to undergraduates through a website. Another is to give undergraduates in large classes a taste of faculty scholarship. The Faculty Perspectives Seminars [link to FPS] that accompany some large-enrollment courses are designed to give a small group of interested students at any level the chance to examine the material in more depth, guided by the faculty member teaching the course. These seminars, begun in AY2001-02, have sparked student curiosity about specific ideas in the social sciences and humanities, as well as in the sciences.

Distinguished Scholarships: Although the current UO student body is academically solid, our students are not as successful as they should be in competing for distinguished awards, such as Rhodes, Marshall, Truman and Goldwater scholarships. We have outstanding students, both in the Robert D. Clark Honors College and outside it, whose merit is indicated by the quality of graduate programs to which they are accepted, but who rarely consider applying for Rhodes or Marshall Scholarships. The University had its first and only Marshall Scholar in 2005, and has not had a Rhodes Scholar since 1985. We fare better with Goldwater Scholarships, typically winning 1-3 each year. The problem seems to be one of communication. Students who would be strong candidates simply don't know about these possibilities, and are often unaware of their own potential. They need the attention of a dedicated advisor – someone who can devote the necessary time to identifying them and working with them through the challenging application process. At present, the College of Arts and Sciences Deans Office does its best to co-ordinate applications, but the time-consuming one-on-one work with potential applicants is simply not possible. It is likely that the success with Goldwater competition is a reflection of the intense personal and intellectual interaction that characterizes daily life in a research lab. Current efforts are underway to improve our ability to identify and encourage promising students in all academic areas.

A.4.b Participatory Learning Experiences (PLEs)

Internships: Internships for undergraduates are offered through individual academic programs, such as the Lundquist college of Business and the Department of Sociology, for instance, and also through a central office. As a working definition, internships are typically one-time work or service experiences related to a student's major or career goal. The internship plan generally involves a student working in a professional setting under the supervision and monitoring of practicing professionals. Internships can be paid or unpaid and the student may or may not receive academic credit for performing the internship. Ideally, internships should enable students to acquire applied and meaningful experiences to identify or test their interests and talents and make informed career and professional decisions.

PLEs: Appreciation of the value of such practical experience has increased among faculty, as well as among students, parents, and potential employers of university graduates. Local campus interest was evident during the Process for Change, and took tangible form in the work of the Upper Division Implementation Group. That group surveyed existing opportunities for students and focused on means for assuring their educational quality. The name “Participatory Learning Experiences” (PLEs) was adopted to include the full range of internships, participation in research and other applied work, and a set of common desired features of credit-bearing experiences was identified. These features included careful design and selection of projects, significant faculty input and evaluation, and close supervision and feed-back throughout the experience.

For a period of approximately two years, while funds were available to hire a PLE Director, progress was substantial. Advisors for unit-specific internship programs joined advisors in the central program, then run by the Career Center, to standardize high expectations for both student participants and supervisors/advisors across the University. In addition, the organization of information about PLEs was greatly improved, and the Director worked closely with an Advisory Group to monitor the quality of existing PLEs and to solicit proposals for new ones. There was widespread appreciation of the progress already made, and enthusiasm for the direction in which the program was headed. Unfortunately, this optimism didn’t last. Budget constraints eliminated support for a Director’s position, and reduced the Career Center’s contribution to the work.

Now, although the value of PLEs is undisputed, the number of UO students finding ways to participate in these activities has decreased. Students with access to internship programs in their majors are probably better-served, but general UO students seeking internships face challenges such as

1. Knowing where to begin looking for internships: Identifying internship opportunities related to a particular field or interest area is not straightforward.
2. Understanding how to obtain academic credit for internships or how to find paid internships, if financial circumstances require this: There is no internship center or clearinghouse that can provide guidance.
3. Understanding the responsibilities associated with an internship: Again, the lack of an effective central resource is a problem, and the number of departmental coordinators and faculty who can help is small.

In addition, there are special challenges for international students, students with disabilities, LGTBTA students, and other students who seek internships, and have special needs .

The opportunity for the University of Oregon to improve in the internship area is significant. Currently, there is no centralized program to act as a referral source for students interested in internships. The UO Career Center formerly acted in this manner by hosting the Career Development Internship Program in which 30 sites were offered each term, with many

organizations using interns on a regular basis. Upper division elective credit was awarded based on attendance at seminars, required written work throughout the term, and written evaluation by the supervisor. More than 250 students per year participated, and this program was a strong component of the PLE initiative described above. At present, the program is administered by a single graduate teaching fellow, who has little or no direct interaction with prospective or actual interns. All proposals are submitted online through a website and are reviewed and approved electronically. Students have difficulty finding the program and fewer than 50 per year participate.

A.5. ACADEMIC ADVISING (Standards 2, 3, and 4: Indicators 2.C.5, 3.D.10, and 4.A.2)

A.5.a Background for Recent Improvements

While the University of Oregon has always defined advising as part of the faculty's role, there had been a long history of real difficulties in identifying interested and qualified faculty to work with undeclared students during initial advising. This created a situation where it was not unusual to have inexperienced and less-than-enthusiastic faculty put in the uncomfortable role of being an expert adviser to entering undeclared students. This also contributed to a tendency for advising to be isolated in the professional Office of Academic Advising. Also, the Office of Academic Advising relied heavily on student initiative in seeking help – probably unrealistically in cases where help was most needed. Finally, advising was too often a mechanical check of students' completion of degree requirements rather than an opportunity to encourage curiosity and stimulate intellectual growth.

Academic advising for undergraduate students has undergone significant improvement as a consequence of the Process for Change. In that process of self-examination, an Advising Implementation Team identified the following goals:

- increase faculty involvement
- provide better outreach to students
- make advising more intellectual and less mechanical

To meet these goals, the University developed a program for excellence in advising that combines

- overlapping advising organizations that promote effective interaction of faculty and professional advisors
- aggressive outreach efforts to students
- implementation of electronic systems for the mechanical aspects of advising: degree auditing and course availability checks.

A.5.b. Overlapping Advising Organizations

The University of Oregon has a distinctive structure of academic advising, which provides students with multiple opportunities to be advised on academic programs, course selection, career possibilities etc. Advising takes place in the centralized Office of Academic Advising (OAA) *and* in academic units across campus. The result is that every undergraduate has more than one academic advisor. Upon arrival for orientation, each student is introduced to an OAA advisor and is also assigned an adviser in an academic unit. Students who have declared a major are assigned advisers in the appropriate units. Students who are undeclared are assigned to “generalist” faculty advisors. Among the innovations of the Process for Change was the improvement of advising for undeclared students through the creation of a stable group of experienced faculty with affinity for this work. This College Advising Program built on the expertise of a small group of faculty, and has added specially-trained new-comers. Participants are compensated and are expected to participate in a certain number of organized advising events during the academic year, in addition to their primary task of advising students at the start of Fall Term. They’re also encouraged to maintain contact with their advisees throughout the year. The effective training and esprit de corps of the College Advisors have increased the consistency and reliability of undeclared advising, and thus greatly improved its quality.

A.5.c. Central Advising Services

The Office of Academic Advising is staffed by 9 professional advisers who are available by appointment and on a drop-in basis on all weekdays. OAA interfaces with the Office of Student Life to coordinate academic with non-academic support and advising. OAA advisers work with the University Committees on Academic Requirements and Scholastic Review to handle students’ degree and progress issues. In addition, OAA maintains a website (<http://advising.uoregon.edu/>) to provide students with advising information and resources. A second centralized advising office, the Office of Multicultural Academic Support (OMAS), coordinates with OAA and provides 5 advisers specifically oriented to the needs of self-identified students of color, and available to other students, as well.

A.5.d. Advising Within Academic Units

Individual academic units organize advising differently, as appropriate and possible, given local needs and resources. Each academic department has a designated advising coordinator, who is typically responsible for coordinating advising within the department and handling transfer evaluations. Most departments in the College of Arts and Sciences rely on instructional faculty to advise their majors, although some of the larger science departments have professional advisers. The larger professional schools also rely upon professional advisers for their majors. In addition, some units provide peer advisers and some employ graduate teaching fellows for advising. The English Department is an example of a unit in which academic advising is embedded in faculty culture. The responsibility for advising is taken seriously and shared by faculty at all levels. Many departments rely on carefully-trained graduate students to supplement faculty advising. Philosophy and Psychology use this approach, and in the case of Psychology, the largest CAS major, undergraduate Peer Advisors make it possible to handle the advising load. The Mathematics Department also uses its excellent undergraduate majors effectively – as tutors and advisors to other math students.

