

CHAPTER SIX

*Ensuring  
Student  
Learning  
and Teaching  
Effectiveness*







## Chapter Six:

# Ensuring Student Learning and Teaching Effectiveness

*Criterion 3: Student Learning and Effective Teaching. The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.*

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln places extraordinary emphasis on undergraduate learning and teaching. Our investment in undergraduate education reflects a core value: Learning that prepares students for lifetime success and leadership. UNL re-emphasized the primacy of this investment in 2003 when the university was forced to cut its budget. During deliberations about where to cut, our highest priority was preservation of the undergraduate academic core. This chapter will focus on how we assess our educational endeavor and how our resources support effective learning and teaching.

### **Core Component 3a.**

*The organization's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.*

In his 2004 State of the University Address, Chancellor Perlman articulated the importance of teaching based on student learning outcomes:

While research can be measured in dollars, ultimately our teaching success is measured by how well we help our students achieve their full potential. The tragedy of wasting even one mind should compel us to continue to devote our energies to achieve even higher levels of student learning and success.

### *Student*

*The green shell of his backpack makes him lean  
into the wave of responsibility,  
and he swings his stiff arms and cupped hands,*

*paddling ahead. He has extended his neck  
to its full length, and his chin, hard as a beak,  
breaks the cold surf. He's got his baseball cap on*

*backward as up he crawls, out of the froth  
of a hangover and onto the sand of the future,  
and lumbers, heavy with hope, into the library.*

"Student" is from Ted Kooser's book, *Delights & Shadows*, published in 2004 by Copper Canyon Press and is reprinted with the permission of the author. Kooser is U.S. Poet Laureate emeritus and professor of English at UNL. *Delights & Shadows* received the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry.

I am now convinced that for us to make substantial progress, we must insist that student learning outcomes be the measure for the success of any effort to enhance the undergraduate experience. Great teaching does not depend on how good students feel about the experience but on how much they learn.

The shift to student learning poses many questions. Can we change the structure of higher education so it measures students' progress by their learning achievements rather than by how long they sit in a classroom? Is our curriculum structured and coordinated in such a way that facilitates interdisciplinary thinking? Can we allocate the valuable time of faculty toward those students who might benefit the most from faculty attention? Can we more fully exploit technology to enhance student learning at less cost? How will we respond to the growing pressure for giving dual credit for high school courses or for accepting credits from other institutions of varying overall quality? The answers to all of these questions are much easier if we focus on learning outcomes.

[www.unl.edu/resources/SD-1](http://www.unl.edu/resources/SD-1)

This statement demonstrates the deep commitment of our university administration to establish an outcomes-based learning program for our students. Since the last accreditation visit, UNL has made significant progress in implementing an outcomes assessment plan. And we are taking even bolder and more dramatic steps as we move into the future. The material in the document "Response to the Commission's Statement on Assessment," found at [[www.unl.edu/resources/SD-1](http://www.unl.edu/resources/SD-1)], describes the processes and programs that UNL has developed and has in place to build a culture of assessment based on learning outcomes across the university.

To demonstrate how UNL is meeting our commitment to assess student learning in all programs through learning outcomes, we have described the following:

- General Education Plans for Outcomes Assessment,
- Outcomes Assessment in Other Undergraduate Programs, and
- Evaluation of UNL's Progress with Assessment of Student Learning.

### ***General Education Plans for Outcomes Assessment***

UNL's current effort to reform and revise our undergraduate general education program demonstrates the progress UNL is making to establish outcomes assessment as part of our institutional culture.

As reported more fully elsewhere, in presenting their plan for the review and reform effort, the General Education Planning Team recommended that the new program be based on student learning outcomes. Therefore, it has now defined as its first proposal for campus-wide approval this academic year a set of institutional objectives and corresponding student learning outcomes. These objectives and outcomes will guide the development of the program structure and content. Members of the planning team and the General Education Advisory Committee attended an American Association of College and Universities workshop in summer 2006 on developing an assessment plan for general education; during the workshop, external consultants commended UNL's bold commitment to design a general education program from outcomes back to the learning experiences

intended to demonstrate them. (Please see Core Component 4c [Chapter 7] for a description of the development of this program.) The sidebar displays the objectives tentatively adopted for the new general education program.

### **Outcomes Assessment of the Undergraduate Majors**

UNL's institutional commitment to outcomes assessment in general education is accompanied by a high level of activity at the college and program level. Outcomes assessment has been instituted as a three-stage process of: 1) determining what the desired student learning outcomes are, 2) identifying the best measures for determining whether these outcomes have been realized, and 3) using the results of these measures to either confirm or improve instructional and curricular practice.

UNL had just begun to implement an outcomes assessment plan for all undergraduate programs when the university was preparing for the 1997 accreditation team visit. The team at that time noted the newness of the plan and areas for improvement. During a 1999 focus visit and a follow-up report in 2002, UNL demonstrated significant progress in implementing its outcomes assessment plan. The material below shows UNL's current response to questions about assessment posed by the Higher Learning Commission.

#### **How are your stated student learning outcomes appropriate to your mission, programs and degrees?**

Faculty are primarily responsible for developing statements of learning outcomes for their programs.

Learning outcomes are expected to be aligned to mission, student-focused, measurable and represent an appropriate level of learning.

Learning outcomes statements are influenced by standards and recommendations of national professional associations, outcomes from similar programs at other institutions and learning outcomes from courses in the curriculum.

Learning outcomes are shared through course syllabi, undergraduate bulletins, departmental websites, student handbooks and/or recruitment materials.

Learning outcomes are reviewed by internal and external constituents, including departmental faculty, students, alumni, internship supervisors, employers, advisory boards, accrediting agencies and academic program review teams.

#### **What evidence do you have that students achieve your stated learning outcomes?**

Colleges and their programs regularly report what was assessed, how it was assessed and what was learned from the assessment evidence gathered.

Units and programs use a variety of direct and indirect measures to assess stated learning outcomes as well as the broader educational experience.

Programs are expected to reflect on and reach conclusions about their assessment

### **Institutional Objectives for Undergraduate General Education at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln**

(approved by the General Education Advisory Committee on Dec. 8, 2005)

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln is committed to providing an education of lasting value, an education that empowers you to become a life-long learner who will thrive in a complex and ever-changing world and assume a variety of work and life responsibilities. To that end, we are committed to help you:

- Develop intellectual and practical **skills**, including proficiency in written, oral, and visual communication, inquiry techniques, critical and creative thinking, quantitative applications, information assessment, teamwork and problem-solving;
- Build **knowledge** of diverse peoples and cultures and of the natural and physical world through the study of mathematics, sciences and technologies, histories, humanities, arts, social sciences and human diversity;
- Exercise individual and social **responsibilities** through the study of ethical principles and reasoning, application of civic knowledge, interaction with diverse cultures and engagement with global issues; and
- **Integrate** these abilities and capacities, adapting them to new settings, questions and responsibilities.

You accomplish these objectives at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln through coursework and programs distributed across and through colleges and majors, conducted at progressively more challenging levels, and delivered using a variety of methods and experiences.

evidence, identifying strengths as well as areas for improvement.

Reports indicate program improvements focusing on student learning and the educational experience have increased steadily and significantly since 1997.

Better structures for facilitating and supporting the documentation, quality and visibility of the assessment process are being sought and piloted.

***In what ways do you analyze and use evidence of student learning?***

Programs are encouraged to assess a manageable set of learning outcomes each year and to use methods that fit with disciplinary traditions and scholarship.

Results are used to facilitate discussions at program and college levels about effectiveness of the curriculum, pedagogy and co-curricular activities.

Results have highlighted a broad array of insights into student learning, including the continuous improvement of learning outcomes, coherence of the curriculum, advising, co-curricular experiences, student-faculty interaction and recruitment/retention.

Insights from results have led to changes at the course level and program level as well as in advising practices and other means of communicating with students.

***How do you ensure shared responsibility for assessment of student learning?***

Assessment processes are developed and conducted from the ground up by faculty in individual colleges, departments and programs while facilitated and supported from the top down.

Institutional and college assessment committees provide leadership for establishing a vision for assessment at UNL and coordinating activities to achieve that vision.

***How do you evaluate and improve the effectiveness of your efforts to assess and improve student learning?***

Evaluation and improvement of assessment occurs at all levels of the institution (program, unit, college, institutional) in different ways:

At program level, programs continually refine their methods for assessing student learning.

At college level, colleges are reviewing and providing feedback on programmatic assessment efforts.

At institutional level, the efficacy and sustainability of assessment is consistently reflected on through communications from colleges and programs.

In the material that follows, a series of figures represent the current status of outcomes assessment at UNL. Evidence presented in these graphs is primarily based on reports submitted by each college about its assessment activities. The figures compare assessment activities reported in 2005 with assessment activities reported for the 1997 and 1999 accreditation visits and at the time of the 2002 accreditation progress report. The following institutional reports are available at [www.unl.edu/resources/6-1]:

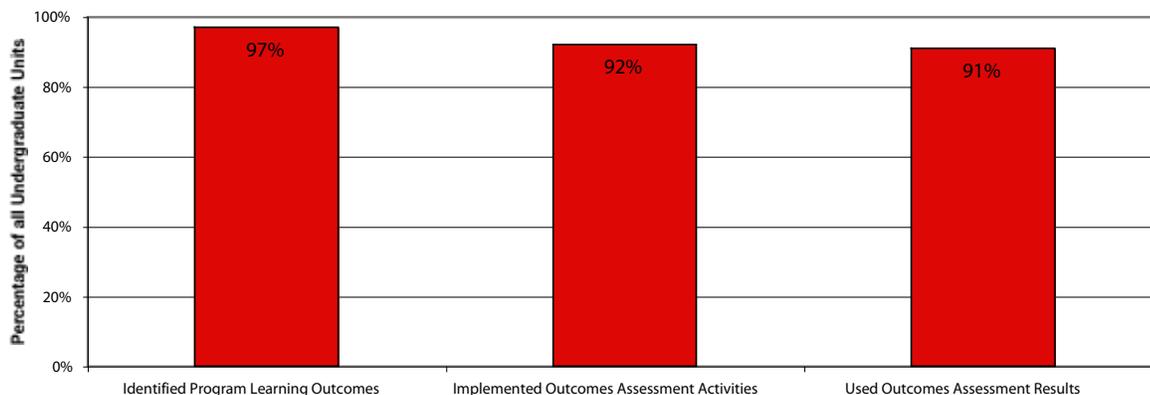
[www.unl.edu/resources/6-1](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-1)

- 1997 reports on 1996-97 assessment activities,
- 1999 reports on 1998-99 assessment activities,
- 2001 reports on 2001-01 assessment activities, and
- 2005 reports on 2003-04 and 2004-05 assessment activities (College of Arts and Sciences information in the 2005 reports is based on 2002-03 and 2003-04).

The figures are derived from data summarizing the use of assessment results reported in the “2005 Outcomes Assessment Results and Use Chart.” [www.unl.edu/resources/6-2]. Figure 6.1 shows the percent of undergraduate units/programs at UNL that have carried out an outcomes assessment activity in the last five years (2001 or 2005 or both).

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-2](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-2)

Figure 6.1 Participation of UNL Undergraduate Units/Programs in Outcomes Assessment (2001 & 2005 Reporting Years)



Within the last five years, nearly all undergraduate units at UNL have identified learning outcomes for their programs, implemented activities to assess learning outcomes and the educational experiences of students and used evidence from those assessments primarily for program improvement. The small number of programs that have not participated in one or more of these activities are primarily new programs that are just getting under way, generally programs with few students and/or interdisciplinary programs that do not have a home department governing the outcomes assessment.

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-3](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-3)

Almost every undergraduate program has developed a list of learning objectives and/or outcomes for their program. These lists can be viewed at [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-3](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-3)]. Eighty percent of those programs have revisited or refined those outcomes in the last five years (since 2001). The lists of learning outcomes are reviewed by the university assessment coordinator for three characteristics:

- Do statements focus on what a student will learn and not what the program will provide?
- Do statements represent the kinds of higher-order thinking skills (application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation) that would be expected of a college graduate?
- Do statements address values, attitudes, and habits of mind as well as knowledge, skills, and competencies?

The review suggests that nearly all outcomes statements developed for our current undergraduate programs do focus on what students will learn instead of what programs will provide. For example, learning outcomes generally are stated like this: “Students will successfully apply the knowledge and skills of the discipline to issues encountered in a research or internship experiences;” rather than like this: “Students will have an opportunity to engage in research or internship experiences related to the discipline.” However, the assessment coordinator has observed that fewer outcomes statements go beyond stating what a student will learn to indicate how that learning will be demonstrated, represented or produced.

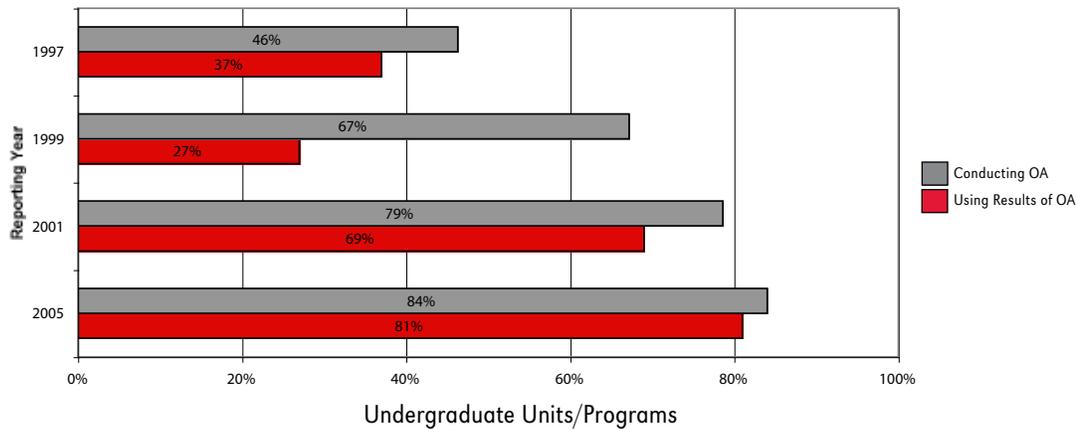
Most programs’ learning outcomes statements do focus primarily on higher-order thinking skills. In many instances, program outcomes list a mix of statements about lower-order thinking skills (recognition and recall) and about higher-order thinking skills (application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation), which is appropriate given that a working knowledge of content and skills serves as a basis for more complex cognitive activities. Our assessment coordinator has observed that a few programs have not focused enough attention on higher-order thinking skills.

Although most learning outcomes statements developed for UNL undergraduate programs address knowledge, skills and competencies, statements that address values, attitudes and habit of mind are less frequent across disciplines. It is likely that most programs value and promote these attributes of learning, but fail to recognize how to include them or how a program might best assess these attributes.

The engagement of UNL undergraduate units in the conduct and use of outcomes assessment has made steady and significant progress over the last 10 years. The percent of undergraduate units/programs conducting outcomes assessments and using the results to improve programs has doubled since 1997. Progressively over time nearly all of the units conducting outcomes assessments now also use that evidence for program improvement. Figure 6.2 presents information on the increase in outcomes assessment activities between 1997 and 2005. In 1997, only 46 percent of our undergraduate units/programs conducted outcomes assessment with only 37 percent using the results. In 2005, more than 80 percent conducted outcomes assessment, with only slightly

fewer using the results. In 1997, only 46 percent of our undergraduate units/programs conducted outcomes assessment with only 37 percent using the results. In 2005, more than 80 percent conducted outcomes assessment, with only slightly fewer using the results.

Figure 6.2 UNL's Progress in Conducting and Using Outcomes Assessment (1997-2005)

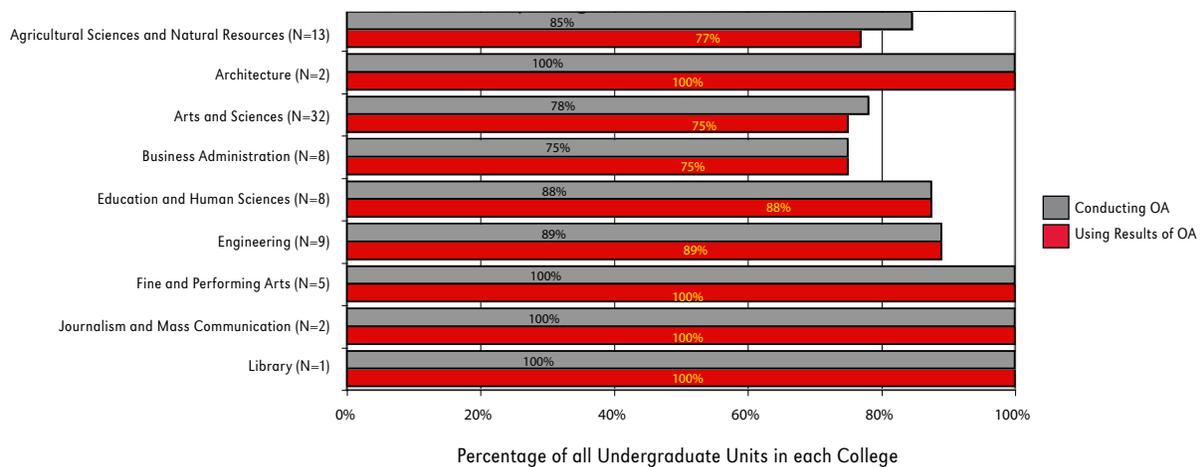


Note: The total number of units varies from year to year because new programs were added and the level at which assessment is conducted (college, department, program) shifts. The number of programs for 2005 is 79.

