
CRITERION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING

The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

Distinguished by quality instructors and accomplished students, the university regards teaching as its most important activity. As such, teaching is clearly articulated as the primary activity in the mission statement and strategic plan. In support of its teaching mission, promotion and tenure policies at UW-L are placing increased value on the scholarship of teaching and learning.

In addition, the university has funded curricular innovations and encouraged faculty training in new pedagogies. Despite budget shortfalls, institutional support for innovative teaching methods has increased over the past 10 years. These ongoing initiatives are complemented by faculty efforts to identify student learning outcomes for programs and to develop and implement assessment measures. During the past 10 years, the institution has demonstrated significant progress in the area of assessment, e.g., it has institutionalized the collection and evaluation of assessment data and is developing a process for the dissemination of results.

Further evidence of the value placed on student learning is seen through the multiple partnerships with community organizations, government agencies, and businesses that allow students direct and varied hands-on experiences. These partnerships are the result of dedicated faculty, but the value of partnerships is recognized throughout the institution and is sustained through administrative support.

Effective teaching and student learning are the institution's most valued endeavors. Processes to improve and measure both are continually being developed and refined. Administrative support in this area has continued despite budget constraints, and a learning environment where assessment practices are integral processes is gradually evolving.

Core Component 3a: The organization's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.

ASSESSMENT

Reporting

Currently, each department in the three colleges prepares a biennial assessment report of student learning outcomes for its programs. Since 1996, three reporting cycles have been completed with the last reports concluding June 30, 2004. In the reports, learning goals are identified by departments and units. For example, the undergraduate General Education Program has developed its own student learning outcomes, which are described at the Web site <http://www.uwlax.edu/generaled/>. In the School of Education (SOE), an extensive assessment system based on the 10 teacher standards (INTASC Standards) is in place to measure the student learning outcomes of teacher education candidates. The SOE has one of the most effective systems at the university to articulate goals; its standards-based system includes e-portfolios, field experience evaluations, the Candidate Progress Review Committee, Essential Dispositions rubric, program evaluation, and one- and three-year follow-up surveys. Additional information about SOE learning outcomes can be found at its Web site <http://www.uwlax.edu/soe/> (see *Resource Room 3-1, Department Assessment Reports*).

In addition to the biennial assessment reports, every seven years each academic department is required to submit an “Academic Program Review Self-Study Report” to the Academic Program Review Committee (see *Resource Room 3-2, Academic Program Review Process and Guidelines; and Resource Room 3-3, Academic Program Review Schedule*). In a section of the report entitled “Degree of Program Success,” departments describe the extent to which the department is meeting the goals and objectives of its academic programs. Departments are required to explain how the findings are based on information gathered “from program assessment based on the measurement of student learning outcomes.” In an effort to promote this section of the academic program review, the Faculty Senate in 2005 charged this committee to consider expanding the role of assessment in academic program review. Several departments and units have been exemplary in their efforts to provide evidence of assessment of student learning, e.g., program reviews completed by the Sociology/Archaeology Department (2002), select departments within the College of Business Administration, and the Microbiology Department (2002) (see *Resource Room 3-4, Academic Program Reviews*).

Finally, UW System requires new programs to have an assessment plan prior to receiving Authorization to Implement the program. Furthermore, the institution and UW System Office of Academic and Student Services undertake a Joint Review five years after implementation of the program. The Joint Review includes an evaluation of the program’s success based on the assessment plan outlined in the Authorization to Implement proposal.

Measures of Student Learning

Within the required biennial assessment reports, departments describe both direct and indirect measures to evaluate student learning. To assist departments in identifying these measures, an assessment link has been created on the Provost/Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Web site. The site is maintained by the Special Assistant to the Provost, who is the architect of the university assessment plan and director of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning. The site has links to the UW-L Assessment Plan, NSSE results, Assessment of Student Learning in Academic Programs, and the Assessment of General Education Outcomes (see <http://www.uwlax.edu/provost/assessment/assess.htm>).

Other measures of student learning such as graduation rates, passage rates on licensing exams, placement rates, and transfer rates are also included in assessment reports of select departments. For example, the M.S. in Occupational Therapy program cites the certification exam pass rate as a direct assessment measure. The graduate Physician Assistant program uses student performance on the Physician Assistant National Certification Examination (PANCE), including analysis by medical discipline and task, as a direct assessment measure. The examination is administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants. In the Accountancy Department, the CPA exam results are used as a direct measure, and the placement of students in internships and placement of graduates are used as indirect assessment measures. The School of Education uses follow-up data from employers and graduates as indirect measures to inform programmatic decisions.

The assessment of student learning also occurs outside the traditional realm of credit-bearing course offerings and programs. The Office of Continuing Education and Extension practices periodic environmental scanning to understand changing needs of its constituencies and their communities. This assessment of learning goals extends to its credit and non-credit courses with evaluations customized to each program.

The Faculty Senate Library Committee endorsed the Wisconsin Association of Academic Librarians' *Information Literacy Competencies and Criteria for Academic Libraries in Wisconsin* in 2000. This document, in conjunction with learning outcomes and goals for individual courses, provides a framework for the information literacy curriculum and assessment of student learning. Faculty members work with librarians to plan course related information literacy instruction. Assessment feedback is gathered for each session through online student evaluation forms and faculty evaluation forms (see *Resource Room 3-5, Information Literacy Outcomes*).

Institutional Processes

To successfully create and maintain a culture of assessment, faculty must be involved in determining learning outcomes and developing strategies to determine whether the outcomes are being realized. At UW-L, the assessment report guidelines ask “who is responsible for conducting assessment in the department/program?” Departments designate either an assessment committee or an assessment coordinator to establish the measures for student learning outcomes and to evaluate whether they are being achieved. Once the report is completed, the Dean or designee in each college reviews the report and submits it to the Provost for review. During the 2004-05 academic year, a new process was initiated in an effort to provide departments with more direct feedback on their assessment practices: (1) the Assessment Working Group (a committee appointed by the Provost) sent the assessment reports to each college, and (2) the college developed individual review processes for departmental assessment programs (refer to Exhibit 3-A in the Appendices for the August 2005 Report).

