

CHAPTER FOUR

CRITERION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING

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

Not all learning is instantly recognized by either teacher or student nor is it easily measured. Because of the multiple measures needed to evaluate teaching and learning, USI has embarked on a series of conversations and investigations to acquire better evidence that we are fulfilling our teaching and learning missions.

In the summer of 2004, deans, department chairs, and program directors came together at a day-long retreat to grapple with the questions “How do you know effective teaching when you see it?” and “How do you know student learning results from that teaching?” Efforts to generate answers to those questions led to a lively discussion about the merits of various approaches and assessment strategies, but it also made us aware that we may never be able to measure with perfect accuracy the relationship between teaching and learning. Engaging in the conversation leads to a more deliberate instructional approach and better documentation of learning than just summarizing the results of tests, quizzes, and papers. The process of assessment—the thoughtful examination of the interplay between teaching and learning—can be just as valuable as the results of assessment.

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

According to the [University’s Mission](#): “The University is an institution which students choose for the strength of its academic programs. . . .” Strong academic programs result from effective and ongoing assessment. Evidence that the University’s goals for student learning outcomes are stated for educational programs and make effective assessment possible is organized into three categories:

- creating an assessment culture
- stating student learning outcomes
- driving improvement through assessment

3A.1: Creating an Assessment Culture

The University is creating a culture of assessment by broadening the evaluation of student learning and teaching effectiveness. To show evidence of creating a culture of assessment, this section highlights the assessment activities of three units:

- University Assessment Committee
- Office of Institutional Research and Assessment
- Core Curriculum Assessment

3A.1a: University Assessment Committee

Although the University Assessment Committee originated as an ad hoc committee, expansion of the central role assessment plays at the University—resulting from the last self-study process—called for permanent recognition of the group. To assure that assessment remains a province of faculty, the Faculty Senate Bylaws were amended in 1995 to add the University Assessment Committee as a permanent standing committee of Faculty Senate.

The University's assessment plan established guidelines for academic program review, requiring each University academic program to prepare a comprehensive program review every five years. The standard review consists of a small-scale self-study, followed by reviews by colleagues and administrators from within the institution but outside the program or department. Two criteria addressed within academic program reviews specifically focus on student learning outcomes. The first criterion requires a description of the assessment measures used to evaluate program effectiveness and student learning as well as a discussion of assessment results. The second criterion involves a description of how assessment results are used to improve program teaching and student learning. For academic program reviews, the University Assessment Committee reviews the incorporation of assessment results. By 2003, most of the University's academic departments had undergone review (with 2003 being the end of a five-year cycle). Programs holding professional accreditation were able to clearly document ways in which student learning outcomes assessment data are used in the program improvement process whereas non-accredited programs were inconsistently able show how assessment data are used.

To evaluate the overall academic program review process, an ad hoc committee, the Academic Program Review Assessment Committee, was appointed in fall 2003. The committee's major recommendation included streamlining the academic program review process for programs that undergo external professional accreditation. For programs that do not have outside accrediting agencies, this ad hoc committee recommended that the program review process be continued and strengthened. Further, the committee recommended more focus on student learning outcomes across academic programs and urged clearer documentation of results. The academic program review process, revised with the recommendations of the Academic Program Review Assessment Committee, resumed in 2006 with the University Assessment Committee again fulfilling its role.

3A.1b: [Office of Institutional Research and Assessment](#)

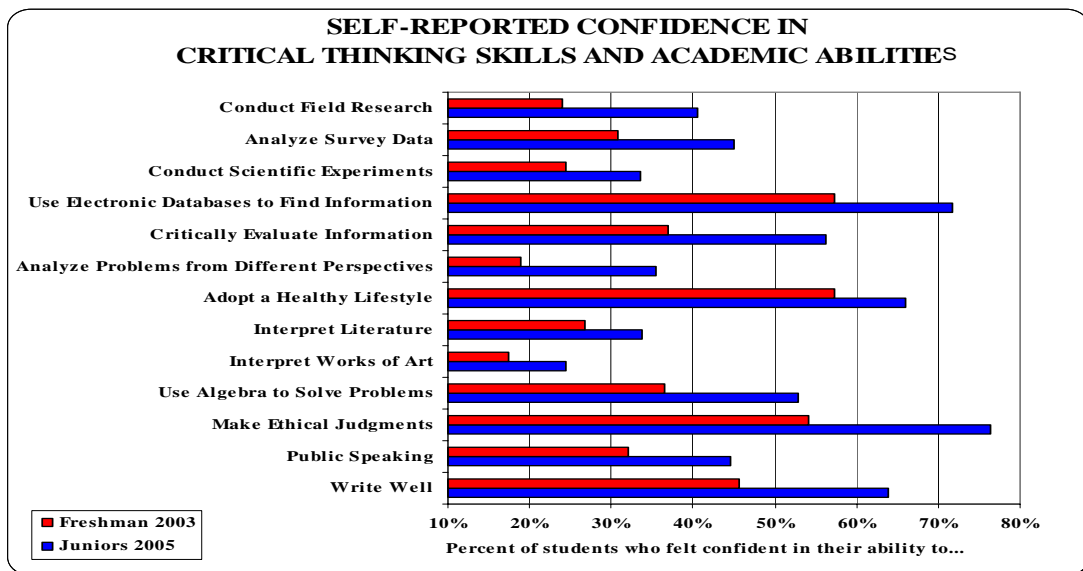
Prior to the last self-study report, the University had established a formal Assessment Day as a reflection of its commitment to assessment. Assessment Day, an annual event occurring on the second Tuesday of November, was originally devoted to assessment of the general education curriculum. For a number of years, various faculty members served as a part-time coordinator of Assessment Day activities and results. Recognizing the need to monitor effective teaching and student learning, the University formally and systematically implemented a number of assessment initiatives, resulting in ongoing improvement. One initiative was creation of the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) in

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1995 with responsibility for assessment assigned to the full-time position, director of Institutional Research. In 2004 the name of the unit was expanded to Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) to reflect the central role assessment plays in the University.

Because assessment is integral to planning and continuous improvement at the University, the major functions of OIRA involve gathering data, analyzing information, interpreting results, and disseminating findings in support of university-wide assessment of institutional effectiveness. In addition, OIRA gathers, compiles, and maintains data and information on students and academic programs, impacting the University's short and long-term planning and reporting to internal and external constituencies. Examples of OIRA internal users include Dean of Students, Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence, Student Development, Alumni and Volunteer Services, Residence Life, and Faculty Senate.

At the institutional level, OIRA coordinates the administration of the Academic Profile on Assessment Day. In 2005, nearly 1,900 freshmen and more than 700 junior students participated in academic testing. Recognizing the importance of student participation in Assessment Day, OIRA has spearheaded mechanisms for enhanced promotion and encouragement, such as postcards, e-mails, lawn signs, and table tents in dining areas. As a result of these efforts, Assessment Day student participation over the past three years has been greater than 90 percent. Analyses of Academic Profile test scores consistently indicate statistically significant learning gains between a student's freshman and junior year (University of Southern Indiana OIRA). In some years Assessment Day is used as a vehicle to collect additional information about USI students. During Assessment Day 2005 activities, students completed an additional set of 50 questions, which included items concerning the University Core Curriculum, students' experiences with their academic advisors, and student ratings of their confidence in a variety of skill sets such as speaking in public, conducting scientific experiments, adopting a healthy lifestyle, and writing well.



Although the major function of the OIRA unit is assessment of institutional effectiveness, in the past decade its activities have expanded to include student assessment activities relating to core curriculum, program majors, discipline-specific learning outcomes, distance learning, alumni outcomes, and student retention (University of Southern Indiana Office of Institutional Research Annual Reports 1998-1999 through 2004-2005). For example, OIRA also coordinates the administration of the Educational Testing Service Major Field Tests for seniors. In a typical year, University staff and faculty volunteers administer assessment instruments for 250 to 300 seniors in areas including biology, business, chemistry, economics, history, literature, mathematics, political science, and psychology. OIRA staff report average score gains and losses from previous years to department chairs and serve as resources for program diagnostic purposes. OIRA also disseminates to department chairs and program directors Major Field Tests score reports that provide input for program evaluation. Other important OIRA assessment activities include the CORE Alcohol and Drug Survey, the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement, the Harvard College Health Behaviors Survey, and the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange.

3A.1.c: Core Curriculum Assessment

The University is committed to evaluating student learning related to core curriculum learning goals. Although most academic units have clearly defined boundaries of departments or programs, the core curriculum crosses disciplines and colleges. The University Core Curriculum Council works with the University Core Curriculum director to coordinate issues related to the core curriculum and also works with the University Core Curriculum Assessment director to measure [student learning outcomes](#).

One self-recognized problem with the core curriculum is its size—there is a disconnect between the concept of “core” (implying a small number of widely shared experiences) and the fact that students may presently choose from over 150 different courses in this program. Through processes including UCC assessment, the deletion of courses that have not been offered within a four-year period, and requests from departments to streamline their UCC offerings, progress has been made in reducing the size of the core curriculum (by about 25 percent), but more work is needed here.

One problem made evident through these processes is that frequently neither faculty nor students are sufficiently aware of a given course’s connection to the core curriculum and its objectives. As one step in addressing this problem, the UCC Council is demanding that each UCC course syllabus clearly and explicitly state which core curriculum category the course fulfills and how the course focuses on that category’s goals and objectives.

A summer workshop, “Getting to the Core,” was offered in summer 2005 and repeated in 2006. Funded by the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence, the workshop enrolls 12 faculty who will be teaching at least one core curriculum course and is led by three exemplary core curriculum faculty. Each day, one teaching leader presents approximately one week’s worth of material from his or her core curriculum course (for

example, Introduction to Sociology or Survey of Mathematics). Participants take notes, evaluate the “lessons”, and take part in a debriefing of content and pedagogy led by the Core Curriculum director. As stated in the application for the Getting to the Core workshop, participants will:

- Observe, describe, and discuss pedagogies used by Teaching Leaders in three commonly taken UCC courses (one each from the social sciences, natural sciences, and humanities)
- Identify the kinds of content and methodologies which non-major students experience in these courses
- Explain how they will use this knowledge and experience in teaching at least one of their own courses in the coming academic year

New since the last self-study report is a University-approved process for periodic core course evaluation: each course in the core curriculum is reviewed every seven years. The assessment process consists of determining whether course content enables students to meet core curriculum learning goals. Further, the process allows for determination of whether course evaluative components enable an instructor to evaluate student achievement of core learning goals. Twenty-four core courses were evaluated during the 2003-2004 year, 24 in 2004-2005, and an additional 17 in 2005-2006.