The Higher Learning Commission/North Central Association review team noted in its 1997 focused visit that implementation of outcomes assessment lagged in some colleges. Figure 6.3 shows that in 2005, every college has a significant number of its undergraduate units engaged in the conduct and use of outcomes assessment, with four colleges reporting full participation, and all reporting about 75 percent participation or better. Each college has summarized how outcomes assessment is structured in their college and discussed past achievements and future focuses. These college summaries can be found at [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-4](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-4)].

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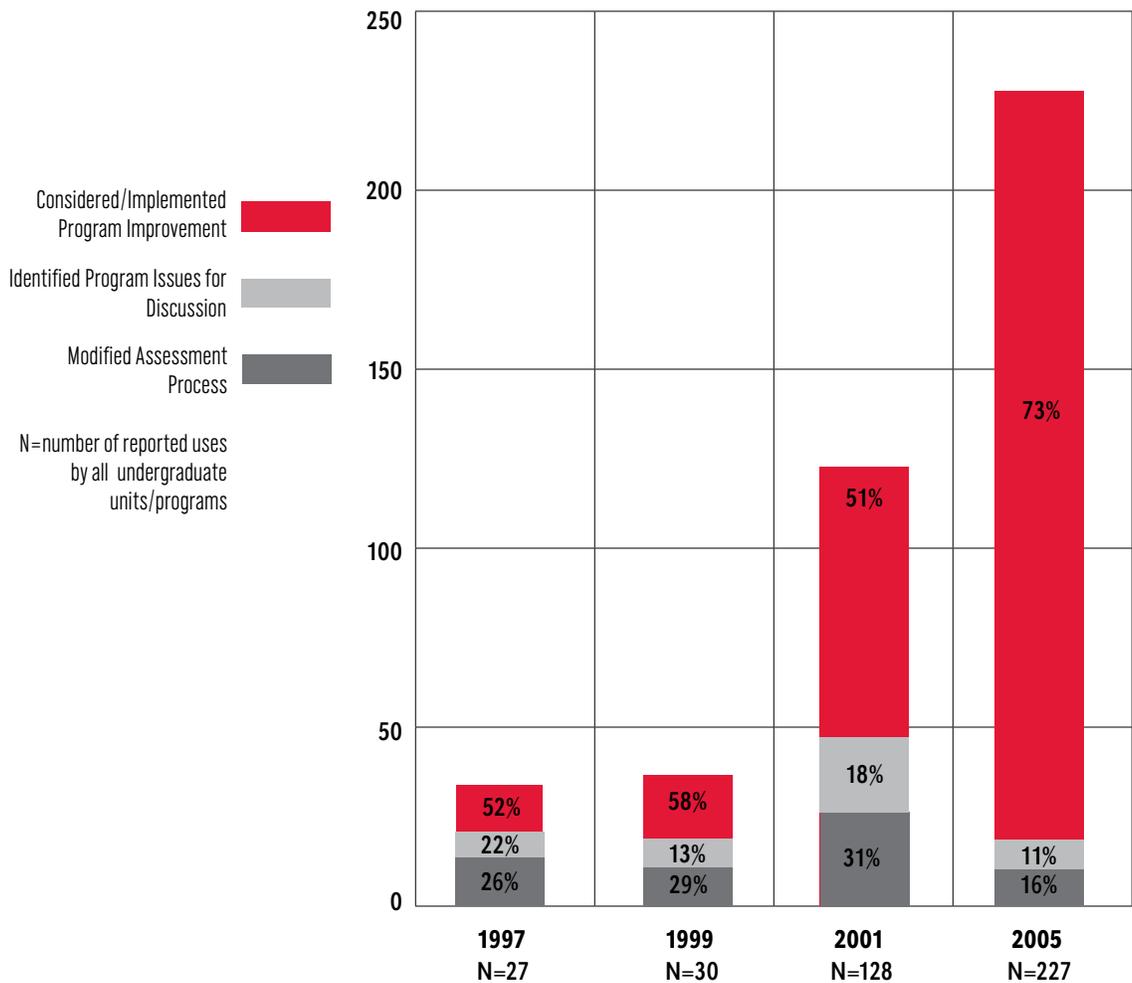
Figure 6.3 UNL's Progress in Conducting and Using Outcomes Assessment by College (2005 Reporting Year)



Percentage of all Undergraduate Units in each College  
Note: N refers to number of programs.

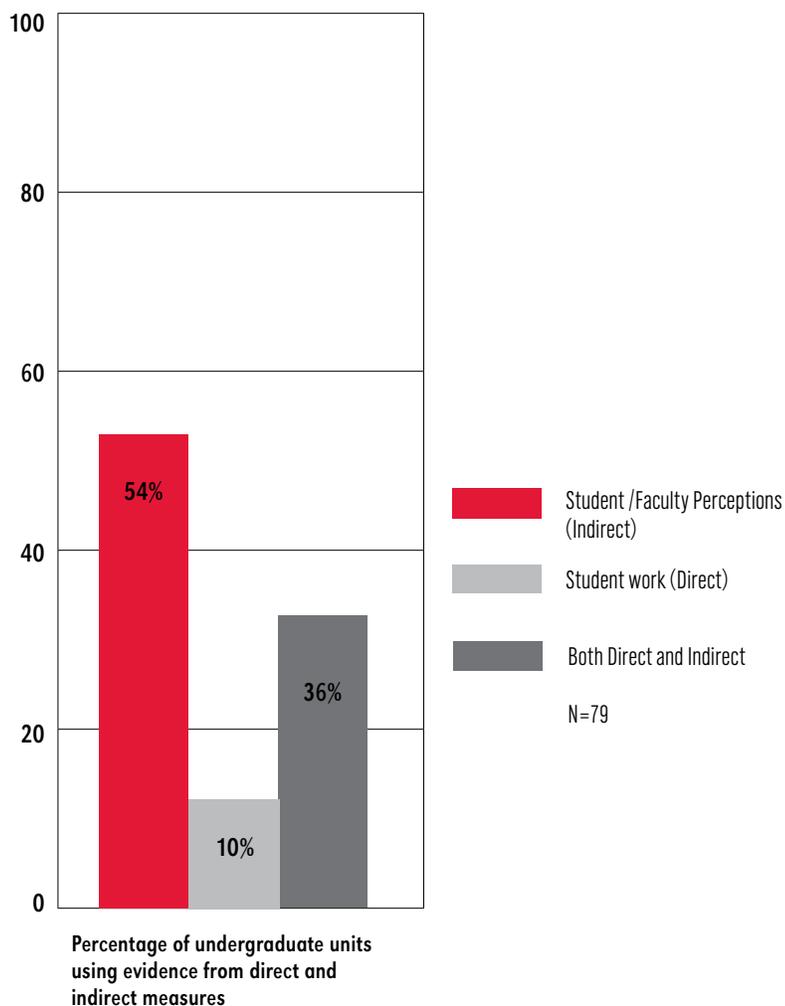
Recognizing that the assessment process doesn't end once evidence is collected, UNL also tracks how undergraduate units/programs are using assessment evidence to improve practice. Figure 6.4 indicates there has been a significant increase in the number of reported uses of assessment evidence by undergraduate units/programs between 1997 and 2005. Most of the reported uses involve the consideration and implementation of program improvements and a sizable amount involve improvements to the assessment process itself.

Figure 6.4 Increase in the Reported Use of Outcomes Assessment by UNL Undergraduate Units/Programs since 1997



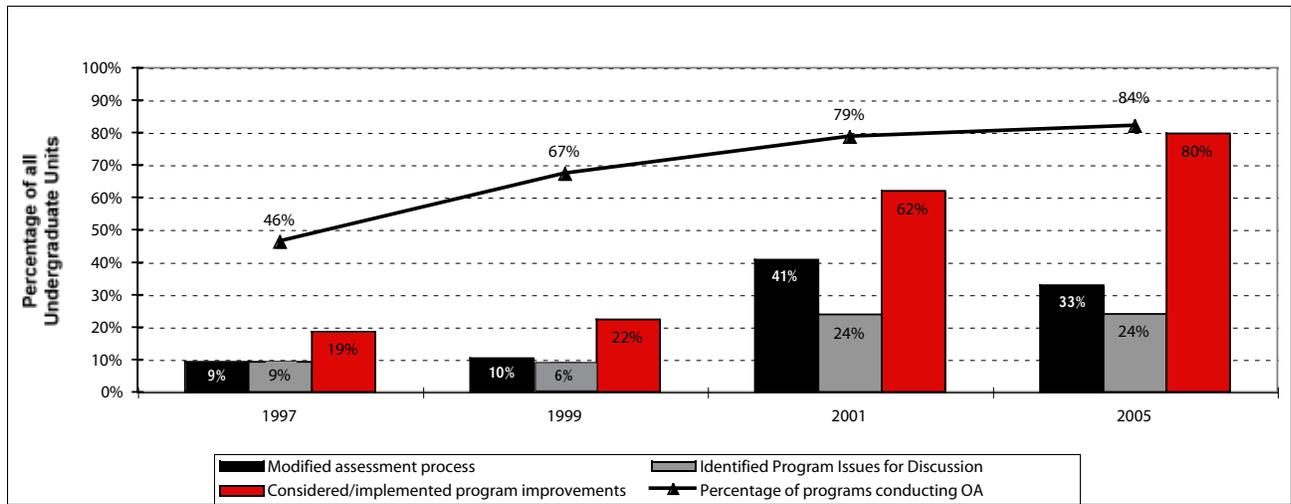
An area of continued focus is increasing the use of direct measures of student learning in addition to or instead of indirect measures. Figure 6.5 indicates that of all the undergraduate units/programs reporting use of outcomes assessment in 2005, slightly more than half use evidence only from indirect measures. The other half use evidence from either direct measures or a combination of direct and indirect measures.

Figure 6.5 Use of Direct and Indirect Evidence in Outcomes Assessments by UNL Units (2005 Reporting Year)



Just as the percent of undergraduate units/programs using assessment evidence has about doubled since 1997 (see Figure 6.2), the percentage of undergraduate units/programs using that evidence to consider and implement program improvements has also increased considerably. Figure 6.6 illustrates this growth since 1997 by documenting the percent of undergraduate units/programs using outcomes assessment results for some sort of program improvement.

Figure 6.6 Use of Outcomes Assessment by UNL Undergraduate Units since 1997 (2005 Reporting Year)

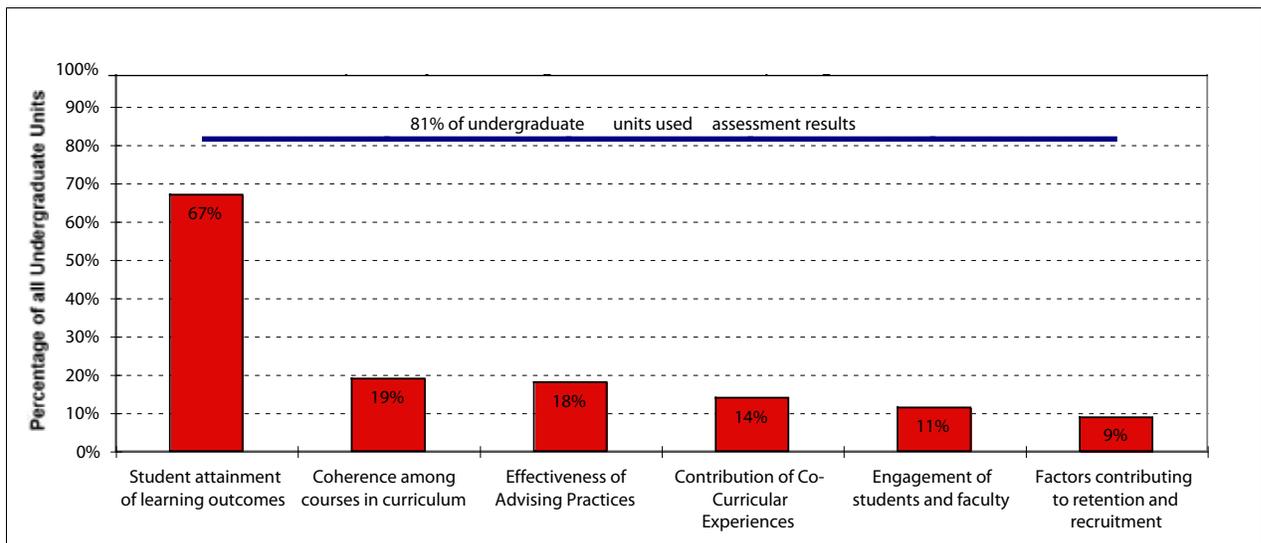


Undergraduate Units/Programs

Note: The total number of units varies from year to year because new programs were added and the level at which assessment is conducted (college, department, program) shifts. The number of programs for 2005 is 79.

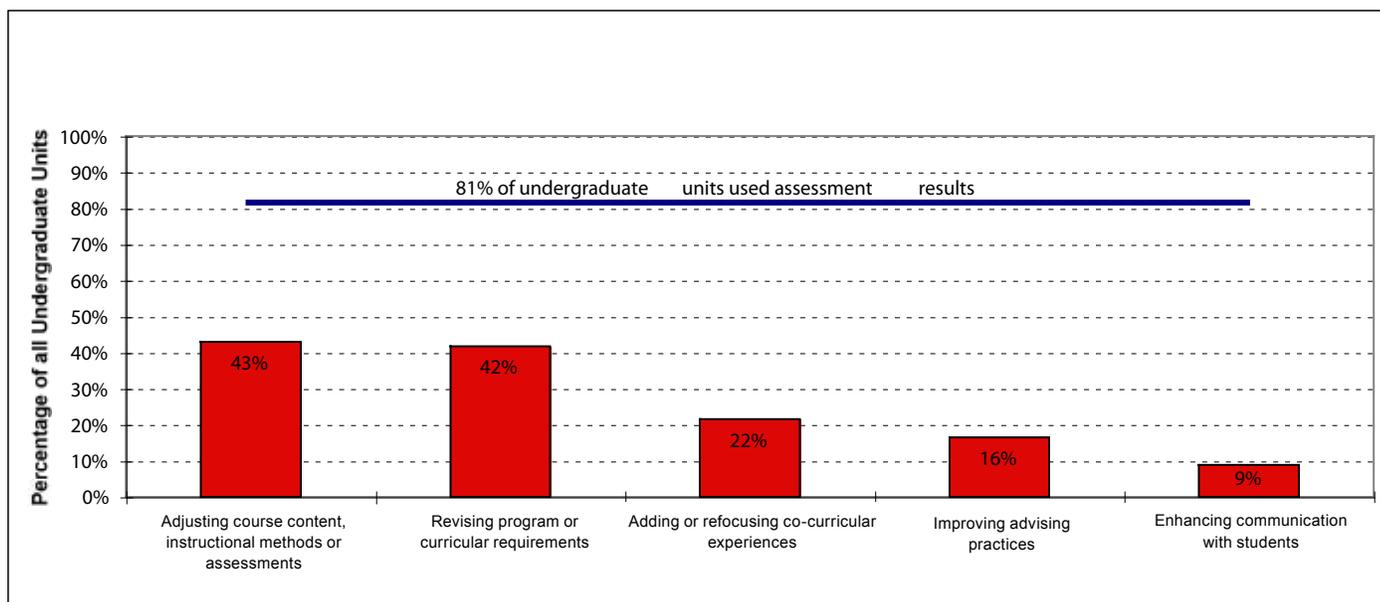
Undergraduate units report gaining a broad array of insights from the outcomes assessment evidence they collect, as shown in Figure 6.7. As intended, the primary insight gained from outcomes assessment is knowledge about student attainment of program learning outcomes.

Figure 6.7 Insights Gleaned from Outcomes Assessment as Reported by UNL Undergraduate Units (2005 Reporting Year)



Finally, Figure 6.8 provides information on the kinds of course and program changes that have resulted from the outcomes assessment process; most prominent are adjustments in course content, methods and kinds of assessments, as well as revisions of program requirements.

Figure 6.8 Types of Programmatic Changes Reported by UNL Undergraduate Units/Programs Conducting Outcomes Assessments (2005 Reporting Year)



The figures discussed provide data on the percent of units /programs using assessment information on program improvements. Assessment results have also affirmed the effectiveness of programs. Examples of these reported confirmations can be found at [www.unl.edu/resources/6-5]. The sidebars on accompanying pages illustrate ways that assessment has helped us to monitor and improve programs.

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-5](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-5)

Several programs at UNL have made curricular or other changes in response to direct evidence of learning outcomes. A few are mentioned below.