Core Component 3b: The organization values and supports effective teaching.

Faculty Credentials

Based on its mission statement, the strategic plan, and promotion and tenure policies, UW-L recognizes teaching as its primary responsibility. In demonstrating its commitment to teaching, the institution continues to hire high-quality faculty. Currently, 98.5% of the ranked faculty have terminal degrees. Although UW-L seeks to recruit only faculty who are dedicated to teaching, many possess credentials characteristic of faculty at research institutions, e.g., high publication rates in peer-reviewed journals, impressive records of obtaining external funding, and prominent roles in professional organizations.

Teaching Loads

While fulfilling the needs of a comprehensive institution, the majority of faculty also fit the teacher-scholar model. Teaching loads vary with the typical load being 12 contact hours per semester in all colleges. However, faculty in the College of Business Administration who are research active typically teach nine hours each semester. The overall university student to faculty ratio is 22:1 with an average class size of 30 per class (see Exhibit 3-B in Appendices).

Curriculum Review

Oversight of curriculum is part of each faculty member's responsibility. Courses must undergo a series of reviews beginning at the department level and progressing through individual college committees and university-wide undergraduate and graduate curriculum committees before receiving approval. The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC) is charged with "evaluating curriculum proposals by a hierarchical set of criteria, taking into consideration the needs of students and of society, the mission of the university, the necessity for quality programs, and the ability of the department and college to meet the resource needs of the proposal." Courses proposed for the General Education Program undergo an additional review. Since 2000 when the position of Director of General Education was established, the General Education Program has been undergoing major revisions. All current courses are being evaluated based upon student learning outcomes in four different areas: foundations of knowledge; aesthetic perspective and meaning; inquiry and critical thinking; and personal, social and global responsibility.

Graduate Education

Although assessment of graduate programs occurs as part of the department biennial assessment of student learning and academic program reviews, the level of formal assessment lags that of undergraduate programs. To improve assessment of graduate programs, Graduate Studies began long-range planning in 2004-05 that will continue during 2005-06. In spring 2005, each graduate program completed a SWOT(T) analysis—strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, trends — that provided an opportunity for each program to evaluate and assess topics such as uniqueness, standards, learning outcomes, success of graduates, program capacity, internal and external partnerships, internal and external funding, and the status of program accreditation where applicable. The SWOT(T) analysis by various programs varied in its scope and did not necessarily include all of the topics. While the analysis will aid in assessment, graduate programs often include diverse courses and research training making uniform summative testing more difficult than in undergraduate programs. In addition, many graduate programs are accredited by outside agencies that require extensive internal and external program assessment that is specific to the agency.

Center for Advancement of Teaching and Learning

Another demonstration of UW-L's commitment to effective teaching can be found in administrative support of the Center for Advancement of Teaching and Learning (CATL), which provides university-wide programs and activities to support improvement of pedagogies and assists faculty in staying current with research on teaching and learning. (The director of CATL, who reports directly to the Provost, also oversees the Faculty Development Grants Program, which totals \$40,000 per year.) The Faculty Development Committee reviews proposals for grants in the following categories:

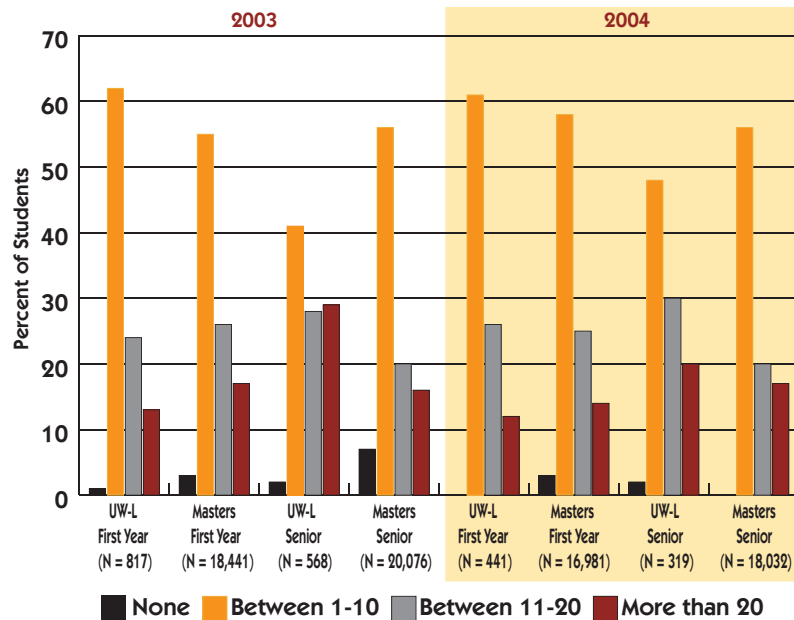
- Professional Development
- Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
- Teaching Innovation

From 1999-02, the Office of Information Technology Services also annually funded \$40,000 in grants related to technology and teaching, which were called “Eagle Grants” and later “Instructional Technology Grants.” These grants were terminated in 2002 when the Faculty Development Committee agreed to reallocate the funds to support a position in Information Technology Services that would in part support faculty development (*see Resource Room 3-6, List of Instructional Technology Grants*).

Writing Skills

The Writing Emphasis program provides further professional development support. This program offers seminars on teaching writing and writing to learn to faculty who teach writing emphasis courses. More than 250 instructors have attended these seminars since the program was created in 1991. Initially the UW System provided funding; however, the internal funding as well as the location of the program is now being discussed (*see <http://www.uwlax.edu/we/>*). A related program that supports teaching is the Writing-in-the-Major initiative, which began in 1999. Until fall 2005, the program was coordinated by a faculty person with a partial release from teaching. Unfortunately, the funding for the coordinator is no longer available; other options are under review. Since its inception, UW-L supported more than 100 instructors to develop Writing-in-the-Major programs in academic departments. More than \$100,000 had been funded for this program through four separate UW System grants plus funding from the Provost's Office. More information on the program can be found at *<http://www.uwlax.edu/wimp>*. This institutional emphasis on writing is reflected in coursework. According to 2004 FSSE results, 65% of faculty require at least some in-class writing, and 62% “quite a bit” or “very much” structure their courses to teach students to write clearly and effectively ($N = 180$). Furthermore, UW-L students report writing more short papers than do students at other comprehensive institutions (*see Figure 3-1*).