A discussion of how the core curriculum helps to prepare students for life in a changing and diverse society may be found in 4B.1.

*Dedication to assessing student learning in order to constantly improve teaching and learning makes USI a **Learning-Focused** and **Future-Oriented Organization**.*

3A.2: Stating Student Learning Outcomes

The University provides goals for educational offerings including credit, noncredit, and certificate programs. University’s goals for student learning outcomes are implicit in the curricular change procedures in the *University Handbook* and in the academic review process. Evidence that the University states student learning outcomes is organized into three categories:

- academic review process
- curricular changes
- noncredit offerings

3A.2a: Academic Program Review Process

The results of the academic program review process, up to the recent hiatus that allowed for assessing the system and procedures, has made apparent that student learning outcomes are not as consistently and clearly stated as desired for each USI educational program. Programs with professional accreditation agencies are more likely to have clearly stated student learning outcomes than programs without such accrediting requirements. The academic program review process, revised with the recommendations of the Academic Program Review Assessment Committee and resumed in summer 2006,

is designed to increase consistency across programs and ensure that each program has clearly stated student learning outcomes.

3A.2b: Curricular Changes

The “constant conversations” mentioned in relation to institutional planning in Criterion 2 also provide the vision and direction for USI to develop its curriculum. The processes and paperwork described below provide for a method and order in changing curricular programs by developing new courses and programs and modifying existing courses and programs. This methodic approach plays an important role in maintaining the balance between the desire to respond to constituent desires and the need to remain true to our mission and within our resources.

In the faculty section (pp. 63-72) of the *University Handbook*, procedures for changes in undergraduate curricula are delineated and for graduate curricula on pages 72-77. According to these procedures: “The term curricular program is defined as the specific course requirements for any major, minor, or certificate program to be applied toward some degree or certificate granting program offered by the University.” Faculty participate in the development, review, revision, and evaluation of student learning outcomes by serving on committees at the program/department, college, and university levels. Committees review the appropriateness of the depth and breadth of student learning outcomes, given the level and purpose of a course or program. Faculty committees also review course syllabi to ensure that learning outcomes are clearly communicated.

Changes in the University’s existing curriculum originate at the program/department level with completion of a formal petition. If the change is a new or modified program, the petition requires the originating academic unit to submit program objectives, which include student learning outcomes and assessment strategies. A good example is the [Food and Nutrition program](#) added by the College of Nursing and Health Professions in 2005. For a new or revised course, the originating faculty member completes the appropriate petition and attaches a syllabus which includes student learning objectives. A curricular change is first considered by faculty at the program or department level. To move to the next step, the college, the undergraduate curricular change must be approved by the majority of program/department faculty. Membership of the college-level group that considers curricular changes varies from college to college. At minimum, department chairs/program directors, as delineated as position job duty (V.B.1.i) on page 27 of the [University Handbook](#): “Serve on the Dean’s Planning Committee and School Curricular Committee.” In some colleges, additional faculty serve on committees that consider undergraduate curricular change. Once approved at the college level, a petition moves to the dean for consideration.

After approval by the college dean, the curricular change petition moves to the University level. The route at the University level is dependent on whether the change is related to the undergraduate or graduate curriculum. Whereas graduate curriculum changes are considered by Graduate Council, a committee comprised of the director of each graduate program as well as a graduate faculty member representative from each college,

undergraduate curricular changes may be considered by one to three faculty committees. Furthermore, consideration of undergraduate-level curricular changes depends on curriculum content and whether the petition proposes new curricular components or modifications of existing courses/programs. At minimum, the Curriculum Committee, a standing committee (which consists of one faculty representative per college) of Faculty Senate, considers all undergraduate curricular changes. Undergraduate courses designed to meet core curriculum requirements or to be part of teacher training must have prior approval from the University Core Curriculum Council (at least one faculty representative from each college) and dean of the Bower-Suhrheinrich College of Education and Human Services (respectively) before consideration by the Curriculum Committee. Petitions approved at the University committee level are forwarded to the provost for consideration.

New programs undergo a more extensive University-level process. Before sending the new undergraduate program proposal to the provost for consideration, the Curriculum Committee forwards the new program to the Faculty Senate for approval. Once the provost has approved a proposed program, the new program petition must be approved by the Academic Planning Council, president, Board of Trustees, and Indiana Commission for Higher Education. Graduate Council forwards a proposed graduate program to the provost for consideration before the new program petition completes the same final four steps as new undergraduate program proposals.

Programs or departments wishing to provide educational offerings using distance education as the sole format undergo additional scrutiny by agencies outside the University. Academic programs delivered solely by distance delivery must also submit for consideration formal program proposals to Indiana Commission for Higher Education and Higher Learning Commission. The Indiana Commission for Higher Education guidelines includes two components directly relevant to student learning outcomes. The first component relates to the development of an assessment plan that assures the integration and continuity of assessment, whereas the second component assures documentation of learning outcomes tied to learning activities. Professional programs, accredited by outside agencies, often have additional distance education requirements that must be met.

3A.2c: Noncredit Offerings

The wide variety of educational offerings the University provides through Extended Services means there is no single standard for setting and measuring learning outcomes. In some professional programs offered for continuing education units (CEUs), such as those for nurses, social workers, and others, very specific learning objectives are developed and measured for each course or workshop. Safety training for local industry conducted at USI in collaboration with the Association of Reciprocal Safety Councils utilizes a national standard curriculum and test. The aquatics program is based upon Red Cross standards and measurements. In other cases, such as arts and leisure courses, the primary goal is for participants to enjoy the learning experience and acquire life-enriching skills. In all cases, participants are asked for feedback that informs a continuous improvement process.

3A.3: Driving Improvement Through Assessment

Evidence that the University's assessment process drives improvement is organized into four categories:

- using multiple direct and indirect assessment measures
- communicating outcomes to constituents
- evaluating at various university levels
- effecting change

3A.3a: Using Multiple Direct and Indirect Assessment Measures

The University's assessment of student learning consists of multiple direct and indirect measures at various levels (Table 3.1.2). USI uses direct assessment approaches to identify and evaluate student learning outcomes. Such methods include pre- and post-testing, evaluation of projects and portfolios, standardized tests, and program-developed indicators (e.g., core curriculum assessment measures). Indirect assessment approaches are also used, allowing inferences to be drawn regarding the development of relevant knowledge, perceptions, attitudes, and/or skills. The University's indirect methods include surveys of students, alumni, and employers as well as retention and graduation rates, graduate school attendance, and job placement data.

Table 3.1.2 Examples of Student Learning Outcome Measures

Direct Measures	Indirect Measures
▪ Summative course reports	▪ Formative course feedback
▪ Core curriculum assessment	▪ Student evaluation of teaching
▪ Grade reports	▪ Course evaluations
▪ Student teacher evaluations	▪ Student satisfaction surveys
▪ Standardized test scores	▪ Alumni surveys
▪ Visual arts portfolios and shows	▪ Employer surveys
▪ Clinical performance evaluations	▪ Job placement rates
▪ Graduate exams (e.g., GRE, GMAT)	▪ Graduate school admission rates
▪ Professional credentialing exams	▪ Exit surveys

As this self-study is being written, the University is exploring the use of course-embedded assessment, resulting from ongoing assessment of the core curriculum and the academic program review process. Embedded assessment entails the process of explicitly and systematically monitoring student achievement of student learning outcomes in particular courses. Additional information about course-embedded assessment, related to core curriculum, is provided at the end of this section.

3A.3b: Communicating Outcomes to Constituents

Programs and departments communicate student learning outcomes to constituents in various ways. Accredited health professions programs provide goals and learning outcomes to new and prospective students in online student handbooks. Other programs make available student learning objectives in the USI Bulletin. The majority of course syllabi provide detailed student learning objectives and outcomes. Program learning outcomes vary in complexity; the Nursing Program offers a sophisticated example.

Driven by general accreditation requirements mandating evidence-based education, the Nursing Program has developed a three-tiered approach to measure student learning (Table 3.1.3). The student learning measures were developed, beginning with outcome statements that reflect the proficiencies expected of a graduate of a professional nursing program. The outcome statements, in turn, shape competency statements, which are “leveled” according to student year (e.g., first year, second year, etc.). The Nursing Program then developed course objectives and clinical evaluation parameters based on outcome statements. Using formative and summative evaluation approaches, the Nursing Program assesses students matriculating through the program, starting with the third tier and moving to tiers 2 and then 1. To provide end-of-the-program summative assessment, first tier outcome statements are used along with alumni and employer surveys.

Table 3.1.3 Nursing Program Student Learning Assessment System

Tier	Measure	How Students Receive Information
1	▪ Outcome statements	▪ Nursing Program Student Handbook
2	▪ Competency statements	▪ A specified nursing course in each year
3	▪ Course objectives ▪ Clinical evaluation parameters	▪ Each course ▪ Each clinical aspect

3A.3c: Evaluating at Various University Levels

The University uses evaluation at various levels to drive improvement. At the program/department level, the University assures assessment of student learning outcomes through the Academic Program Review self-study process. Faculty actively participate in student learning outcomes assessment by serving on program or department-level committees during the self-study process required by accreditation standards of outside accrediting agencies, professional associations and/or through formal internal academic program review. In addition, feedback loops with external organizations and agencies offer a continuous flow of information. Accreditation organizations and professional credentialing agencies provide the University with student performance data that, in turn, are used for program assessment purposes. Internal and external feedback, a major component of the self-study process at the program/department level, has resulted in curricular change including modifications of programs and courses.

Once a program provides evidence of self-study process completion, in the form of the academic review report, two University-level groups evaluate the information and provide feedback. A faculty member may serve on a University-level committee designated to review a specific department or program’s self-study report that resulted from the academic program review self-study process. In addition, a faculty member representing each college serves on the Assessment Committee, which oversees the academic program review process. To date, virtually all programs have completed at least one round of academic program review (with some programs having experienced multiple external and internal reviews) with feedback used to reconsider and strengthen goals and student learning outcomes measures.