**Advertising** (College of Journalism and Mass Communications)

The Advertising sequence has required graduating seniors to complete senior-exit interview surveys for a number of years. Faculty analyze the interviews twice a year to watch for patterns of strengths and weaknesses. One of the areas that consistently emerged as a weakness with the program was preparing students with knowledge and applied use of new technologies. To provide students more opportunities to learn new software technology without adding courses to the curriculum or diverting teaching time from principles to teaching software, advertising faculty applied for a one-time technology fund grant. With it, the sequence hired a professional to offer “Technology Tuesdays,” which gives students additional opportunities to expand their working knowledge of design software. The program has worked well for about five years. Since the addition of this program, students’ survey responses about their preparation in knowledge and applied use of new technologies have improved.

**Electrical Engineering** (College of Engineering)

Prerequisite exams for learning outcomes covered in key courses in the program suggested that students were making significant progress on most learning

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## ***Evaluation of UNL’s Progress with Assessment of Student Learning***

The following sections provide an evaluation of the current status of learning outcomes assessment through answering some questions that we have asked ourselves.

### ***Who at UNL puts outcomes assessment to use?***

UNL faculty members in each academic program are the typical audience for assessing and sharing learning outcomes. Outcomes are shared with the entire faculty in department meetings/retreats, with instructors of courses and with curriculum committees. In some instances, these outcomes are incorporated into formal program-planning processes or documents such as curriculum packets given to all instructors or curriculum matrices mapping where outcomes are to be taught throughout the curriculum. Many programs also share learning outcomes with students through course syllabi, the undergraduate bulletin, departmental websites, student handbooks or recruitment materials. Programs also share their program learning outcomes with advisory boards, accreditation agencies and academic program review teams. Although we are encouraged by these uses, students and faculty could be more engaged in these processes than they are at present.

### ***How are learning outcomes developed and verified at UNL?***

A broad range of sources and approaches are used to develop and verify learning outcomes listed by the programs. The most influential sources of verification are standards or recommendations of national academic and professional organizations, such as disciplinary professional societies or accreditation groups. Programs in engineering, architecture, business administration, journalism, education, human sciences, physical sciences, social sciences, libraries, and fine and performing arts have adopted or taken into consideration these achievement or performance standards/recommendations when developing their lists of learning outcomes. The second most influential sources are the faculty members in each academic program. Often a faculty subcommittee has developed the outcomes that are then shared with the broader faculty for approval. This faculty input is then sometimes verified or supplemented by suggestions of other constituencies including students, alumni, internship supervisors, advisory boards of alumni and employers. Other sources used occasionally to develop or verify learning outcomes include outcomes from similar programs at other institutions and learning objectives/outcomes of individual courses within the curriculum.

### ***Do UNL programs’ learning assessments focus on higher-order thinking skills?***

As indicated in an earlier section, most of UNL programs’ learning outcomes statements do focus primarily on higher-order thinking skills with some appropriate mix of attention to lower-order skills. Programs need to continue to review the outcomes they seek for the type and quality of performance they require.

### ***How might UNL improve our programs’ outcomes assessment plans?***

The quality of UNL programs’ outcome statements could be improved by encouraging programs to word outcome statements so that it is clear how outcomes are to be assessed, to ensure they represent the level of learning expected of a college graduate and that they address attitudinal outcomes as well as cognitive outcomes. There is a need, also, to continue to broaden with whom

and how outcomes are shared. Faculty, students and other external constituencies need to be more formally engaged in the discussion and assessment of these outcomes. To encourage programs to think through this aspect of their assessment more carefully, the University-Wide Assessment Committee should develop recommendations and suggestions for sharing outcomes and for what purposes, and identify some best practices as examples for others. But we need other methods to help engage faculty as well (see PEARL project described below and at [www.unl.edu/resources/SD-1]). We need also to increase units' use of student demonstrations of learning (direct measures) by setting a clear expectation that indirect measures should supplement direct measures and by helping units to identify effective and meaningful approaches for assessing student learning directly. Finally, most of the work on outcomes assessment that has been done at UNL has focused on undergraduate programs, although progress also has been made in assessing learning in graduate programs (see [www.unl.edu/resources/SD-1] for examples). One reason for UNL's greater attention to the undergraduate level (in addition to the fact that there are many more students affected at that level) is that graduate programs have traditionally included extensive assessments of student performance, such as comprehensive and oral examinations, that provide better information on student learning than often has been available at the undergraduate level.

[www.unl.edu/resources/SD-1](http://www.unl.edu/resources/SD-1)

### **What is UNL doing to improve faculty engagement in outcomes assessment?**

In addition to engaging in a campus-wide effort to develop a general education program based on learning outcomes, we have made three substantial changes in the way we do things at UNL that are making a difference in the way faculty and programs are approaching outcomes assessment; these include:

- Regular participation in the National Survey of Student Engagement and other student learning assessments;
- Participation in Graduate Studies assessments; and
- Conducting a faculty development pilot, the PEARL Program, to assist faculty and programs in developing assessment plans.

These efforts are described in greater detail in the sections below.

### **Participation in NSSE and Other Student Learning Assessments**

The National Survey of Student Engagement is a national survey administered annually at four-year colleges and institutions to assess the extent to which undergraduate students are involved in educational practices empirically linked to high levels of learning and development. In the spring of 2002 and 2004, a sampling of UNL first-year and senior students participated in the NSSE. The 2002 NSSE results made a significant contribution to the discussion and writing of the *Intellectual Engagement and Achievement at UNL* (Blue Sky report) and *Everyone a Teacher, Everyone a Learner* (Transition to University Taskforce report). We are currently preparing for the 2007 administration and will continue to participate in the NSSE every three years.

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outcomes. But a further analysis of the exam scores and qualitative interviews with students indicated students were struggling in applying abstract mathematical concepts to engineering problems. To address this learning issue, the program added a laboratory to an existing course that enables students to visualize abstract concepts and to see them applied to real problems.

**Food Science and Technology** (College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources)

During their final year in the program, students participate in a product development scenario. Students frequently expressed surprise at the costs involved in marketing a food product, the requirements for financial returns, the influence profits have on corporate decision-making regarding new food product introductions and the role branding has on development decisions. Faculty found their students have extraordinary technical knowledge in the engineering, microbiology, chemistry and processing of foods; information about how business interests interface with the science was sometimes lacking. The program's capstone course now integrates several lectures that include business topics (costs associated with marketing and product placement, the role marketing, business, and legal professionals have in new product development), as well as a field trip to Omaha to visit a major multi-national food company. During

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the half-day field trip, the lecture topics are reinforced by industry professionals. Although the department has not formally assessed the impact of these changes in approach, its students are at least now exposed to this information. During its next curriculum evaluation, department faculty will consider whether a food-marketing course would be helpful.

**Dietetics** (College of Education and Human Sciences)

Several in-class activities that address research skills and problem-solving were created by a faculty member while participating in the Peer Review of Teaching Project. These class activities were created because internship directors rated graduates' preparation on problem-solving and critical thinking skills the lowest and seniors rated their preparation in research methodologies and interpretation of research and statistics as only adequate. The new class activities will be incorporated into existing 400-level courses and the program will continue to focus and monitor student performance on these outcomes in the future.

**Agricultural Economics** (College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources)

Agricultural Economics' 2003 senior survey responses indicated faculty needed to be better informed about revisions and changes to the curriculum and advising. Students commented on career-track advising, their lack of confidence in

*continued on page 127*

The number of students surveyed in 2004 tripled, allowing us to summarize results at the college level as well as at an institutional level. The 2004 survey was sent to more than 3,000 first-year and senior students at UNL; the response rate, 41 percent, is slightly higher than the national average. In 2004, UNL received responses from 739 first-year students and 504 seniors. This summary of survey results focuses primarily on five clusters of survey items identified by NSSE administrators as benchmarks of effective educational practice. These five benchmarks are:

- Active and Collaborative Learning,
- Enriching Educational Experiences,
- Student-Faculty Interactions,
- Level of Academic Challenge, and
- Supportive Campus Environment .

Table 6.1 compares UNL scores on these benchmarks with how the NSSE instrument predicted our institution would score based on the background characteristics of our students (for example, proportion of different races/ethnicities, proportion reporting on-campus residence) and selected institutional information (for example, Carnegie classification, undergraduate enrollment, etc.).

Table 6.1 Comparison of UNL Actual and Predicted NSSE Benchmark Scores (2004)

	First-Year		Senior	
	ACTUAL SCORE	PREDICTED SCORE	ACTUAL SCORE	PREDICTED SCORE
<b>Active and Collaborative Learning</b>	37.9	=	47.7	>
<b>Enriching Educational Experiences</b>	25.4	=	40.8	>
<b>Student-Faculty Interactions</b>	27.4	<	42.0	>
<b>Level of Academic Challenge</b>	51.1	=	54.2	=
<b>Supportive Campus Environment</b>	56.9	<	52.6	<

> actual score is higher than predicted score (difference .5 or >)

= actual score is equal to predicted score (difference < .5)

< actual score is less than predicted score (difference of .5 or >)

This comparison suggests that first-year students are experiencing active and collaborative learning, participating in enriching educational experiences and receiving the level of academic challenge expected for an institution like UNL. First-year scores for interaction with faculty and encountering a supportive campus environment were less than might be predicted.

Comparison of actual and predicted benchmark scores for seniors suggest their experience with active and collaborative learning, interaction with faculty and participation in enriching educational experience is greater than what is predicted for an institution like UNL. The score for level of academic challenge is as predicted and the score for supportive campus environment is somewhat lower than predicted.

This comparison of benchmark scores for first-year students and seniors was considered and addressed by several recommendations made in the Transition to University Taskforce's report *Everyone a Teacher, Everyone a Learner*. As a result, UNL has implemented several measures, including the Mid-semester Check and Initiative for Teaching and Learning Excellence (ITLE), which have a special focus placed on advising for student success and retention. We will continue to monitor our progress on these benchmarks to determine the extent to which our interventions have been successful.

Each of the academic colleges and the Division of General Studies receives a breakdown of its NSSE results. This includes replicating for each unit the same notebook the institution received from NSSE. The notebook includes a summary of the college's student responses to the survey questions displayed by year in school and compared with the institutional response. It also includes other useful information such as respondent characteristics, guidelines for interpreting NSSE results, a codebook for the survey items and a Power Point template given to UNL by the NSSE administrators for the colleges to use when sharing their results with groups on and off the campus. The university-wide assessment coordinator presented NSSE benchmark results for the institution and colleges to the chancellor's senior management team; other actions were taken as follows:

- The vice chancellor for student affairs asked that information related to his unit be shared with his directors and the chancellor suggested that individual colleges receive their benchmark score results. (December 2004)
- NSSE results were shared with Council of Student Affairs Directors. Directors of several units requested additional analysis specific to their program (e.g. Greek affairs, financial aid). (January 2005)
- NSSE results were analyzed for each program in the Office of Undergraduate Studies. The university-wide assessment coordinator met with individuals in charge of each program to discuss the results and possible follow-up. (January 2005)
- NSSE results were presented to the Admissions, Advising and Retention Committee. Discussion prompted an analysis of differences in the survey responses of first-year students who returned for their sophomore year and those that did not. (February 2005)

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writing skills and frustration with the department's 12-hour international-focus requirement. The faculty began a series of monthly noon-hour teaching roundtable discussions as part of the department's five-year review and its efforts toward student learning outcomes assessment, focusing each discussion on a particular undergraduate teaching and/or student advising issue. The department's Undergraduate Program Committee led the discussion.

The department now has regular advising communication mechanisms and meetings, and it has revised its core curriculum – reducing some requirements and bolstering others, including doubling the written communications course requirements.

- Selected NSSE results were discussed in greater depth with a student leadership group in student affairs to gain their thoughts on those results. (March 2005)
- NSSE benchmark results were shared with Enrollment Management Council. (April 2005)
- NSSE benchmark scores for each college and institutional benchmark scores were shared in individual meetings between the university-wide assessment coordinator and associate deans in each college. Colleges shared and discussed the scores with faculty and students and shared them at college retreats and in alumni newsletters. (March/April 2005)
- Based on NSSE results, Year 2 of the Initiative for Teaching and Learning Excellence (ITLE) had a special focus placed on advising for student success and retention. (September 2005)



In the future, we will continue to participate in the NSSE and track benchmark scores as one method for determining the effectiveness of our efforts to improve the undergraduate experience. We also plan at the institutional and college level to use item level results to supplement other sources of information we are gathering and plan to gather about student learning and their educational experience at UNL. Our expectation is that academic programs and units will use the NSSE data to inform their learning outcomes assessment planning.

In addition to participation in NSSE, several UNL units participate in accreditation and professional program assessments now that are highly focused on student learning outcomes. A list of these special assessments appears in our discussion of Core Criterion 2b (Chapter 5).

In spring 2006, the College of Law participated for the first time in the Law School Survey of Student Engagement. On most indicators, the college fared better than expected for colleges of its type.

Finally, in spring 2005, UNL was chosen to participate in the Collegiate Learning Assessment Longitudinal Project. The Collegiate Learning Assessment is a tool to assess the quality of undergraduate education through direct measurement of student learning outcomes. The study is sponsored by the Council for Aid to Education and partially funded by the Lumina Foundation. UNL was one of 50 institutions of higher education selected from 144 applicant institutions across the United States to participate in the study. The CLA examines the degree to which institutions contribute to developing their students' abilities in critical thinking, analytical reasoning and written communication skills. The objectives of the CLA project are to create a value-added, performance-based assessment model and to develop direct measures of quality that can be used to evaluate academic programs and measure academic program effectiveness to improve student proficiency.

The original protocol required 300 UNL first-year students to complete a three-hour, web-based assessment during fall 2005. These same students would be asked to retake the same CLA twice more, once during their sophomore or junior year and again during their senior year. To establish

a benchmark for expectations of senior-level students at UNL, 100 graduating seniors took a 90-minute CLA during spring 2006. Both seniors and first-year students could elect to receive their individual scores and UNL would receive the aggregate score for each group.

Although CLA personnel were very good to work with, we ran into several difficulties with the administration of the exam, such as the recruitment of first-year students, timing of the fall semester with CLA testing period, the need to meet research compliance, parental permission for students age 19 and under, as well as incentives for students to complete the three-hour test.

In consultation with CLA, UNL switched from the longitudinal project to the one-year cross sectional testing project. We did receive the results of our first-year students who completed the three-hour exam and found that the students who completed the CLA exam were prepared for college level work. We are still waiting to receive the aggregate scores of the seniors who took the exam spring semester 2006.

We will continue to assess the learning of our undergraduate students and will consider adoption of the CLA exam if it meets our needs.

### ***Participation in Graduate Studies Assessments***

Graduate students are now surveyed to learn about their career goals and the academic and professional development activities that they believe will best help them prepare for the future. Results are used to plan workshops and other experiences for graduate students.

Graduate students are also surveyed to assess the prevalence and quality of mentoring relationships between them and the faculty. Of those most recently surveyed, 75 percent indicated that they had a mentoring relationship. Students reporting such a relationship were found to be performing better than those without such a relationship on a number of dimensions. Implications of this study relate to activities the Graduate Studies office and departments can undertake to enhance graduate student mentoring.

The Office of Graduate Studies also uses an online exit survey (see [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-6](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-6)]) to obtain graduating students' perceptions on a wide range of questions relative to their experience as graduate students at UNL. The survey has experienced a 60 percent response rate. The information gathered is provided to programs for their use in making program assessments.

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-6](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-6)

### ***Faculty Development Pilot on Outcomes Assessment***

The PEARL project, a collaborative effort of faculty members across two colleges (College of Education and Human Sciences and College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources), is testing a software package to assist departments in developing learning objectives and outcomes collaboratively. PEARL is an acronym for Program Excellence through Assessment, Research and Learning. Faculty participants compare program assessment efforts to an established set of assessment criteria and obtain peer feedback. We have high hopes for institutionalizing this project, providing for our faculty an on-line, sustainable program for developing, validating and assessing student outcomes. A more complete description of the PEARL project is included in the "Response to the Commission Statement on Assessment" in the Virtual Resource room at [[www.unl.edu/resources/SD-1](http://www.unl.edu/resources/SD-1)].