Figure 3-1. Comparison of the Number of Papers of Fewer than 5 Pages Written by UW-L Students and Students at Other Masters Institutions



Source: Special Assistant to the Provost

Additional Teaching Improvement Initiatives

Since 2000, the Office of the Provost has organized and funded the annual UW-L Conference on Teaching and Learning. The conference is open to all faculty and instructional academic staff and features presentations and workshops by UW-L faculty. The conference is a product of faculty interested in teaching development and was modeled after the annual fall research day at UW-L. In addition to the conference, UW-L has sponsored special workshops with presentations by well-known speakers such as Barbara Wright, Peter Seldin, Barbara Walvoord, and Greg Valde. Finally, an initiative entitled the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) began in 2003 and is funded by the UW System Office of Professional and Instructional Development along with some matching funds from the UW-L Provost's Office. The initiative provides three types of services to improve teaching and learning: (1) a faculty colloquium offered several times each semester, (2) a classroom research project that offers small grants to support individual instructors to do classroom research projects, and (3) a lesson study project that supports instructors in academic departments to do lesson studies. An example of a particularly effective teaching improvement initiative is the lesson study project. Lesson study involved teams of approximately four faculty who work together to design, field test, and revise

individual class lessons. In 2003, the initial year of the project, four teams with a total of 16 people were involved. Each participant received a \$500 stipend for their participation. As of 2005, more than 70 people are involved in 20 teams in 14 different departments. Due to the popularity of the project, stipends have been reduced to \$300. Thirteen individuals who have been involved since the inception now are completing an advanced lesson study project, where they act as leaders and mentors for new teams. These individuals received a Tablet PC for their involvement. UW-L's Provost's Office and UW System have provided the funds to support the stipends and the Tablet PCs. Finally, UW-L is training instructors at other UW System schools in lesson study. Currently, 80 people from nine other UW System schools are participating in the project. This project is the only effort in the U.S. that applies lesson study to college teaching. For further information on these services, refer to <http://www.uwlax.edu/sotl> and <http://www.uwlax.edu/sotl/lsp>.

Role of Departments and Programs

Departmental Review. Departments and programs also evaluate their teaching effectiveness and student learning. As discussed earlier, all departments are required to perform a biennial assessment of student learning outcomes. The assessment requests that departments identify: (1) learning outcomes, (2) direct and indirect measures of these learning outcomes, and (3) specific actions intended to improve student learning and program quality undertaken by the department or program in response to the results of direct and indirect measures of student learning. As a result, some departments have instituted thorough measurements of both direct and indirect student learning outcomes in the undergraduate and graduate programs. These measurements include content, critical thinking and skills tests, as well as surveys and post-graduation employment and placement rates. One example of an exemplary report is from the Biology undergraduate and graduate programs (see Exhibit 3-C in the Appendix).

Although the majority of departments and programs submit the required biennial reports, one critical step that has yet to be consistently implemented throughout the university is “closing the loop” between collecting assessment data and using the results to improve teaching at the departmental level. At this time, there is little evidence to demonstrate that this essential step is happening in most departments. To address this concern, one recommendation (discussed in the chapter conclusion and recommendations) is to link the allocation of college and departmental resources to those who use assessment learning outcomes to improve teaching, i.e., to those who “close the loop.” Because of the wide variation in the quality of the assessment plans and the inconsistent use of assessment results in curricular and/or departmental decisions, the university is providing feedback through the college offices to ensure effective systematic assessment plans.

Role of Assessment in Promotion and Tenure Decisions. On an individual faculty level, the university has high expectations for faculty performance in teaching. The Joint Promotion Committee (JPC) guidelines state that “candidates for promotion will be good teachers and will provide multiple sources of evidence about their teaching effectiveness. Evidence of quality teaching, clinical/laboratory or librarianship work is a necessary condition for promotion; poor teaching skills and lack of effectiveness cannot be offset by superior achievements in scholarship and service.” The JPC evaluates teaching effectiveness using the following criteria:

- The primary aim of all teaching is to stimulate, promote and advance students’ learning and educational development. Quality will be measured by the success of the instructor in securing the interest, effort and progress of students toward this aim.
- Faculty who have reduced classroom-teaching loads, or whose primary responsibility is clinical/laboratory or librarianship work, will be evaluated using the same criteria as that used for those whose primary responsibility is classroom teaching.
- Evidence provided from three distinct sources that include self assessment of teaching, peer evaluation of teaching, and student evaluation of instruction.

Although JPC guidelines state that its judgment will be based on evidence provided on peer evaluation, student evaluation, information on teaching methods and effectiveness and teaching development activities, the only formal template provided for a candidate is three years of data on Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEI) and grade distributions of the promotion candidate (with comparative data for the department). In addition, SEI instruments vary greatly among departments, and the only question common to all SEI instruments is the one stating some form of the following: *Compared to all other instructors I have experienced, I rate this instructor ___*. Only data for this one question is reported to the JPC.

The JPC commonly faces two main challenges in evaluating teaching effectiveness for some promotion candidates. First, there is inconsistency on the part of faculty in submitting evidence of teaching effectiveness. For example, some candidates report only the SEI and grade distribution data, i.e., not all report peer evaluations (other than the department promotion committee letter) or other additional information on teaching methods and effectiveness. Second, the only SEI data required by JPC is for the single common question among SEI instruments. As faculty have submitted limited evidence of teaching effectiveness, a perception has developed that the JPC over relies on the SEIs in judging teaching effectiveness and that scholarship is emphasized more than teaching. This perception may lead to the reasoning that if most individuals have average SEI scores and a few have more

publications and grants, then the latter will be more likely to be promoted. This may further lead to the perception that the best way to be promoted is to focus upon scholarship and not to focus on improving their teaching effectiveness. In reality, the main problem is that some faculty submit only limited evidence of teaching effectiveness for the JPC to evaluate.