A.5.e. Assistance to Advisors and Outreach to Students

Advisors. Information about all advising offices and resources is given in the *Student Handbook*, in a form that allows both students and faculty to understand where to go for various kinds of advising. For advisers from units across campus, OAA regularly offers workshops for beginners and information sessions for everyone. These take place prior to the start of the academic year, quarterly during the year, and are offered individually or in small groups throughout the year by request. They provide training and also encourage interaction among faculty and professional advisors. This interaction, as well as the other outreach efforts of OAA, has significantly reduced the isolation that previously compromised UO advising. Advisors are provided with a Faculty Advising Manual, Student Handbook, and a quarterly Advising Bulletin that covers recent changes and highlights key information.

Students. Before registering for the first time, students are required to attend an advising workshop and to meet with their individual advisers. They are encouraged to see their advisers frequently thereafter and the name of their faculty adviser is readily available in two places, DuckWeb and their Degree Audit (see below). The Office of Academic Advising now actively creates opportunities for advising to take place in informal settings, making it more accessible to students. These include regular Advising Outreach programs in the residence halls (e.g. informal Pizza Dinners with advisors), and in the student union, as well as presentations to classes and student organizations. In addition, OAA regularly contacts students via e-mail and postcard, to encourage all students to seek advising during class registration periods, to congratulate those who are successful, and to provide students in difficulty with more targeted information and advice. Advertisements of approaching events are published widely (in the student newspaper, through flyers, and on street banners), and undeclared students are given important advising information *via* Blackboard.

A.5.f. Electronic Systems for Degree Audits and Course Availability Checks

The University now utilizes a Degree Audit Report System (DARS) that enables students to track electronically their progress toward completion of degree requirements. The move toward such a system, and purchase of the necessary software, came out of the implementation phase of The Process for Change. Completion of General Education coursework was track-able almost immediately because the requirements had already been encoded in a home-grown system. The Registrar's office then led the campus effort to systematize and enter the requirements for all 79 UO undergraduate majors.

“DARS” reports are generated after every quarter, and they've quickly become popular with both students and advisors. They are structured by requirement category: a description of the requirement is followed by a list of the student's coursework that meets it, and a statement of what is missing [[link to sample DARS report](#)]. DARS reports make it easy for students to check on their own progress and, because they provide the name of the academic adviser, also inform them of who to see for in-person follow-up. They dramatically improve sessions with advisers because they eliminate mechanical progress-checking, and thereby allow more time for substantive discussion.

DARS has been particularly helpful in enforcing pre-requisites, where they are important for students' learning. For example, before DARS, impatient students often registered for courses like Biochemistry without any prior coursework in chemistry. Since their inappropriate registration could not be prevented, faculty were left to try to discover these students after the fact (through laborious manual checking) and then persuade them to drop the course. This was not a recipe for establishing good rapport with the class.

Implementation of DARS was followed by inauguration of an electronic Class Schedule, which facilitates advising about course selection through its effective search functions and expanded course descriptions. The electronic Class Schedule enables advisers to readily find open classes that meet students' needs and interests. Another popular advising aid is the DuckWeb faculty advising menu, which gives advisors instant access to transfer evaluations, degree audits, and transcripts.

A.5.g. Specialized Advising Services

In addition to the advising services described above, which are designed for all UO undergraduates, there are some that are deliberately specialized to meet the interests and needs of particular groups of students. These are

Transfer students. Over the last several years, we have experimented with variations of our Freshmen advising program so as to make it more suitable for transfer students. What we've found effective are modified advising workshops that focus specifically on transfer credit equivalencies and the academic planning strategies appropriate for experienced student. We now offer this kind of specialized advising to prospective, as well as newly admitted, transfer students. UO advisers provide on-site advising at Lane Community College (located in Eugene), and at several other Oregon community colleges throughout the year. All transfer students are sent a welcome letter in their first term, and those who earn a first term gpa one point or below their admission gpa are contacted and encouraged to connect with important campus resources. Those who do unusually well are congratulated. In addition to meeting with an academic advisor, transfer students are encouraged to enroll in Transfer Seminars, which function in somewhat the same way for them that the FIG seminar does for Freshmen [[Add link to program](#)].

Future professionals. A group of faculty-members in a range of disciplines constitutes the Education Careers Advising Team (ECAT) (<http://geography.uoregon.edu/edge/TeacherCert/ecat.htm>) and is available for specialized advising of students interested in middle- or secondary-level teaching in those disciplines. Pre-professional advising in education is also provided by OAA, and specialists there collaborate with faculty in the relevant departments to advise students headed for other professions: *e.g.* medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, physical therapy, engineering, social work, and law.

Student athletes. Support Services for Student Athletes reports to the Provost and works jointly with the Office of Academic Advising and the Athletic Department to provide academic advising for NCAA athletes, and to ensure compliance.

Students needing special academic support. The Office of Disability Services works with students, faculty, and others, as needed, to minimize the limitations students experience because of disabilities. The services provided vary greatly – from assistance with note-taking for students with arm or hand injuries to signing in all classes and extra-curricular activities (*e.g.* sports) for deaf students.

Academic Learning Services (ALS) provides Math and Writing labs for all students who want assistance, beyond their formal classes, with these essential skills. The staff for both labs work closely with the Math and Composition faculty who design and teach the courses, so that each group understands and respects what the other is doing and can reinforce key concepts and approaches. ALS also advises McNair scholars and the TRIO program, and thereby increases the likelihood of academic success for first-generation college students. ALS is also a key partner in the University's Undergraduate Support Program (USP), which assists the small number of freshmen (~30/year) who do not meet admissions requirements, but show promise. USP students are required to participate in a specialized curriculum, Models for Academic Performance and Success ([MAPS](#)), along with a comprehensive advising program during their freshman year. The idea is to build essential academic skills through a curriculum that initially grounds students in the foundations of humanities and social sciences, and progressively integrates coursework in other disciplines according to individual interest. A small team from three campus offices: [Academic Learning Services](#), [Academic Advising](#), and the [Office of Multicultural Academic Support](#) collaborate to run USP. Recent improvements include a revised admission contract that clarifies the University's expectations, a special orientation that introduces USP students to the whole USP Team and prevents isolation, and a regular check-in with the 3-member USP administrative team.

In addition to these central academic services for general needs, there is support for more specialized needs, as well. In the sciences, it is common for excellent undergraduates to serve as tutors for students in particular courses. In Chemistry, Biology, and Math, this help is organized in groups of carefully-selected and trained Peer Tutors. The Yamada Language Center offers students the opportunity to hone their language skills and to learn languages that are not formally taught at the University.

A.5.h. Challenges and Opportunities: Advising

In order to make our distinctive, overlapping advising structure even more effective, we need to enhance communication and collaboration among the advising offices and academic departments. Steps have been made in this direction through the advising workshops and discussion sessions offered by OAA. The new "Living and Learning" residence hall, with classrooms and faculty offices as well as dormitory rooms, has an explicit goal of enhancing informal opportunities for advising by both faculty members and professional advisors. We think that students are certain to benefit, but we expect that the interactions among advisors will yield dividends, as well.

Technology can be very effective in enhancing communication and collaboration among advisors. The web based tracking system, Advisor-Trac, allows advisors within OAA or other offices to document information about meetings with students, and when appropriate, to share

information readily, even when on opposite sides of the campus. It also provides reporting functions that will reveal patterns of students' use of advisors. Advisor-Trac is now being installed and tested in OAA with full office implementation anticipated in 06-07. The next step will be to determine interest and applicability to specific academic departments and other advising units throughout campus.

A.6. INTRODUCTION TO THE ACADEMY (Standards 1, 2 and 3)

A.6.a. New student Orientation (Standard 3: Indicator 3.D.9)

Background for recent improvements. The way in which students are introduced to the university influences the likelihood that they will engage with the academic core and ultimately succeed. Both the importance of orientation for new students, and the need to improve it, were pointed out in the Process for Change discussion phase. A significant improvement had already been made in the early 1980s, when a massive fall program was replaced with a series of smaller mid-summer orientations. The wisdom of this change was widely appreciated, but neither the structure nor the spirit of the summer events was seen to be ideal. Summer orientation, called "IntroDUCKtion", was designed to be a relatively relaxed, two-day program during which students could register for Fall term classes, and both parents and students would get a feel for campus life. The overall plan was good, but because program components had been added piecemeal, over time, key ideas and desirable messages had gotten lost. For example:

- Although parents were encouraged to accompany their children to IntroDUCKtion, the programs for parents and students did not fit together conceptually. On the one hand, parents were urged to be involved in the decisions associated with beginning college study; on the other, they were barred from the one-on-one meetings of students with their academic advisors. Not surprisingly, the result was frustration and anger.
- Students were overwhelmed with information on Day 1, but were still not adequately prepared to meet with academic advisors and select fall term classes on Day 2.
- Undesirable peer influence was common. Too much was asked of the student orientation staff, who simply lacked the experience and perspective to carry the full burden of encouraging both academic engagement and responsible personal behavior.
- The event was largely isolated from the academic side of the university. Although a few faculty participated as academic advisors or occasional speakers to parents, none understood the program as a whole or had been involved in its design.