Because programs in the past submitted academic review reports using a standard format, accredited programs were required to submit a different report for outside accreditation agencies. A self-study report completed by a particular program for outside accreditation agencies was read by the college dean and provost; however, the University community in general was unaware of specific program accreditation requirements. Beginning in the 2006-2007 school year, a self-study report mandated by an outside accreditation agency will become part of the academic review report, a change recommended by Academic Program Review Assessment Committee. This change will result in two additional groups of readers (the two faculty committees previously mentioned) of the accreditation self-study report, and perhaps a better understanding at the University level of the requirements of outside accreditation agencies.

Extended Services regularly evaluates noncredit and certificate educational offerings. Assessment of participant learning for credit, noncredit, and certificate educational offerings varies from paper and pencil evaluations related to the offering and presenter to pre- and post-testing of participants. Extended Services uses assessment results to make improvements on an ongoing basis.

3A.3d: Effecting Change

Effecting change completes the feedback loop of the assessment process. At USI feedback from the assessment process results in change at the program level. Curricular development and change are ongoing and dynamic processes at USI, resulting from completing the academic review process, meeting requirements of outside accreditation agencies, and responding to input from employers and the growing educational needs of Indiana citizens.

Over the past 10 years, the program-level self-study process (mandated by outside accreditation agencies and/or required by the internal academic program review process) has produced many changes at the graduate and undergraduate levels. At the graduate level, the University implemented new programs, converted existing programs, and offered programs customized for a particular worksite. Implementation of the Master of Public Administration degree program fulfilled a geographical need when a similar program at Indiana State University closed. The University implemented the Master of Science in Nursing degree program with multiple tracks and Master of Health Administration degree program, both offered in a distance education format because of constituents' educational needs. To comply with the occupational therapy profession's move in April 1999 to post-baccalaureate degree entry (minimum of a master's degree), the University converted the entry-level baccalaureate degree program to a combined BS/MSOT curriculum, becoming USI's only program leading to the awarding of a post-baccalaureate first professional degree. In addition, the University offered the Master of Industrial Management degree program customized for Bristol-Myers Squibb employees at their worksite. These changes in graduate curricular offerings signify the University's future-oriented, learning-focused connection with the community and mission to fulfill regional requirements both on and off campus.

Degree programs have also changed, as a result of the self-study process, at the undergraduate level. Findings from the academic program review process that included input from the community, resulted, for example, in extending two existing programs (engineering technology and radiologic technology) to the professional level: engineering and radiologic and imaging sciences, respectively. In addition to assessment driving improvement in degree programs, the core curriculum—because of assessment—has changed as well. [Core curriculum assessment](#) is unique in the academic review process because the program is distributed across programs and colleges. Because many core curriculum courses are taught by faculty in a range of disciplines across the colleges (the Synthesis core category, for example, includes core curriculum courses offered by all five colleges), the University Core Curriculum Council sponsors assessment workshops related to various core categories. For core curriculum faculty in the history (C1) and social science (C2) areas, the University Core Council during the 2003-2004 academic year implemented a workshop that focused discussion on preparing evaluative materials for courses under review in these areas. A second workshop during that same school year for science (C3) faculty focused on how and when to assess student learning outcomes in core science courses. Prior to the fall 2004 semester, University Core Curriculum Council members contacted new and current faculty teaching in the synthesis (D) core category to review the category's goals. UCC members recognize the need to design synthesis courses in a manner that will enable students to develop interdisciplinary responses to contemporary problems.

Future plans for assessment of core curriculum include evaluating student learning outcomes related to composition (A1), oral communication (A1), and mathematics (A2). In December 2005, the University Core Curriculum Assessment director was coordinating efforts to evaluate a large sample of student writing, gather and analyze data pertaining to oral communication from both students and faculty, and measure students' final exam scores in core curriculum math courses. In addition, while considerable effort has been devoted to assessing core curriculum objectives at the program and course levels, discussions also were underway regarding the desirability of embedding assessment into some core curriculum courses. Although some faculty may be engaged in the practice currently, embedding assessment is not a common approach in core curriculum courses at USI.

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

Driven by mission, USI faculty, who believe students are the future, take pride in teaching and advising students. Faculty regularly use various assessment strategies that provide continuous improvement of teaching effectiveness and routinely share outcomes with colleagues within the University as well as at the state, national, and international levels. The University provides funding and personnel in support of effective teaching. Evidence that the University values and supports effective teaching is organized into four categories:

- employing effective teaching faculty
- supporting effective teaching
- developing effective teaching
- recognizing effective teaching

3B.1: Employing Effective Teaching Faculty

USI places value on attracting and retaining faculty who possess high levels of knowledge and expertise in their fields and who also place students at the heart of the teaching and learning process. The University ensures effective teaching by

- hiring effective teaching faculty
- working to retain effective teaching faculty
- offering workshops and other professional development opportunities for department chairs and deans to support their roles in faculty recruitment

3B.1a: Hiring Effective Teaching Faculty - “Excellence in teaching” according to the University’s mission, “will continue to be the most important criterion in faculty recruitment”. To recruit and hire qualified faculty, the University has a formal process developed in accordance with policies and procedures developed by the provost’s office and Human Resources. With vacant faculty positions or new faculty budget lines, the hiring process begins with formation of a search committee that follows the University’s policies and procedures, culminating in recommendation of the best qualified candidate(s) to the college dean and provost. Once hired, the new tenure-track faculty member undergoes frequent evaluation for the first three years, whereas veteran faculty submit annual reports. The evaluation schedule permits early intervention if a faculty member is struggling in the classroom. The emphasis in the early stages of evaluation is upon mentoring and improvement with college and University resources aiding the development process.

The colleges stipulate degree and experience requirements to join the faculty. Those requirements will be incorporated into the *University Handbook* during the 2006-2007 year. Better documentation of part-time faculty credentials was mandated by the provost in 2005.

Among the challenges to USI in recruiting new faculty has been the 12 hour per semester teaching load and, in some fields (health professions and business in particular), salary. The Economic Benefits Committee of the [Faculty Senate](#) conducted a study of faculty salaries during the 2005-2006 year and found that the issue of salary compression is evident for the rank of full professor and to a lesser degree for the rank of associate professor. Assistant professor salaries fared best in comparison with other universities, however, search committees and deans hear from candidates their concerns about salary levels, particularly when combined with teaching load. During the past few years, the University has sought to address some of the compression issues with additional salary allocations, but it has not been possible to eliminate the compression issue. This struggle is evident on most university campuses today and USI will continue to address salary issues for faculty with funds available.

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3B.1b: Retaining Effective Teaching Faculty - According to the academic appointment, promotion, and tenure section of the *University Handbook*:

Teaching occupies a central position among academic duties. Generally, teaching responsibilities consume the greatest amount of faculty energies and provide the primary arena to display faculty scholarship. Quality teaching, therefore, is the most important element in evaluation of teaching faculty.

USI considers teaching effectiveness a multidimensional construct with student learning outcomes a core component. Student evaluation is one of many methods to measure effectiveness of teaching. Other methods include faculty-developed survey/questionnaires for students, peer review, teaching portfolios, reflective teaching memoranda, etc. Assessment of student learning and teaching effectiveness occurs for formative and summative purposes. Faculty members use formative teaching evaluation as feedback to improve teaching. Summative assessment is used by:

- faculty to provide information for use in reflecting on outcomes to improve effectiveness of instruction and courses
- administrators to serve as one measure of teaching effectiveness during the annual review process as well as for retention, tenure, promotion, and merit raise decisions
- the University to provide aggregate data for institutional effectiveness efforts (e.g., program review, outside accreditation agencies)

There has been campus-wide discussion about “teaching portfolios” and more departments are beginning to integrate this approach into their assessment of teaching performance. Other departments assign experienced faculty as mentors to new faculty and require peer review of teaching during the review process.

A detailed description of professional development opportunities provided for faculty appears in 4A.1.

A new student evaluation of teaching instrument for summative purposes is being piloted during the summer 2006 session and will be fully implemented during the 2006-2007 year. The instrument is the result of extensive campus conversations with faculty, consultation with external experts in the field, and review by administrative offices involved in the personnel review process. Discussion began at the administrative level during the August 2004 Academic Affairs Retreat (for deans, directors, and chairs), of which the focus was measuring teaching effectiveness and student learning. During the fall 2004 semester, a Faculty Senate ad hoc committee (including representatives from student government) was appointed to develop or select a standardized student evaluation of teaching instrument that includes better indicators to assess student learning to replace the existing Purdue Cafeteria Instructor Reports. To collect additional information from faculty, the task force convened focus groups during the January 2005 Faculty and Administrative Staff spring semester meeting. [Data gathered from those focus groups](#) guided recommendations in the crafting of a new standardized instrument.

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Because the Purdue Cafeteria Instructor Report was a paper-based assessment system, distance education has already impacted student evaluation of teaching. Widespread implementation of distance education and the ensuing low return rate of the traditional printed evaluation forms mailed to distance education students created a need to provide a course evaluation format that matched the technology used. During the 2000 summer terms, Academic Affairs developed and pilot-tested, through Instructional Technology Services, a course-level assessment instrument for use by students and faculty in evaluating distance learning course content and instructional support. Because distance education is increasing, the University will need to select a student evaluation of teaching standardized instrument that works for traditional classes as well as courses delivered using distance education formats.

Each year faculty members gather data about their teaching effectiveness (as well as information on scholarship and service) for annual reviews, which consist of two aspects: written self-reflection (by the faculty member) on his or her year's activities and evaluation by the faculty member's immediate supervisor. Annual review outcomes factor into merit raise recommendations. Both aspects of the annual review, plus an updated curriculum vitae, are kept in the faculty member's file in the provost's office.

Because of the emphasis placed on the annual review process, faculty seeking promotion and tenure have available multiple self-reflection documents with supporting evidence. Four of the five colleges have separate promotion and tenure documents, consistent with processes and procedures in the *University Handbook*, serving as guidelines and standards for faculty completing the process in their college. The fifth college, Education and Human Services, relies solely upon the processes in the *University Handbook*.