[www.unl.edu/resources/SD-1](http://www.unl.edu/resources/SD-1)

***Fulfillment of Core Component 3a:*** *An institutional culture that embraces outcomes assessment is an essential element in the teaching-learning process; this climate is clearly developing at UNL. Considerable progress has been made over the past decade with the result that today almost all programs have established student-learning outcomes, assessed the accomplishment of these outcomes and used the assessment data to enhance elements of instruction and curriculum. All colleges are highly involved in outcomes-assessment activities. And we have made a significant commitment to revise our general education program, basing it on student-learning outcomes. Work left to be done includes a need to focus more on direct measures of student learning and to develop ways of sharing the activities and products relative to outcomes assessment with students and other constituents. Becoming an outcomes-assessment-oriented institution is a learning process. We believe we have made highly significant progress in this direction but anticipate that we will become more skilled in stating, measuring and using student-learning outcomes in the years ahead.*

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### **Core Component 3b.**

#### ***The organization values and supports effective teaching.***

The chancellor and others at UNL have publicly stated our commitment to create a student-centered research-intensive environment. Our core values state that we value “Learning that prepares students for lifetime success and leadership.” (April 2006). In his 2004 State of the University Address, Chancellor Perlman reiterated our commitment to this value as it is integral with our tripartite mission:

We believe in the integration of teaching, research, and service. These missions are neither independent nor in conflict, even though they sometimes compete for our attention, our resources, and our time. Our primary reason for existence is to assist young people to achieve adult success through our teaching programs. Research informs our teaching and makes our classrooms more current, more sophisticated, and more unique. For the increasing number of students who participate in our research activity, it is often a life-changing experience that can be duplicated at no other type of institution. It also prepares students to assume leadership roles for the uncertain but always changing world they will enter. [www.unl.edu/resources/6-7]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-7](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-7)

Chancellor James Moeser, who preceded Chancellor Perlman, also emphasized this commitment in speaking to the NU Board of Regents in 1999:

This vision affirms UNL’s identification as a research university, a place where, if we are to be one of the nation’s premier land grants, our scholarship, science, and other

creative activity must be at the cutting edge, must be world-class. But this works only if the research and creative activity engages our students as well — after all, our strategic framework emphasizes that. ... faculty and students will continue to create new knowledge. [www.unl.edu/resources/6-8]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-8](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-8)

The 2003 Blue Sky report (*Intellectual Engagement and Achievement at UNL: The Blue Sky Committee Report*) talks also of the “seamless environment” on our campus that supports the integration of teaching, research and outreach:

It is common to refer to the ‘tripartite mission’ of the land-grant university: teaching, research, and outreach. This is misleading, however, in that it implies that these three areas are separable. They are not! Whenever university professors bring their expertise to students on campus (teaching) or to the broader community off-campus (outreach), they must communicate more than facts. They must convey methods that are used to generate reliable facts and evaluate competing concepts and ideas. Only if these methods are passed on can the recipients become autonomous individuals, generating their own data and ideas and evaluating issues and problems on their own. UNL needs to more fully integrate research and public service with the undergraduate experience. Students often report that their most significant learning experiences come when they get to apply the methods and ideas they have learned in the classroom. Expanding the opportunities for undergraduates to participate in high quality research and community programs will enrich education, research and outreach. [www.unl.edu/resources/6-9]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-9](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-9)

Similarly, the 2003 report *Everyone a Learner, Everyone a Teacher, Report from the Transition to University Task Force* focuses on the question “How do we better prepare our students to be intentional learners?” (i.e., learners who “adapt to new environments, are informed, integrate knowledge across a wide spectrum, and are responsible for their own actions”). This report provides a series of recommendations for steps to be taken to realize our 2020 vision with undergraduate students, focusing on their learning experience through teaching, advising and other activities. [www.unl.edu/resources/6-10]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-10](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-10)

UNL has backed up its stated commitment to student learning in our educational programs and implemented the suggestions and recommendations of the seminal reports described above by supporting a number of teaching and learning programs with increased funding. For instance, of the 23 UNL programs identified for substantial funding under the Programs of Excellence rubric, 21 emphasize teaching. [www.unl.edu/resources/6-11]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-11](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-11)

In addition, in 2003, UNL created the position of Dean of Undergraduate Studies and the Office of Undergraduate Studies. The UNL Office of Undergraduate Studies was established to support and enhance the undergraduate experience. It is of primary importance to the UNL community that students be successful in their programs of studies, graduate with degrees from UNL and become successful and proud alumni. The office coordinates, administers and advocates for campus-wide policies, programs and initiatives affecting undergraduate education, particularly those activities outside the academic degree programs and individual majors that support the teaching mission of the university.

And finally, in 2004, a half-time position was created in Academic Affairs to support teaching. Also, more than 100 faculty were invited to a day-long retreat to discuss additional supports that might be given teaching and learning on campus. In 2005, the senior vice chancellor for academic affairs converted this position to a full-time associate vice chancellor for curriculum and teaching. This position was filled in May of 2005. Among the duties of this position are to coordinate support for teaching and learning on campus, monitor and encourage curriculum development, serve as a liaison to the Teaching Council and the Academy of Distinguished Teachers, coordinate the Initiative on Teaching and Learning Excellence program and provide leadership for the development of campus workshops on teaching and learning.

The following sections provide information about a number of activities that support teaching excellence across the University of Nebraska–Lincoln’s campuses in fulfillment of our core value to ensure “learning that prepares students for lifetime success and leadership”; these sections describe:

- Evidence that UNL Retains Qualified Faculty Who Determine Curriculum,
- Programs that Recognize and Honor Good Teaching,
- Programs that Enhance Teaching Effectiveness,
- Teaching and Learning Workshops, and
- Support for Teaching in Distance Education.

### ***Evidence that UNL Hires and Retains Qualified Faculty Who Determine Curriculum***

UNL’s practices in regards to hiring and retention of faculty were discussed in Chapter 2. The university also has extensive mechanisms for review of faculty performance.

University policy requires units to develop methods for student review of faculty teaching:

Each college or school shall provide a mechanism by which students have an opportunity to report their perceptions of courses and the methods by which they are being taught, provided, however, that such mechanism shall protect members of the faculty from capricious and uninformed judgments. (Board of Regents Bylaws 5.3)

Additionally, the board mandates that:

Each major administrative unit ... (s)hall establish procedures for gathering relevant information from all sources, including student evaluations and peer judgments, as part of an annual review of faculty performance. ... (Board of Regents Bylaws 4.5)

In January 2006, the university’s Guidelines for Annual Evaluations, Promotion, and Tenure were updated. The introduction to the guidelines states:

The ability of a university to function, progress, and develop excellence depends both on the individual performance of each faculty member and on the collective performance of the faculty as a whole. Thus, the success and reputation of a university are highly

dependent upon the talents that exist among its faculty and how effectively those talents are marshaled to accomplish the mission of the academy. To achieve and maintain high quality, a faculty evaluation system is essential. Properly administered, an evaluation system will encourage professional growth of individual faculty members, assure retention of only those faculty members who demonstrate a high level of scholarship and academic performance, and permit appropriate recognition of achievement.

The work of faculty members as independent professionals is not easily categorized or measured. Because it is inherently judgmental, the evaluation of faculty must be constrained by principles and procedures designed to protect academic freedom and to ensure accuracy, fairness, and equity. The purpose of this document is to outline these broad principles and to establish the rigorous and common procedures necessary to maintain these qualities in the faculty evaluation process. The Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR), colleges, departments, and other administrative sub-units shall supplement these guidelines with more detailed descriptions and interpretations of the criteria and standards that, when approved, will apply to faculty members in the particular unit. [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-12](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-12)]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-12](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-12)

Faculty evaluations occur at three levels — annual performance evaluations, evaluations leading to promotion in rank and evaluations leading to continuous appointment (tenure).

The annual evaluation provides a regular opportunity to assess a faculty member's performance and to develop goals for the upcoming year; it forms the basis for annual merit salary raises and other rewards. The overall goal is to provide written records of expectations and performance that encourage professional growth and alignment with the institution's mission. Promotion-in-rank evaluations provide the opportunity to assess a faculty member's growth and performance since initial appointment or since the last promotion. Evaluation of probationary faculty prior to the award of tenure is a particularly rigorous evaluation involving an assessment of accumulated accomplishments and a determination of whether the performance is likely to meet expectations for the indefinite future.

Each faculty member is responsible for his or her conduct, quality and presentation of work. Evaluations begin at the level of review by departmental and collegiate peers. Subsequent levels of review uphold the fairness and integrity in the review process as applied by departments and colleges. Faculty evaluations are to be conducted within the context of each faculty member's role in the institution with a clear understanding of what is expected of him or her. Achievements are judged against these expectations.

Information about annual review, tenure and promotion and other policies can be found at [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-13](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-13)].

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-13](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-13)

University policy specifically states that it is our qualified faculty in each college who determine the curricular content:

... [T]he immediate government of each college shall be by its own faculty. Without

limiting the generality of the foregoing statement, such power shall include adoption of attendance rules, determination of requirements for graduation, recommendations of candidates therefore, developing research and extension programs, discipline of students for conduct solely affecting the college, and proving to the Board recommended admission requirements, courses of study and other relevant materials for meeting statutory requirements. ... Those persons with rank of assistant professor and above, or equivalent ranks, shall constitute the voting members of a college faculty. ... (Board of Regents Bylaws 2.9) [www.unl.edu/resources/6-14]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-14](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-14)

Proposals for new courses or programs of study originate with faculty and are reviewed by faculty committees at the departmental and collegiate levels. Course proposals are then routed either to the University Curriculum Committee, if at the undergraduate level, or the Graduate Council, if at the graduate level. Program proposals are reviewed at the campus level by the Academic Planning Committee, and if appropriate, by the Graduate Council. Each of these groups is composed primarily of faculty who are either elected or appointed by their colleges, disciplinary area or by the Academic Senate. The Academic Planning Committee also has representation from deans and the two academic vice chancellors.

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-15](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-15)

For more information, see generally the Academic Planning Committee website [www.unl.edu/resources/6-15].

### ***Programs that Recognize and Honor Good Teaching***

UNL is proud to sponsor and/or participate in several award programs that recognize and honor good teaching. They are described in the sections below.

#### ***Academy of Distinguished Teachers***



The Academy of Distinguished Teachers was established in 1995 with a charter class of 10 outstanding faculty members. Each year, as many as two new members are selected through a review by a special committee of the Teaching Council, which makes its recommendations to the senior vice chancellor for academic affairs. Election to the academy recognizes and supports professors who are experts in their content areas and have consistently demonstrated excellence in teaching students, in developing curricula and in designing new models of instructional delivery. Academy members share their skills with other faculty on campus, model effective teaching and serve as advocates for teaching excellence. The academy also serves in an advisory capacity to the senior vice chancellor on matters involving the enhancement of teaching.

### ***College Distinguished Teaching Awards***

In 1976, the Nebraska Legislature authorized the presentation of \$1,000 stipends to selected faculty members to recognize outstanding teaching. Up to 15 awards are presented each year based on recommendations from the colleges.

### ***Distinguished Educational Service Award***

One of the highest honors that UNL bestows upon a faculty member, the Distinguished Educational Service Award recognizes faculty for educational service in areas other than residential instruction. To be eligible, a faculty member must devote at least 25 percent of his or her time to what is considered an extension of educational service.

### ***Harold and Esther Edgerton Junior Faculty Award***

Established in 2001, the Harold and Esther Edgerton Junior Faculty Award honors an outstanding junior (pre-tenured) faculty member in the third year of his or her appointment who has demonstrated creative research, extraordinary teaching abilities and academic promise. The award's goal is to provide strong incentive to pre-tenure faculty to expand expertise and enhance learning at UNL. This recognition provides resources for professional development funds and a cash award for two years. It is named in honor of a distinguished alumnus, inventor of the strobe light and instrumental in refining sonar, and his wife.

### ***George Howard/Louise Pound Distinguished Career Award***

The Howard-Pound Distinguished Career Award was approved by the Academic Senate in 1989 to recognize an individual whose career at UNL has made an exceptional contribution to the university community. This contribution may have been made through teaching, research or administrative service or a combination of those activities. The award's namesakes are George Howard, an early NU alumnus and professor considered to be one of the university's founding intellectuals, and Louise Pound, an alumna and prominent faculty member.

### ***Annis Chaikin Sorensen Award for Distinguished Teaching in the Humanities***

This campus-wide award is conferred upon a scholar in one of the following areas: art, classics, communication studies, English, history, modern languages and literatures, journalism, libraries, music, philosophy, theatre arts, ROTC, museum, athletic department and all departments in the College of Architecture. It was first awarded in 1981 and commemorates the matriarch of a Nebraska family notable for service in politics, education and business at the state, national and international levels. Annis Sorensen led the movement to put women's suffrage on the Nebraska ballot. The award recognizes creative activities related to teaching in the humanities, focusing on courses, curriculum development and or program development. The recipient receives a \$1,500 stipend.

### ***Student Foundation/Builders Award for Outstanding Academic Advising***

Established in 1987, the award acknowledges faculty members who have demonstrated outstanding academic advising ability, and who, by their service to UNL, have made a considerable contribution to the educational enrichment of UNL students. All faculty are eligible for the award

and nominations may be made by any UNL student, faculty or staff member or administrator. This award includes a \$1,500 stipend.

### ***Donald R. and Mary Lee Swanson Award for Teaching Excellence***

Funded by a gift from Donald R. Swanson, the Donald R. and Mary Lee Swanson Award for Teaching Excellence honors exemplary teaching in the College of Education and Human Sciences and carries a \$10,000 cash gift for the recipient. The award was first given in 1999. The central focus of the award is the positive impact of teaching on students. Recipients demonstrate a record of teaching in a manner that engages students in higher order thinking, teaching that enables students to become active and continuous learners, a history of holding high standards for student performance and a record of engagement in activities and research to improve one's own teaching. Donald Swanson retired in 1987 from Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph Co. after a 40-year career. His late wife, Mary Lee, was a 1940 graduate of Teachers College. Mr. Swanson believes that teachers are the key to turning lives in positive directions.

### ***Outstanding Teaching and Instructional Creativity Award***

Two Outstanding Teaching and Instructional Creativity Awards are conferred by the University of Nebraska system and are presented annually in honor and recognition of meritorious and sustained records of excellence in teaching and creativity related to teaching. The recipients may come from any of the four NU campuses. They each receive \$3,500, an award medallion and plaque. Candidates are nominated from each campus; the NU Provost appoints a university-wide selection committee to review nominations and make recommendations. The provost makes the appointment.

### ***University-wide Departmental Teaching Award***

One University-wide Departmental Teaching Award is presented each year in honor and recognition of a department/unit within the University of Nebraska that has made a unique and significant contribution to the teaching efforts of the university and which has outstanding esprit de corps in its dedication to the education of students at the undergraduate, graduate or professional levels. The honored department receives \$25,000 to be used in whatever manner the department sees fit.

### ***Parents Association Awards for Outstanding Teaching***

Each year, the UNL Parents Association recognizes UNL faculty and staff for outstanding teaching or service to students. Recipients are nominated by parents who typically suggest individuals based on positive comments from students.

### ***Programs that Enhance Teaching Effectiveness***

In addition to recognizing teaching excellence through award programs, UNL has in place a number of offices, committees, and annual programs that are offered to assist instructors in improving their teaching practices. Examples of these annual programs and their faculty contacts are listed in Table 6.2. The Instructional Technology group is described on an upcoming page.

Table 6.2 Offices, Committees and Annual Programs that Support Teaching

RESOURCE	FOCUS	CONTACT
Academic Affairs	Support for faculty instructional development.	David Wilson Dwilson2@unl.edu
College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources Teaching and Learning Improvement Council	Encourage continuous improvement in teaching and learning in CASNR.	John Markwell Jmarkwell2@unl.edu
Century Club	Support for those teaching large-section courses.	Michael James Mjames2@unl.edu
Century Club Community of Practice	Support for those teaching large-section courses.	Michael James Mjames2@unl.edu
Digital Curriculum Development Program	Assist faculty with utilizing the Libraries' digital resources to develop online curriculum that enhances both resident and distance UNL courses.	Robert Bolin Rbolin2@unl.edu
Distributed Environment for Active Learning Laboratory	Partner with faculty and staff at UNL to develop new and exciting active learning environments.	Mark Hendricks Mhendricks1@unl.edu
Diversity Community of Practice	Support for faculty interested in exploring issues of diversity in teaching and learning.	Gwen Combs Gcombs2@unl.edu Joy Ritchie Jritch1@unl.edu Helen Moore Hmoore1@unl.edu
Extended Education and Outreach	Assist faculty in planning, designing and delivering distance courses.	Marie Barber Mbarber2@unl.edu
Focus on Faculty	Focuses on teaching for success in lower-division courses.	David Wilson Dwilson2@unl.edu
Graduate Teaching Assistants Community of Practice	Offers graduate students an opportunity to explore undergraduate teaching at UNL.	Laurie Bellows Lbellows1@unl.edu
Institute for International Teaching Assistants	Prepare international graduate students to teach U.S. undergraduates.	Laurie Bellows Lbellows1@unl.edu
Instructional Support Services for Graduate Teaching Assistants	Help graduate teaching assistants develop as teachers and scholars.	Laurie Bellows Lbellows1@unl.edu
Instructional Technology Advisory Committee	Study, advise and promote issues related to teaching and learning with technology.	Ron Roeber Rroeber1@unl.edu
Instructional Technology Group	Develop, promote and support the use of technology for teaching and learning.	Bruce Sandhorst Bsandhorst1@unl.edu
Online Pedagogy Community of Practice	Support for faculty who are teaching online.	Marie Barber Mbarber2@unl.edu
Peer Review of Teaching Project	Support faculty in the development of a community of scholars investigating the intellectual work involved in teaching.	Paul Savory Psavory2@unl.edu Amy Burnett Aburnett1@unl.edu Amy Goodburn Agoodburn1@unl.edu
Preparing Future Faculty Program	Provide doctoral students with opportunities to observe and experience faculty responsibilities at a variety of academic institutions with varying missions, diverse student bodies, and different expectations for faculty.	Laurie Bellows Lbellows1@unl.edu
Services for Students with Disabilities	Serve as a resource for faculty and staff who work with students with disabilities.	Veva Cheney Vcheney2@unl.edu
Teaching Council	Encourage and support efforts to improve instruction and learning at all levels at UNL.	David Wilson dwilson2@unl.edu
Teaching Resources Tab	An online portal dedicated to supporting teaching at UNL.	Ron Roeber Rroeber1@unl.edu
Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Corps	Provide faculty with peer mentors for their students teaching large first-year courses.	Rita Kean Rkean1@unl.edu
Visual Literacy Community of Practice	Support for faculty teaching in the Visual Literacy Program (a Program of Excellence).	Michael James Mjames2@unl.edu

### What UNL Faculty Participants say about the Peer Review of Teaching Project

**Carolyn Pope Edwards,  
Professor, Psychology**

“I am much more systematic in thinking about outcomes and trying to tie the course experiences to them. I think students find my courses better organized and more unified in main messages.”