In an effort to provide more consistency for adequately judging teaching effectiveness, JPC is piloting the use of a Teaching Effectiveness Measures rubric in 2005-06. The rubric identifies both required and recommended sources of evidence to demonstrate teaching effectiveness; each source is ranked using a scale of no, minimal, or strong evidence provided. These sources include multiple elements relating to (1) information about the faculty member such as philosophy statement, participating in teaching development activities, etc., (2) information on teaching methods and effectiveness such as direct and indirect measures of student learning, (3) student evaluation of instruction, (4) peer evaluation of teaching effectiveness, (5) other, and (6) grading distributions in comparison to his/her department (see Exhibit 3-D in the Appendices). JPC will evaluate the effectiveness of the rubric in aiding JPC members to appraise teaching during the 2005-06 academic year. If effective, use of the rubric may be useful in providing feedback to promotion candidates.

In response to these challenges, one recommendation from the Self-Study Committee is to ensure that all promotion candidates provide more comprehensive measures of effective teaching such as peer evaluations, descriptions of formal assessment of student learning outcomes, and results of multi-item SEIs. (One of the charges for 2005-06 to the Promotion, Tenure and Salary Committee is to choose three to five global student evaluation of instruction items that have been found to be reliable and valid and to make recommendations about how to report and use the results.) Once created, this comprehensive measure must be institutionalized and integrated into the promotion and tenure process.

Teaching Awards

In addition to promotion and merit reviews, another way to recognize effective teaching is through public acknowledgement. For example, the College of Liberal Studies began an “Excellence in Teaching Award” in 2003. Other examples include the UW System Board of Regents annual teaching award that UW-L faculty have received three times in the last 10 years. (Only two faculty members are selected annually from all institutions in the UW System campuses.)



Core Component 3c: Organization creates effective learning environments.

Use of Assessment Results

UW-L offers many services to provide students with the support they need to succeed academically. While NSSE results suggest UW-L student perceptions of academic support are below the national averages, the gap is closing (see Table 3-1). The goal is to continue the upward trend toward the national averages for first year students and seniors.

Table 3-1. Percent of Students who Believe Their Institution “Quite a Bit” or “Very Much” Provides the Support They Need to Succeed Academically

	2001		2002		2003		2004	
	UW-L	ALL NSSE	UW-L	ALL NSSE	UW-L	ALL NSSE	UW-L	ALL NSSE
First Year	62.7%	72.7%	70.8%	71.0%	71.0%	78.0%	74.2%	77.0%
Seniors	59.4%	67.0%	61.2%	68.0%	68.0%	72.0%	69.1%	73.0%

Note: Institutional percentages are derived from over-sampled population in 2001 through 2003. (Institutional percentages differ from those derived through standard sampling.) Comparison group percent includes all public and private masters' institutions in the NSSE sample.

Source: UW System 2004-2005 Achieving Excellence Report

Effective learning environments are created through a variety of means, including the use of assessment results to inform curriculum, pedagogy, instructional resources, and student services. While there are numerous examples of assessment shaping curriculum and pedagogy, some departments are exceptional. For example, in the Accountancy Department, faculty solicit feedback from employers to assess the skills of accounting majors. One recurring comment from employers was the need for students to improve their writing skills. In response, the department implemented a Writing-in-the-Major program in which numerous writing assignments were built into the curriculum including two writing emphasis courses. The Writing-in-the-Major program allows the department to identify the forms of writing it wants students to know and in which courses they will develop quality skills. Then, the entire curriculum is analyzed so that students completing the required courses in the major will receive the necessary writing experiences. As this program is relatively new, assessment of program-wide writing initiatives is just beginning (see *Resource Room 3-1, Department Assessment Reports for additional examples*).

The student services areas also use assessment to help them understand how well they are meeting student needs. They use assessment surveys as an aide to monitor the number of students that are participating in and using their services as well as their satisfaction with these services. For example, see the Advising Center Annual report at <http://www.uwlax.edu/advising/Annual-Report/#Annual%20Report>.

Campus Resources for Student Learners

Some examples of other means used to create effective learning environments that support all learners include the following campus services:

- Counseling and Testing Center offers crisis intervention, personal counseling, group counseling, career testing, national exams, psychological testing, test anxiety/study skills assessment, and alcohol/drug abuse programs.
- Office of International Education offers a multitude of support services to international students.
- Office of Multicultural Student Services offers a variety of services to multicultural students including tutoring and academic early intervention programs as well as cultural events and community outreach.
- Office of Student Support Services offers tutoring services to eligible students and academic, career and personal advising.
- Office of Disability Resource Services provides advocacy and academic services (taped textbooks, classroom note taker, etc.) to students with disabilities.
- Office of Residence Life has an extensive Resident Assistant (RA) training program that includes programming for students in the residence halls.
- Office of Student Life offers traditional advocacy services for all students, enforcement of various student conduct codes, assistance for students in understanding their rights and responsibilities, mediation services, programs to ensure campus safety such as Safety on our Sidewalks, and support for non-traditional students.

In the academic realm, there are a number of programs to provide additional academic challenges to students. For example, juniors in the Psychology department, with the appropriate coursework and grade point average apply to the departmental Honors program, which requires an honors seminar and an advanced research design course culminating in independent research projects, grant proposals, and presentations at regional conferences. Approximately 12 students a year complete the program and more than 90% of them are accepted into graduate schools. A university-wide Honors program offers

an interdisciplinary honors component to the General Education Program. This Honors program is small, is supported entirely by the College of Liberal Studies, and is lacking campus-wide awareness and support. UW-L also has a well-established Undergraduate Research Program that is discussed in the Introduction and in Criterion Four.

Supporting Diversity

Another area that is receiving increased attention is diversity, whether through curricular offerings or in creating an environment that supports all learners and respects the diversity they bring to the university. For example, diversity courses have been infused throughout the UW-L general education curriculum. Furthermore, according to 2004 FSSE results, 77% of instructors report that they infuse discussions or assignments about diversity in their courses at least some of the time. In developing supportive learning environments, units such as the Office of Multicultural Student Services provide a number of services for students of underrepresented groups on campus. The Academic Initiative passed in 2004 included funding for diversity issues, most notably by providing funds to support a Campus Climate Coordinator who was hired in May 2005. Also, a campus climate survey was completed by students, faculty, and staff during the 2004-05 academic year. Analysis of the results revealed several opportunities for improvement that will be addressed in part by the Campus Climate Coordinator. In addition, for several years, the Joint Minority Affairs Committee has identified the need for a curriculum infusion coordinator in its annual report (*see Resource Room 3-7, Joint Minority Affairs Annual Report*).