Promotion and tenure documents vary across the colleges, showing the appreciation the University has for field diversity. Across colleges, however, there is inconsistency related to the roles the department/program and the chairperson/director play (for a particular faculty member) in the promotion and tenure decision process. In some colleges, the department/program and/or the chairperson/director provide written recommendations; in others, input is not sought at the department/program level. At USI, a promotion decision moves from the college-level to a university-level committee, part of the Faculty Senate governance structure, before going to the next step, the provost. Tenure decisions move directly from the college-level committee to the provost.

USI's mission says "Excellence in teaching will continue to be the most important criterion in faculty recruitment. At the same time, the ability to do research, to engage in continuous scholarly and creative work, and to provide service, primarily to the region and the state, will be important additional qualifications."

Also according to the *Handbook*, "effective teaching assumes . . . scholarly inquiry which results in constant revision of courses and curricula consistent with new knowledge." Scholarly inquiry, used in this way, is the impetus behind some faculty members' decision to combine teaching and scholarly efforts. Rather than setting a separate research agenda, many faculty are actively involved in the scholarship of teaching and

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learning, using feedback from courses to enhance future offerings of the same course, resulting in continuous improvement of courses. The University supports the scholarship of teaching and learning (as well as other types of scholarship) through units, staff, and funding. In the past two years there has been increasing focus on Boyer's four domains of scholarship with particular attention to the scholarship of engagement. Given USI's connectedness with the region, this broad definition of scholarship best fits the University's mission.

Recognition of the stress generated by balancing a heavy teaching load with scholarship and service expectations resulted in the development of two programs with monies from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. For junior tenure-track faculty, a Summer Research Fellowship program was established. This program offers faculty in their first three years of tenure eligibility a summer stipend to focus on their scholarship. Seven faculty were awarded the \$ 7,000 fellowship in summer 2005, and eight faculty received fellowships in summer 2006. For mid-career and senior faculty, the sabbatical program was expanded to permit more faculty to take advantage of the opportunity to retool, renew, and reenergize their teaching and scholarship. Professional development monies of \$2,500 per person are included in this program and four faculty have been awarded these sabbaticals in the first two years of the program.

Four university components supporting effective teaching are:

- [The Computer Center](#) - The University has expanded the services, support staff, equipment, and responsibilities of the Computer Center since the last self-study report. Responsible for the University's technology infrastructure, the Computer Center oversees the University's major financial commitment to technology: computer labs in every classroom building and residence halls, wired and wireless Internet access, and network servers and systems. Additionally, the Computer Center maintains the majority of University Web pages and the main information portal, MyUSI (powered by Pipeline). To provide quick responses to technology difficulties that arise for faculty, staff, and students, the center decentralized some staff: there is now at least one Computer Center staff member "housed" in each major campus building.
- [Instructional Technology Services](#) - Since the last self-study report, the University formed Instructional Technology Services with the strategic merger of Distance Education and Media Services, resulting in the consolidation and leverage of the University's instructional media resources and support. Since 1999 ITS has provided consultation, planning, and promotion for the effective use of new and existing technologies to support instruction and learning; maintained high standards of service for its clients; deployed University technical resources; and collaborated with members of the campus community and other partners on technical issues and activities consistent with the unit mission. Specific services ITS offers include [presentation support](#) (equipment loans, deployment, troubleshooting, and [training](#) satellite and multi-point [videoconferencing](#)), [multimedia services](#) ([video production](#), photography, scanning, CD-ROM

authoring, transparency creation, poster-making, and lamination), [audiotape and videotape duplication](#), [Scantron testing services](#), instructional [videotape lending](#), and distance education development and coordination through the [USI Learning Network](#). To determine ongoing technology support needs of the University, ITS works with the Computer Center to survey faculty, students, and staff.

ITS involves others in planning through the Instructional Technology Services Advisory Board and the Distance Education Advisory Board, which meet face-to-face and virtually via Blackboard™ course management system to discuss issues related to ITS and distance education. Additionally, ITS maintains ongoing collaborative relationships with faculty members, particularly those who teach distance education courses or those who are “power users” of classroom presentation equipment to evaluate and demonstrate new hardware and software.

- **Rice Library** - In other developments since the last self-study process, the [David L. Rice Library](#) has transformed from a conventional “paper” document center to a learning center featuring Web-based virtual access from any computer with an Internet connection, multiple on-site electronic work stations for students and faculty, and physical access to growing collections. The library currently subscribes to 65 databases and provided, through the state network, offers access to an additional 19 data bases. With the opening of the new library, the University increased collection acquisition funds available by \$68,000 annually. A 1996 student government initiative resulted in increasing the number of open hours to 92 hours each week during regular academic terms and 82 hours per week during summer terms. As of June 2006, hours will increase to 96 per week during fall and spring terms. Additionally, the virtual aspect of Rice Library is available to students and faculty nearly 24 hours per day (maintenance and back-up procedures require early-morning downtime), seven days per week from any location with an Internet connection.

In addition to providing traditional pedagogical assistance and professional development opportunities (including workshops, demonstrations, and technology updates), Rice Library recently added distance learning support through a new component, Distance Learning Services. This area of library support services is dedicated to providing resources and serving students and faculty involved in the University's distance education and off-campus courses and programs. Rice Library has a full-time distance learning librarian on staff to assist faculty and students. Additional information about the new Rice Library is provided at the end of the physical learning environments section under Core Component 3C.

- **Other Services** - Although the previous units in this component are University-wide entities, some colleges provide additional pedagogical support to their faculty. The College of Business, for example, demonstrates high regard of teaching effectiveness with a teaching improvement committee—members are elected—that offers workshops and provides presentations related to teaching improvement to faculty. The Pott College of Science and Engineering uses Pott

Foundation funds to support faculty development opportunities. The College of Liberal Arts also offers summer research and teaching improvement support.

3B.2: Developing Effective Teaching

The University considers faculty members its greatest resource and provides significant resources for faculty development. Faculty can select from a wide variety of faculty development opportunities on campus or apply for funds at various levels (program/departmental, college, and University) to travel to professional conferences. The USI Foundation strongly supports faculty research and development activities related to both student learning outcomes and the delivery of instruction. In addition to travel and development support allocated to all faculty within colleges and the Office of the Provost, faculty can receive additional faculty development opportunities and support from numerous entities across campus including the

- Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence
- Excellence Through Engagement
- Instructional Technology Services
- Institute for Online Teaching and Learning
- Distance Education
- Faculty Research and Creative Works Awards

3B.2a: [Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence](#)

Since the last self-study report, the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence (CTLE) has significantly expanded its programming. CTLE now offers consultation, development opportunities, and grant funding, directed primarily to enhancing teaching effectiveness. Consultative services are customized to the request, and CTLE also provides (when requested) peer review of teaching effectiveness through a classroom visitation program. The wide array of development opportunities offered by CTLE provides faculty new skills and allows opportunities for faculty to discuss successful teaching and scholarly practices with colleagues. These CTLE development opportunities are available at the University's [employee learning Web site](#). Topics range from utilizing classroom assessment techniques and developing teaching portfolios to preparing for the tenure review process. Special sessions are offered exclusively for newly-employed faculty as part of their first-year orientation process.

CTLE funds two grants: the Research, Innovation, Creativity, and Scholarship (RISC) and Teaching Enhancement Awards (TEA). RISC grants support student/faculty research travel for students wishing to attend and present scholarship at academic conferences. TEA, the main CTLE grant program, is specifically designed to provide financial support to faculty or departments who wish to improve pedagogy. Between 1998 and 2005, TEA has awarded more than \$120,000 of grant funding to faculty and departments for pedagogical improvement purposes. Numerous examples exist across campus of faculty using innovative ways to enhance student learning. A social work faculty member, who has made extensive use of the technology embedded in the Blackboard™ course management system provides (through a TEA grant) students in her online courses with “virtual guest speakers,” experts who present and interact with students in real-time. Another TEA example is a service learning project in which students contributed to a

national oral history project by interviewing African-American veterans from World War II, transcribing the interviews, and making presentations based on the subjects of the interviews.

In the 2003-2004 school year, the CTLE appointed fellows, known both inside and outside the University for a particular expertise. Each fellow (e.g., technology, service learning, assessment, writing) was responsible for presenting two faculty development offerings and was available for consultation to individuals and academic units during the year. The assessment fellow, for example, was asked (following one required faculty development offering) to provide an Academic Skills workshop to support adjunct instructors teaching a reading course. Following the CTLE workshops and customized academic unit workshop, Academic Skills made changes that increased student responsibility for learning, accountability of student learning outcomes, and consistency across adjunct instructors.

The University has the opportunity to strengthen faculty development efforts as a result of the \$2.5 million “Excellence through Engagement” grant from the Lilly Endowment in summer 2004. The CTLE director has labored with little release time from teaching, little access to staff support, and no permanent space that permits more flexibility in programming. These issues are among those to be addressed by the Excellence through Engagement grant.

3B.2b: Excellence through Engagement

Excellence through Engagement is a \$2.5 million project, funded by the Lilly Endowment in 2004 whose primary purpose was to encourage universities to recruit and retain intellectual capital. A multifaceted project that interconnects other Criterion Three core components, Excellence through Engagement provides funding for a wide range of efforts that develop and support effective teaching and student learning. The project establishes a full-time CTLE director position, enhances recruitment and retention of students through a scholarship endowment for National Merit Scholars and enhancements to the Honors Program (discussed in Core Component 3D), augments faculty development opportunities through [Summer Research Fellowships](#) for junior faculty and expanded sabbatical opportunities for tenured faculty, and provides for travel/research support for graduate students. A regional leadership program, “[Connect with Southern Indiana](#),” brings together participants from nine contiguous counties in southwest Indiana and uses a critical thinking module as an organizing component to empower up-and-coming leaders. Seven of the 24 participants are USI faculty and staff. This program facilitates faculty and staff engagement and highlights the connectedness of teaching, learning, and engagement. A summary of activities is in the Appendix.

3B.2c: [Instructional Technology Services](#)

ITS is the primary provider of technology development offerings for faculty, students, and staff. Offering customized group workshops and individualized sessions, ITS also offers a series of workshops focusing on applications within the Blackboard course management system. Participants who successfully complete the Blackboard workshop

series earn an ITS certificate. Additional information regarding ITS support of effective teaching is discussed in the previous section.