**Tim Wentz,  
Interim Department Chair and  
Associate Professor, Construction  
Management**

“Using the discipline and structure of Peer Review, I was able to identify problems within one of my courses and develop working strategies for correcting them by working with my peer group. I would strongly encourage any faculty member to explore the impact peer review can have in your classroom.”

**D'Andra Orey,  
Assistant Professor, Political Science**

“This project has forced me to develop clear-cut goals and objectives that have now been defined in such a way that I can measure them. Along with teaching me how to self-evaluate my teaching, the project has also helped to improve my teaching.”

**Kevin Lee,  
Research Assistant Professor, Physics  
and Astronomy**

“My Peer Review experience encouraged me to finally get rid of having lectures in my classroom. I don't think I will ever lecture in a course again. I spend my preparation time making worksheets

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Two specially funded projects that support teaching excellence are the Peer Review of Teaching Project and the Initiative for Teaching and Learning Excellence, described in the sections below.

#### **Peer Review of Teaching Project**

The UNL Peer Review of Teaching project is an intensive year-long program in which faculty examine and reflect on how their teaching supports student learning. Through conversations, writing and analysis, participants document, test and assess their teaching, using a model similar to that used when conducting scholarly research. The model validates teaching as an intellectually rigorous activity.

Funded by the Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, the Peer Review of Teaching Project is a faculty-driven initiative that provides faculty with a structured and practical model that combines inquiry into the intellectual work of a course, careful investigation of student understanding and performance and faculty reflection on their teaching effectiveness. The key objective is to mentor faculty in being able to document, assess and discuss the intellectual work in their courses and the resulting impact on student learning.

The project began in 1994 with UNL's participation in the Peer Review of Teaching Project initiated by the American Association for Higher Education. The following year, a FIPSE grant augmented by university funding enabled the creation of a campus program that supports faculty as they engage in peer consultation on teaching and develop course portfolios describing and documenting their teaching. In 1999, with financial support from the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Hewlett Foundation, our campus program was expanded to collaborate with four partner campuses (Indiana-Bloomington, Texas A&M, University of Michigan and Kansas State University). In spring 2004, the project hosted a national conference “Making Learning Visible: Peer Review and the Scholarship of Teaching” (March 26-28, 2004) in Lincoln. This working conference brought together more than 200 faculty members, university administrators, and faculty developers to explore the current status of peer review and to discuss how this form of peer collaboration contributes to larger conversations regarding the scholarship of teaching and learning. While each partner has developed different models for administering and financing individual campus efforts, all have held true to the goal of helping faculty document the intellectual effort that they put into their teaching.

The UNL project is a grass-roots effort in which campus faculty leaders recruit other faculty for participation in developing a campus community for discussing, assessing and developing approaches for understanding, measuring and documenting classroom effectiveness. Rather than advocating any particular teaching approach or technique, the project focuses on helping faculty document student learning occurring in their courses and then think about whether student performance is reflective of the curricular and department goals. Specific outcomes for faculty participating in the project include:

- Reflecting upon, developing and writing a course portfolio about one of their courses;
- Identifying common teaching and curricular issues across academic disciplines;
- Becoming skilled as a reviewer of a course portfolio (and other teaching materials);

- Discussing the challenges in teaching and addressing the needs of diverse student learners;
- Developing a common vocabulary for talking about and assessing the intellectual work of teaching; and
- Being nurtured to become a leader in creating and advocating department, college and university teaching policies.

The project promotes educational reform at three different levels: by assisting faculty in evaluating and improving their students' learning, by building a campus community that supports and refines this inquiry into student learning and by challenging a research university's attitude and policies about teaching. As a result, the project has helped to broaden the scope for improving student learning outcomes from individual classes to improving outcomes across programs, curricular areas, college departments and different colleges.

In February 2005, UNL's Peer Review of Teaching project received a TIAA-CREF Theodore M. Hesburgh Award Certificate of Excellence. Named in honor of Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., president emeritus of the University of Notre Dame, the award is given annually to the program judged to have best met the three award criteria: significance of the program to higher education; appropriate program rationale; and successful results and impact on undergraduate teaching and student learning.

Since fall 2000, faculty members from 40 different programs and eight different colleges have participated in the project. The project currently is coordinated by three faculty members: Professors Paul Savory (Industrial and Management Systems Engineering), Amy Goodburn (English) and Amy Burnett (History). The project has proven results. A written survey of former peer review project faculty participants revealed that 100 percent strongly agree or agree that writing a portfolio helped them improve the course that was the subject of their analysis; 95 percent strongly agree or agree that development of a course portfolio helped them identify, articulate and revise course goals, especially with regard to student learning objectives; and 98 percent strongly agree or agree that writing their portfolios helped foster self-reflection and awareness about their own teaching practices. A sidebar on these pages presents a few faculty testimonials on the value of this teaching support service.

Go to [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-16](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-16)] for a further description of this project.

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-16](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-16)

### ***Initiative for Teaching and Learning Excellence***

Launched in 2004, the Initiative for Teaching and Learning Excellence supports projects that sustain and improve undergraduate education. The first year of the project was funded by an allocation of more than \$485,000 from the University of Nebraska Foundation, requested by Chancellor Perlman. The chancellor announced the initiative in his 2004 State of the University address, saying that competitive grants would be awarded to support projects related to selective implementation of the recommendations of the *Transitions to the University Task Force report* or

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and peer instruction materials rather than lectures. I made the leap to a 100% student-centered pedagogy because of my peer review experiences. It made me completely aware of how little my students were learning."

**Patrice McMahon,**  
**Assistant Professor, Political Science**

"The project required me to be very conscious about how I was designing a syllabus, how I was evaluating students, and how I was approaching my teaching. It serves as a foundation on which my colleagues and I often start discussions about teaching and learning."

**Marilynn Schnepf,**  
**Chair and Professor, Nutrition and Health Sciences**

"I am now more concerned with the question 'How do I know if students are learning what I want them to learn?' I use more minute papers in class to gauge student learning through their comments. I have tried to tie objectives more closely to activities. I am not sure if student learning has been impacted yet. I feel that the course is more coherent and learning activities are more closely tied together."

**Christine Marvin,**  
**Associate Professor, Special Education and Communication Disorders**

"Through my participation, I was amazed and embarrassed to discover that I had course objectives I never taught, I had course objectives I taught but never assessed, I had course objectives I assessed and never taught, and I had material I taught and assessed but never listed as a course objective. By reorganizing the goals of my course, developing rubrics for evaluating student work, and assessing my classroom activities, I now have a focused approach for linking my teaching to my students' learning."

### College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources Winter Teaching and Learning Workshop

For many years the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources has supported a winter workshop on teaching and learning. In recent years, the faculty planning committee has broadened the invitation to the workshop to the rest of the UNL campus and post-secondary institutions across the state. The committee includes College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources faculty and a representative from UNL's Academy of Distinguished Teachers, the lead faculty development administrator for the Southeast Community College System and a Cooperative Extension educator. At the 2005 winter workshop, more than 70 faculty from post-secondary institutions explored the topic, "Teaching the New Generation of Learners." The 2006 session attracted 105 faculty from post-secondary institutions to a session titled "Does Technology Improve Learning?" A keynote on the future of technology set the stage for concurrent workshops on podcasting, personal response system/clickers, discussion boards, online portfolios, working with images and documents for Blackboard, online communication with Breeze and a 3D virtual reality system demonstration.

for other activities relating to undergraduate education. In late fall 2004, proposal guidelines were developed and eventually 100 proposals were submitted; 23 were funded. The projects fell into the broad categories of "advising for life," "teaching fellows grants," "program innovation grants," "classroom development grants," "technology grants," and "one campus, many views – projects to enhance diversity or globalization." Among funded projects were those aimed at improving undergraduate leadership training, enhancing training for teaching assistants, expanding women's studies offerings, establishing an international-focus learning community, remodeling of outdated classrooms, transcribing Omaha language recordings into a digital dictionary and creating an interactive CD for incoming education and human science students. A full description of 2005-06 ITLE grants can be found in the Virtual Resource Room at [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-17](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-17)].

In February 2006, a second round of grants was funded. This time, 15 proposals shared \$285,000 in funding, again from the NU Foundation. Proposals aimed at improving advising were especially encouraged for Year 2 grants. Funded grants fell into four categories: "advising for success," "program innovation," "one campus, many views" and "teaching fellows." A full description of Year 2 grants can also be found at [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-18](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-18)].

Grants for Year 3 of the initiative will be distributed to outcomes-based undergraduate program assessment projects that use direct measures of student learning to guide decisions about improving curriculum and pedagogy. The goal of Year 3 is to enable undergraduate programs to develop and implement a complete and continuous cycle of improvement. Applications are due Oct. 27; \$100,000 will be distributed.

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-17](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-17)

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-18](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-18)

### Teaching and Learning Workshops

UNL offers many workshops and opportunities in support of teaching and learning. The following is a short list of events sponsored by the Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs in the fall semester of 2005. The list is typical of the kinds of activities this office hosts:

- **Crafting Assignments for Better Research and Writing**  
Steve Dunbar, Harriet McLeod, Tracy Bicknell-Holmes, and Deborah Minter  
Friday, October 21, 2005  
8:30 to 10 a.m., Nebraska Union
- **Blackboard Brown Bag: Meet the Newest Blackboard Team Member Heath Tuttle, Information Services, and Paul Erickson, Information Services**  
Thursday, October 27, 2005  
Noon to 1 p.m., Room 22, 501 Building.  
Meet Heath Tuttle, the newest member of our Blackboard team. Paul Erickson will be there to talk about the latest plans for Blackboard at UNL.
- **Preparing Intentional Learners Using Technology**  
Rita Kean and Melissa Anderson  
Tuesday, November 1, 2005  
1-4:30 p.m. Nebraska Union

- **Grappling with Plagiarism**  
Signe Boudreau and Matt Hecker  
Friday, November 4, 2005  
1:30-3 p.m., Nebraska Union
- **The Humanities Without Apology**  
Pauline Yu, President, American Council of Learned Societies  
Wednesday, November 16, 2005  
3:30 p.m., Nebraska Union

The sidebars on these pages describe similar activities of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and the Office of Graduate Studies.

### ***Support for Teaching in Distance Education***

In 1999, the Office of Extended Education and Outreach announced a grant program to provide greater incentive for new distance education degree and certificate program start-ups and expansion of existing distance education programs. The project was funded by \$200,000 in discretionary funds provided by the chancellor. The following grants were made available:

- One \$50,000 grant for the development of a new graduate degree program.
- Up to four \$25,000 grants for expansion of existing graduate degree programs that have excess capacity or the development of a new undergraduate or graduate certificate program.
- Remaining funds for the development of new distance education courses. Preference given to courses that support a degree or certificate program. Maximum of \$10,000 per course development grant proposal.

The Department of Instructional Design and Development staff, experienced in distance education instructional technologies and teaching, provides support to faculty developing distance delivered courses, learning modules and instructional materials by:

- Consulting on course design and structure, as well as providing individual hands-on development and production support;
- Identifying teaching strategies that are effective in a technology environment and providing information about online and/or distance teaching and design best practices;
- Supporting faculty during the delivery of the online course or module, helping implement strategies that increase student interaction and discussion while keeping workloads manageable;
- Supporting the development of online or other distance media instructional materials, such as presentations of content, assignment instructions, work study group spaces, activities and quizzes, surveys and so on; and
- Helping to structure and produce interactive, multimedia learning objects, graphics, simulations, and video and audio elements.

**The Office of Graduate Studies provides a variety of programs to prepare graduate students to take on teaching roles, both now and in their future careers.**

- The Annual Fall Workshop for Graduate Teaching Assistants (in its 17th year in 2006)
- Preparing Future Faculty Program
- Spring Graduate Student Professional Development Workshops
- Institute for International Teaching Assistants

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***Fulfillment of Core Component 3b:*** *The value that UNL places on effective teaching is reflected in both informal statements of chancellors and faculty committees and in the support structure for teaching that is in place. Several programs provide recognition for high-quality teaching and bring attention to the importance of teaching on campus. A wide range of support services, including the national-award-winning Peer Review of Teaching Project, is provided for faculty who wish to continue to improve their teaching. Internal grants are available to faculty for a variety of projects relative to the enhancement of teaching and learning.*

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### **Core Component 3c.**

#### *The organization creates effective learning environments.*

UNL sponsors a number of enhancement programs designed to create effective learning environments for students through complementing and intensifying classroom learning experiences. These are described in the sections below. We conclude our discussion of this criterion with a description of national recognition that UNL has received from the AAC&U for the quality of our learning environments.

#### **Undergraduate Creative Activities and Research Experiences program (UCARE)**

The Undergraduate Creative Activities and Research Experiences program, administered by the Office of Undergraduate Studies and funded by the Pepsi Endowment and Program of Excellence Funds, is a signature program at UNL. It creates intellectual partnerships between UNL faculty and undergraduates by funding opportunities for undergraduates to work with faculty members and directly participate in the campus' research or creative activities. Undergraduates may apply for UCARE awards to incorporate a research or creative experience into their undergraduate education.

All full-time UNL undergraduates who have completed at least 30 semester hours are eligible. Students are generally expected to have a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Applicants must work with a faculty sponsor; the sponsor may be either from the student's own college or another college, if appropriate. All full-time UNL faculty, regardless of rank or nature of appointment, may serve as sponsors. During the first year, the student works as a research assistant for a faculty member on the faculty member's ongoing research or creative activity project(s). During Year 1, the student engages in "learning by doing" — learning why and how the faculty member does research and creative activities by assisting the faculty member in completing research tasks. The student may learn such skills as how to do library literature reviews, code or retrieve data, work in a research laboratory, undertake research techniques specific to a project or discipline, assist with an experiment and work in a studio.

In the second year, the student advances to a more independent project proposed by the student and sponsored by the faculty mentor with whom the student worked during the first year. The project may be an extension of or related to the student's UCARE experience during the first year or may simply build upon skills gained in the first year. The faculty member sponsors and serves as a mentor for the project.

The maximum UCARE award is \$2,000 for Year 1 and \$2,400 for Year 2, or a total of \$4,400 over the two-year period. In some cases it is possible and appropriate for the student to receive course credit (e.g., under internship or independent study listings) for the work being done. All such



Davy Crockett worked with Lawrence Harshman, associate professor in the School of Biological Sciences, on reproductive processes in fruit flies in Crockett's UCARE project.

arrangements are worked out between the student and his or her faculty sponsor, subject to the department's and college's rules and expectations.

UCARE participants complete a mid-year evaluation form and upon completion of the project, both the faculty sponsor and the student submit a brief evaluation of the project. It is also expected that at the end of the Year 2 experience, the student will share the results of his/her study or activity with the university community in an appropriate forum such as a poster session.

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-19](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-19)

For more information, see [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-19](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-19)].

### ***UNL Honors Program***

The UNL Honors Program admits approximately 500 new students each year and provides them with a rich academic experience, close professional relationships between students and faculty, opportunities for mentored research and participation in a culture of academic excellence. Applicants to the UNL Honors program generally are ranked in the top 10 percent of their high school class, have a minimum ACT composite of 29 or above or combined SAT of 1300, provide a written essay in which they demonstrate their commitment to academic and intellectual pursuits and provide evidence of engagement in school and community activities. All students admitted as first-semester freshmen and as transfers to the Nebraska Honors Program receive a scholarship that covers up to \$500 per year of the cost of required textbooks for up to four years, provided they fulfill annual requirements.

UNL Honors Program students are required to enroll as full-time students (at least 12 credit hours each semester, fall and spring), maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.5 (out of 4.0), and complete 24 credit hours in honors courses (including 189H and 395H honors seminar courses and the honors research or creative senior project) with a minimum grade of B.