To improve matters, and particularly to strengthen and co-ordinate the academic aspects of orientation, the Office of New Student Orientation <http://orientation.uoregon.edu> was brought together with the offices of Academic Advising and First-year Programs in 2000, and put under the leadership of the newly-created Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies.

The current program. The changes listed below have created orientation events that show what our academic community is, and that more effectively bring students and parents into it. As a result, students now emerge from orientation confident and enthusiastic about starting challenging coursework, not just going through the mechanics of registration; parents are reassured that they understand the academic decisions their children are making and they often

compliment the university on the thoughtful design of its undergraduate programs [[Link to survey results](#)].

- *Stronger Student Orientation Staff (Standard 3: Indicator 3.A.1):* Students representing greater academic strength and greater diversity of all kinds (academic major, ethnic and cultural background, age, and social interests) were deliberately recruited as Student Orientation Staff (SOS). Whereas Caucasians in a few majors previously dominated SOS, active recruitment across campus now produces staffs that more nearly match the actual array of student academic interests and personal characteristics at the UO. The typical staff member now has a strong academic record, a high standard of personal behavior, and a lively interest in a range of activities (e.g. music, athletics, and languages).
- *Increased participation by incoming students:* Participation in IntroDUCKtion has increased steadily since it was started more than 25 years ago.

[Insert graph]

- A fall orientation just before classes begin is still offered, but fewer and fewer incoming students rely on it exclusively. Completion of an entirely on-line registration system in 200? simplified IntroDUCKtion logistics. In addition, clearer messages to incoming students and parents *via* telephone and the *Chart Your Course* book (a publication created in 2001 that is now mailed to all admitted students while they are still in high school [[Link to CYC](#)]) has diversified the population of students who attend, and increased the proportion who come with family. These efforts are in line with the recommendations of the UO Diversity Plan [[Link to UO Diversity Plan: Strategic Directions Involving Students](#)] and a focused outreach effort in 2004 (correct year?) brought ~100 students of color, and their families, who wouldn't otherwise have attended IntroDUCKtion. Since then, participation of students of color at IntroDUCKtion has been strong, and special outreach has not been needed.
- *Improved explanation of the curriculum (Standards 1, 2 and 3: Indicators 1.B.2, 2.C.2, 2.C.5, and 3.D.10):* Formerly, the academic information necessary for fall term course selection, as well as for planning an entire Bachelor's degree program, was presented in detail to students at orientation. In contrast, little or nothing having to do with the curriculum was explained to parents. As a result, overwhelmed students tuned out and anxious parents fretted about the unknown. Our current approach is to explain the curriculum more effectively to everyone, deliberately separating students and parents at this point, but bringing them together later to compare notes and share what they've learned. Advising of students is done in two stages: 1. An overview session presents the general structure of a bachelor's degree, without a lot of detail. This is followed by a smaller more informal workshop that addresses individual questions and situations. 2. On the second day students typically meet individually with an academic advisor, who may be a faculty-member or a professional advisor [[link to IntroDUCKtion program](#)].

Parents go to a single session, which is the functional equivalent of the students' workshop, and is led jointly by the Directors of Academic Advising and First-year

Programs. Just as the students do, parents learn about the deliberate inclusion of General Education and Electives in our curriculum, but parents learn considerably more about the rationale behind this design, and are also introduced to the philosophy and goals of our First-year Programs, as well as the importance of academic advising.

Both students and parents are given copies of the *Student Handbook*, and encouraged to approach course selection with curiosity -- reading the descriptions of General Education courses provided on line or in the *Student Handbook*, and considering a wide range that sound interesting. The idea is to prepare students and parents to communicate with each other when they are re-united, but also to give both groups the knowledge and confidence needed for students to talk directly with their academic advisors, without parents present, the following day. We've improved our explanation of the curriculum by

- eliminating unnecessary detail and structuring the workshops with Power Point slides tailored to students or parents [[links to Advising Workshop PP Parent Session PP: Introduction to Academics at the UO](#)].
- improving the preparation of advising staff for leading these sessions, and training students to assist.
- creating the *Student Handbook*, which aims to make academic information more accessible than it is in a typical catalog [[link to Student Handbook](#)].
- personalizing the student workshops by organizing them around small, 25-student groups that go through orientation as cohorts.

We monitor the effectiveness of advising during orientation by

- sitting in on workshops
 - collecting feed-back from students and parents
 - asking faculty and professional advisors to rate the extent to which the students they advise have been properly prepared in advance.
- *Improved Campus Climate:* In addition to working out their Fall Term schedules, students at IntroDUCKtion get a sense of campus culture and begin to create a new community that will shape the university in the future. We have therefore taken care, in the design of orientation and the choice of its leaders, to encourage the attitudes we prize: intellectual curiosity, openness to new ideas and unfamiliar people, kindness, and personal integrity [[Link to Mission Statement](#)]. Through the specific changes listed below, we have sought to prevent the cynicism and antagonism that sets in when students feel alienated from the academic core of the university.
 1. The appeal of ideas is emphasized throughout orientation. For example,
 - The opening session uses various media, including a student jazz trio, to convey the pleasure of engagement with ideas, and the sense, ala Pogo, of “insurmountable opportunities”.

- In the “Faculty Perspectives” sessions, faculty offer mock classes for students and parents (separately) that feature the ideas and philosophies that motivate their teaching and scholarship. During IntroDUCKtion 2006, for example, an anthropologist explained what’s interesting about the social behavior of the great apes she studies; a mathematician who works at the physics/math interface talked about what we might learn from gravity waves; a historian asked where universities came from and why they persist. This popular program is often cited as students’ and parents’ favorite part of IntroDUCKtion. Instead of equating academics with mechanical study skills and time management, it gives students a glimpse of the rewards of thinking logically and asking good questions, and it encourages them to join this creative community.
 - Advising workshops for students and parents are designed to encourage curiosity and understanding, not to overwhelm with information. The results of this change in emphasis have been dramatic. Both parents and students are eager to talk with faculty and staff – often about ideas or topics that they simply find interesting, rather than about how confused they feel.
2. Staff concerned with the academic and non-academic aspects of student life collaborate to encourage positive attitudes and responsible behavior among students. For instance,
- The structure of IntroDUCKtion is designed to integrate academic and social messages, and throughout, staff in Student Affairs and Undergraduate Studies communicate with each other and take care to reinforce key ideas, such as personal integrity, attentiveness to the needs of others, and the notion that academic challenge is not a bad thing.
 - University Housing works closely with Undergraduate Studies to create residential FIGs and promote them to incoming students.
 - The role of Week of Welcome (fall orientation) is changing, as more students arrive with class schedules in place. We now use this time to encourage healthy community formation through University-wide events that celebrate the pleasure of human interaction (Intermingle) and the values of the academy (University Convocation). University Convocation serves as the official welcome for both new students and new faculty. It features an outstanding speaker (usually connected with summer reading for incoming students), academic regalia, wonderful music, and afterwards, an informal picnic supper for ~3000 on the lawn. Last year’s speaker was string theorist Jim Gates; this year’s was U.S. Poet Laureate, Billy Collins
<http://orientation.uoregon.edu/convocation>

Challenges and Opportunities: New Student Orientation. Progress in introducing students to positive extra-curricular opportunities has been substantial over the last decade, but more could be done, and it’s not clear that all students find an optimal academic/social balance. Initiatives

such as the Living Learning Center are motivated by our conviction that students' everyday living environment is a major factor in establishing this balance. Much of our attention during the next few years will be aimed at finding the best ways to influence it productively.

A.6.b First-Year Programs (Standards 2 and 3: Indicators 2.A.3. and 2.A.8;
Policy 2: Indicators 2.1 and 2.2)

Key to the education UO offers its undergraduates are the programs we have designed especially for Freshmen <http://learning.uoregon.edu>. The designs are based on the idea that effective academic engagement of beginning students is essential, and that if it can be achieved, sustained academic success and persistence toward a degree are likely. We foster academic engagement by

- bringing beginning students and faculty together in small groups that have an academic focus
- helping students discover the connections among different subjects
- creating opportunities for the practical application of classroom concepts
- creating and promoting academic programs in the residence halls

Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs). Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs) have been a part of introducing new students to our campus since 1982. In fact, UO was the second university in the nation (after SUNY Stonybrook) to create such a program. A FIG is a group of 25 Freshmen who are co-enrolled in 2 General Education classes, and also in a 1-credit seminar. The General Education courses are regular university courses that include students at other levels, and may be quite large. The seminar course, however, is limited to FIG students. There are FIGs to suit students with different interests. Some are designed for students with specific majors or careers in mind; most are intended to introduce students to General Education subject areas that interest them. The two General Education courses in each FIG are selected because they fit together conceptually, and because the faculty teaching them are interested in making the intellectual links explicit for students. Examples of FIGs for Fall 2006 are listed at [[Link to Fall 2006 FIGs](#)].