3B.2d: [Institute for Online Teaching and Learning](#)

During summer, ITS and CTLE sponsor the Institute for Online Teaching and Learning. This on-campus institute provides USI faculty, who are new to teaching at a distance, with hands-on development activities. Faculty receive guidance from current practitioners through a two-week series of workshops that enable participants to fully develop their distance curricular materials. Following the summer institute, ITS provides ongoing technology support for faculty, including group training, individualized training sessions, and consultations.

3B.2e: [Distance Education](#)

Distance Education, a component of ITS, provides support for faculty to attend the annual Indiana Higher Education Telecommunications System (IHETS) All-Partners' conference. Faculty attending this conference can share their best practices in distance learning with other colleagues from Indiana. Additionally, Distance Education encourages faculty who teach distance education classes to apply for course or module development funding available through the Indiana Partnership for Statewide Education. For further information related to this topic, please see Core Component 3C.2b.

3B.2f: [Faculty Research and Creative Works Awards](#)

The University also offers Faculty Research and Creative Works Awards (FRCWA), awarded by the Faculty Affairs Committee, a Faculty Senate standing committee. FRCWA is an internal grant program designed to support faculty needs in both teaching and scholarship.

3B.2g: Recognizing Effective Teaching

USI recognizes effective teaching as a core institutional value and seeks ways to exemplify and promote best teaching and learning practices for the University community. As related earlier in this core component section, teaching effectiveness plays a major role in both the promotion and tenure procedures and in the annual review process for all faculty. Across colleges, there is variation related to recognition of effective teaching. The College of Business recognizes effective teaching faculty with teaching awards given on an annual basis while other colleges rely on University-level recognition mechanisms.

The University demonstrates it values effective teaching by recognizing and awarding two faculty honors each year. The Integra Bank Distinguished Professor Award, which includes a major teaching component within the selection criteria, is awarded during commencement to a faculty member selected by the Faculty Affairs Committee, a Faculty Senate standing committee. The award was increased from \$1,000 to \$2,000 during the 2004-05 year. In addition, the University Core Curriculum Council awards the H. Lee Cooper Award in recognition of a faculty member's effective teaching in the core curriculum. In 2005-2006, the USI Foundation supported the establishment of two additional teaching awards, the first for full-time faculty in their first six years of service,

and the second to recognize outstanding teaching by a part-time faculty member. The Excellence through Engagement project, mentioned in an earlier section of this core component, will provide for enhanced recognition for faculty work including scholarship and outstanding advising.

Core Component 3C: *The organization creates effective learning environments.*

USI has created effective learning environments within the institution as evidenced by an almost geometric growth of physical learning space and exponential development of virtual learning space. In addition to spaces created within the University, USI offers collaborative learning opportunities in environments outside the University. In fact, creating effective learning environments is the University's strongest core component for this criterion. Evidence that USI is committed to creating effective learning environments is reflected in planning and budgeting priorities related to three categories:

- physical learning environments
- virtual learning environments
- collaborative learning environments

3C.1: Physical Learning Environments:

During the past decade, the University has undergone significant transformation in its physical learning environment. The concerns of the 1995 NCA site visit team regarding studio and laboratory space for fine arts and sciences has been addressed in Chapter 2. The [physical footprint](#) of the University has increased with the addition of the following new buildings: Education Center, Liberal Arts Center, Art Studio, Recreation and Fitness Center, Rice Library, and Science Center Torrington Wing. The Liberal Arts Center includes labs for psychology and sociology as well as display space for fine arts and a stage for theatre productions.

Besides new buildings, existing physical spaces have undergone extensive rehabilitation and renovation. The once unfinished lower level of the Health Professions Center was converted to learning spaces; laboratories in the existing Science Center were renovated and the building was rehabilitated to match the newly built science wing; the Technology Center, home of the new engineering program, underwent general updating in the form of renovation and rehabilitation; and the Ceramics Laboratory was renovated. With input from students and the Student Disability Advisory Committee, physical accessibility to buildings has also improved in the past 10 years. For example, automatic doors activated by motion sensors have replaced some doors previously opened with touch switches requiring unnecessary physical effort, and in areas with two sets of doors, one motion detector opens the first door and then the second door after a short pause. Planning is underway to renovate the space vacated by the library's move to a new building in 2006. Renovated space for Extended Services and Graduate Studies and Sponsored Research will enhance the ability of both units to deliver better service to students and community members.

In the past 10 years, classroom space appearance also has changed, primarily in the form of technology. At the time of the last self-study report, classroom technology often meant

the ubiquitous overhead projector (faculty had access to more “exotic” technology with prior reservations through the audiovisual unit then managed by the library) and a traditional wall-mounted blackboard (newer classrooms had dry-erase whiteboards). New buildings feature smart classrooms with technology stations that incorporate computers and projectors, often with additional learning devices (e.g., Symposium and SmartBoard) supported through Instructional Technology Services, discussed in 3B.1. Through retrofitting in existing buildings, 72 percent of all classrooms now have built-in technology. The rest are served with portable equipment.

3C.1a: Other Learning Places

The University also supports learning and scholarship by improving learning spaces outside the classroom. Full-time faculty have private offices that keep student advising confidential. Part-time faculty do not have as ample access to office space with usually a desk assignment on days when they are teaching. At this writing, crowding is again an issue in some colleges. The pattern of growth at USI is one of constantly moving from overcrowded conditions to comfort when a new building opens back to overcrowding as enrollment increases.

Although study spaces were scarce 10 years ago, students, faculty, and staff can usually find quiet areas throughout the campus, and have access to many more in the new Rice Library. Individuals and groups can work at tables in designated study areas as well as study or meet in areas adjacent to convenient food service options available to students, faculty, and staff. The Link, a new lounge area (connecting the Science Center with the Health Professions Center) that offers ample gathering and study space for students, now features a ‘grab and go’ cafe available for lunch and early evening meals. A similar food service operation opened in 2005-2006 in the lobby of the Liberal Arts Center. Two additional study areas connected to food services are located in the University Center: The first floor of the University Center has an informal clustering of tables and booths near the food court and the second floor has a more quiet area within the Loft, a full-service dine-in cafeteria open for lunch and dinner five days a week with brunch and dinner offerings on weekends. As planning begins for the new College of Business building (planning monies were authorized in the 2005-2007 biennium), gathering spaces for students and faculty are an integral part of the program planning.

3C.1b: Residence Halls

A marked change since the last self-study report is construction of residence halls. Until recently the University’s student housing consisted of [standard apartments](#), each with an outside entrance. Driven by the mission, the University engaged in self-reflection and internal communication resulting in the realization that USI was no longer strictly a “commuter school.” The University designed and constructed four [residence halls](#) over a period of five years, after careful study of research showing that students who live together and take classes together are more likely to have a smooth transition to university life and greater academic success. Designed for today’s freshmen, residence halls provide more open, shared areas that allow increased interaction among students. Although students in each residence hall live in two-bedroom/two-bathroom air-conditioned suites (which include a small refrigerator, utilities, computer data

connections, local phone service, and expanded cable service), they have access to the following common areas: central lounge with a reception/information desk, multi-purpose room (for activities, meetings, and classes), laundry facilities, and two computer labs per floor.

3C.1c: Future Construction and Renovation Plans

USI has plans to improve existing space and construct additional physical learning environments. The new David L. Rice Library is a learning showpiece, more than doubling the size of the original building. The library features 30 group study rooms, two combination computer and library instruction labs, special reading rooms (including a periodicals reading room for newspapers and current journals), and a variety of study spaces (ranging from computer workstations to tables and carrels to rocking chairs and soft seating), as well as traditional library services such as circulation, reference, and book stacks. The lower level of the library has 16 technology-rich classrooms and a 125-seat lecture hall.

During the 2005-2007 budget biennium, USI was cleared to begin Phase 2 of the expansion of the [Recreation and Fitness Center](#) (project cost of \$7.25 million). The current Recreation and Fitness Center is heavily used, serving more than 800 people each day during the regular academic year. The original Rice Library building will be renovated and more clearly connected to the University Center, allowing more space for students and University functions (project cost of \$14 million). Thanks in large part to a private donation, plans will soon be underway to design and construct the McCutchan Art Gallery, establishing the first formal gallery space on campus.

The largest new project will be a new building for the College of Business (\$31 million). Space for the engineering program will be included in the new building to facilitate the development of cross disciplinary collaboration between business and engineering. Program development of a joint baccalaureate program in business and engineering is being considered. The location of the new building will permit completion of a formal quadrangle bordered by Rice Library, Liberal Arts Center, Technology Center, and University Center.

More information on the campus master plan may be found in 2A.1.

3C.2: Virtual Learning Environments

Ten years ago, the majority of faculty and staff had access to computers and many students spent time outside classes in computer labs completing classroom assignments. In all probability, the biggest change since the last self-study report is the exponential development of virtual learning environments. Although technology is discussed in conjunction with Core Component 3B, this section highlights two virtual environments (a) Blackboard Learning System™ and (b) Distance Education.

3C.2a: Blackboard Learning System™

A University technology committee, comprised of representatives from colleges and other units, has been active for a number of years. One of this committee's

recommendations resulted in the evolution of an audiovisual unit into Instructional Technology Services (ITS). In addition to those technology-support services mentioned in the previous core component discussion, ITS provides primary support for the University's virtual learning environments. When the University decided to host an electronic learning system, an ad hoc committee formed to study available systems recommended adoption of the Blackboard platform for computer and network-based learning over WebCT. Blackboard, an Internet-based course management system, allows faculty to use the following features: course sites customized by the instructor, online syllabus and course documents, faculty contact information, student roster, student Web pages, group Web pages, online gradebook, online quizzes, real-time chat, course discussion board, group discussion boards, student email delivery, file transfer, faculty online manual, student online manual, and uploading existing Web pages or images. Most faculty are using Blackboard to support campus-based courses, and some have developed courses for total Internet delivery. Additionally, some faculty have constructed Web sites outside Blackboard to provide student learning support.

