

Foundations of Excellence

**A Self-Study of the First Year of College at
the University of Central Arkansas**

Final Report

July 2006

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Executive Summary

Introduction

In 2005, the University of Central Arkansas and the Policy Center on the First Year of College entered into an agreement to participate in a self-study of University of Central Arkansas (UCA) programs for first-year college students using the nine dimensions of the Policy Center's Foundations of Excellence (attached). The self-paced study was intended to accomplish the following goals:

- Recognize and affirm a foundation for student success in the first year of college
- Develop action plans to ensure that UCA's approach to assisting students during their first year of college is intentional and effective
- Implement one piece of UCA's *Strategic Framework* (see especially strategic goals 1 and 3)
- Form a significant component of UCA's next application for continuing accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission

Overview of Work and Highlights of Findings

Using the nine foundational dimensions of the Foundations of Excellence program as a model to evaluate the first-year of college programs, the UCA task force charged with completing the self-study reported more than once their documentation that the process for assisting first-year students is both rewarding and successful. Task force members were impressed with the extent, scope, and quality of UCA programs and services already being provided for first-year students. Task force members were pleased to find that "student satisfaction with instruction is very high as indicated in the student survey," and that the bulk of those UCA first-year students who were not in the Honors College and were not in University College reported the highest scores on the survey regarding "having their academic needs met."

Consultants from the Policy Center working with UCA have suggested that these results should be "celebrated and communicated broadly." The Foundations Task Force also found in its review of the first year that the university's mission and *Strategic Framework* support a strong commitment to attracting and retaining a cultural and racial diverse body of students, faculty, and staff (see especially strategic goal 4). Complete findings reported by each subcommittee for the nine dimensions can be found in the Scorecard and Dimension reports.

Although the Task Force members identified strengths and success within UCA's first-year experience, they also reported areas of concern found under each dimension and assigned a letter grade to the university for its performance on each dimension.

PHILOSOPHY (Grade: C)

- Lack of overall campus vision for the first year
- Lack of a written first-year philosophy, recognized and adopted campus wide

ORGANIZATION (Grade: D)

- Lack of designated central leadership/coordination
- Lack of rewards/recognition for active participation by faculty/staff in first year initiatives

LEARNING (Grade: B)

- Lack of generally recognized first-year learning goals
- Failure to assess learning outcomes for the first year

FACULTY (Grade: C)

- Lack of reward system to reward teaching, advising, or interaction with first-year students outside of class
- Lack of faculty expectations about teaching first-year students
- Lack of consistent attention to learning goals for the first year
- Lack of a system to ensure that unit-level administrators encourage their faculty to address learning goals, student characteristics, and significant trends and issues related first-year students

TRANSITIONS (Grade: C+)

- Lack of communication for first-year students on WebPages
- Lack of a program that connects faculty to first-year students outside of the classroom
- Lack of a strong mentoring program

ALL STUDENTS (Grade: B)

- Lack of faculty awareness of first-year programs
- Lack of centralized service referral
- Lack of specialized services for non-traditional, veterans, and unconnected students

DIVERSITY (Grade: B)

- Lack of formal infrastructure to provide students with diverse backgrounds to meet people of like backgrounds
- Lack of a system-wide formal structure through which first-year students interact with those whose backgrounds and cultures differ from their own
- Lack of awareness through which to reach the greatest number of first-year students with programming that introduces them to diverse ideas, world views, and race differences

ROLES AND PURPOSES (Grade: C-)

- Lack of explicit statements/teaching about the roles and purposes of higher education
- Lack of a coordinated effort to advertise the benefits of a college education
- Lack of “the why of learning”

IMPROVEMENT (Grade: D)

- Lack of student-outcomes assessment for first-year programming
- Lack of appropriate staff and other resources for assessment processes
- Lack of use of assessment results that are available
- Lack of consistent assessment practices

Summary of Key Recommendations

The Foundations Task Force was charged not only with review and evaluation of the first-year experience, but also with recommending actions to improve UCA’s first-year experience for students. A primary recommendation emerging from the work of several subcommittees was to identify a Director of First-Year Experience and to establish a university standing committee. Other recommended actions include the following:

- Adopt an explicit statement of philosophy for the first year
- Increase cross-campus communication about and collaboration on first-year issues

- Coordinate resources for first-year programming
- Establish learning goals for the first-year
- Include in the curriculum the why of learning and the importance of higher education
- Commit to increasing first-year awareness regarding diverse ideas, cultures, and world views
- Evaluate first-year initiatives

After a thorough review of the self-study reports, the project's co-directors recommend the following steps to complete the Foundations of Excellence process: (1) that a Director of First-Year Experience be appointed; (2) that the director chair a new working group made up of some individuals from the original Foundations Task Force, members from the standing Retention Committee, and other at large members; and (3) that this group be responsible to address the recommendations of the Foundations of Excellence self-study and create an action plan for the first-year experiences at the University of Central Arkansas.

UCA Foundations of Excellence Task Force

Project Co-Coordinator

Sally Roden, Associate Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies

Jonathan Glenn, Assistant Provost

Executive Committee

Donna Bowman, Assistant Professor and Associate Director, Honors College

Shoudong Feng, Assistant Professor, Early Childhood and Special Education

Wendy Holbrook, Director, Minority Services

Larry James, Chief of Police

Barbara Satterfield, Lecturer II, Art/Faculty Senator

Task Force Committees

Committee on Learning and Transitions

Donna Bowman, Assistant Professor and Associate Director, Honors College (Chair)

Chris Charlton, Director of Housing

Margaret Morgan, Associate Professor, Writing and Speech

Gary Roberts, Dean of Students

Tony Sitz, University Registrar

Committee on Faculty

Shoudong Feng, Assistant Professor, Early Childhood and Special Education (Chair)

Rahul Mehta, Associate Professor, Physics and Astronomy

Hank Phelps, Director of the Student Center

Jayne Stone, Instructor and Director of Learning Communities, Undergraduate Studies

All Students

Larry James, Chief of Police (Chair)

Lisa Shoemake, Assistant Director of International Programs

Kim Hoffman, Assistant Professor, Political Science

Stephanie Watson, Assistant Professor, Accounting

Marvin Williams, Academic Advisor

Roles and Purposes

Wendy Holbrook, Director of Minority Services (Chair)

Sam Buchanan, Associate Provost and Professor, Mathematics

Bill Lammers, Professor, Psychology and Counseling

Cheryl Lyons, Director of Financial Aid

Diversity

Barbara Satterfield, Director of the Baum Gallery and Lecturer II, Art (Chair)

John Gale, Director of University College and Associate Professor, Mass Communication and Theatre

Penny Hatfield, Director of Admissions

Terrance Kearns, Director of General Education and Exemplary Studies and Professor, English

The Foundations of Excellence[®] Report Card

This report card represents the final step in the Foundations of Excellence process. It is the culmination of a nine- to twelve-month effort of analysis and planning focused on the experience of new students. This report card is based on an aspirational model of the first year produced in 2003 by the Policy Center on the First Year of College and its research partners, and 219 four-year colleges and universities. In 2005, the model was adapted for two-year higher education by 82 public and private two-year colleges working with the Policy Center. That model, consisting of nine Foundational Dimensions[®], identifies characteristics of excellence in the new student experience. Because the Dimensions focus on institutional structures, policies, and processes (the decisions institutions make about organizing and delivering the new student experience), the model is useful in confirming effective practice and/or providing direction for improvement efforts.

The core work of the project was conducted by your institution's Foundations of Excellence Task Force with assistance from the Policy Center on the First Year of College and Educational Benchmarking, Inc. By using a series of performance indicators and a variety of data sources, the Task Force carefully reviewed the campus efforts that align with each Dimension. These reviews resulted in a collective judgment about your institution's level of achievement on each of the performance indicators.

The final step in the process was to produce single-grade indicators of the institution's achievement of each Dimension. Because these grades are based on judgments made by your campus task force, they are not intended to be used in comparison to any other institution or in a ranking system. The Foundations Report Card can be used most effectively as an indicator of relative grades within your institution. The grades reflect the best collective judgment of the task force and are supported by the evidence collected during the project. Grades will not be made public by the Policy Center in any manner that identifies individual institutions.