FIGs have undergone major changes since Fall 2000, growing in size and in academic focus. A total of 47 FIGs were offered in Fall 2000, compared with 62 for Fall 2006. Although FIGs are not mandatory, nearly half (48%) of entering Freshmen now choose to join one. Over the same period, the academic rigor of FIGs has increased – because of stronger student leaders and cultural change throughout the program. Before Fall 2000, the role of the FIG seminar was primarily social – to help FIG students get to know one another, and be introduced to campus resources (e.g. the Career Center, student organizations and clubs) by an upper classman who served as an organizer of social activities outside of class. There was concern among instructors that these influential older students did not always provide ideal role models for incoming students. The representation of academic majors within the group was skewed (in 1998, 2 majors contributed 40% of the FIG leaders and, at 47% of the FIG leaders, professional schools were over-represented), and too often, the “leadership” provided was simply access to grapevine information on easy courses. In some FIGs, expression of serious academic interest was actively discouraged.. Moreover, the FIG seminar was rarely taught by faculty, and tended to focus on study skills rather than intellectual content. Most research and teaching faculty were not interested in participating in a program without academic purpose.

Changing the role of the FIG seminar: The original FIG program had a demonstrable positive effect on student retention (see 1998 in the “Retention” bar graph farther on in this section), but we thought it had the potential to play a more significant role in introducing students to the academy. Therefore, we deliberately remodeled the program to attract faculty members. The FIG seminars are now taught by the faculty who are teaching the General Education courses - sometimes both of them. The most important change in FIGs is that the purpose of the seminar is now very clearly to explore the ideas in the main courses, and to find connections among them. For instance, the “Rockin’ Science” FIG paired a Physics course with the History of Rock and Roll, and the physicist/ drummer who taught the seminar made the most of the music/physics connection. The Rippey Innovative Teaching Award has been a key factor in promoting collaborative teaching of the FIG seminar by both of the General Education course instructors. One team of ecologists uses the award to support a FIG field trip to the Olympic National Park, where students investigate the watershed they’ll be studying later on in class. Other pairs of faculty stay on campus, but connect ideas just as effectively. Here’s what happened when John Lysaker and Sara Hodges co-taught a FIG that included a philosophy and a psychology course:

John Lysaker’ comments 12/7/04 (phone conversation excerpt): “On [one] occasion, we brought the two FIGs together and had them watch a video on the Stanford Prison project and reflect generally on what the video showed about human nature. In addition to the benefits for the students, it was also beneficial for Sara and me as faculty. For example, I had never seen the prison project before (this was a famous study in the 70s where they simulated a prison, and the participants really devolved into the roles they were playing and the lead researcher had to end it). It allowed me the chance to work with someone in Psychology. Both of us are talking about human nature, but from different perspectives and in different ways. I wanted my students to think about different ways of exploring human nature. I wanted them to think about it empirically and with experiments and being in the Rippey made it easier for me and for the students to follow.”

Sara Hodges’ comments 12/7/04 (email excerpt): I have no doubt that students are constantly exposed to profs telling them how one discipline fits with another - we don't need Rippeys just to alert them to that fact. However, there is something very potent about students seeing faculty interacting - having fun playing with ideas together, being energized by the intellectual connections. I think they think we are a little weird to be excited by this stuff, but they "get" it: That our job is not just to create tests and assignments to make their lives a living hell; that we actually LIKE what we're studying, and we seek out new ways of thinking about it.”

Changing the role of the FIG student assistant: The role of the student assistant has also changed markedly. Inspired by the University of Missouri, we now carefully train UO students (called FIG Academic Assistants, FAs) to be able to work jointly with FIG faculty to create original syllabi for their seminars [[link to sample FIG syllabus](#)]. The training is done in a Spring Term course by an experienced faculty member. Preparation for both academic and social leadership is woven into the course. Of particular note is the attention to effective interaction with different kinds of people [[Link to FIG diversity training](#)]. The diversity training

provided for FIG leaders is imaginative and nuanced, and students tell us that it is useful in practice.

Unlike earlier FIG leaders, the FAs begin working with the faculty during the training course the preceding spring, and continue the collaboration throughout fall and sometimes into later terms. We've found that the FAs have good, original ideas for seminar topics and activities, and they're able to lead some of the discussions in class. One FA suggested a completely new FIG, based on his interests in Environmental Studies and Philosophy and showed us how the intellectual links could be made; another FA brought together her two majors, Psychology and Biology, in a highly successful FIG that she proposed. Collaboration with the Teaching Effectiveness Program and with the Library has improved the FAs' ability to facilitate productive discussion, and to introduce Freshmen to substantive library investigation. (It hasn't hurt their own library skills, either!)

Faculty routinely rave about their FAs, and it's clear that these partnerships are mutually beneficial. All of the student mentors also arrange out-of-class activities that help new students become better acquainted with each other, the faculty, and campus resources. Some of the activities offered in Fall 2005 are listed at [\[link to Fall 2005 FIG Activities\]](#). The overall quality of the students in FA positions has increased dramatically. Compared to 1998, the FAs for Fall 2005 represented a wider range of majors (from Biochemistry to Religious Studies), earned higher grades (3.64 vs 3.36 senior GPA), and included more members of the Clark Honors College [\[link to FIG FAs: 1998 vs 2005\]](#). Moreover, it is now common for FAs to serve more than once. About half the FAs return to the position each year, and some work with the same professor for 3 or 4 years.

Residential FIGs: An important component of the current FIG program is the group of FIGs known as "ResFIGs" (Residential FIGs) – which go one step beyond standard FIGs by allowing the twenty-five FIG students to live in the same residential complex. Students don't live right next door to one another, but are close enough to find each other for study purposes, or to take part in special events connected with FIGs (e.g. expeditions to plays, poetry readings, or informal meals with campus visitors). For example, the Creative Arts hall contains FIGs dealing with architecture, theater, and art, and also houses non-FIG students interested in music or the fine arts. The Residential FIG program did not exist before Fall 2000, and it has grown from an experimental offering of 4 residential FIGs in Fall 2001 to the current 23. All are popular and are exceptionally effective in fostering academic engagement [\[link to FIG vs resFIG data\]](#). The success of Residential FIGs would not be possible without the effective partnership we are fortunate to have between Undergraduate Studies and University Housing.

Freshman Seminars. Freshman seminars are small, interactive courses designed to introduce first-year students to thought-provoking, challenging, and interesting subjects. The topics are diverse -- currently ranging from "How to do Baseball Research" to "The French Mind". These courses develop writing, speaking, and critical-reasoning skills, in addition to providing faculty guidance and peer interaction. Freshman Seminars are open to all incoming students in their first year of university study. Each term, approximately ten different seminars are offered and enrollment in each is limited to 23 students. Students may take more than one seminar throughout the year, however space is limited and enrollment is on a first-come, first-serve basis.

One example of a popular Freshman Seminar is “Theories of Leadership,” taught each year by President Frohnmayer. In this seminar, students investigate how theoretical concepts about interaction of personality, training, character, and environment help explain the principled or unprincipled exercise of power and influence. Students also examine various definitions of leadership from political theory, history, psychology, sociology, literature, moral philosophy, and organizational behavior, and they test the insights of classical theorists from Machiavelli to Nietzsche.

Side bar: Why Faculty Enjoy Teaching Freshman Seminars

Eugene Luks , Professor of Computer Science, on his Freshman Seminar, “Making and Breaking Codes”:

“Today I was showing the Masterpiece Theatre video ‘Breaking the Code’, about Alan Turing, ... and the students were submitting ... original ciphers for “Cipher Challenge”, a 2-week take-home activity. One [student] showed up with a bowl of chocolate cookies to share with the class. I appreciated the gesture but did not give any special thought otherwise, since I had brought snacks of some kind to our prior events. However, Kate's motive involved more than showing off her baking talent. It turned out that she baked her cipher into each cookie -- and the encoded message even referred to cookies. What a delightful surprise!