First-year honors students are required to complete six hours of honors credit hours with a minimum grade of B in Honors 189H (three credit hours) and at least one other three-credit Honors designated class (for example, English 150H or Math 108H). Honors students are expected to complete 15 hours of honors courses with a minimum grade of B by the end of their fourth semester at UNL and file the formal Statement of Academic Interest with the Honors Program. During their third and fourth years of study, honors students are required to complete at least nine honors credit hours with a minimum grade of B, including the UHON 395H course and the thesis hours. Students must enroll in three credit hours of designated honors courses each year, regardless of the number of credit hours accumulated and file a Memorandum of Study (for research purposes) with the Honors Program prior to completing their sixth semester. To graduate with Honors Program distinction, students are required to complete up to six hours of an honors research or creative project (e.g., thesis).

The University Honors program is responsible for creating and offering the 189H and 395H seminars that are supplemented by honors courses offered by academic departments (i.e., Math 108H honors calculus or History 202H honors American history). Incoming honors students are required to take a section of the 189H seminars and eventually they will register for one or more

of the 395H upper-division seminars. These courses embody the pedagogical philosophy and expectations of the honors curriculum at UNL that are also implemented in the many honors courses offered by the academic departments. The pedagogy of these seminars is emphatically interactive with the expectation that the informed dialogue between students and faculty, as well as among the students, creates a vibrant intellectual environment. The seminars encourage students to become engaged learners and active participants in the discovery of knowledge.

The 189H seminars, each with no more than 20 students, provide entering honors students the opportunity to study in an environment populated by high-ability students. The use of the seminars to acculturate students to a learning environment that many have not experienced in high school is not only valuable but essential. Even more important, the 189H seminars serve as an introduction to more advanced and sophisticated enquiry than the student might encounter in “mainstream” freshman classes. The 189H courses invariably engage students in the examination of controversial issues and the consideration of conflicting interpretations. In the process, faculty introduce the student to the discipline’s methodology and engage the student in its process of discovery.

The 395H upper-division seminars develop the students’ research skills by drawing the students into a systematic and rigorous exploration of the subject matter at a level appropriate for juniors and seniors. Course requirements explicitly state that students will do a considerable amount of reading, participate actively in class discussions (courses are limited to no more than 15 students), and prepare and present to the audience a substantial research paper. Faculty require students to identify a research topic early in the semester, formulate a research strategy, submit a prospectus for the project, present a bibliography and a review of literature on the topic, prepare a rough draft and a polished final document. The size of the class allows for ongoing closely monitored dialogue among the participants and continuous faculty response to the students’ in-class contributions and written work.

Examples of 189H and 395H course offerings can be found at [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-20](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-20)].

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-20](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-20)

The program encourages students to participate in enriching academic opportunities, whether study abroad, internships or domestic exchange programs. In addition, the Honors Program is intimately involved in identifying strong candidates to compete for prestigious national and international scholarships and assist them in preparing their applications. Providing information workshops for our students and semester-long seminars to develop and refine their applications is an integral part of the annual honors curriculum. These resources have contributed to student success in university, college and departmental scholarship competitions as well as in admission to leading graduate and professional schools. These resources and the Honors Program experience have provided students with the ideal background to compete successfully for the most prestigious academic scholarships and awards, such as the Rhodes and Marshall Scholarships for graduate study in Great Britain, the Fulbright Fellowship for international studies, the Truman Scholarship for careers in public service, the Goldwater Scholarship for math, science, and engineering students and the Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship for graduate study. Our Nebraska Honors students are consistently competitive for these scholarship opportunities and have had an exceptional

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-21](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-21)

record of success over the years. The UNL Honors Program is affiliated with the Office of Undergraduate Studies. [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-21](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-21)]

### ***Agricultural Research Division Undergraduate Honors Student Research Program***

UNL's Agricultural Research Division supports approximately 12 students annually in its ARD Undergraduate Honors Student Research Program. Approximately \$30,000 is committed annually to the program, which provides successful applicants with up to \$2,500 over 12 months. The program is open to junior and senior University Honors Program students proposing to conduct their thesis research in agriculture, biology, human resources and natural resources with faculty who have an Agricultural Research Division appointment. This competitive grant program also acquaints students with the scientific method, provides strong research and learning experiences, stimulates interest in teaching and research careers and informs students about opportunities in graduate study. Preference is given to students enrolled in AGRI 299H (Honors Thesis Seminar) or HRFS 498H (Research Methodologies). Honors Program students not enrolled in either course may work independently with an ARD faculty member to develop a proposal. The student completes her or his thesis project by working directly with the faculty thesis adviser or with staff who are part of the faculty member's research program.

At the project's end, the student submits a final report that includes a brief description of the project, budget/expenditure summary and a summary of the findings, including an executive summary that outlines potential impacts of the research. Students are expected to present their findings at either the UNL Undergraduate Research Conference, the Nebraska Academy of Sciences Annual Meeting or a professional meeting. Students are also encouraged to make presentations to the appropriate student club or organization and departmental seminars. For more information, see [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-22](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-22)].

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-22](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-22)

### ***J.D. Edwards Program in Computer Science and Management***

The J.D. Edwards Honors Program offers interdisciplinary computer science and business management education. The program provides an education balanced in technology and management while developing professional skills in leadership, communications and collaboration. Hands-on practical experience develops leaders and entrepreneurs for the increasingly information technology-driven business world. Program capacity is 116; in the fall 2006, there are 109 students enrolled.

The program is residential and is highly competitive. Students major in either computer science with a minor in business or one of seven business areas with a minor in computer science. Alternatively, they may elect to major in computer engineering, industrial engineering, electrical engineering or math, while also earning minors in computer science and business. The four-year core curriculum consists of honors computer science, business and management topics. The core curriculum focuses on system development, including generalized business systems and management of technology firms. All J.D. Edwards Honors Program students participate in a

multidisciplinary, team-based project approach that integrates computer science, business and professional skill topics in daily two-hour block classes.

This unique learning opportunity is enhanced by the Kauffman Center’s living and learning community, which enables students to engage in collaborative project work via its student residences, faculty offices, project work areas, meeting rooms and both wireless and wired internet services.

The program faculty is composed of university faculty members from the colleges of Arts and Sciences and Business Administration, industry professionals and visiting faculty from other universities. The program faculty work to integrate computer science and business content effectively throughout the core curriculum. [www.unl.edu/resources/6-23]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-23](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-23)

### ***The Peter Kiewit Institute***

The Peter Kiewit Institute for Information Science, Technology and Engineering was formed to meet the needs of students and local industry. The institute brings together the UNL College of Engineering, the University of Nebraska at Omaha College of Information Science and Technology, and local industry. Its goal is to merge the cultures of higher education and business to create an ideal learning environment for Nebraska’s engineering and information science professionals.

The Peter Kiewit Institute opened in 1999 with each college occupying a wing. The institute is located at 67th and Pacific streets in Omaha. It was the first facility built at UNO’s 70-acre high-tech south campus.

The bachelor of science engineering programs housed at the institute include architectural engineering, civil engineering (also on the Lincoln campus), computer and electronics engineering and construction engineering. Graduate degree programs leading to the Ph.D. are available to students on the Omaha campus. Approximately 730 undergraduates and 130 graduate students are enrolled in institute programs.

The newly created Charles W. Durham School of Architectural Engineering and Construction will serve as a national center of excellence. In addition, the institute is home to a National Security Agency Center of Information Assurance and the International Academy of Advanced Decision Support, and is touted for its broadcast-quality SCOLA transmission over high-speed Internet-2 to some of the most prestigious centers of post-secondary education in the nation.

In 1996, when the Kiewit Institute was conceived, more than 250,000 vacant technology jobs were available in the United States alone. That number is growing by an estimated 90,000 jobs per year. The institute is designed to help meet the needs of the nation’s technology and engineering firms by providing a top-flight education to students interested in pursuing careers in information science, technology and engineering. [www.unl.edu/resources/6-24]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-24](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-24)

### ***Cedar Point Biological Station***

Cedar Point Biological Station offers eight courses each summer at a mini-campus in the bluffs near Lake McConaughy, Nebraska's largest lake. Thirty to 50 students spend the summer at Cedar Point and earn up to 20 hours of college credit in one of the richest ecological settings in the region. At Cedar Point, students and faculty mix informally in a highly instructional setting, which provides an outstanding intellectual experience. Cedar Point was founded in 1975 and has established a strong educational program and an outstanding record of research productivity. The station has grown from an initial 16 buildings and 38 acres to 29 buildings and 980 acres of cedar forested canyons, rugged bluffs overlooking the North Platte River valley, and rolling uplands of shortgrass and mixed-grass prairie. Facilities at the field station include well-equipped classroom and laboratory space. Available equipment includes microscopes, centrifuges, balances, freezers, refrigerators, an ultracold freezer, incubators, drying ovens, a fume hood, autoclave, mesocosms and several boats. Some housing is available for researchers, and there is also a dining hall, library and computers with internet connections. Although course offerings vary, typical classes include field parasitology, ornithology, limnology, ecology and evolution, field animal behavior, studies of reptiles and fish, grasslands and botany. [www.unl.edu/resources/6-25]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-25](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-25)

### ***Capstone Courses in Journalism and Mass Communications***

Capstone courses in each sequence of the College of Journalism and Mass Communications reflect the college's student learning focus. These courses provide experiences that broaden understanding of cultural values among various audiences and help students professionalize their skills.

The depth reporting class helps students in the news-editorial sequence hone their reporting, editing and design skills. Topics have included a 125th anniversary look at the Battle of Little Big Horn, a study of obesity and the links between the food industry and human health, Cuba, Franco-American relations, post-tsunami Sri Lanka, post-Katrina New Orleans, the Platte River and water issues in Nebraska, and American bison. Some classes go overseas to complete their reporting (Cuba, France, Sri Lanka). Magazines are designed and published and film documentaries also are made (the Cuba documentary was a finalist in the Student Academy Awards competition). The capstone class in advertising campaigns has groups of students assigned to help real clients develop ad campaigns, brand launch or other projects. Clients have included the National Arbor Day Foundation, Downtown Lincoln Association, the Nebraska state quarter launch, the Nebraska Commission on the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial and others. Students in broadcasting produce a weekly newscast that airs on Lincoln's cable television network. Planning for these experiences begins up to a year before the students enroll. Because the course enrollments are limited, students develop a deep camaraderie and sense of teamwork during the course.



### ***NU Paths***

NU Paths is a highly selective scholarship cooperative program between UNL and the University of Nebraska Medical Center. The program seeks to attract academically talented students to the university who demonstrate, through life experiences and personal motivation, a desire to become health care professionals who will serve persons in need of health care who are economically or socially disadvantaged. NU Paths students receive guaranteed acceptance to their selected UNMC health professional program as long as the NU Paths program standards are met. Students follow a specific curriculum that will prepare them for the professional program at UNMC. At UNL, the program is affiliated with the Office of Undergraduate Studies. [www.unl.edu/resources/6-26]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-26](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-26)

### ***UNL Learning Communities***

UNL Learning Communities are small groups of first-year students who share similar intellectual interests, are co-enrolled in two or three classes, live together in a residence hall and are guided by a mentor from the sponsoring academic unit. In existence since 1999, learning communities have been well received by incoming students and academic units. The UNL Learning Communities program is administered by the Office of Undergraduate Studies in partnership with the Division of Housing.

Our assessment of learning communities through focus groups, analyses of retention data and the NSSE data indicates that learning communities are accomplishing their purpose of helping students make the transition to college. We are now working to ensure that learning communities offer students a community that builds upon and enhances their intellectual and academic experiences. Learning communities provide first-year students the opportunity to first observe and then become legitimate participants in the learning environment. Through carefully designed initial interactions, coupled with adequate support, the student grows in stature and capacity from passive recipient to an actively engaged learner. Lessons of community, cooperation and responsibility form the foundation for learning through interaction.

In academic year 2005–06, learning communities were organized for biology, business administration, criminal justice, engineering, general studies, Joint ROTC, mass media perspective, music, natural resources and nursing. For more information, see [www.unl.edu/resources/6-27].

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-27](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-27)

### ***Scholars Communities***

“Second generation” learning communities, called Scholars Communities, have been developed to create and maintain the overall goals of academic engagement and adjustment to campus while broadening the populations served. A Scholars Community differs from a residential learning community in that it is generally interdisciplinary, by invitation, and offered by one or more colleges.

The sections below describe the current, active UNL Scholars Communities.

### ***CEHS Advantage***

The CEHS Advantage scholars community is provided for students of the College of Education

and Human Sciences. Programs of study associated with this community range from teacher preparation to textiles to nutrition and athletic training to developing strong families. Students in this invited community study with others who share the college's vision of academic excellence, commitment and professional success. The overarching goal of the community is to develop engaged, successful graduates by building professional and ethical competence into career development. College of Education and Human Sciences programs provide the knowledge and job-specific competency needed. Each student engages in focused coursework that enhances his or her skills and talents while developing professional skills universally sought by employers — problem solving, teamwork, leadership, creativity and communication. Classes support both academic requirements and professional development.

### ***E.N. Thompson International Scholars***

Working closely with the E.N. Thompson Forum on World Issues, this community is designed to provide talented students from all disciplines with an opportunity to explore world issues, engage in community service and begin grappling with the complexity of being a global citizen. Thompson Scholars are challenged through honors-level coursework, thoughtful dialogue and experience with students around the world via real-time global classrooms.

### ***Justin Smith Morrill Scholars***

Justin Smith Morrill Scholars are high-ability students with an interest in advancing the public good through social and civic responsibility. These scholars have double major/dual degree programs with the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and the College of Arts and Sciences. Students in this community value the process of discovering, applying and evaluating knowledge. They are committed to becoming responsible, independent citizens who are intellectually curious, articulate, confident and resourceful. Selection for this community is a competitive process.

### ***Melvin W. Jones Scholars***

This community is a legacy to the late Melvin Jones, a vice chancellor whose life exemplified leadership, civic engagement and integrity. Jones Scholars focus on the development of leadership, academic excellence, and serving others. Open to all students, this community is aligned with the university's goals of recruiting and retaining a diverse student body.

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-28](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-28)

For more information on UNL Scholars Communities see [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-28](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-28)].

### ***Service Learning***

UNL is the host for the Midwest Consortium for Service-Learning in Higher Education. The Nebraska Consortium for Service-Learning in Higher Education received its first grant from Learn and Serve America in 1997. Beginning with five member institutions, the consortium now consists of 20 institutions. With the addition of the University of South Dakota in 2002, the consortium dropped Nebraska from its name and became the Midwest Consortium for Service-Learning in Higher Education. More than 200 faculty members have rewritten their curricula to include service-learning experiences, member institutions have improved infrastructure, cross-campus dialogue about service-learning has increased and member institutions have developed programs that have received national attention.

### **Practicum, Internships, and Field Experiences**

More than half of UNL seniors (55 percent) indicated on NSSE questionnaires that they have participated in a “practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience or clinical assignment.” Some specific groups have differing rates. For example, 100 percent of students in the College of Education and Human Sciences complete one or more practicum experiences. In 2004-05, 332 students in the College of Arts and Sciences (of a total of 4,151) were involved in such experiences for credit. In 2004-05, 38 percent of students in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Sciences had such experiences. Through the Kauffman Entrepreneur Internship Program in the College of Business Administration, more than 120 entrepreneur interns were placed in small, high growth potential businesses and new social organizations during the past four years.

Table 6.3 shows internship data from academic year 2003-04, the latest data available. That year, 764 internships or co-ops completed by 457 individuals in 358 organizations were reported to Career Services. This data may not be fully accurate, as some internships and co-ops are not reported and they only include students registered for courses titled “internship” (e.g., students doing student teaching are not included in this table).

### **NU Start**

NU Start is a unique residential program open only to incoming university freshmen. NU Start gives incoming freshmen a chance to begin their university studies, make friends and meet faculty when the atmosphere of the campus is more relaxed, occurring during the three weeks before the fall term begins. The program includes activities and experiences that encourage students to interact with each other while learning to manage the new-found freedom and independence of college life, such as:

- Earning four credit hours that fulfill university general education requirements;
- Participating in small, informal classes with hands-on computer applications;
- Becoming a university student prepared to succeed when the fall semester begins;
- Discovering what university professors expect of students;
- Exploring the campus, computer laboratories, library resources, the writing assistance center, advising offices, the campus recreation center, museums, theaters and galleries;
- Living in a university residence hall with other NU Start students;
- Learning to manage free time and study hours; and
- Building leadership and team-working skills.