Foundational Dimensions	Grade
<p>Foundations Institutions approach the first year in ways that are intentional and based on a philosophy/rationale of the first year that informs relevant institutional policies and practices. The philosophy/rationale is explicit, clear and easily understood, consistent with the institutional mission, widely disseminated, and, as appropriate, reflects a consensus of campus constituencies. The philosophy/rationale is also the basis for first-year organizational policies, practices, structures, leadership, department/unit philosophies, and resource allocation. (Philosophy)</p>	C
<p>Foundations Institutions create organizational structures and policies that provide a comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated approach to the first year. These structures and policies provide oversight and alignment of all first-year efforts. A coherent first-year experience is realized and maintained through effective partnerships among academic affairs, student affairs, and other administrative units and is enhanced by ongoing faculty and staff development activities and appropriate budgetary arrangements. (Organization)</p>	D
<p>Foundations Institutions deliver intentional curricular and co-curricular learning experiences that engage students in order to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors consistent with the desired outcomes of higher education and the institution's philosophy and mission. Whether in or out of the classroom, learning also promotes increased competence in critical</p>	B

thinking, ethical development, and the lifelong pursuit of knowledge. (Learning)	
Foundations Institutions make the first college year a high priority for the faculty. These institutions are characterized by a culture of faculty responsibility for the first year that is realized through high-quality instruction in first-year classes and substantial interaction between faculty and first-year students both inside and outside the classroom. This culture of responsibility is nurtured by chief academic officers, deans, and department chairs and supported by the institutions' reward systems. (Faculty)	C
Foundations Institutions facilitate appropriate student transitions through policies and practices that are intentional and aligned with institutional mission. Beginning with recruitment and admissions and continuing through the first year, institutions communicate clear curricular and co-curricular expectations and provide appropriate support for educational success. They are forthright about their responsibilities to students as well as students' responsibilities to themselves and the institution. They create and maintain curricular alignments with secondary schools and linkages with secondary school personnel, families, and other sources of support, as appropriate. (Transitions)	C+
Foundations Institutions serve all first-year students according to their varied needs. The process of anticipating, diagnosing, and addressing needs is ongoing and is subject to assessment and adjustment throughout the first year. Institutions provide services with respect for the students' abilities, backgrounds, interests, and experiences. Institutions also ensure a campus environment that is inclusive and safe for all students. (All Students)	B
Foundations Institutions ensure that all first-year students experience diverse ideas, worldviews, and cultures as a means of enhancing their learning and preparing them to become members of pluralistic communities. Whatever their demographic composition, institutions structure experiences in which students interact in an open and civil community with people from backgrounds and cultures different from their own, reflect on ideas and values different from those they currently hold, and explore their own cultures and the cultures of others. (Diversity)	B
Foundations Institutions promote student understanding of the various roles and purposes of higher education, both for the individual and society. These roles and purposes include knowledge acquisition for personal growth, learning to prepare for future employment, learning to become engaged citizens, and learning to serve the public good. Institutions encourage first-year students to examine systematically their motivation and goals with regard to higher education in general and to their own college/university. Students are exposed to the value of general education as well as to the value of more focused, in-depth study of a field or fields of knowledge (i.e., the major). (Roles & Purposes)	C-
Foundations Institutions conduct assessment and maintain associations with other institutions and relevant professional organizations in order to achieve ongoing first-year improvement. This assessment is specific to the first year as a unit of analysis—a distinct time period and set of experiences, academic and otherwise, in the lives of students. It is also linked systemically to the institutions' overall assessment. Assessment results are an integral part of institutional planning, resource allocation, decision-making, and ongoing improvement of programs and policies as they affect first-year students. As part of the enhancement process and as a way to achieve ongoing improvement, institutions are familiar with current practices at other institutions as well as with research and scholarship on the first college year. (Improvement)	D

Dimension Reports

Philosophy Dimension Report

Foundations Institutions approach the first year in ways that are intentional and based on a philosophy/rationale of the first year that informs relevant institutional policies and practices. The philosophy/rationale is explicit, clear and easily understood, consistent with the institutional mission, widely disseminated, and, as appropriate, reflects a consensus of campus constituencies. The philosophy/rationale is also the basis for first-year organizational policies, practices, structures, leadership, department/unit philosophies, and resource allocation.