Challenges and Opportunities: First-Year Programs. The academic quality of our programs for beginning students has increased significantly, and that progress has catalyzed other initiatives that hold great promise. For example, one of the fruits of the ResFIG collaboration is the new Living Learning Center. The idea of bringing the intellectual life of the university into undergraduate residence halls is not new, and residence halls intended to promote this union have been built on a number of campuses. The intended goal is not always met, however. Our confidence that such a venture has a high probability of success at UO comes from our experience with the Residential FIGs. These provided direct evidence that the living-learning idea is appealing to our students, and the ResFIGs established the organizational infra-structure for the community we hope to create in the Living Learning Center.

The principal obstacle facing First-year Programs is financial. The essence of this unit’s work is connecting beginning students with excellent faculty. Faculty time is precious and must be purchased, but the available funds increasingly fall short of compensating departments for the actual cost of this time. For example, the cost of buying a faculty member out of a formal course has risen beyond the standard payment for a Freshman Seminar. In addition, a variety of worthwhile programs, such as Honors College Seminars, the Society for College Scholars, FIGs, and Freshman Seminars, now compete for faculty time and must keep pace with the compensation they offer.

A.7. PROGRAM EVALUATION (Standard 2: Indicators A.3, B.1, B.2. Policy 2.2)

A.7.a. Background

Ideally, all decisions about continuing or changing undergraduate programs would be based on objective data on their effectiveness. In some cases, the information we would most like to have is difficult to obtain, but increasingly, we strive to base programmatic decisions on evaluation of the quality of the program, not simply on quantitative measures, such as enrollment. This section describes the evaluation methods that are currently in place, and what we have learned from them. We are always receptive to suggestions for additional or better ways to measure the results of our effort, and anticipate adding tools in the future.

A.7.b. Assessing the Quality of the General Education Curriculum

Determining the effectiveness of a curriculum that has multiple components, and that encourages students to devise their own paths through it, is not trivial. In addition, few faculty, even those who frequently teach General Education courses, have a comprehensive understanding of the full curriculum. Therefore, the Provost and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies suggested an initial focus on analyzing the curriculum as it presently operates – trying to discover its strengths and weaknesses. To do this, we examined the Group-satisfying courses, the largest part of General Education, at the level of syllabi. We also examined the elements of General Education that most students have in common (Writing, Mathematics, and Foreign Language) at a more pedestrian level – asking simply whether students were beginning their coursework at the appropriate level and completing it in a timely fashion.

Systematic review of current UO Group Curriculum. The Undergraduate Council carried out a systematic review of the Group Curriculum in AY 2003-4 and 2004-5, which led to the development of supplemental guidelines for the design, presentation, and on-going review of courses that satisfy the University's Group requirements. To our knowledge, this was the first systematic review ever conducted of the Group curriculum as a whole, in contrast to the reviews of individual courses by various curriculum committees at the proposal stage. For the purpose of the review, the Council developed a questionnaire that focused on whether a course met existing criteria for Group courses in its area and was consistent with the overall intent of General Education. The criteria were:

Group courses in arts and letters must create meaningful opportunities for students to engage actively in the modes of inquiry that define a discipline. Proposed courses must be demonstrably liberal in nature and broad in scope. Though some courses may focus on specialized subjects or approaches, there must be a substantial course content locating that subject in the broader context of the major issues of the discipline. Qualifying courses will not focus on teaching basic skills but will require the application or engagement of those skills through analysis and interpretation.

Group courses in the social sciences must be liberal in nature rather than professionally oriented or devoted in substantial measure to the performance of professional skills.

They must cover a representative cross-section of key issues, perspectives, and modes of analysis employed by scholars working on the subject matter addressed by the course. The subject matter of the course will be relatively broad (e.g., involving more than one issue, place, or time). Courses with emphasis on methods and skills will satisfy the requirement only if there is also a substantial and coherent theoretical component.

Group courses in the sciences should introduce students to the foundations of one or more scientific disciplines, or should provide an introduction to fundamental methods (such as mathematics) that are widely used in scientific disciplines. Courses should introduce students to the process of scientific reasoning. Although laboratory courses are not automatically excluded from Group-satisfying status in the sciences, to acquire this status, the courses must not focus primarily on techniques or data collection.

Upper division Group courses must provide depth and rigor beyond that of typical lower-division general education courses.

The questionnaire [\[link to Questionnaire\]](#) was used to evaluate the syllabi of all 100- and 200-level Group-satisfying courses (excluding Math and Language courses) offered in 2002-3, as well as the syllabi for all 300-level Group-satisfying courses offered in the Fall term of that year. This amounted to a review of approximately 230 syllabi from the total of approximately 300 courses that make up the Group Curriculum. Overall, the findings were encouraging: most courses were found to be appropriate in level, breadth and rigor, and Council members discovered a number of excellent courses that they'd been unaware of. Where significant problems were noted, they were communicated to the relevant academic unit.

During its review, the Undergraduate Council also analyzed features beyond the subject-matter of the courses – for example, the effectiveness of course descriptions and syllabi and the time-frame in which the courses were offered. On the basis of this analysis, the Council proposed, and the University Senate subsequently passed, supplemental legislation to improve the Group curriculum and communication of its content. The legislation now requires:

- (1) the posting of electronic course descriptions for all Group-satisfying courses
- (2) an explanation in the syllabus of (a) the fundamental questions addressed by the course and (b) how the course meets the criteria for Group status. These requirements are designed to increase awareness and appreciation of the content of Group-satisfying courses, most especially by helping faculty communicate to students *why* these courses are part of our General Education curriculum.
- (3) a lower limit on the time interval within which the course may be offered. To ensure that students have sustained engagement with material that is likely to be new to them, Group courses must be offered in time periods that are standard for academic terms, and not less than 3 weeks.

Although much of the Group Curriculum is deliberately offered at the lower division level, appropriate for incoming Freshmen, a substantial segment (40%) is offered at the 300 level. These courses face multiple constraints: they must have the intellectual sophistication of the

upper division, yet be accessible to students untrained in the field. The Council found the existing guidelines for such courses inadequate (“provide depth and rigor beyond that of typical lower-division general education courses”) and drafted further explanation, which has been adopted. The full explanation, along with examples, is available at [\[link to current Group-satisfying course criteria\]](#) but the essence is that 300-level Group courses should introduce students to a discipline; educate students in the way knowledge is produced in a discipline; encourage students to integrate perspectives and material; and assume that students have completed some lower-division University coursework, although not necessarily in same field as the course. For purposes of clarity and effective application, we recently compiled all of the legislation dealing with the Group Curriculum in one coherent document, which forms the current basis for design and review of courses that merit inclusion in this curriculum.

Future Directions. The Undergraduate Council’s systematic review of Group-satisfying courses marked the inauguration of a regular, cyclical review of all parts of the General Education Curriculum. The plan is to work through the five elements of the curriculum (Group courses, Multicultural courses, Writing, Mathematics, and Foreign Language) over a period of approximately 5 years. At that frequency, it should be possible to identify needed improvements in each element, make appropriate changes, and still have time to consider their effectiveness before the element is reviewed again. The Council deliberately began with the largest and most diverse segment of General Education (the Group-satisfying courses) in order to set up and test a robust review system. As described above, the system worked well: the criteria previously developed for these courses proved useful in practice, and the score sheet created by the Council permitted rough quantitative summaries of course characteristics [\[link to score sheet \]](#).

A weakness of the initial review was that no well-defined process existed to communicate and act on the Undergraduate Council’s findings. This reduced the usefulness of the Council’s work, and a credible means of responding to problems was needed before more review was undertaken. We have adopted the following approach, which we think is broad and consultative enough to inspire confidence in its fairness. Starting in AY 2006-07, the practice will be for the Undergraduate Council to give its findings to the University curriculum committee that deals specifically with General Education (ICGERC: Inter-college General Education Review Committee). It is ICGERC that initially reviews all newly-proposed General Education courses, but since courses can change between the proposal stage and the classroom, we think that the flow of information back to ICGERC about specific courses in actual operation is vital. Inclusion of the ICGERC chair on the Undergraduate Council already fosters informal communication, and has helped both groups apply the criteria for Group-satisfying courses more systematically. Now, there is an explicit procedure for asking ICGERC to re-examine General Education courses that have attracted the Undergraduate Council’s attention during review. The breadth and dispassion of this approach will facilitate action, and thereby maintain, and even increase, the quality of the UO’s General Education.