3C.2b: Distance Education

Driven by the University mission to serve constituents, USI created Distance Education, a component of ITS, to support learning at a distance. Distance learning enables students to enroll in courses that fit their circumstances and lifestyles. Although many courses utilize Blackboard, additional courses are delivered using videotape, CD-ROM, DVD, computer media, electronic mail, or television. Still other courses meet at learning centers in Evansville or locations throughout Indiana. Some faculty have developed "hybrid" courses that combine class meetings with distance learning.

In addition to providing training and support services for Blackboard and other distance learning communication hardware and software, Distance Education coordinates USI's distance course offerings with other Indiana universities. USI is a member of the [Indiana College Network](#) (ICN), a collaborative effort by Indiana colleges and universities that comprise the Indiana Partnership for Statewide Education (IPSE). Through IPSE's wide variety of distance courses, USI students can take ICN courses at USI's rate of tuition, with the course part of the student course load for the semester (a benefit for financial assistance purposes); likewise, students at other IPSE universities can take USI courses for credit at their institutions. Table 3.3.1 shows the rapid rise in distance education enrollment since the 1996-1997 school year.

Year	Spring	Fall	Summer	Total
1996-97	126	150	62	338
1997-98	283	388	105	776
1998-99	470	389	356	1215
1999-00	661	903	502	2066
2000-01	1,074	1,051	539	2664
2001-02	1,440	1,467	647	3,554
2002-03	1,819	2,332	807	4,958
2003-04	2,467	2,586	876	5,053
2004-05	2,444	2,874	1,428	6,746
2005-06	2,867	2,942	1,688	7,477

3C.3: Collaborative Learning Environments

The University has been a connected organization from the time the surrounding area called for the formation of a branch campus and continued when the community championed USI's transition to an independent institution. USI's strong ties to the surrounding area have had a profound impact on student learning and teaching effectiveness. While other universities try to implement what is now called "service learning," the University has created a culture of service and actively engages with the surrounding area in collaborative learning environments.

Students in professional programs often complete field experiences related to their disciplines in collaborative learning environments. Called by a variety of names (clinical experience, fieldwork, student teaching, internships, externships, residencies, co-op programs, service learning), field experiences provide immersion into disciplines, thereby allowing students, in real-time, real-world settings, opportunities to hone their critical thinking abilities while applying and generalizing their professional skills. Collaborative learning environments are (a) inside the University and (b) outside the University.

3C.3a: Inside the University

Although most of USI's collaborative learning environments are outside the University's physical boundaries, the Dental Hygiene Clinic (housed on campus in the Health Professions Center) offers dental hygiene services at reduced rates to the public. Staffed by students and supervised by dental hygiene faculty, the clinic offers invaluable work experience for students while providing professional services to adults and children.

Education students often do observations at USI's on-site Children's Center, and complete practicum assignments there. Those enrolled in EDUC 351, Music and Movement, visit the Children's Center with their instructor to practice music and movement exercises with the children. The Children's Center is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

3C.3b: Outside the University

Collaborative learning environments outside USI are varied, extensive, and sometimes exotic. A signal partnership that has resulted in a unique learning environment is that between USI and the historic community of New Harmony. Now in its twentieth year, this collaboration between utopian community and university has generated research and creative works by faculty and students. It has also fostered a creative home for the New Harmony Theatre and The Gallery of Contemporary Art, both run by USI. USI is also the home of the Center for Communal Studies and Historic Southern Indiana, both of which are enriched by the connection to New Harmony.

Although some programs and departments utilize services related to field experience available through Career Services and Placement (CSP), the majority of programs handle placement of students in collaborative learning environments within the originating professional unit. Many collaborative learning environments are within the community and surrounding tri-state area; however, some professional programs and departments have contracts or memoranda of understanding with collaborative learning environments across the country and beyond. Collaborative learning environments range from those located in nearby schools, hospitals, and agencies to a hippotherapy program in New Mexico and a community psychiatric setting (using the clubhouse model) in Maryland. In 2003-04, The Lilly Endowment awarded USI a \$1 million grant to develop co-op experiences for students in the new engineering program.

Distance education has added a new dimension to collaborative learning environments: students located at a distance geographically from the University can often complete professional field requirements close to home. The University (through originating professional units) assesses collaborative learning environments for educational value on a regular basis. Furthermore, agreements between the University and collaborative learning environments are reviewed periodically, on schedules mandated by outside agencies that accredit the professional units.

In recent years USI has expanded collaborative agreements with study abroad programs and students have a choice of over 50 countries and programs ranging in duration from a few weeks to an entire year. Student participation in study abroad opportunities at USI remains relatively modest (approximately 52 students in 2005-2006), but among the Excellence through Engagement grant initiatives is a scholarship program targeting Honors Program students who wish to participate in an international study experience.

*USI's practice of welcoming appropriate partnerships for providing services to its constituency by cooperating with public and private universities, hospitals, and libraries, area business, industry, social and governmental agencies makes it a **Connected and Distinctive Organization.***

Our connectedness informs our teaching and learning

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

USI reflects student-centered learning in its extraordinary commitment to undergraduate education that emphasizes faculty/staff-student connections and educating the complete student inside and outside the classroom for a future of active lifelong learning. The University’s commitment to student-centered learning is comparable at the graduate level, in which USI has experienced growth in terms of program and student numbers in recent years. Students often comment that they value the opportunity to work closely with their professors. USI students who compare notes with friends attending larger universities come away pleased that USI does not have teaching assistants as a filter between undergraduates and faculty members.

According to the mission: “The University provides a comprehensive range of support services for students.” Indeed, USI provides financial assistance and personnel in support of many programs and units that enhance student learning and effective teaching. To provide evidence that the University’s vast and varied array of learning resources support student learning and effective teaching, learning resources are classified into four categories:

- enhancing student success
- improving student retention
- celebrating student diversity
- enabling student balance

3D.1: Enhancing Student Success

3D.1a: Students as Resources

Current students, employed as part-time University employees or institutional representatives, are often the first University representatives prospective and new students meet. Students interested in working with prospective and new students apply for Student Ambassadors and AMIGOs, respectively. [Student Ambassadors](#), housed in the Admission Office, greet prospective students and their families for campus tours or during Southern Hospitality Days, open house events offered by the University several times each semester. Likewise, student [AMIGOs \(Ask Me, I Give Orientation\)](#), employed by the office of Student Development, assist students during early registration, advising, freshmen/transfer student orientation sessions, and Welcome Week programs. Both groups of students discover a sense of purpose that goes beyond classroom learning. By giving information to new students, Student Ambassadors and AMIGOS also reinforce information and knowledge for themselves.

3D.1b: [Honors Program](#)

New since the last self-study report, the Honors Program invites entering students who show promise of outstanding academic achievement to participate in a wider range of intellectual and academic experience, enriching co-curricular activities, rewarding interaction between students and Honors faculty, and opportunities to form lasting friendships with other students committed to academic excellence. The Honors Program

curriculum serves to supplement and enrich the student's overall experience within any of the University's major fields of study. Honors classes are generally smaller in size, providing increased class participation and discussion. Students in the Honors Program grow through special classes that stress the interrelatedness of knowledge; skill in oral and written communication of ideas; and methods and techniques for the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of information. Students who successfully complete the Honors Program requirements earn the honors diploma.

3D.1c: [O'Daniel Leadership Academy](#)

The O'Daniel Leadership Academy provides opportunities for students to learn and build competency in key skills including communication, critical thinking, self-confidence, initiative and motivation, conflict management, goal setting, working in teams, and self-assessment. The academy provides opportunities for individual, organizational, and community development and challenges students to develop personal and professional skills by taking responsibility for their own growth, excellence of the organizations they care about, and quality of life in the community. These opportunities prepare students for life after college by teaching them to identify problems, organize people to work on problems, generate and implement creative solutions, and evaluate results to seek ongoing improvements. Leadership conferences, one aspect of the academy, include the Fall Lecture Series, the Corporate Leadership Conference, and the Fall Executive Board Retreat (which provides leaders of student organizations with an opportunity to get to know one another), and Leadership USI.

3D.2: Improving Student Retention

The University has strengthened learning resources to improve student retention. In 2004, President Hoops charged the Task Force on Enrollment and Retention Management to review and assess the range of retention efforts on campus. The Task Force seeks to deepen the understanding of forces that encourage and discourage retention of students at USI. During the second year of the Task Force, proposals for change will be developed and implementation will begin.

According to the classic retention measure (full-time, first-time students who return for the fall of their second year) USI retains 62 percent of its new students (10 year average). Eighteen percent of students complete a baccalaureate degree in four years; 32 percent complete a degree in six years. Based on a regression model created by Alexander Astin, USI's degree completion rate is within the range of what would be predicted, given the factors of high school grade point average, SAT/ACT score, and gender. But entry test scores and high school grades tell only part of the story for USI students.

Data from a fall 2005 survey administered to freshmen during USI's Assessment Day reveal that 41 percent of new students report that they are the first in their immediate family to attend college. From a fall 2004 survey administered to first year students nationwide (Cooperative Institutional Research Program), there are striking differences between USI students and peers at similar public institutions (low selectivity in admissions). USI students had lower high school grades, far less confidence in their

Our connectedness informs our teaching and learning

academic abilities, worked more hours at a job each week, had lower educational aspirations, and were less likely to say that they would communicate with their professors or participate in student clubs and groups. Combine the pattern of work and low confidence, and the challenge for USI is to find ways to connect, engage, and empower more students to succeed.

The University has developed more than 40 programs to serve student needs and encourage student success [Appendix: Inventory of Retention Programs]. Some of those programs are described at the end of this chapter. Programs include “Calling All Eagles,” which occurs every November when USI student leaders make personal phone calls to all new USI students to answer any questions, to connect new students with campus activities, and to assist in the advising and registration processes. During the past year, deans and department chairs have personally called continuing students who delay registration or “stop out” for a variety of reasons usually linked to finances, work, and family issues. They help to connect these students with information about financial aid, encourage them to continue their education, and provide program information for those students with questions. Student Ambassadors, AMIGOS, and a total of 90 student organizations work to integrate new students into campus life and create a feeling of community. The Freshman Orientation program, including a “first class” session to familiarize students with expectations at the college level, offers a strong and positive introduction to the campus. The Multicultural Center is an important hub for students interested in diversity and seeking community as they adapt to campus life. The student-led Activities Programming Board provides a wide range of entertainment and community awareness programming.