Committee Leaders:

Sally Roden

Jonathan Glenn

Committee Members:

Donna Bowman

Shoudong Feng

Wendy Holbrook

Larry James

Barbara Satterfield

Current Situation:

- A number of programs specifically focused on first-year students exist, and several of them have either written or implicit philosophies by which they address the needs and concerns of first-year students. Campus-wide, however, the university has not formally developed and endorsed a clear and widely accepted philosophy statement/rationale for its programming for first-year students.
- Current philosophy/rationale statements influence practices/policies in their particular areas: they are discrete, isolated, and often structurally unrelated.
- The campus has become too large and too complex to rely on implicit beliefs being shared by all the parts of the university that affect first-year students. Certainly the philosophy/rationale statements of individual departments are often known by the staff/faculty in those departments, but these are not connected by a shared campus philosophy/rationale and so tend not to be disseminated more widely. What is implicit (we do share some beliefs about first-year students and their needs) does not in this case allow explicit connections and communication. New and continuing faculty appear not to be charged with sharing a first-year philosophy with students; to some extent this contrasts with the implicit expectations of student services and residential life staff.

Areas of Concern:

- Academic units that have a major influence on first-year students are more likely than student services units to lack an articulated first-year philosophy.
- Lack of a campus-wide first-year philosophy.
- Lack of structural relationship among philosophies/rationales and, thus, lack of structural relationship among the affected programs.
- Lack of overall campus vision for the first year.
- Lack of a campus-wide, explicitly articulated statement makes wide communication and collaboration difficult or impossible.

Summary of Evidence:

The FoE executive committee’s judgments in this dimension are based on the findings of the dimension subcommittees, the student and faculty/staff surveys, and the committee’s collective knowledge. A selection of individual program mission/goal/assessment statements have been entered in the evidence library as examples.

Recommended Grade: C

Recommended Action Items:

- Campus wide Philosophy/Rationale Statement (*High priority*)

In recognition of the university mission’s commitment to “to the intellectual, social, and personal development of its students,” the FoE executive committee recommends that the university adopt an explicit statement of philosophy/rationale for the first year. As noted by the Policy Center: “The first college year is central to the achievement of an institution’s mission and lays the foundation on which undergraduate education is built.”

We propose the following statement:

The University of Central Arkansas affirms that the quality of the first-year experience is central to the achievement of its mission and lays the foundation on which undergraduate education is built. UCA’s mission commits the university to the intellectual, social, and personal development of its students. The university recognizes that this commitment obligates all members of the university community to cooperatively and intentionally structure their programs, activities, and services to promote first-year success.

We additionally propose that the Nine Dimensions identified in the Foundations of Excellence self-study be used as guides in developing and assessing the university’s approach to the first college year.

Organization Dimension Report

Foundations Institutions create organizational structures and policies that provide a comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated approach to the first year. These structures and policies provide oversight and alignment of all first-year efforts. A coherent first-year experience is realized and maintained through effective partnerships among academic affairs, student affairs, and other administrative units and is enhanced by ongoing faculty and staff development activities and appropriate budgetary arrangements.

Committee Leader:

Sally Roden
Jonathan Glenn

Committee Members:

Donna Bowman
Shoudong Feng
Wendy Holbrook
Larry James
Barbara Satterfield

Current Situation:

- Limited coordination occurs: e.g., Housing and Residence Life works with Undergraduate Studies to make the Residential Colleges work; Student Services works with Housing and

Residence Life to coordinate services to students; and some other instances might be cited. However, no overall coordination integrates first-year programming.

- No central leadership/coordination results in limited integration of first-year programming.
- The Foundations of Excellence self-study is the first comprehensive campus wide evaluation of the university's approach to the first college year. Some individual units conduct regular assessment activities. These will become useful in structuring and evaluating an FYOS, but they do not address a comprehensive university approach.
- On-campus faculty/staff development is very limited. The university has only recently begun to offer faculty IDC-sponsored opportunities to learn about first-year programming. Staff and some faculty attend regional and national conferences related to the first college year. Most of the university, however, is not involved in this development.
- Particular needs have been met, giving evidence of support for some of the aims of an FYOS, but no intentional structure exists, so that no overall budget for FYOS has been established.