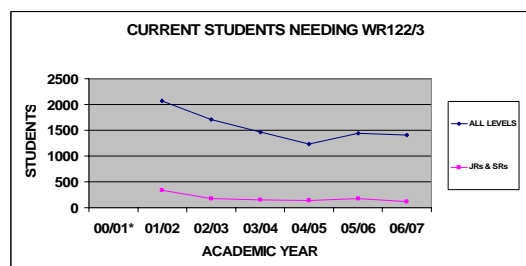
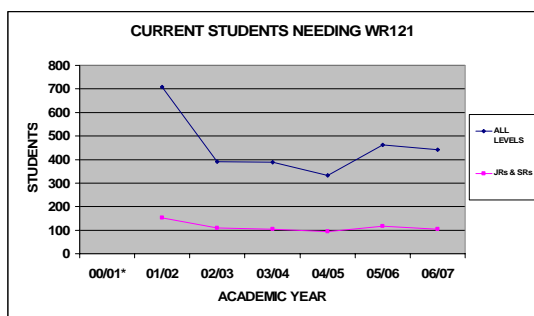
The Council plans to return to its review of General Education, with a focus on Multicultural courses, in AY2006-07. The choice of these courses as next in line for review was based on their partial overlap with Group-satisfying courses, as well the strong campus interest in them expressed in the University’s Diversity Plan (see “Strategic Directions Involving Students” in [\[link to Diversity Plan\]](#)).

Writing, Mathematics, and Foreign Language: Placement and Timely Completion.

Writing. Nearly all UO students take the same 2 writing courses (the exceptions are those who are exempted by high SAT-Verbal or AP scores, or membership in the Clark Honors College). Faculty throughout the university understand the central importance of writing and worry that the overall standard of undergraduate writing is declining. This is not to blame our Composition Program, which is highly respected, but to acknowledge a significant problem. There have been several efforts to address the problem, including a pilot Writing Assessment during the Process for Change and a donor-funded “Writing Across the Disciplines” project that gave students additional writing instruction (beyond the 2-course standard) through well-taught writing components that were added to upper-level courses ranging from Political Science to Biochemistry. Both initiatives were seen to have promise, but financial limitation prevented implementation on a broader scale, and even with adequate funding, there were logistical problems that had to be solved. Specifically, a pattern of complaints from students and advisors indicated a chronic shortage of writing classes for incoming Freshmen, despite the use of remarkably accurate enrollment forecasts to determine the need for writing sections.

Problem and solution: The basis of the shortage turned out to be the large number of upper-class students who hadn’t completed writing within their first two years. Enrollment by upper-class students reduced the space available to freshmen, and thus perpetuated a pattern of delay that defeated the main purpose of the writing requirement – namely, to prepare students for writing in more advanced courses.

An aggressive plan to solve the problem was put in place for Fall 2002, relying on 1. concerted advising to urge new students to take their writing courses on schedule, and 2. financial support over a 3-year period to provide the extra writing sections needed to accommodate both incoming Freshmen and upper-classmen. Since then, we have kept careful track of the balance between supply and demand for writing classes. Periodic enrollment checks by the Advising Office indicate that incoming Freshmen now do a good job of taking their writing classes on schedule. and the graphs below show that the number of advanced students who’ve delayed writing has decreased. We continue to monitor these classes to ensure that the recent slight rise does not regenerate the original problem.



Future direction: Having removed the barrier to timely (before Junior year) completion of the UO writing requirement, we are now in position to examine the development of writing skill by our students, and to enhance it in various ways. The university may wish to reconsider a writing assessment of some sort -- designed to measure the qualities emphasized by our Composition faculty, and supported with sufficient resources to respond to its results. For instance, mechanisms to follow up with students whose writing is weak, as well as to encourage higher-level work from other students, need to be in place. The new Certificate and Minor program in “Writing, Public Speaking, and Critical Reasoning”, recently created with Williams Fund support by the English and Philosophy Departments, begins to address the need for sustained higher-level work. We appreciate the insight, creativity, and collaborative energy that have gone into the design of this new Program, and we anticipate that it will serve as an inspiring model for further enrichment of the UO writing curriculum.

Mathematics. The UO offers a wide range of math courses for students with different interests and math backgrounds. Good communication between the Math Department and the rest of the university has resulted in an array of strong courses that meet the specialized needs of various majors and also promote math literacy for all students who earn a BS degree. For example, in addition to the “regular” Calculus sequence, the Math Department offers a sequence that is designed for business majors, another in which well-chosen examples tailor it to biological science students, and a highly-regarded Honors Calculus sequence designed for math majors and other students who want a deep understanding of the mathematics of calculus, not just its applications. The math offerings just below Calculus are also varied, and include both the pre-requisites for Calculus (College Algebra and Elementary Functions), a sequence for students who plan to teach at the elementary level, and a sequence that doesn’t provide the specialized math required by certain majors, but serves as an effective part of General Education for all BS students.

Problem and Solution: The challenge in mathematics is to place beginning students in the appropriate course. For many years, the approach had been to have everyone take the Math Department’s placement test during Orientation. The testing center was able to handle the large number of students, but the test was irrelevant to those students (~ half of the total) who were headed for a BA, rather than a BS, degree. The inclusion of these students, whose anxiety about math was typically severe, was damaging to the spirit of confidence and optimism we were trying to cultivate, and the performance of those who did not take it seriously made the overall test results un-interpretable. The results consistently over-estimated the need for remedial courses, for instance.

We’ve solved this problem by using SAT-Math scores as an initial, approximate placement guide. We (University Testing Center in collaboration with the Math Department) took this approach after using past student math performance to calibrate the SAT scores, and compare their placement accuracy with that of the Department test. The SAT-Math scores proved as effective as the local test, at least as a basis for the most fundamental decision – readiness, or not, for college math. This discovery allowed us to design a streamlined math placement procedure, which has proved effective and user-friendly throughout the 5 years it has been in place. All students are given “ready or not” placements, based on their SAT-Math scores, when they arrive at Orientation. For students not planning to take further Math (those

headed for BA degrees), this is simply information that requires no action. For most of the others, this crude placement is sufficient, and they can begin university math where most students do – with college algebra. Students are invited to challenge the SAT placement *via* Math Department tests: the regular one for placement at the college algebra level (if the SAT-Math placement was lower), or the advanced one for fine-tuned placement in Calculus or above. The adoption of this approach has been transformational for the academic parts of Orientation. While test-taking is nobody's favorite activity, the general anxiety level has gone down dramatically, and most students taking placement tests see them as potentially beneficial. This makes it easy to encourage all students to aim high.

Foreign language. Placement challenges also beset foreign language instruction, and a different psychology makes them more difficult to deal with than they are in Math. Students planning to study a foreign language in college typically want to begin at the lowest possible level. This is appropriate for students who lack prior experience with the language, but not for students who've already studied the language in high school. These students should build on the high school experience and begin at the second-year level, if they've had 2 years of the language, and even higher if they've had more.

Problem and partial solution: Large numbers of “ringers” in introductory classes cause problems. They take resources away from higher level instruction and interfere with faculty's ability to teach the true beginners in their classes. In an effort to reduce the problem in Spanish (where it is most severe) and also in French, an accelerated beginning sequence has been created for students with some language experience. Nonetheless, many students simply take the standard first-year sequence, starting at the very beginning, with 101 classes.

In some cases, reluctance to begin at an appropriately high level is due to poor high school training, but in others, it reflects unjustified fear and avoidance of challenge. The contrast between this behavior and that of Math students probably comes from the fact that since most Math courses are taken as pre-requisites to something else that corresponds to the student's primary interest, the motivation to shorten the waiting period by starting with an advanced course is strong.

Over the last 5 years, we have relied on advising to encourage students to start language study at the appropriate level, and to investigate languages other than the one they studied in high school. This effort has been aided by the recent addition of high school language experience to the electronic records of incoming students. Previously, UO academic advisors knew only that students had met the 2-year foreign language requirement for entrance, not which language had been studied.

Future direction: Electronic encoding of more of the information contained in high school transcripts has allowed us to determine, for the first time, the extent to which students heed our advice. It's clear that the advising approach has been only partially successful. Thus, we've neither optimized our own language instruction, nor pressed for rigorous language instruction in Oregon high schools. It may be appropriate to consider stronger measures – including blocking students with significant high school language study from registration in beginning classes. The availability of electronic high school records makes this feasible, and

our obligation to our own students, as well as to the K-12 education system, makes it worthwhile.