In 2004-2005, Project e-AGLE (Electronic Advice for a Great Learning Experience) was implemented, using Web-based software from GoalQuest. The primary purpose of this program is to provide electronic information to new students and their parents, thus aiding retention. During the 2006-2007 year, there is a pilot project to integrate the electronic messages (or flying lessons) into Core Curriculum classes with first year students. The hope is that this integration of student success information into the general education program will increase student use of the program and foster student success.

There is a flow of students between the Evansville campus of Ivy Tech Community College and USI. After several conversations with colleagues at Ivy Tech, in 2006 USI established an assistant director of admission position on Ivy Tech’s local campus to assist students in the transfer process to USI. The creation of this position was welcomed by the Ivy Tech campus and stands to serve well students from both institutions.

As an institution dedicated to provided access to higher education, USI is committed to improving the success of all its students.

3D.2a: Placement Testing

The key to student retention is placement in appropriate courses that offer the appropriate learning challenge. Until 2004, all freshmen entering the University completed placement testing in mathematics and language. At that time, student placement into a math course

was dependent on a combination of the computerized testing system scores and a department-developed regression equation incorporating SAT/ACT language scores and high school rank. The math assessment system placed prepared students, dependent on their abilities, into college algebra, trigonometry, pre-calculus, or calculus. Students with identified needs were placed into intermediate algebra, which does not fulfill the core curriculum math requirement, or GENS 097, a developmental math course that does not count toward graduation. Placement into a first English composition course occurred in a similar manner with the exception of an additional step: students completed an on-site writing sample scored by the English Department. Depending on scores, students were placed into the first core curriculum English requirement, an intermediate English course, or GENS 098, a developmental English composition course that does not count toward graduation. English placement testing also resulted in recommendations for a reading course for some students.

Placement testing of entering freshmen was streamlined by the University in 2004. Regression equations incorporating SAT/ACT math/language scores and high school rank have replaced on-site placement testing with the exception of students who perform within a certain range of math scores. Students identified by the math regression equation as needing further testing for math placement are tested on-site. Recommended placement into a reading course, however, no longer occurs. To provide accountability by assessing changes in student learning, the University is conducting ongoing analysis of the results of placement testing changes. Initial results will not be available until the first cohort of freshmen become juniors and participate in the November 2006 Assessment Day.

3D.2b: Advising

Entering students who have declared an academic major are assigned a faculty advisor from that academic area while undeclared students are assigned advisors by University Division. In addition to seeing undecided students, University Division advisors work with two other groups: students classified as non-degree seeking and students who are conditionally admitted or who begin struggling academically during the course of their study. The University Division advising team emphasizes academic planning, a necessary step when considering semester hours attempted, prerequisites and preparedness, core curriculum requirements, and work/class scheduling. Advising is an essential key to student accountability for making wise choices. University Division also oversees the Options program, developed by USI in partnership with Ivy Tech Community College, for students who are academically under-prepared for college. In addition to taking developmental classes and a college success course, Options students enjoy regularly scheduled mentoring meetings with their advising team members. During weekly sessions with mentors, these students review their academic progress as well as setbacks, thus receiving individual attention during their transition to college. Because Options students were low-achievers in high school, the “connectedness” of the student-advisor mentoring relationship enhances the learning process.

According to the *University Handbook*: “The specific purpose of the academic advisor is to assist students in their selection of academic goals and in the wise planning of courses

in their chosen curriculum.” Although “academic counseling is one of the regular assigned duties of the faculty,” advising varies widely across programs, departments, and colleges. Variation is often considered a strength; however, the dissimilarity in overall advising is a concern that has been considered periodically over a number of years. In fact, the report of the last on-site accreditation evaluation included the suggestion: “The team suggests that USI gain a thorough understanding of students’ attitudes and concerns about advising and personal/career counseling.” Driven by mission, the University has addressed the team’s suggestion regarding personal/career counseling with additional and enhanced support units and staff discussed in the enabling student balance section 3D. To address continuing concerns about advising variation, in 2004 USI created the University Advising Council, a University-level committee charged with addressing issues related to the communication of curricular information as well as developing models for more effective advising systems.

At the University level, USI administration is currently involved in an ongoing series of conversations about the partnership with the Evansville campus of the Ivy Tech Community College. In addition, the University is beginning to review existing articulation agreements, consider new articulation agreements (the most recent completed agreements were in pre-engineering and biotechnology) and discuss how to coordinate advising efforts across the institutions. The new assistant director of admission position described in 3D.2 is an innovation that emerged from these ongoing conversations between the two institutions. As these conversations evolve, we anticipate the ability to enhance student success as they move between the two institutions.

*A **distinctive organization** that is self-reflective and committed to improvement, the University is working diligently on improving quality and consistency of advising, considered key to student retention.*

3D.2c: [Living-Learning Communities](#)

Freshmen who opt to live in residence halls are eligible to apply for living-learning communities (LLCs), which allow students with similar interests, goals, and academic programs to be placed on designated theme floors. LLCs provide strong linkages between students’ lives in the residence hall and learning experiences in the classroom. At the time of the self-study report, LLCs include Elementary Education, First-Year Initiative, Global Community, Honors, Nursing and Health Professions, and Science and Engineering. Several LLCs offer a Freshman Interest Group (FIG), a cluster of classes taken together by students living on the floor. FIGs allow students to feel more connected to USI and have stronger relationships with other students and faculty members, thereby increasing the likelihood of graduation. One LLC, First-Year Initiatives (FYI), helps freshmen become successfully integrated into the University culture, have a sense of purpose and spirit of adventure about their education, realize they are valued members of the campus community, recognize their responsibility and potential to give something of value to their community and, in doing so, achieve a greater sense of their potential and happiness. FYI students participate in various programs including the Freshman Success Series. The University is investigating the effect of FYI on student learning and retention. For the period of 2004-2008, the USI Foundation is a source of support for Living-

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Learning Communities as funds from the Endowment for Academic Excellence target this program for further development.

3D.2d: [EXCEL Mentoring Program](#)

The Multicultural Center (discussed in more detail in 2A.3) created the EXCEL Mentoring Program as a resource to assist first-year minority students with the transition to USI. This mentoring program, which is designed to improve retention and the graduation of minority students, connects students with peer mentors who share their own experiences at USI, encouraging EXCEL students to develop skills needed to succeed academically and personally in college, and teach EXCEL participants to seek and use the variety of services and programs available to USI students. The Multicultural Center sponsors two other first-year events: the Cultural Diversity Welcome Reception and New Student Assembly.

3D.2e: [Academic Skills Center](#)

In addition to providing centralized advising for certain types of students, University Division includes the Academic Skills Center, a major learning resource for students.

Course Offerings and Other Services - The Academic Skills Center provides “General Studies” (GENS) courses for those students whose test scores and high school grades indicate the need for further preparation in the basic skills foundational for success in college. Offerings include developmental courses in reading, writing, and math, as well as courses in college study strategies and career planning. University Division offers the one-hour course, Freshman Seminar, exclusively to University Division students—especially those admitted conditionally. The Academic Skills Center also includes a developmental writing area where students receive instruction and targeted help in preparing written assignments.

Peer Assistance Programs - The Academic Skills Center also provides peer assistance programs for students who struggle academically. Tutoring sessions include basic computer skills, study skills, and writing as well as subjects that cut across disciplines, provided in Table 3.4.1.

Targeted Students	Subject Area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ College of Business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accounting ▪ Economics ▪ Finance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bower-Suhrheinrich College of Education and Human Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PRAXIS (preparation in math, reading, and writing)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bower-Suhrheinrich College of Education and Human Services ▪ College of Business ▪ College of Liberal Arts ▪ College of Nursing and Health Profession ▪ Pott College of Science and Engineering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Algebra ▪ Biology ▪ Calculus ▪ Chemistry ▪ Foreign Language ▪ History ▪ Philosophy ▪ Physics ▪ Political Science ▪ Psychology ▪ Sociology

Math, study skills, and writing tutors complete a training certification program administered by the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA), and subject-based tutors complete a minimum of 10 hours of training. As they work with students one-on-one or in small groups, tutors develop self-confidence in their abilities to help others, contributing to the University community. The students that tutors help are invested in the learning process, and repeat visits and hours spent engaged in the activity prove the dual benefits of this effective interaction. Table 3.4.2 provides a comparison of tutoring usage across semesters in multiple years.

	Spring 2006	Spring 2005	Spring 2004	Fall 2005	Fall 2004	Fall 2003
Visitors	1050	1430	933	1724	1590	1583
Sign Ins (repeat visits)	3787	4768	4101	5032	5043	6062
Hours	3818	4940	4488	4904	4801	5990

Supplemental Instruction - [Supplemental instruction](#) (SI) is an innovative learning strategy designed by the Academic Skills Center for classes in which students have struggled in the past. A SI session for a particular course is staffed by a student, called an “SI Leader,” who has successfully completed that course. Both types of students (the SI Leader and the students in SI sessions) benefit. SI leaders benefit in three ways:

- attending the targeted classes (again) with students in their study groups, developing a visual presence, and earning respect as a successful student role model

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- planning their sessions, incorporating both ideas from training and proven strategies to enhance learning
- interacting during sessions, showing ways of understanding while encouraging SI participants to take ownership of their own learning processes

Students participating in SI sessions benefit from having the assistance of SI Leaders who have already completed courses successfully and are attending the course again with the students in a particular SI group. The leadership skills that the SI Leaders learn cannot be gleaned from a book or a lecture, but only from the guided independence they gain from their employment in the SI program.

3D.3: Celebrating Student Diversity

Since the last self-study process, the University has continued working to attract and retain diverse students, faculty, and staff, though the ethnic and racial composition of people connected with USI is reflective of geographical area demographics. Through Student Affairs, the Multicultural Center and International Programs provide significant programming and event support to celebrate student diversity. The Office of Academic Affairs is working with the Indiana Business Diversity Council to provide opportunities for minority students at USI to connect with area employers and to familiarize minority employers with opportunities at USI. While recruitment is ongoing, the University offers improvements through the creation of a supportive and inclusive environment for diverse learners. USI serves diverse learners through a variety of resources including the International Programs and Services and the Multicultural Center, two newly created entities that address the diversification concern of the on-site team, as well as English as a Second Language. These units are described in detail in 2A.3.