Areas of Concern:

- Lack of coordination limits the overall effectiveness of individual units and inhibits sustainability of the university's efforts on behalf of first-year students.
- Lack of designated central leadership/coordination.
- Resource and staffing constraints and the lack of central leadership limit partnering among academic affairs, student services, and housing. Goodwill exists, and some partnering occurs, but the potential for such cooperation is limited by the constraints noted above.
- Individual unit evaluations are not as useful as they might be if they were related to a comprehensive philosophy/rationale.
- Pervasive lack of awareness of the importance of faculty/staff development in this area.
- Lack of rewards/recognition for active participation in first-year initiatives and faculty/staff development opportunities.
- FYOS cannot be sustained in a purely piecemeal fashion, and an overall budget cannot be established without central leadership/coordination.

Summary of Evidence:

The FoE executive committee based its judgments on the findings of the dimension subcommittees, the student and faculty/staff surveys, and their collective knowledge.

Recommended Grade: D

Recommended Action Items:

- Central Leadership/Coordination for the FYOS (*High priority*)

The FoE executive committee recommends that UCA establish a central point of responsibility for the FYOS. This will, we expect, involve appointment of a director of FY and the establishment of a university standing committee with responsibility to advise and support the FYOS. The director and the committee will be responsible for developing and implementing FY policy, coordinating and evaluating university FY initiatives, communicating with the campus and its community about FY initiatives, and promoting the philosophy/rationale of FYOS.

Learning Dimension Report

Foundations Institutions deliver intentional curricular and co-curricular learning experiences that engage students in order to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors consistent with the desired outcomes of higher education and the institution's philosophy and mission.

Whether in or out of the classroom, learning also promotes increased competence in critical thinking, ethical development, and the lifelong pursuit of knowledge.

Committee Leader:

Donna Bowman

Committee Members:

Chris Charlton

Margaret Morgan

Gary Roberts

Tony Sitz

Current Situation:

- General Education areas and objectives constitute the major venue in which first-year learning goals exist. First-year experience courses, still relatively new on campus, are emerging and slowly spreading. First year seminars are also established as a category, although these courses seem to be limited to the residential colleges. Residential Colleges also have visions of first-year learning goals, although they may be idiosyncratic compared to an institutional vision that does not yet exist.
- Satisfaction with instruction is very high in the student survey. Students across the board don't feel that the level of work is something that they are prepared for. At the two extremes of the freshmen population, students feel that they are encouraged to participate in classes and that their instructor cares about their success. Responding to explosive growth in first-year enrollment, the proliferation of sections of these courses and emergency hiring to staff them has probably affected the consistency and communication in these courses.
- A strong general education program with good oversight at the University communicates the importance of evaluating student outcomes. Writing's comprehensive assessment plan for first-year courses is a model.
- A movement toward having an adviser assigned to Honors College students and one assigned to residential college students is a promising development for assuring that well-prepared students are challenged. University College addresses placement issues for remedial students.
- Few programs could provide assessment materials. Several reported that they are developing assessment plans.

Areas of Concern:

- Departments that teach large numbers of first year students have no cues for particular learning goals that should be established and monitored for these students except the General Education Program, which is not specific to the first year.
- More connection is needed between the level of classwork and the preparation of students before entering the University. Writing, a young department with a different sense of institutional mission, focuses on first-year courses more thoroughly than other departments enrolling many first years. Other departments, perhaps historically more focused on their major programs than on their first-year general education courses, need more documentation and assessment of those courses.
- There is a lack of evidence for documentation and evaluation of student learning across all sections of the course in Speech and History. College Algebra's learning outcomes are well defined and would lend themselves to cross-section evaluation, if that is not already occurring.
- Standards for placing incoming students in the appropriate math course are not readily available or apparent. The appointment of an Honors advisor will not address the separate issue of high-ability students who are not in the Honors College. Information provided by

departments to the advising center is not in any standard form, nor is it obvious that it is up to date; regularly updated web information, rather than the notebooks full of bulletins, might prevent bad data from persisting and influencing advising or student decisions.