Advising

Although the institution has numerous services available to support all learners, there is concern that faculty are not always aware of all of these services. Consequently students are not always referred to available resources. The new Academic Advising Center (also supported by the 2004 Academic Initiative) may, however, be instrumental in making the various student services more widely known to both faculty and students. Students also have an opportunity to learn about campus services, be supported in their transition to college, and be encouraged to evolve as educated persons through the First Year Student Seminar (UW-L 100) that is now part of the General Education Program.

Formally, assessment of the effectiveness of the student advising process occurs through the NSSE, the FSSE, assessments conducted by the college offices, and the Academic Advising Center's (AAC) online assessment. The advising system at UW-L is largely decentralized with all students assigned to a faculty member. According to results on the 2004 FSSE, over 90% of faculty advise students every week, with 83% of faculty reporting spending between one and eight hours per week advising students

($N = 180$). Some academic departments have developed exceptional advising programs that use both traditional and internet-based components (see the Psychology department at <http://www.uwlax.edu/psychology/advising.htm>, which begins with an online tutorial for all students declaring the psychology major followed by individual appointments with an advising coordinator). Many faculty also are very accessible to students through email and office hours. Furthermore, efforts are underway to extend advising services to students via the internet through advising grants to the colleges funded by the student differential tuition. Still, historically, NSSE results suggest that UW-L students are less satisfied with the quality of advising they receive than their peers at other comprehensive institutions. Some departments have not focused on advising, in part because of perceptions that there are not always incentives for faculty to improve their advising. As a result, faculty training in advising is not consistent throughout the departments. To be more effective, the university needs to foster a culture that encourages the role of faculty in student advising with attention to department requirements, department webpages, and faculty advising assignments.



Academic Advising Center (AAC)

Students receive additional advising support from the AAC and the college offices. While the AAC is open to all students, its main focus is with undeclared majors, transfer students, returning students, and students who are changing majors. The AAC is becoming established as a critical component of UW-L's academic structure, e.g., it plays an important role in summer freshmen registration by creating class schedules for more than 1,700 incoming students. Staff from the AAC are also teaching a section of the First Year Student Seminar (UW-L 100) in fall 2005 and will be assuming the administration of all the course sections in 2006. All incoming "undecided" freshmen in the College of Liberal Studies are assigned to AAC advisers for academic advising in the 2005-06 school year. In addition, the AAC initiated a special orientation program for transfer students in fall 2005; contact is being made with all transfer students to orient them to the university prior to their arrival or immediately afterward.

Another indicator of AAC success is the number of academic advising appointments; almost 1,800 students visited the center for advising assistance during the 2004-05 academic year. During the same period, AAC staff made almost 12,000 correspondence contacts and more than 3,700 in-person contacts (outside the center) in which they informed students about academic advising issues. Students are also utilizing the AAC Web site with 7,000 visits by online users during 2004-05 (see <http://www.uwlax.edu/advising>).

Ensuring Academic Success

Complementing individual student advising, many departments provide tutoring to assist students in the mastery of skills required for academic success (see http://www.uwlax.edu/records/01-03/UG-Cat/services.html#_TUTORING_SERVICES). The institution also provides a Writing Center and a Math Center. In addition, students experiencing academic difficulties are provided general counseling by the AAC if they have not declared a major or by the offices of academic deans if they have declared a major. UW-L, however, has a relatively low percentage of students whose grade point averages place them into probationary or academically ineligible categories.

Additional Institutional Services

Another tool designed to assist students is the Student Notice of Academic Progress (SNAP), a computerized degree audit that has been available for 10 years. The SNAP is important because it identifies areas of academic strength and weakness and helps students with academic planning. For example, the SNAP helps students track which general education categories have been completed and provides a list of the courses that could be used to complete a category.

The campus has improved its services for students outside the traditional course offerings and for those involved in academic experiences off-campus. Several examples are listed below:

- The Office of Multicultural Services offers pre-college programs (<http://www.george.intra.uwlax.edu/mss/programs.asp?id=6/>) and an Academic Success Program for entering students (<http://www.george.intra.uwlax.edu/mss/programs.asp?id=5/>).
- The Office of Clinical Experiences and Student Teaching in the School of Education supports students doing clinical experiences or student teaching (<http://www.uwlax.edu/tepf/>).
- The Office of International Education provides assistance in a variety of ways to students who are studying abroad (http://www.uwlax.edu/oie/SA/study_abroad.htm/).
- Murphy Library offers a broad array of services for distance learners (<http://www.uwlax.edu/murphylibrary/distance/index.html>).
- The Office of Career Services provides support for students doing internships through the use of e-mail and the Web site (<http://www.uwlax.edu/CareerServices/>).

***Core Component 3d:* The organization's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.**

Classroom Space

UW-L continually strives to secure adequate resources to support student learning. However, the last classroom building on campus was constructed in 1974 (not counting the Health Science Center that was built adjacent to campus in 2000 as a result of the five-partner La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium). Most other classroom improvements since 1974 resulted from renovations of existing spaces. At present, classrooms are heavily utilized, and additional general access classrooms are seriously needed, as noted as a key concern in a 2002 space management report. Many classrooms were recognized as being too small, and others were determined inappropriate for the type of instructional activity. The report stated that classrooms with fixed rows of seats were inappropriate for small group work, and as many as 40% of the classrooms had visual screens with aspect ratios greater than the recommended ratio. In addition, a 2004-05 study of the laboratories in Cowley Hall showed instructional laboratory daily usage rates of up to 65%. (The traditional class day is from 7:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., allowing little time for preparation of labs.) A significant initial step to mitigate many of these concerns is the construction of a \$33 million general access classroom building, which is anticipated to begin in 2008. This classroom building will provide more than 120,000 assignable square feet of general access classroom space in a variety of configurations and will incorporate advanced technology to replace existing deficient classrooms that are found throughout campus.