NU Start is affiliated with the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

Table 6.3 UNL Internships/Co-ops by College  
(AY 2003-04)

110	Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources
12	Architecture
116	Arts and Sciences
191	Business Administration
50	Education and Human Sciences
197	Engineering
13	Fine and Performing Arts
3	General Studies
5	Graduate Studies
17	Journalism and Mass Communications
50	Public Affairs and Community Service (program administered by UNO)

### ***Office of Academic Support and Intercultural Services (OASIS)***

OASIS supports all UNL students, although it places an emphasis on supporting students of color. OASIS provides students of color and minority student organizations an opportunity to be in a familiar environment and provides student staff and program coordinators with a thorough knowledge of the special needs of students of color on a predominantly white campus. OASIS was created on Aug. 1, 2003, through the amalgamation of three different programs: the Minority Assistance Program, the Office of Student Involvement for Minority Programs and the UNL Culture Center. OASIS is affiliated with the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

The OASIS vision is to facilitate a supportive environment for students with an emphasis on students of color; to promote cultural and educational programs that celebrate, embrace and enhance students' learning experiences; and to establish links between students, faculty and staff in organizing, developing and participating in programs and services that promote the recruitment and retention of students of color. The OASIS mission is to provide services and programs that foster the intellectual, cultural, social and moral development of students, and to create opportunities for students to increase their involvement in academic endeavors that support their successful matriculation to graduation in preparation for enlightened, responsible membership in society.

OASIS programs include the services described below:

- *The Academic Support Series*—a series of study skills and motivational workshops designed to support various areas of student development.
- *Students Taking Academic Control (STAC)*—set up to help monitor the academic progress of each student served by OASIS. First-time academic probation students are contacted to discuss available services. STAC students are urged to commit to two hours of study time for every hour in class. It is recommended that STAC students spend at least six hours per week in the NU Connections Success Lab where tutoring is available. OASIS Program Coordinators are available to them for consultation on academic, social or personal issues.
- *NU Connections*—a mentoring and social support program that provides first-year undergraduate students of color, and Nebraska Achievement, Davis, Heritage, Larson Gupta and Summer Institute for Promising Scholars Scholarship students with a support system consisting of a connection with a family of mentors, student peers and a connection to NU resources.

OASIS also sponsors a number of intercultural and co-curricular programs to celebrate and recognize cultural diversity and experiences. [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-29](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-29)]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-29](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-29)

### ***Summer Institute for Promising Scholars***

The Summer Institute for Promising Scholars is a six-week, summer bridging residential program for high school seniors who will be attending the university in the upcoming fall semester. The program is designed to facilitate a smooth and successful transition to university life for students who bring diversity to the freshman class. It is sponsored by the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

Courses taken during this program are official, count toward the students' fall-term GPA and are recorded on the college transcript. As a part of each course, strategies are covered to solidify each student's ability to be successful in university level-classes. Courses include English composition and mathematics.

Social and cultural experiences are incorporated into the summer schedule, such as weekly forums to acquaint students with the university environment.

Summer Institute for Promising Scholars participants are required to participate in community service activity in Lincoln. This experience offers the scholars meaningful relationships with community members and creates a sense of pride and responsibility.

Each scholar is employed by a university office or department that has committed to provide a meaningful work experience. Students work 8-10 hours each week for \$5.65 an hour. Participants receive a scholarship award that covers summer tuition, fees, room and board, plus books. Upon successful completion of the SIPS program, students who enroll full-time the following academic year at UNL are awarded a \$1,000 scholarship, \$500 each semester.

Selection criteria include being a member of an underrepresented racial or ethnic group, life experiences growing up in an economically disadvantaged condition, first student from family to attend college, life experiences in a culturally diverse neighborhood or community, demonstrated strong academic potential, and leadership and community service experiences in the school or community.

### ***Other Departmental and College Special Learning Programs***

In addition to the teaching and learning programs described above, several colleges and departments have developed special programs and activities to make the university a "smaller place" for students. Activities and amenities include:

- Social events for students (e.g., picnics, ice cream socials, pancake feeds, attending opening night performances of arts productions, fun runs, College of Law Bocce Ball tournament)
- Student projects (e.g., annual student art exhibition, student research fairs and poster sessions)
- Group study carrels in the Library

- Rooms for student informal gatherings (e.g., for poetry readings)
- Service learning projects (Red in Motion project at St. Elizabeth Regional Medical Center; Pro Bono Initiative of the College of Law; work with immigrants through the Psychology of Immigration class; ALEC 397 – “Service-Learning in the Animal Sciences”; Criminal Clinic in the College of Law; Christ Temple Church Renovation by students in CNST 405 and 490; Reading Clinic for the community staffed by students in the College of Education and Human Sciences)
- Mentoring programs (e.g., College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources’ Dean’s Scholars for Experiential Leadership program; Women’s Undergraduate Math Network; the Latino Achievement Mentoring Program; Public Relations Society of America Student Chapter Professional Mentors program in College of Journalism and Mass Communications)
- Special summer school courses (e.g. courses at Cedar Point Biological Station, summer reading courses, world campus program)
- Contact with students before they arrive on campus
- Department clubs and events (e.g., Classics department sing-alongs in Latin, Shakespeare’s birthday readings, James Joyce readings, public readings of the Iliad and Odyssey)
- Working with faculty outside of course activities (NSSE data: 30 percent of seniors indicated that they had “worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements” and seniors gave a rating of 1.9 [2= “sometimes”] on the statement “worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework.” Both of these frequencies were statistically significantly higher than frequencies reported by other doctoral extensive universities)
- Student advisory boards of many different types ensure that the student voice is heard (e.g., the College of Journalism started a mentoring program as a result of input from its advisory board)

### ***National Recognition of the Quality of Learning Environments at UNL***

In December of 2000, UNL was one of 16 colleges and universities recognized by the Association of American Colleges and Universities for visionary campus-wide innovations in undergraduate education. A team from the AAC&U visited UNL for two days in November 1999 as part of its judging process of 73 campuses. In an announcement in December, UNL was lauded by AAC&U for demonstrating “strong commitment to a liberal education relevant for the contemporary world,” according to Andrea Leskes, then the vice president of AAC&U.

AAC&U stated that the schools selected were characterized by extensive innovation in curriculum, pedagogy and organizational structure. At each of the 16 institutions, the campus culture was deemed to support undergraduates within and outside the classroom, provide opportunities to “learn by doing,” emphasize critical thinking about complex problems, promote effective

communication and the ability to contribute to a diverse society as an outcome of powerfully lasting undergraduate education. (See [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-30](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-30)]).

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-30](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-30)

In follow up to this recognition, UNL has become a partner campus with the Association of American Colleges and Universities in its Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Campaign. This campaign champions the value of a liberal education—for individual students and for a nation dependent on economic creativity and democratic vitality. UNL's LEAP efforts are coordinated with our reform of general education.

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***Fulfillment of Core Component 3c:** To meet the special learning interests of the wide variety of students who attend UNL, a range of noteworthy programs and learning environments has been developed. Special attention is given to providing students with opportunities for research experiences and to apply what they are learning in practical settings through field experiences. Several types of residential learning programs are available to students who wish to take advantage of the learning dynamics they provide. The quality of the learning environment at UNL has been recognized nationally by the American Association of Colleges and Universities.*

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### **Core Component 3d.**

*The organization's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.*

UNL's learning resources are multiple, ensuring student access to various sites for special support, practice and research. Program review and established college and departmental procedures assure that these services are monitored for effectiveness. UNL is continuously working to improve and enhance instructional spaces in the performing arts, engineering and the sciences, an effort that is too extensive to elaborate appropriately here. For information on capital planning in this area, see Chapter 5 and the Virtual Resource Room [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-31](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-31)]. We have detailed in the sections below just a few of the ways that UNL supports student learning and effective teaching through general services and facilities; they include:

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-31](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-31)

- University Libraries Services,
- Academic Support Services,
- Attention to Class Size,
- Support for Student Advising,
- Mid-semester Check,
- Instructional Technology in General Purpose Classrooms, and
- Systematic Adoption of New Instructional Technology/Software.

### ***University Libraries Services***

The University Libraries consist of Don L. Love Memorial Library and six branch libraries Architecture, C.Y. Thompson, Engineering, Geology, Mathematics and Music — and the Marvin and Virginia Schmid Law Library. The University Libraries have a collection of more than 2.9 million print volumes and more than 35,000 current serial subscriptions. Through the Libraries website, faculty, staff, and students can access more than 20,000 electronic journals, books, indexes and abstract services. In summer 2006, UNL Libraries learned it had moved up to number 66 in the Association of Research Libraries' index for 2004-05. Previously ranked 85 out of 113, the upward movement reflects the impact of new funding available to the libraries through the student credit hour fee and the support of student government (ASUN). The new funding allowed the libraries to add resources, serials, online databases and staff.

UNL's Libraries are a primary gateway to information resources and are fully integrated into the university's teaching, research and outreach missions. The Libraries accomplish these missions through an infrastructure of technology, facilities and personal assistance that support a commitment to timely, equitable, seamless service for students and faculty irrespective of the information source. At the core of library service to students is an information literate library

faculty and support staff providing in-depth assistance for accessing, delivery and creation of knowledge. Within a dynamic environment, the Libraries strives to maintain a pluralistic, highly qualified staff committed to excellent service, continuous learning, and the values of the education experience.

The University Libraries serves the information literacy needs of UNL students by providing a variety of instructional services based upon the belief that information seeking is an essential skill for life-long learning, which can be learned and improved throughout a person's educational and professional career. The Libraries work with teaching faculty to foster the application of research into instruction. The Libraries also incorporate research from library and information science and other disciplines that study user behavior into the design of our instructional programs. Collaborations include co-

teaching classes and partnering Library 110, Introduction to Library Research, with core courses. Library 110 is a one-credit course in library use and is required for most incoming freshmen and transfer students. Course objectives include enabling students to: locate library service points and materials, generate terms appropriate to specific research, refine search strategies and identify the most useful resources for specific research needs. The Library 110 curriculum has been revised based on research on how students seek information to build the skills that students need to effectively use scholarly information; it specifically addresses issues of assessing electronic information and websites and issues of plagiarism.



Love Memorial Library

Liaison librarians provide specialized instruction in the use of resources tailored to particular disciplines and are available to provide instruction either in the libraries or in classrooms, addressing numerous skills from identifying useful resources to searching electronic databases. Subject-specific instruction ranges from a class period devoted to learning about indexes, abstracts and other resources for an upper level undergraduate class to an in-depth presentation to graduate students of new electronic databases in their field. In addition, the Libraries provide general orientation tours, transfer student tours and international student orientation tours.

By continuing to enhance its services to meet the needs of a digital age, the Libraries provide user-centered support for research and creative activities by our students and faculty that meet the needs of a new generation. In addition to computers in the Libraries, students may check out laptop computers for use anywhere in our buildings using the campus wireless network. New services include the digital learning librarian program for access to multimedia resources; expanded online (chat) reference services through consortial arrangements; and enhanced document delivery services, for students and faculty, both on campus and off campus. Currently, more than 62 percent of the searches each week on the library system come from outside our library buildings. We continually assess new technologies, based on user needs, for application in the Libraries.

Student surveys, Library 110 evaluations, the LibQUAL+ survey and focus groups help provide data to inform our decisions on how to remain student-centered. The Libraries are developing more seamless and secure access to digital content through the Libraries website (IRIS) and Blackboard, and have recently implemented a single sign-on from Blackboard to the Library system's licensed databases. The Libraries will also continue to enhance search tools, providing students with the capability of searching across multiple resources, including Google, with one search. [www.unl/resources/6-32]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-32](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-32)

### ***Academic Support Services***

UNL offers a great variety of special academic support services and opportunities for students. Students are made aware of these services during New Student Enrollment and through contacts with faculty and advisers. A partial list includes the following:

- *Career Development Course (Educational Psychology 150 A/B)*. This course assists students in preparing for a career in which they can succeed, providing opportunity for self-assessment and career information. Students examine the relationship between the two. Active exploration, examination and pursuit of career possibilities and their relationship to the individual are emphasized.
- *College-level Activities*. A number of college-level systems provide early advising intervention for students. Examples include programs in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR Cares) and the College of Education and Human Sciences.
- *Chemistry Resource Room*. This on-line resource offers information for students about a variety of chemistry courses. (See [www.unl.edu/resources/6-33]).
- *Computer Science and Engineering Resource Room*. The CSE Student Resource Center, located in Avery 13A, is available to help resolve student problems related to their

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-33](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-33)

academic work. Resource Center Assistants serve as liaisons between students and their undergraduate advisers and their faculty instructors. They serve as role models for other CSE students and are advocates for department activities, student groups and services. SRC Assistants are also responsible for providing technical support to students, including launching programs and printer, login and other problems. In addition, they provide general homework help, with topics such as giving tips on debugging a program, helping with syntax problems and how to use various e-mail programs. [www.unl.edu/resources/6-34]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-34](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-34)

- *Engineering Mechanics Instructional Laboratory.* This laboratory provides tutoring help for students in the following courses: ENGM 220 Statics, ENGM 324 Strength of Materials, ENGM 223 Engineering Statics, ENGM 325 Mechanics of Elastic Bodies and ENGM 373 Engineering Dynamics. [www.unl.edu/resources/6-35]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-35](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-35)

- *Instructional Design Center.* The Instructional Design Center provides a wide range of technology services to faculty and students. Students can go there to develop materials for class assignments and to get assistance in using a variety of forms of technology in their work.

- *Math Resource Center.* The newly renovated Mathematics Resource Center in Avery 13B is the primary facility for undergraduate students who have questions related to any precalculus or calculus course offered by the department. Students can ask for assistance with the following math courses: 100A, 101, 102, 103, 104, 106, 107, and 108H. The center is staffed by graduate teaching assistants and by undergraduate math majors hired specifically for the center. [www.unl.edu/resources/6-36]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-36](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-36)

- *Modern Languages and Literature Tutoring Center.* This center offers tutoring in all the languages taught at UNL.

- *Services for Students with Disabilities.* Services for Students with Disabilities, located in 132 Canfield Administration Building, provides special assistance to students with disabilities through individualized help and counseling. Services include interpreting and real-time captioning, transportation and parking, housing, technological assistance and advocacy. [www.unl.edu/resources/6-37]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-37](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-37)

- *Statistics Support.* The Department of Statistics' Statistics Support program offers tutoring and other aids to students, online or via the telephone. [www.unl.edu/resources/6-38]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-38](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-38)

- *STAR Center (Advising).* The Satellite Tutoring and Advising Resources Center is a joint effort between the Office of Undergraduate Studies and Housing to provide walk-in academic advising and tutoring services to students within the residence hall environment. [www.unl.edu/resources/6-39]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-39](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-39)

- *Student Support Services (TRIO Programs).* The TRIO programs serve students who might otherwise be denied access to post-secondary education. There are six types of TRIO Programs in operation at UNL: Upward Bound, Talent Search, Student

Support Services, Education Opportunity Centers, Ronald McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program and Upward Bound Math/Science. [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-40](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-40)]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-40](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-40)

- *Study Skills Classes (Educational Psychology 109 and 209)*. These courses focus on application of ideas from educational psychology to improve students' learning ability in academic and applied settings. The courses help develop learning strategies related to motivation, time management, memory, lecture note taking, text processing, knowledge representation, test review, test taking and error analysis.
- *Undergraduate Teaching Assistance Corps/Supplemental Instruction*. Based upon the successful UCARE model (see Core Component 3c above), undergraduate students have the opportunity to assist in teaching along with a sponsoring faculty member from a large, entry-level class; be exposed to the scholarship of teaching; and be a supplemental instruction mentor. Administered by the Office of Undergraduate Studies, Supplemental Instruction is a non-remedial, institution-wide approach to retention, providing academic assistance that increases student performance and retention. The Supplemental Instruction program targets traditionally difficult academic courses — those where a high percentage of students receive D or F grades or withdraw — and provides regularly scheduled, out-of-class, peer-facilitated sessions. Thus Supplemental Instruction does not identify high-risk students, but rather identifies high-risk courses. Students who choose to attend Supplemental Instruction sessions earn higher course grades and withdraw less often than students who choose not to attend those sessions. Data also demonstrates higher re-enrollment and graduation rates for these students. [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-41](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-41)]
- *Writing Assistance for CBA Students*. The E.J. Faulkner Small Group Writing Lab is designed to help College of Business Administration faculty incorporate language instruction into selected courses. [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-42](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-42)]
- *Writing Assistance Center (English Department)*. Associated with the English Department, the Writing Assistance Center is a space for UNL students, faculty, and staff to work on their writing with experienced teachers. The center is a free service for all members of the UNL community. The principal facility is located in 129 Andrews Hall, with a satellite center, which offers evening hours, in Sandoz Residence Hall. The center assists writers in any stage of the writing process: exploring ideas and getting started, drafting, rewriting, revising, documenting and citing sources and editing. The center works with writers from all disciplines and can help with a variety of projects such as letters of application, resumes and cover letters, business writing and creative writing. More than a “proofreading” service, the center staff welcomes the opportunity to work with writers on grammatical and mechanical concepts and teaches writers to gain skills in proofreading and editing their own writing. [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-43](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-43)]

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-41](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-41)

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-42](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-42)

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-43](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-43)

**Attention to Class Size**

UNL regularly assesses class size relative to our regental institutional peers (see Core Component 2c, Chapter 5). As Table 6.4 shows, in AY 2005 (using sixth-day census data collected in fall 2004), fewer than 15 percent of UNL's classes are above 50 students and we have fewer of these large classes than seven of our peers. Table 6.5 shows that in AY 2005 we have reported more classes under 20 students than three of our peers.