- Many established and emerging programs with great promise currently have no assessments in place. Consumer satisfaction and needs are not the only forces driving these programs; however, feedback from those “users” and follow-up after program completion would provide a key source of information about their effectiveness.

Summary of Evidence:

Faculty report in their responses to the faculty survey that they are not aware of a specific institutional vision for the first year. Evidence of a first-year vision is lacking on the website or in publications targeted to incoming students. The published General Education goals and objectives provide learning targets and rationales, but these courses are distributed throughout a student’s career, although they may be disproportionately clustered in the first two years.

Documents from the writing department detailing objectives, methods, and assessment plans for those courses provide very complete pictures of Writing’s commendable focus on first-year students. Sample quizzes from College Algebra reveal basic knowledge covered and methods for measuring student learning. Syllabi available on the history website reveal the range of approaches and assignments.

Assessment plans from the Writing courses, a brief statement of assessment areas from the Speech course, tests from College Algebra, and syllabi statements from History were used to evaluate assessment efforts in the highest-enrollment freshman courses.

Information from the Advising Center’s website shows what general advice and direction are readily available to incoming students to prepare them for their advising session and equip them to ask meaningful questions. Hardcopy documents consulted by advisors and available to incoming students in their summer registration appointments route communications from advising and departmental sources to students with questions about majors and department offering; this information is rather bewildering in its variety, and it is rarely apparent whether the information is up to date.

Inquiries with staff and faculty responsible for programs produced information about which programs assess (and in what areas) and which ones do not. Copies of the assessments used by the Student Orientation program were gathered.

Recommended Grade: B

Recommended Action Items:

- Create a standard establishing learning goals for the first year (*High priority*)
Attached to the university statement of philosophy for the first year, create a principle that lists learning goals for the first year, possibly distilled from the General Education goals and aims, but directed specifically at the first year.
- Baseline and outcome testing (*High priority*)
Baseline testing should take place in first-year courses to determine the levels of skills and knowledge being inculcated in college preparation. Outcome testing tied to those same skill and knowledge sets provides evidence for the learning goals addressed and achieved.
- Best practices database (*Medium priority*)
In departments with many sections of first-year classes, build a database of best practices for first-year instruction in that discipline. Share practices that have the potential for success across disciplines.

- Assess specific pedagogies (*Medium priority*)
With a combination of outcome testing and student/faculty response surveys, particular pedagogies in high-use first-year classes can be assessed across individual sections. Responsibility for outcomes is therefore connected to methodologies, in addition to the responsibility already assigned to individual instructional styles (e.g. in student class evaluations).
- Assessment plan for co-curricular activities (*Medium priority*)
Develop a FY assessment plan that can be adapted for a wide variety of co-curricular activities to assess the impact on the first-year experience.

Faculty Dimension Report

Foundations Institutions make the first college year a high priority for the faculty. These institutions are characterized by a culture of faculty responsibility for the first year that is realized through high-quality instruction in first-year classes and substantial interaction between faculty and first-year students both inside and outside the classroom. This culture of responsibility is nurtured by chief academic officers, deans, and department chairs and supported by the institutions' reward systems.

Committee Leader:

Shoudong Feng

Committee Members:

Rahul Mehta

Hank Phelps

Jayme Stone

Current Situation:

- At the present time, different units on campus are individually addressing the needs of first-year students. Different programs communicate with faculty about the characteristics of first-year students, first-year learning goals, broad trends and issues, and pedagogies.
- In some departments, the chairs do encourage faculty to do the above things. In others, the chairs do not interfere with what faculty do. The committee could not find data on the whole picture, i.e., what each department does with its faculty on the issue of first year students. Even in the departments where instruction of first year students is emphasized and goals have been established, the policy and practices are not consistently implemented. Due to logistical limitations, departments tend to respond to problems when they arise.
- Typically, such expectations are not communicated to candidates in job ads. Different departments may mention first-year students during the interview process, but no evidence to show consistency across campus.
- No reward system is in place to reward teaching, advising, or interacting with first-year students outside of class. Some programs recognize faculty teaching first-year students. For example, the Living and Learning Communities give end-of-year award banquets. Advising seems to have received proper emphasis from the administration because a representative from each college (except Health and Behavior Sciences) is staffed in the advising center to advise first-year students. Nevertheless, there is no reward for expertise/excellence in advising either.