3D.4: Enabling Student Balance

Although many institutions of higher education emphasize the cognitive components of college, USI takes pride in providing for the whole student: the physical, emotional, and social aspects as well as the cognitive component. To enable student balance, the University serves constituents with the creation of the following resources:

- Food Services
- Student Wellness
- Counseling Center
- Student Development Programs
- Religious Life
- Career Planning Services
- Other career planning offerings

3D.4a: [Food Services](#)

New to the University since the last self-study report is implementation of much enhanced food service. Until the residence halls opened, campus housing consisted of apartments, and students were responsible for meals. Two food service facilities, the Eagle's Nest snack bar and The Loft dining room in the University Center, were open

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primarily from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays during the academic year, with much more limited hours during the summer. The University engaged in planning to determine that some students, including many freshmen, needed assistance to stay properly fueled for learning. The planning resulted in several changes: a food court (Burger King/Sub Connection/Pete's Arena Pizza) that replaced the Eagle's Nest, expansion of the Loft hours to include weekday dinner and weekend brunch and dinner times, and meal plans. The University now offers meal plans at three levels. Meal plan options are available to all students; however, all freshmen students living on campus are required to have a meal plan.

Recognizing the impact that nutrition has on learning, as well as living in general, USI developed a new academic program, Food and Nutrition, housed in the College of Nursing and Health Professions.

3D.4b: [Student Wellness](#)

The Student Wellness Office develops, implements, and coordinates health and wellness education activities offered to students as well as faculty and staff. These educational activities provide a framework to make informed decisions relating to disease prevention, quality of life, and lifestyle.

3D.4c: [Counseling Center](#)

USI's Counseling Center provides free and confidential psychological, personal, and academic resources. This center assists students in reaching their educational goals to improve the quality of their life. Primary services include disability resources, crisis intervention, and substance abuse services. Students with disabilities are assisted so they can benefit from an accessible educational environment. The Counseling Center coordinates accommodation services and provides a centralized source for disability information. In 2005-2006, the Counseling Center saw 1,237 students for general counseling issues, 255 students with disability issues, and 62 students with alcohol or drug issues. Many of these students made multiple visits to the center.

3D.4d: [Student Development Programs](#)

The Office of Student Development Programs supports the academic mission of the University through a number of programs and services designed to enhance students' education beyond the classroom. Student organizations address a broad range of interests, including student government, multicultural groups, fraternities and sororities, service organizations, academic associations, professional organizations, honor societies, and club sports, as well as programming, religious, political, media, and special interest organizations. Student Development Programs maintains a Leadership Resources Library. The Student Government Association is one of the most prominent campus organizations. Among its initiatives was a voter registration drive in 2004 that helped to register 854 new voters on USI's campus.

3D.4e: [Religious Life](#)

To address the spiritual dimension of students' lives, the Office of Religious Life provides opportunities for students to maintain, renew, or introduce themselves to the role

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of faith in their lives. A range of services from religious worship services to personal spiritual guidance are offered by the director.

3D.4f: Career Planning Services

The University provides several services and course offerings designed for students to plan their futures. Among these services are Career Services and Placement, Career Counseling Center, and other career planning offerings.

[Career Services and Placement](#) - Career Services and Placement offers career and job-related services to meet the needs of current students, alumni, employers, and other University personnel. Examples of services offered include Career Fairs for students, alumni, and employers; assistance with resume development; referrals of candidates to employers; part-time job listings; internships; and co-ops. In 2005-2006, 199 employers participated in career fairs and 279 students held internships with various employers. More than 2,400 resumes were sent to employers through Career Services and over 1,700 job openings were posted.

[The Career Counseling Center](#) - The Career Counseling Center helps students determine which academic program or career is best for them. Students served by this center range from freshmen unclear about which academic major to pursue to juniors and seniors wondering whether they have chosen appropriate majors. The Career Counseling Center provides assessment testing along with career counselors trained to administer and interpret a variety of standardized tests which help students gain focus and pinpoint careers which suit each student's interest, values, and personality. A total of 791 students took at least one of these tests in the 2005-2006 academic year.

USI alumni employed in various career fields are available as career advisors, to talk with current students interested in learning more about what alumni actually do on the job. The "Day on the Job" shadowing program offers students opportunities to spend a day with a USI graduate to see what a potential career entails.

Other Career Planning Offerings - University Division offers a for-credit course, Career and Life Planning, in which students develop an academic and career plan in a major field. Along a similar vein, seniors in the College of Business complete a required course, Business Career Planning and Professional Development.

Summary

This self-study report chapter provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness, demonstrating that the University is fulfilling its educational mission. Since the last self-study process, the University—a future-oriented, learning-focused, connected, and distinctive organization—has made notable and significant changes in student learning and teaching effectiveness. Embracing change is clearly evident in the rapid growth and evolution that characterize the University's relatively short history, particularly during the past 10 years. USI's evolution has resulted in developing assessment processes that stipulate goals for student learning outcomes, offering additional and enhancing existing support for effective teaching; designing effective

learning environments in the form of new and renovated physical and virtual environments; and developing new and strengthening existing student learning resources.

Strengths

By far, the top area of strength is the University's evidence for Core Component 3C: The organization creates effective learning environments. Since the last self-study report, the University has experienced geometric growth in physical learning space and exponential development of virtual learning space. Over the past 10 years there has been over \$150 million in new construction on campus including three classroom buildings, a library, a recreation and fitness center, and four freshmen residence halls in addition to extensive rehabilitation and renovation of existing physical space as well as implementation and integration of technology in the form of distance education and the Blackboard Learning System™.

Another area of strength is the University's evidence of new and enhanced teaching support for Core Component 3B: The organization values and supports effective teaching. In addition to enhancing the existing Computer Center and library services, the University has provided support for new resources and services including Instructional Technology Services, the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence, Excellence Through Engagement, and the Institute for Online Teaching and Learning.

The University also shows evidence of strength for Core Component 3D: The organization's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching. In the past 10 years, four new learning resources that enhance student success and celebrate diversity have been created: the Honors Program, Living-Learning Communities, Student Leadership programs including the O'Daniel Leadership Academy, International Programs and Services, and the Multicultural Center (creation of the latter two entities addresses a diversification concern from the report of the last on-site accreditation evaluation). In addition, services provided by University Division, of which Academic Skills Center is a vital component, have increased and improved. Furthermore, the University has shown strength in developing and augmenting the following learning resources that enable student balance: Food Services, Student Wellness, Counseling Center, Religious Life, Student Development Programs, and Career Planning Services.

The University shows areas of strength for Core Component 3A: The organization's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and effective assessment is a priority. USI is developing an assessment culture that is "owned" by the faculty, evidenced by amending the Faculty Senate Bylaws to add the Assessment Committee as a standing committee of Faculty Senate. In this assessment culture, the academic program review process is central: programs complete internal self-study processes on five-year cycles and the core curriculum, because of the cross-disciplinary nature, undergoes a multifaceted assessment process over a seven-year period. Moreover, USI created the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment to provide for University-wide assessment of institutional effectiveness. Additionally, the University completes the feedback loop by using assessment findings to drive continuous

improvement as evidenced by creating new programs to suit the educational needs of the region and revising existing curricula for currency.

Challenges

The self-study process resulted in finding several areas that need improving. Assessment of the first five-year cycle of the academic program review process made clear the inconsistency across University academic units (especially when comparing discipline-specific accredited versus non-accredited programs) related to Core Component 3A: The organization's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible. The revised academic review, scheduled to begin in the 2005-2006 school year, is designed to ensure that student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program.

In Core Component 3B (The organization values and supports effective teaching), two improvement areas were noted: less than effective evaluation of teaching effectiveness measures and the inconsistency across colleges related to the role the department/program and the chairperson/director play in promotion and tenure decisions. The University has started to address these areas with the appointment of a Faculty Senate task force on teaching effectiveness and discussions with the University-level Promotions Committee, respectively. Furthermore, department chairs have come together to form a University-wide Chair Council, which will facilitate communication between departments across the campus.

During the self-study process, inconsistency of advising was found to be a primary area needing improvement in Core Component 3D: The organization's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching. At the time the self-study report was written, advising variation included disparity in numbers of students assigned to individual faculty and differences in quality and depth of services provided. With the appointment of the Advising Council, the University has already begun to address advising inconsistency and move toward better delivery of advising services.

One of the strains in providing adequate advising is a deficit in full-time faculty. USI has experienced rapid growth in student enrollment during the past decade and state resources to the University have not kept up with that rate of growth. Enrollment increase monies from the state are an important resource to enable growing institutions to increase the number of faculty lines, but those monies have lagged during the past two budget biennia as Indiana struggled with an economic downturn. Furthermore, USI's state funding per full time student equivalent remains the lowest among the four-year institutions in Indiana. The combination of the disparity in funding along with the state legislature's inability to fully fund enrollment increase monies results in a critical shortage of instructional resources and heavy teaching loads for full-time faculty.

Opportunities

As stated at the beginning of this summary, USI's evolution is dynamic. The University is proud of its ability to make and adapt to change, demonstrating flexibility in responding proactively to stakeholders' needs. The University's dynamism combined

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with real-time adaptability creates an energetic learning environment. USI considers its youth as an institution an asset, allowing the University to take risks, seize opportunities, and adapt to the needs of the region. This future-forward outlook is reflected in the implementation of innovative pedagogy and integration of technologies that enhance student learning and effective teaching and prepare graduates for lives in a diverse, global society.

In addition to measures the University has already taken to address challenges discussed in the previous section, future plans include evaluating outcomes of newly created programs (e.g., Project e-AGLE), assessing student learning resource changes (e.g., placement testing), continuing existing program assessment, and incorporating assessment findings to aid ongoing improvement.

Future plans also include celebrating the University's primary mission—teaching—by developing and implementing multiple methods of measuring teaching effectiveness and by providing clearly stated student learning outcomes, thereby demonstrating that the student is the center of the educational process. Additionally, USI plans to enhance existing support for effective teaching, press for additional operating funds to increase full-time faculty lines, continue designing effective physical and virtual learning environments, and augment current student learning resources.