Table 6.4 Percent of UNL Classes with 50 or More Students Compared to Peers (Fall semester 1998-2004) (Source: U.S. News and World Report)

SCHOOL	FALL 1998	FALL 1999	FALL 2000	FALL 2001	FALL 2002	FALL 2003	FALL 2004
University of Iowa	9%	10%	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%
University of Kansas	11%	10%	10%	10%	10%	12%	13%
Univ. of Missouri - Columbia	22%	10%	11%	10%	11%	12%	14%
<b>Univ. of Nebraska - Lincoln</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>
Univ. of Minnesota - Twin Cities	13%	17%	16%	18%	17%	15%	16%
University of Colorado - Boulder	16%	15%	14%	16%	16%	17%	16%
Ohio State University - Columbus	17%	17%	17%	17%	18%	18%	17%
Colorado State University	20%	18%	17%	18%	18%	16%	18%
Purdue Univ. - West Lafayette (IN)	16%	17%	18%	17%	16%	19%	19%
Iowa State University	18%	17%	19%	21%	21%	19%	20%
Univ. of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign	17%	18%	18%	19%	18%	11%	20%

Table. 6.5 Percent of UNL Classes with 20 or Fewer Students Compared to Peers (Fall semester, 1998-2004) (Source: U.S. News and World Report)

SCHOOL	FALL 1998	FALL 1999	FALL 2000	FALL 2001	FALL 2002	FALL 2003	FALL 2004
University of Iowa	44%	48%	45%	46%	47%	46%	49%
University of Colorado - Boulder	45%	45%	46%	48%	46%	43%	45%
Univ. of Minnesota - Twin Cities	60%	51%	53%	47%	42%	50%	44%
Univ. of Missouri - Columbia	25%	54%	52%	56%	52%	51%	44%
Ohio State University - Columbus	41%	43%	45%	44%	44%	43%	43%
Colorado State University	30%	36%	39%	39%	39%	35%	37%
Purdue Univ. - West Lafayette (IN)	38%	36%	32%	36%	36%	36%	36%
<b>Univ. of Nebraska - Lincoln</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>34%</b>
Iowa State University	32%	37%	36%	33%	35%	35%	33%
Univ. of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign	29%	29%	32%	30%	30%	38%	33%
University of Kansas	42%	43%	40%	42%	42%	29%	32%

### ***Support for Student Advising***

Student surveys have indicated a desire for more advising, both for academic and “life issues,” and this has led the colleges within UNL to invest more heavily in advising centers. An example of such a college program is the “Advisor Advantage” program in the College of Agriculture Sciences and Natural Resources. That college sponsors “Advisor Advantage” each fall for freshmen students. The event occurs at the end of the first week of classes and serves as a procedural, academic and social check point for students. Initially, students attend a general session led by the college Dean’s Office. Students are given an overview of information that will help them successfully navigate the university system. The overview is followed by a question and answer period. The students then divide up according to majors allowing students to meet with their academic advisers for individual or group advising. Advisers review class schedules with students and answer questions, and in general, strengthen their personal connections with students.

## Interest Sessions for 2005 Mid-semester Check

### Finding A Major Right For Me Larry Routh/Jake Kirkland

Do any of these statements describe you?  
I picked a major but now I am not sure it's right for me. I want to find a major that fits my career goal. I don't have a major or career goal. Come to our session to see how you can find answers to your academic and career concerns.

### Surviving College Math Cheryl Kane

This session will cover: General expectations of an "entry-level" course, how to study for exams, how to know when you're "in trouble," where to find help when you need it and how to combat test anxiety.

### Research - Just do it! Laura Damuth

Find out how you can be a part of faculty research at UNL. Through the UCARE program, you can work alongside faculty on their research or creative activities. Find out about opportunities to extend your learning outside of the classroom and learn more about what faculty do besides teach!

### Study Abroad? Me? Christa Joy

Hear a lively and informative presentation from students who have expanded their horizons by studying abroad. Where did they go? Why did they do it? How you can do it too. UNL International Affairs offers study abroad programs in countries all over the world from two weeks to a full semester or year. Come learn more about it.

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Professional advising centers exist in most UNL colleges. These centers provide information to students in person and online. Advisers are available throughout the day for student consultation on either a walk-in or appointment basis. As covered in our discussion of Core Component 3b above, a focus of the second year of the Initiative for Teaching and Learning Excellence grants was improved advising. Grants in the "Advising for Life" category, ranging in size from \$5,000 to \$25,000 each, were distributed to colleges to help faculty and staff reform advising to clarify and simplify program requirements, increase faculty-student contact, and emphasize advising beyond academics.

### **Mid-semester Check**

In response to student surveys, the Office of Undergraduate Studies in fall 2004 implemented an innovative program: Mid-semester Check. Targeting first-year and entering transfer students, Mid-semester Check occurs in late September prior to most mid-term exams. The purpose is to highlight and remind students of academic expectations and provide general information on advising resources. New for 2006 will be sessions on financial responsibilities and credit card use.

Students are invited to attend sessions in the Nebraska Union taught by faculty and student affairs professionals. The first year, some 800 students attended. Two identical sessions convened on successive evenings. The second year attracted 1,500 students to the two sessions. Because of the popularity and growth of the program, four sessions are scheduled for 2006: Sept. 18-21.

In 2005, the colleges with first-year orientation courses, the residence hall resident assistants, Greek chapter scholarship chairs, the Athletic Department and the OASIS staff were instrumental to the event's success by escorting their first-year and new-transfer students to one evening's events. In 2006, faculty who teach 100-(entry) level courses were asked to note this event in their course syllabi.

### **Instructional Technology for General Purpose Classrooms**

UNL Facilities Management is responsible for the installation and maintenance of basic teaching tools found in general purpose classrooms, that is, classrooms available for general scheduling and not designated for use by a specific department or program.

The current (second) generation of general purpose classroom technology incorporates computers as well as digital multimedia capabilities, producing a more complex and more powerful presentation environment. The first media-rich general purpose classrooms came into use in AY 1993-94, and the number has been expanded each year since then. In new buildings (e.g., Othmer, Ross/Van Brunt) they have been built from scratch, while in older buildings (e.g., Burnett, Henzlik) they have been retrofitted. In order to achieve the greatest impact as measured by the number of students taught in a media-rich environment, the large lecture halls were targeted in the initial years of this effort. In some cases, UNL colleges or departments have taken their own initiative to equip general purpose classrooms that are heavily used by their faculty so that these classrooms function similarly to the media-rich classrooms supported by Information Services. The university's annual investment of state funds in general purpose classroom equipment and support has increased to \$466,835 in FY 2005, from \$57,622 in FY 1997, a 710 percent increase.

After the first few years of supporting media-rich classrooms and receiving feedback from instructors, Information Services developed a set of design standards for these rooms. The design standards are categorized by seating capacity.

To assure that general purpose classrooms are always well-equipped and are in sufficient number, the Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs sponsors the General Purpose Classroom Advisory Committee. This committee initially approved equipment lists and service expectations for general purpose classrooms in spring 2002 (See Figures 6.9 and 6.10). Current design standards can be found in Section DG00170 of the UNL Design Guidelines for Facilities Construction (February 2003). Revisions of the standards proposed by Information Services in spring 2005 are pending approval. Facilities Management is responsible for enforcing facilities design standards at UNL. For more information, see [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-44](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-44)]. In supported rooms, the Instructional Technology Group cooperates with UNL Facilities Management to replenish supplies such as overhead and slide projector lamps.

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-44](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-44)

Figure 6.9 Checklist of Equipment for Small Classrooms or Seminar Rooms

1. **Dual computer platforms—(Macintosh and PC) connected to the campus network and the Internet.**
2. **Video projector**
3. **Document camera**
4. **Videocassette recorder/player**
5. **CD player/DVD player (may be installed in computer)**
6. **Audio system**
7. **Closed captioning decoder**
8. **Software including: current operating system with any maintenance or service patches installed, Microsoft Office suite and web browsers. The classroom support team will install specialized software if a department maintains a current software license and the software does not conflict with the standard installation.**
9. **Teaching station with necessary equipment such as keyboards, mice, and remote controls within easy reach.**

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## **Mid-semester Check Sessions**

### **Finding Success in the Large Classroom: Understanding the View**

**C.W. McLaughlin**

Have you ever sat through a large class and wondered what the professor had covered? This session will help you identify strategies to focus on the faculty's message. See what you can do to make the large classroom experience meaningful, interesting and successful.

### **University Honor Societies**

**Michelle Howell**

What are the steps you should take as a new student to achieve membership in one of the top honoraries for UNL students? Learn from present members so you can develop a plan.

### **The Next Step: Spring Semester**

**Don Gregory**

Advisers will be present to answer your questions and provide advice on what to do next to ensure you are on the track toward a timely graduation and meeting your career objectives. Your questions about spring semester advising and class registration will be answered and tips provided for a successful working relationship with your adviser.

### **Academic Success**

**Cal Garbin**

What steps do you need to take to achieve your goals at UNL? Identify strategies necessary for success as you manage your new academic demands. How do you put it all together: study skills, time management, note taking and test taking? This session will help you develop a plan for success.

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## Mid-Semester Check Sessions

### Writing for College

#### Heather Camp

This session will provide some general advice to first-year students for making a successful transition from writing for high school to writing for college. It will also provide information about how to get assistance with writing on campus.

### Time Management

#### Ann Koopmann

There are specific tools you can use to help manage your everyday tasks successfully. Planning projects and papers to fill in with your exams will even out the work load and result in a more meaningful approach to college.

### Tools for Success: Using Blackboard

#### Ron Roeber/Paul Erickson

Blackboard is a communication tool used by many faculty at UNL. This session will provide you with ideas to use Blackboard to its fullest. Discussion threads, group projects, digital drop boxes, taking exams and communicating with professors will be included in this presentation.

### Academic Opportunities & Support

#### Rita Kean

How to move from high school to college successfully using the academic resources available will be the focus of the session. Resource Rooms, Supplemental Instruction and OASIS's Success Lab will be described along with the attitude to excel.

Figure 6.10 Checklist of Equipment for Large Classrooms or Lecture Halls

1. Dual computer platforms--(Macintosh and PC) connected to the campus network and the Internet.
2. Document camera
3. Videocassette recorder/player
4. DVD player
5. CD player
6. Laserdisc player
7. Wireless microphone
8. Audio system
9. Video switcher
10. Room automation system to control projection, screen, audio/video systems and room lighting. Equipment is controlled using a touch panel located on the instructor's desk.
11. Video projection
12. 35mm slide projector
13. Hearing assistance devices
14. Closed captioning decoder
15. Local phone service
16. Software including: current operating system with maintenance or service patches installed, Microsoft Office suite and web browsers. The classroom support team will install specialized software if a department maintains a current software license and the software does not conflict with the standard installation.
17. Teaching station with necessary equipment such as keyboards, mice and remote controls within easy reach.
18. Installation may also include closed-circuit television.

## ***Systematic Adoption of New Instructional Technology/ Software***

Through the cooperative efforts of the Office of Academic Affairs and the Instructional Technology Group of Information Services (see sidebar), UNL now has in place processes for systematically reviewing the need for new instructional technologies or software that are adopted campus-wide. Systems that have been currently under review include a software program for identifying plagiarism, a possible campus-wide on-line student course evaluation program, and the PEARL program for assisting in developing student learning outcomes for academic programs (see Core Component 3a above). We described below two learning resources, involving new technologies/software adopted campus-wide, that have helped improve teaching effectiveness: the Blackboard Course Management System and the “Clicker” Audience Response System.

### ***Blackboard Course Management System***

All UNL courses are now on the Blackboard course management system. This system supports an array of communications and course support tools from which faculty can select. The system supports posting course materials such as syllabi, assignments, required texts and course content. Other tools include class-threaded discussion, e-mail, testing and record-keeping tools.

The UNL Blackboard system automatically generates a link with these tools for every course offered on campus. Each semester, faculty make use of Blackboard’s tool sets in one-third to two-thirds of UNL courses. Student government surveys indicate nearly 95 percent of undergraduates are regular users of the Blackboard system each semester.

### ***“Clicker” Audience Response System***

UNL has adopted for classroom and other uses an audience response system, sometimes called a “clicker system.” UNL has purchased InterWrite PRS — a comprehensive response system for electronically testing, polling and surveying a group of people. Grounded in the terminology of the academic environment for which it was originally developed, the arena of Audience Response Systems, the InterWrite Personal Response System makes it possible to easily track and record each individual response coming in from the audience and to provide instant feedback about the response results in the form of a graph or chart of the response distribution.

Response data are scored and recorded in electronic gradebooks. PRS also has a comprehensive reporting capability that allows faculty to print out information from just about anywhere in the PRS system. The PRS software creates an environment whereby transmitted response data from those in the audience, for instance, students in a classroom, can be electronically converted quickly and easily into useful response information that can be displayed for all to see. Instructors at all education levels can use the system to evaluate and test their students. The PRS system also can be used to survey and electronically record preferences, opinions and votes. The InterWrite PRS system can be used in any situation where there is a need to gather, record and evaluate response data.

## **Instructional Technology Group**

The Instructional Technology Group works to create a strong link between technology and pedagogy at UNL. Its mission is to develop, promote and support the use of technology for teaching and learning.

Among its projects are:

- encouraging faculty to experiment with using technology to enhance learning;
- supporting faculty and staff in creating and implementing interactive multimedia projects through the New Media Center;
- supporting the MyUNL (Blackboard) initiative;
- supporting Web services and streaming media;
- supporting video conferencing services;
- planning and conducting faculty/staff technology workshops;
- planning and conducting free student technology training workshops; and
- maintaining, supporting and updating computer labs and multimedia and distance learning classrooms.

An early adopter, chemistry lecturer William McLaughlin, is profiled in an excerpt from this 2005 web-story by University Librarian Kate Adams:

In spring 2004 Bill McLaughlin, senior lecturer and coordinator of general chemistry at University of Nebraska–Lincoln, piloted eInstruction in one of the two sections in his beginning chemistry course. Student test scores in the clicker section jumped above previous scores, at a statistically significant amount. Then during fall semester 2005 he did a one-month pilot study of the InterWrite PRS. McLaughlin asked his students if the university should implement the technology. Nearly 80 percent of the students agreed or strongly agreed that the technology should be used; less favorable responses came from the students who were earning A's and didn't want the class pace to be slowed down. This semester McLaughlin is using the InterWrite PRS. ...

Clicker technology gives the student instant feedback on a question, and offers anonymity compared to the student raising a hand. Clicker data isn't everything — the instructor still needs to scan the students to read puzzled expressions as well as the “aha” moment. Writing effective clicker questions is as essential as creating pedagogically sound multiple choice test questions. The occasional software and hardware glitches can affect the instructor's planned lecture. Overuse of clickers can be as frustrating to students as overuse of Power Point or overhead transparencies of lecture notes. (For the complete article, see [[www.unl.edu/resources/6-45](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-45)]).

[www.unl.edu/resources/6-45](http://www.unl.edu/resources/6-45)

To help faculty members use new instructional technologies more effectively, a variety of workshops, cited earlier in this chapter, are provided to encourage “best practices” in the use of newly adopted technologies and software.

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***Fulfillment of Core Component 3d:*** *A wide variety of specialized support services are available to UNL students and faculty to support student learning and effective teaching. Most student resources provide tutoring in specific content areas or access to materials and technology to support their academic work. The libraries are an important and effective resource for faculty, students and staff. The importance of student advising has been recognized by UNL colleges through the establishment of professional advising centers and encouragement to improve advising is provided by internal grant funding. Considerable attention has been given to upgrading the technology available in classrooms throughout the campus with the result that faculty and students now have up-to-date technology available to them in almost all classrooms, and UNL systematically reviews new technologies and software to support teaching and learning for possible campus-wide adoption.*

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### *Summative Evaluation of UNL's Performance on Criterion 3*

UNL has made considerable progress since 1997 in defining and assessing student learning outcomes for our academic programs. We need to continue to place special emphasis on work in this arena with attention to the development of more direct ways of measuring student learning. Increasingly, our decisions regarding program improvement are being informed by data on student-learning outcomes. And we are working on ways to ensure that the measures of student learning are always clear from the goals and objectives identified and that the ways to apply assessment data to program improvement are certain.

We understand and embrace the adoption of learning outcomes to be central to academic program quality. We have boldly adopted an outcomes-based approach to our review and reform of the UNL general education program. In short, we fully understand that learning is the aim of all teaching and that identifying and verifying learning outcomes is an index of quality teaching. Our efforts to develop appropriate assessment programs will be and should be a continuous work in progress.

UNL has made significant investments in programs to support teaching and learning. Both faculty and students have many sources of help to which they can turn to enhance their work in teaching and learning. We must be certain to continuously assess the effectiveness of these programs and be alert to new ones that may be needed. This is particularly important because students constantly bring new needs, perceptions, goals and experiences to us.

Finally, we need to take a look at how we are using the NSSE data to determine how this program might be a better tool for us. It would also be helpful to look at other tools that may prove valuable for us to use in continuous improvement.