Despite placement problems, there is inspiring progress in the largest segment of UO language instruction. Specifically, a new method of assessing students' command of Spanish has been introduced recently with good results. Here's what the department says about it:

Teaching Culture and Building Language Proficiency: The Role of Authentic Assessment

Studying a second language and its cultures is a cornerstone of a liberal arts education, and the UO two-year language requirement for the BA represents a serious commitment to this ideal. But what are our real goals for second language study? In the past few years, the Spanish Language Program at UO has pursued a two-pronged objective: real-world, usable proficiency for students who study only two years, and a firm basis for continued study for those who go on to advanced-level courses. To achieve these goals, we have taken seriously the well-studied phenomenon of assessment "washback" on instruction, a type of reverse design in which implementing authentic oral and written assessments impacts how courses are taught. The results have been:

- development of proficiency gains in student's real-world ability in Spanish
- lowered grade inflation
- increased student accountability and motivation in the learning process

The role of authenticity is important: in our lower-division "language" courses, students do not simply manipulate grammatical structures and vocabulary in artificial exercises. Rather, our chapter exams are more like in-class compositions on topics of personal and cultural interest. Even as early as Spanish 101, students are producing two- and three-page compositions on written exams and in oral exams they can speak for three to four minutes without interruption.

The focus on real content in our assessment program has allowed us to integrate a criterion- or rubric-based evaluation system. Instead of a discrete-point system that is subtractive—that is, one in which a writing sample is expected to be perfect and errors cause points to be subtracted from an ideal 100 percent total—our system is additive. An evaluator looks for both positive and negative aspects and rates the sample against a list of well-defined criteria. Positive aspects of a composition cause points to be added to a baseline grade, thus encouraging students to strive for higher levels of performance.

A.7.c. Assessing the Quality of Major Programs.

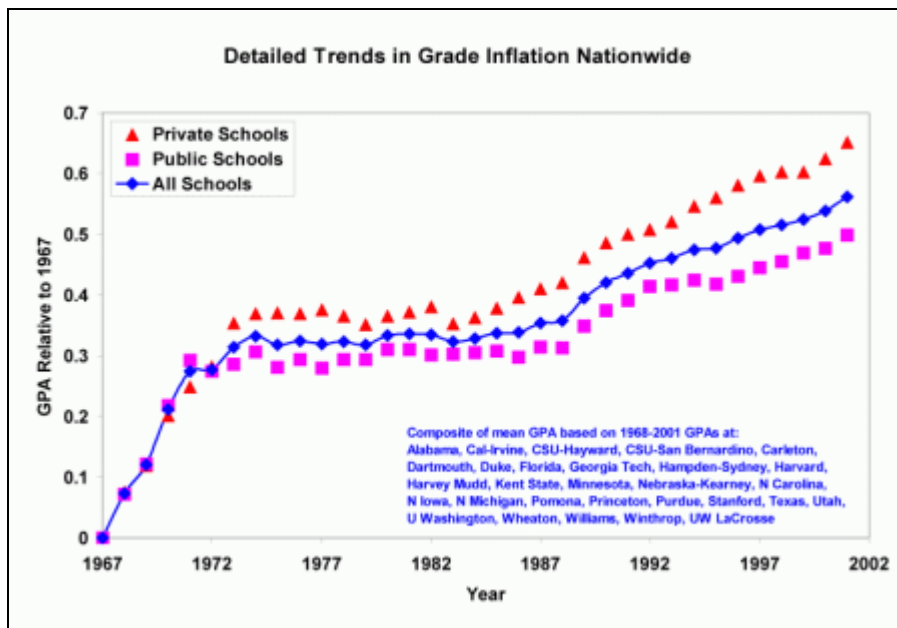
Undergraduate majors are examined in detail through the Program Review Process, which also assesses the quality of the faculty and the graduate program in each academic unit. The process is described in section B. *Graduate and Professional Education* and at [\[Add link to "Program Review Guidelines"\]](#), and it includes both external and internal reviewers. Review of the undergraduate programs was strengthened when the process was revised to include the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies. In addition, the process now includes regular provision of data that can inform units about the academic progress of their students the unit's grading practices, in comparison with university norms. The first reviews, using the new approach, were carried out in AY 2005-06 for four Social Science Departments: Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, and Sociology. The External and Internal Review Teams' reports on each of these programs are available for review [\[insert link\]](#).

A.7.d. Grades as assessment throughout the curriculum

Meaningful and consistent assessment of student learning outcomes is one of the principal responsibilities of a university faculty and grading ought to be an effective form of assessment. Despite its importance, grading practice is not often emphasized in accreditation reviews. Our self-study departs from the norm in this respect because we are convinced of the necessity for candid and responsible evaluation of student work. We have made a careful study of UO undergraduate grading patterns over the period for which electronic data are available, and we intend to respond to the evidence of grade inflation we have found. We believe that grades can be useful indicators of student learning, but we understand that this function requires use of the full grading scale and general agreement on the degree of mastery represented by points on the scale.

While we find that our grading practices are not out of line with practices elsewhere – indeed, we are probably best characterized as “typical” – the national picture that we reflect is not inspiring. Grade inflation threatens to eliminate the assessment function of grading systems because it erases distinctions in student performance. Moreover, variation in grade inflation across institutions and time leads to a systemic erosion of confidence in the meaning of grades. [[Link to discussion of grades as assessment by Rosovsky and Hartley, 2002](#)].

Grade Inflation at UO: The phenomenon of grade inflation, as experienced at the UO, is documented in a study by the Undergraduate Council that was completed in Spring 2006 [[link to Grade Inflation Report](#)].¹ The report includes evidence on national trends, compiled at www.gradeinflation.com, and indicating an average increase in grades given of 5.1% from 1992 – 2002. The graph from that site is reproduced below:



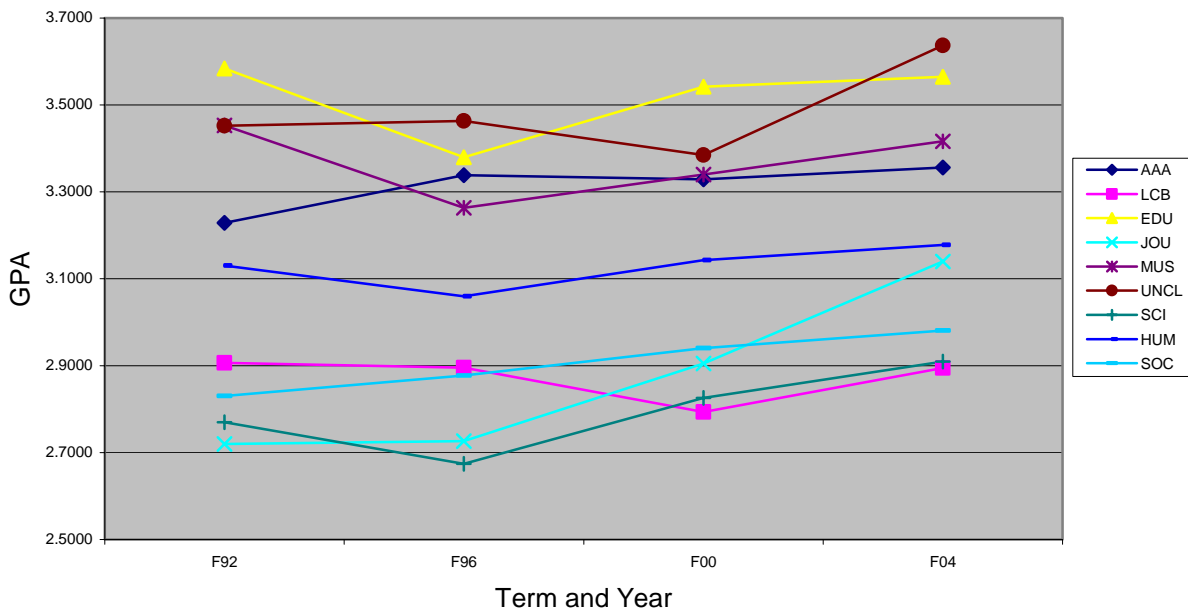
Undergraduate grades at the University of Oregon exhibit a similar pattern:

National vs UO Data – changes between 1992-2002

All schools GPA	5.1%	increase
Public schools GPA	5.3%	increase
Private schools GPA	4.8%	increase
UO GPA	5.1%	increase

There is considerable variation across academic units in both the level of grades awarded and the amount of inflation. The figure below uses data from the Registrar’s Office to give a general picture of this variation at the UO over the period 1992-2004.²

Undergraduate GPA by College and CAS Division



Additional analysis by the Undergraduate Council focused on the percentages of As and Bs awarded in the large enrollment classes offered over the same period. A class had to have been taught in three of the four sample years (1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004) to be included in this study, and the findings are thus less likely to reflect changes in the composition of classes than is the case when institution-wide GPAs are tracked. The percentage of As awarded increased from

² SCI, HUM, and SOC indicate the sciences, the humanities, and the social sciences within the College of Arts and Sciences. UNCL indicates graded courses offered outside the schools and colleges, including military and P.E. classes.