Library and Learning Technologies

Murphy Library and Information Technology Services (ITS) provide students and faculty with opportunities to effectively utilize information technology. Each of these units continually assesses its ability to provide training and access. The Enhancing Student Learning Through Technology (ESLT) initiative provides information to the campus about faculty success stories that showcases successful student learning and teaching methodologies. For more information see <http://www.uwlax.edu/edtech/eslt2/>.

In 2004, ITS developed a classroom assessment form as a tool to analyze each prospective classroom modernization project. This form helps to determine the most appropriate technologies to be included in the teaching activities that are planned for any remodeled space. Faculty are consulted and offered an opportunity to comment on the assessments before the project is officially approved and started. ITS also provides faculty with classroom facilities guides so they know what technological

tools are available for their teaching. Some classrooms, such as large sections of introductory biology, are equipped with an electronic student response system (SRS) that provides immediate feedback to students and faculty during class lectures. Thus, faculty use student responses as formative assessment to guide student learning. For more information, see

http://www.uwlax.edu/edtech/de/Classroom_Guide/index.html.

Another initiative includes UW-L's participation (in association with UW-Eau Claire) in a UW System grant to investigate how portable computing devices affect student learning. The campus is also undertaking a Tablet PC Study, which is tracking the number of students that use this technology in their academic pursuits. This study is intended to evaluate student learning and teaching effectiveness. Educational Technologies (housed in ITS) will share assessment results (data in spring 2006 and completed reports in summer 2006) on campus and throughout the UW System (see <http://www.uwlax.edu/tabletpcstudy/>).

Using technology effectively has become a high priority since 1996. Both Murphy Library and ITS continue to provide high quality services despite limited resources, and both actively assess their effectiveness. For example, the librarians at Murphy Library have been promoting the concept of "information literacy" as a general education competency, one that is woven throughout the student's education. During the last 10 years, the program has expanded from 3,000 participants in 1994 to more than 5,600 participants in over 278 sessions in 2003-04. The number of participants is third highest among libraries at UW System comprehensive universities.

Librarians at Murphy Library also continue to assess and improve instruction. For instance, in a move toward more problem-based collaborative learning, a new classroom was designed with group tables, allowing teams of three to four students to work together at one computer workstation. Students and faculty use a survey to assess the effectiveness of this group setting to support collaborative learning (see *Resource Room 3-5, Information Literacy Outcomes*).

A 2004 LibQUAL+ survey underscores success of the library's efforts to teach "information literacy" concepts (see <http://www.uwlax.edu/murphylibrary/libqual/>). The results indicated student approval, particularly in the area of information skills. For example, on a 9-point scale where nine was the highest, undergraduates rated the following statement a 6.52: "The library provides me with the information skills I need in my work or study." The reference desk staff has fielded over 13,000 questions during the academic year. This number has dropped in the past several years indicating that courses and services help students to become more self-sufficient (e.g., the use of interactive subject guides). Personalized reference services such as individual research consultations have been developed for more in-depth, advanced assistance. Visits by librarians to departments also were initiated to provide tailored, discipline-specific information on library services and resources to faculty.

The number of library electronic databases available to students and faculty has increased dramatically in recent years to well over 200 (see <http://www.uwlax.edu/murphylibrary/research/titles.html>). In 2004-05, more than 2.1 million searches were conducted using these databases, which are funded locally through the UW System Shared Electronic Collection and BadgerLink. Library research materials at other UW System campuses are easily accessible via self-initiated requests in the library catalog. A new interlibrary loan service, ILLiad, allows for the quick delivery to the desktop.



A UW Libraries system-wide effort has resulted in the University of Wisconsin Digital Collection, a rich digital library of photographs and secondary and primary texts (see, <http://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/index.html>). The one-millionth image was added in fall 2005. This collection is complemented by locally scanned texts and digital media (<http://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/>) that are strong in regional history and culture. Digital collections greatly facilitate access for local users and distance learners.

Information Technology Services complement faculty instruction, as faculty development is part of the ITS mission. Several programs offered by ITS for faculty include the annual “Passport to Technology,” which provides a one-day event at the beginning of fall semester to introduce, explain, and demonstrate how specific technologies can aid faculty in their teaching and learning activities. For more information see <http://www.uwlax.edu/edtech/passport/>. Other efforts include ITS presentations on the effective use of technology at Faculty Research Day and at New Faculty Orientation to explain where campus technology resources are located and who to contact when faculty development is needed or desired. ITS offers instructional design/development and production services to faculty. ITS staff include a faculty developer who attends regional and national workshops and communicates the information acquired to campus faculty and staff. The faculty developer also writes articles on issues that assist faculty with technology advances. These articles appear in publications on-campus as well regionally, nationally, and internationally.

ITS also staffs the ITS Support Center, which provides the following services to faculty, staff, and students on campus:

- Telephone and walk-in service for campus-supported applications such as Desire2Learn, Microsoft Office, university e-mail, etc. (see <http://www.uwlax.edu/itssupport/Services/software.htm> for a full list).

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- Training for faculty, staff, and students on campus-supported applications and technology.
 - Guest lecturers for faculty conducting technology projects in the classroom.
 - Support and administration of online course management systems.
 - Support and administration of university Web sites.
 - Data operations for administrative and academic offices.
 - First-level hardware support of campus-supported hardware.

The ITS Support Center tracks a wide range of issues for faculty, staff, and students through the use of help desk tickets. Since July 2002, the most common issues have centered on email and viruses (excluding Enterprise related work orders and issues). Enterprise is the Campus Administrative Systems (CAS), which is used to access student record information, accounting and budget data, personnel data, and other information. Because e-mail is a primary method of communication on campus for most offices and students, it is no surprise that these two issues place the greatest demand on help desk operations. September is the busiest month each year for the Support Center with over 2,000 tickets logged during this time period. Trends show an ever increasing reliance on the Support Center by the campus community, as annual call rates continue to climb. In 2004, ITS added a new self-service component to the Support Center at <http://itssupport.uwlax.edu/solutions/> to allow the campus to search for answers 24 hours per day. The Support Center's closure time is less than one hour for more than 62% of the calls logged. This rate is greater than 80% when tickets forwarded to other ITS units are excluded. This performance rate compares favorably to the targeted 70% best practice rate for any professional help desk organization. More information about Support Center services can be found at

<http://www.uwlax.edu/itssupport/>.