~31% to ~42% between 1992 and 2004, while the share of As and Bs combined increased from 66% to 73%.

UO overall – changes between 1992-2004

%A	10%	increase
%A+B	7%	increase

As for GPAs, variation across academic units was evident. The results of both analyses show that grades have risen over the interval examined. Since concurrent changes in student characteristics are not large enough to account for the higher grades, we conclude that inflation has occurred.

UO Response to Grade Inflation: Concern about this trend has prompted a number of colleges and universities to respond locally to grade inflation. For example, the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Princeton, Georgia Institute of Technology, and Indiana University are doing so. We recognize that curbing grade inflation is difficult. While it is true that faculty responsibility for the curriculum includes an obligation to provide meaningful evaluation of student work, this responsibility is balanced by academic freedom, which allows faculty members to grade as they deem appropriate. Clearly, if the UO decides to distinguish itself as one of the institutions attempting to address the problem of grade inflation, faculty members will need to collaborate within their departments to develop approaches that respect both the responsibility and the freedom involved in the act of grading students.

A number of market forces favor the tendency to award high grades, and there is concern that if grade deflation is not universal, UO students will be at a disadvantage with respect to their peers at other institutions. On the other hand, inaction will quickly lead to a grading system that is of little value. The growing public demand for standardized proficiency demonstrations may well be prompted by the lack of evaluative information in college grades. From this perspective, if the University of Oregon were to succeed in curtailing grade inflation, our students would likely benefit from the University's enhanced reputation for rigor.

In the interest of stimulating a productive campus-wide conversation, the Undergraduate Council has considered possible ways to curb grade inflation on our campus and has compiled and circulated them to the campus [[Link to Examples of Responses to Grade Inflation](#)]. These ideas represent an initial frame for the conversation and should not be confused with recommendations. Any recommendations that come forward will do so through a process of campus-wide discussion coupled with careful consideration of their feasibility and consequences – intended or otherwise.

We expect that a lively campus-wide discussion of the Grade Inflation Report will generate proposals for action. All interested members of the academic community have been invited to participate and to send ideas to the Undergraduate Council, which will formulate recommendations based on this feed-back. An approximate time table would put the Council's consideration of possible recommendations in Fall Term 2006, and a motion to the University Senate in Winter or Spring Term 2007.

A.7.e. Assessment of Programs That Promote Academic Engagement

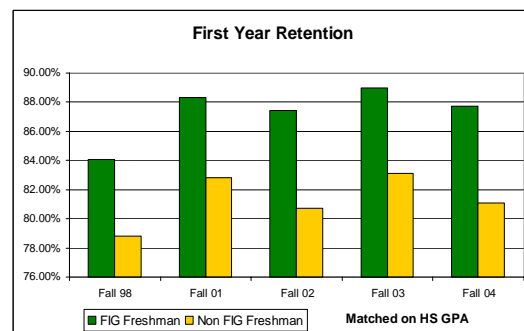
Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs).

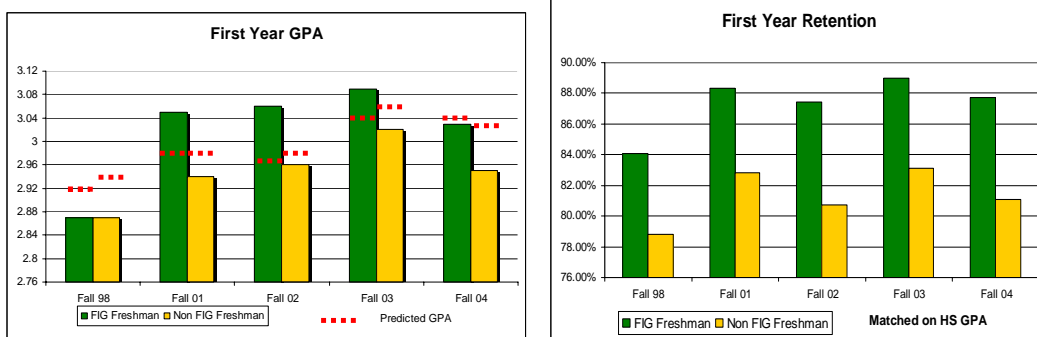
We evaluate FIG effectiveness by

- Analyzing qualitative evaluations from multiple sources
 - First-year students in the programs (~1700/yr)
 - Faculty teaching courses in the programs (~90/yr)
 - Advanced students serving as assistants (~60/yr)
 - Classroom visits by First-year Program Staff
- Measuring students' academic success
 - Grades in specified courses (controlled for SAT scores and HS GPA)
 - Overall UO GPA
- Tracking students' persistence toward a baccalaureate degree
- **Evaluations by students and faculty**

Both quantitative and narrative responses from first-year students, faculty and student assistants reveal the popularity of these programs and suggest that participation in them is satisfying [[link to survey and sample student and faculty responses](#)].
- **Quantitative evidence of student academic success and retention**

Academic success: The graph below shows that after 2000, FIG students have consistently earned higher grades than non-FIG students. In contrast, there was no difference in FIG and nonFIG academic performance before that time. The data for the single cohort shown (1998) is representative of the other pre-2000 cohorts that were analyzed. All of the comparisons were done with FIG and nonFIG groups that had been matched with respect to high school GPA, and FIG SAT scores were either the same as, or lower than, the nonFIG scores. Although the possibility of self-selection makes it difficult to establish a causal relationship between FIG participation and academic success, we can conclude that the alterations in the FIG program since 2000 have had a good effect. (This conclusion is based on the assumption that the self-selection factor has remained constant over time.)





Comparisons that eliminate some additional potential variables reinforce the conclusion [\[link to FIG grade comparison data\]](#). Specifically, letter grades earned by FIG and non-FIG students in the same FIG courses were compared directly, and the possibility of FIG instructor bias was removed by considering only the courses not taught by each student's FIG seminar professor.

Residential FIGs became a substantial proportion (~40%) of the FIG program only recently, but our data suggest that these FIGs are especially effective in helping students reach their potential [\[link to resFIG data\]](#). Even when students in residential FIGs had earned lower high school grades than had students in regular FIGs, they performed just as well in the FIG courses and in their university coursework overall, as measured by UO GPA.

Retention: FIG students are also more likely than non-FIG students to return the following year (88% vs. 81% for the 2004 cohort) We are in the process of tracking retention in subsequent years, as well as graduation rate, for each of these groups.

Freshman Seminars: The University first offered Freshman Seminars in fall 1984, following the program's creation by the Faculty Advisory Council to the President. Each year, the Freshman Seminars Advisory Board conducts a campus-wide competition to select the best courses for the program. A new board of faculty with rotating membership was appointed in 2000, and since that time proposals have been subjected to particular scrutiny, and a required writing assignment has been added to reinforce the University's attention to writing through General Education. The board considers the suitability of the topic proposed, the choice of readings, and the appropriateness of all assignments, especially writing. Board members regularly request changes or additions, which are discussed with the instructor and incorporated before the seminar is offered. Even existing freshman seminars now undergo this review process on a rotating basis. [\[links to Freshman Seminar Proposal and Evaluation Forms\]](#). Regular visits to all freshman seminars were instituted in 2000 as a way to monitor the quality of the classes and to support the faculty. Workshops with small groups of instructors each term serve the same function.

A.7.f. NSSE: An Overall Measure of Student Engagement

We have participated twice in the NSSE survey (2003 and 2006), but have only just begun a detailed analysis of the results. A summary of the response rates (~46%) and characteristics of the sampled students gives confidence that the results are likely to be meaningful. In addition, the 2006 survey deliberately expanded the sample size (from 500 to 5000) so as to permit comparisons of subgroups of students. Although the analysis is far from complete, some generalizations are possible. To facilitate thinking about the large number of survey items, we've devised a simple sorting scheme to highlight the items on which the UO does especially well or especially poorly, compared to the mean for AAU schools [[Link to color-coded summary](#)]. The take-home lesson from both surveys is that the UO scores at the AAU mean for most items, but does significantly better on some. Here are some examples – from 2003 Freshmen and Seniors, the 2 groups included in each survey:

Freshmen

- Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in.
- Did not come to class without completing readings or assignments..
- Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments.

Seniors

- Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in.
- Have studied abroad, or plan to.
- Positive relationship with faculty members.

In contrast, our 2003 scores are below the mean for these items:

Freshmen

- UO emphasizes spending significant amounts of time on academic work.
- UO contributed to their growth in acquiring a broad general education

Seniors

- Amount of time spent studying and on academic work.
- UO contributed to skills in solving complex real-world problems.

We anticipate that further analysis will reveal trends (2006 compared with 2003) and suggest causes for poor scores. These insights will be used to direct our attention and effort in the future.