Faculty use of ITS services continues to grow. From 2002 to 2005, more than 2,000 faculty and staff have participated in one or more of the 40 workshops offered, e.g., a workshop on the electronic course management program Desire2Learn (D2L). Faculty use of D2L increased from 249 sections (representing 178 courses) in fall 2003 to 381 sections (representing 284 courses) in fall 2004. In addition, more than 1,000 students registered for some form of technology training offered through ITS. Students also receive assistance to develop online portfolios through ITS staff.



Other Efforts

Further efforts to strengthen teaching effectiveness and enhance student learning can be found in the university's multiple relationships with organizations within the community. These collaborations provide additional learning opportunities for students. Several examples are listed below:

- The Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center (MVAC) receives approximately \$500,000 per year in extramural contract and grant work, most of which involves direct archaeological experiences for students. These field experiences are key to the success of the Sociology/Archaeology department in placing its students in top graduate schools.
- The River Studies Center helped establish a formal cooperative education agreement between the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the College of Science and Health. Both undergraduate and graduate students have served as research assistants and interns for a variety of research projects. On average, more than 40 students are employed or volunteer as interns with the USGS each year.
- The Small Business Development Center (discussed in length in Criterion Five) assists students who are starting small businesses by offering classes and counseling sessions (approximately two to three per year). It also hires students to help with research on client cases or economic development projects.
- The La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium is a partnership among UW-L, Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center, Franciscan Skemp Healthcare/Mayo Health System, Western Wisconsin Technical College, and Viterbo University. The consortium was responsible for building the Health Science Center, a \$27.1 million, state-of-the-art facility (completed in 2001) near the edge of campus. The Health Science Center provides facilities to train UW-L students in several health professional programs. In 2003, for example, 11 students graduated as Physician Assistants, 16 as Occupational Therapists, 35 as Physical Therapists, 16 as Radiation Therapists, seven as Clinical Laboratory Scientists, and 22 as Nuclear Medicine Technologists; moreover, a cohort began in Dosimetry. In addition to providing space for educational training for clinical students, the laboratory space allows for excellent research training. For example, a UW-L microbiologist specializing in virology has an average of three to four undergraduates and three



to four graduate students working in his lab in the Health Science Center each year. These examples represent UW-L students, but students from other institutes of higher learning in La Crosse are also served by the Health Science Center. For example, students in health-related associate degree programs at Western Wisconsin Technical College (WWTC) take many of their technical courses at the Health Science Center.

- The Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) program represents a collaboration between UW-L and Franciscan Skemp Healthcare/Mayo Health System. Students simultaneously complete requirements for the Masters of Science in Biology at UW-L and the educational requirements to become a CRNA via the School of Anesthesia at Franciscan Skemp Healthcare/Mayo Health System.
- K-12 partnerships are an important component of the Teacher Education program. By spring 2004, UW-L was involved in over 40 partnerships with more than 20 school districts. Over 700 education students work in clinical and student teaching sites every semester. In addition, 12 School Psychology graduate students are placed in practica every fall, and 24 are placed every spring. Through these partnerships, students gain direct access to hands-on training side-by-side with experienced professionals.
- Accountancy students may complete the elective course, Accountancy 350 (Income Tax Practicum), which provides the volunteer income tax assistance program (VITA). This program services over 100 individuals each year (mostly students and low-income individuals). Experience gained by accountancy students is reflected by their placement rates and performance on the CPA exam (see Introduction for further discussion of this department).
- In the Clinical Exercise Physiology graduate program (formerly the Adult Fitness and Cardiac Rehabilitation graduate program), 15 graduate students annually receive practical, hands-on experience in cooperation with area hospitals and clinics. Students also participate in the La Crosse Exercise and Health Program (LEHP), which provides adult fitness, Phase II and IV cardiac rehabilitation programming, and health and nutrition services to more than 300 clients each week. For more information, see <http://www.uwlax.edu/sah/ess/cep/>.
- The Cooperative Education and Internship Program is offered through the Career Services Office. The program assists students from all majors to integrate classroom theory with practical experience through field experiences related to their academic and occupational goals. These experiences, for which a student can receive credit, include working for community and government agencies and for regional, national, and international businesses. Generally, students participate for one academic term (summer or semester) in full or part-time field assignments called internships. However, students also have available to them cooperative education assignments in which they can alternate classroom study with work (e.g., a student would work

during the fall semester, study during the spring semester, and work again during the summer). Another variation involves spending part of the day in a field assignment and part of the day in class. The type of assignment is determined by the employer's needs as well as those of the student. In 2002-03, there were more than 500 internship placements of which 80% were local and 20% were elsewhere within the U.S. Most students received credit, and many received salaries or stipends. International internships are also available. Currently internships are available in six different countries: Australia, China, France, Germany, Mexico, Scotland, and elsewhere in the United Kingdom (see Table 3-2).

- History majors, with a Public History Minor, are required to complete at least one internship. As a result, the History department has collaborated with a number of agencies to provide internships. Public History students have interned at regional agencies (such as the Mississippi Valley Conservancy) to national organizations (such as the Cody Museum of Western History and Martha's Vineyard Historical Society). Internships also have been completed at government entities such as the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives, and the National Park Service, to name a few.

Table 3-2.
Number of Students
Completing International
Internships

Academic Year	Number of Countries	Number of Students
1996-97	1	1
1997-98	1	0
1998-99	1	3
1999-00	1	0
2000-01	1	2
2001-02	1	2
2002-03	3	9
2003-04	3	8
2004-05	4	14
2005-06*	6	24

* Does not include Spring 2006
Source: Office of International Education

Adjunct and Clinical Faculty Program

The additional efforts, however, to enhance student learning would not be possible without the large adjunct and clinical faculty program at UW-L. The university has developed a formal program that engages more than 200 professionals who are not employed by the university in its academic and research endeavors. These individuals are awarded non-remunerative appointments with one of the following titles: Adjunct Instructor or Professor, Clinical Instructor or Professor, or Associate Researcher or Researcher.

Objectives of the program are to encourage professional collaboration between UW-L faculty and interested professionals outside the university, to increase the curricular and research expertise in undergraduate and graduate programs, and to increase the research and/or educational expertise of both UW-L faculty and adjunct and clinical faculty through joint research and educational programs at their respective facilities. Most adjunct and clinical faculty are local/regional professionals who are employed

at governmental and medical facilities, school districts, private companies, and other universities. Roles of adjunct and clinical faculty are varied and include teaching in clinical settings and at the university, advising/supervising undergraduate and graduate student research, advising/supervising student interns, collaborating with faculty on research projects, etc.

This program greatly increases the pool of expertise available for the university to pursue its mission as a high-caliber comprehensive institution and has been a highly successful program. Several of UW-L's academic programs would not exist without the collaboration with these external professionals; other programs are much more successful because of them. Likewise, the participating professionals and their organizations equally benefit from the relationship. Most of UW-L's partnerships involve the Adjunct and Clinical Faculty Program in some way. Adjunct and Clinical Faculty are listed in the undergraduate and graduate catalogues; the policy can be found at <http://www.uwlax.edu/hr/adjunct-clinical.faculty.pdf>.

Examples of Budget Priorities to Support Student Learning

Further evidence of UW-L's commitment to teaching and learning is demonstrated through budget priorities. In comparison to the other comprehensive universities in the UW System, UW-L spends the greatest proportion of its state appropriations budget on instruction. For 2002-03, UW-L spent 55% of its total General Program Revenue (GPR) budget on instruction (for further budget information, please refer to Criterion Two). Also, during the past several years, UW-L has been awarded approximately 110 lab modernization grants (\$335,000 in 2005) and over 21 curriculum or classroom modernization grants (\$100,000 in 2005). Additional base funding has come from an Economic Stimulus Package (ESP), which was funded by a DIN (Decision Item Narrative), meaning that it was budgeted as a separate line item in the budget and supported by board, legislative, and Governor action. This funding was used to help stimulate student interest and training in high technology areas such as certain majors, minors, or concentrations in information systems, computer science, biomolecular sciences, biochemistry, physics, and geographical information sciences. Much of the funding was used to renovate instructional and research laboratories and supports students in lab research. Finally, UW-L Foundation scholarships since 1999 have consistently provided more than \$500,000 annually for students (see Table 3-3).

Table 3-3.

UW-L Foundation Scholarship Awards 1995-2006

Year	Number of Award	Total Amount Awarded
2005-06	589	\$535,469
2004-05	587	\$502,661
2003-04	530	\$437,557
2002-03	586	\$515,753
2001-02	560	\$523,480
2000-01	555	\$495,007
1999-00	525	\$440,923
1998-99	480	\$380,730
1997-98	420	\$304,317
1996-97	435	\$254,276
1995-96	389	\$166,468

Source: UW-L Foundation

Conclusion

UW-L places the highest value on student learning, as evidenced by its persistent refinement and resulting improvement of assessment practices. The institution can demonstrate significant improvement since 1996, although the level of assessment varies among departments (80% of departments submit biennial assessment reports). The critical element of assessment of student learning outcomes that must be developed and implemented to a much greater extent is “closing the loop” between collecting assessment data and using the results to improve teaching at the department level. UW-L also must develop greater uniformity of graduate program assessment. Overall, the majority of faculty and staff view assessment as an integral part of their teaching responsibilities.

University support, both in recognition and funding, is essential in the cultivation of an atmosphere of continually seeking ways to improve teaching and learning. Institutional support for training in innovative teaching methods has increased, and a wide array of programs exist to improve teaching. The institution also offers a variety of services for students that enhance the learning environment. Numerous partnerships provide exceptional real-world environments, greatly enhancing learning opportunities for UW-L students.

Finally, the value placed on effective teaching is evidenced through faculty retention, promotion, and tenure guidelines. However, to ensure consistency and alignment in evaluating teaching effectiveness, more effective assessment of teaching must be institutionalized which includes peer evaluation, teaching portfolios, and measurement of student learning outcomes in addition to the current use of SEI scores.

Recommendations

While the departmental assessment of student learning has improved over the past 10 years, there is little evidence that assessment reports are being used directly by departments to improve student learning. Several measures might be instituted to “close the loop” with assessment that include:

- Changing the Academic Program Review (APR) guidelines to address more directly student learning outcomes.
- Linking the Academic Program Review more directly to biennial assessment.
- Holding all departments accountable in submitting biennial assessments.
- Linking a portion of college and departmental resource allocations to the unit’s ability to demonstrate that these funds are being used effectively to improve student learning.

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- Continuing to make assessment a focus that is valued by university faculty, staff, and students (For example, see Truman State's assessment Web site <http://www.assessment.truman.edu/committee/indexl.htm>).

Complementing improvements in assessment activities are recommendations for effective teaching practices, including measures of teaching effectiveness other than student evaluations. For example, UW-L might consider institutionalizing the use of peer review and other measures of evaluating effective teaching (especially measured student learning outcomes) as measures in academic program reviews, merit reviews, and promotion portfolios (e.g., standardizing SEIs across all departments for consistency throughout the university). While the institution supports innovative and effective teaching practices, these practices are not consistently rewarded in departmental reviews of faculty for the merit portion of the pay plan or joint promotion decisions. Finally, effective teaching can only occur when assessment is taking place at all levels. For example, in addition to assessing student learning outcomes in the traditional classroom, instructors need to consider assessing student learning using alternative instructional delivery methods such as D2L and to determine how this technology enhances student learning. Also, when assessing programs, instructors should explore the effectiveness of academic minors as well as majors.

From a historical perspective, assessment is a much more integral part of the UW-L culture than it was 10 years ago. Faculty and staff now have expectations regarding the assessment of student learning outcomes that did not exist then. The campus is presently at a juncture to institutionalize the application of assessment results to the larger university environment — only then will assessment inform curriculum and student learning.