Areas of Concern:

- There is no centralized office that is responsible for the policy and practices related to first-year students. Information communicated to faculty about first-year students, learning goals, pedagogies, and trends and issues is not always put in a context and is not widely shared.

- There is no system that ensures that unit-level administrators encourage their faculty to do the above things in teaching first-year students. Data on the campus-wide situation is not available. In the departments where instruction of first-year students is emphasized, the policy and practice often lack consistency.
- New faculty do not know the expectations about teaching first-year students. Neither do they know the culture among first-year students. New faculty are not provided with training regarding first-year students.
- Faculty perceive teaching first-year students as low prestigious and risky because of the expected low teaching evaluation in large-size freshman classes.

Summary of Evidence:

Retention Committee Recommendations 2004-2005; Memorandum from President Lu Hardin

The committee could not find any written evidence on the unit-level policy and practice regarding first-year students. We came to these conclusions through sharing our own experiences in the department we are affiliated with.

We reflected on the experiences we went through in the hiring process. We also discussed the training sessions provided through IDC. Two job ads are included to show that no expectations about first-year students are communicated to job candidates.

The charge of the Teaching Excellence Award Committee does not mention any emphasis on teaching first-year students (<http://www.uca.edu/org/facultysenate/CommitteePages/TEAC.html>). No award committees are found on excellence in advising or interacting with first-year students. The Academic Advising Center's website (<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/undergraduatestudies/advising>) does not have information on rewarding excellence on advising. In the faculty survey, Question 63 is directly related to Reward for Teaching Excellence. Only 26.6% of faculty who recently taught first-year students ranked it high or very high.

Recommended Grade: C

Recommended Action Items:

- Establish a Centralized Office (*High priority*)
The office could be named First Year Experiences or First Year Success and placed under the Provost Office or the Dean of Undergraduate Studies. The office should be responsible for making policy, overseeing the implementation of best practices for first-year students, and coordinating the efforts at the university and unit level. The director of the office should work with the Office of Institutional Research to access data related to first year students. The office should also have its own website posting information for first-year students, parents of first-year students and faculty who teach first-year students.
- Communication and Evaluation (*High priority*)
The director of First Year Experiences should communicate with deans and chairs about policy and practice regarding first-year students. Deans and chairs who have first-year students in their units should be included on the First Year Experiences Summit. In evaluation, all faculty and chairs who have first year students may be evaluated on their efforts and performance in working with first-year students.
- Establish a Reward Structure (*High priority*)
A reward structure needs to be developed for faculty working with first-year students in the area of instruction, advising, and co-curricular activities. The faculty senate, deans, and chairs should work together to establish the reward mechanisms.

- **Communicate Expectations to Faculty (*Medium priority*)**
Expectations regarding first-year students should be communicated to faculty who will teach first-year students either in job ads or during interviews. Training regarding first-year students may be provided through IDC.

Transitions Dimension Report

Foundations Institutions facilitate appropriate student transitions through policies and practices that are intentional and aligned with institutional mission. Beginning with recruitment and admissions and continuing through the first year, institutions communicate clear curricular and co-curricular expectations and provide appropriate support for educational success. They are forthright about their responsibilities to students as well as students' responsibilities to themselves and the institution. They create and maintain curricular alignments with secondary schools and linkages with secondary school personnel, families, and other sources of support, as appropriate.

Committee Leader:

Donna Bowman

Committee Members:

Chris Charlton

Margaret Morgan

Gary Roberts

Tony Sitz

Current Situation:

- *Communication to students on matters financial and academic*
Students report mixed results on communicating expenses and financial aid opportunities. Advisors have 45-50 minutes with students during summer registration appointments. As the university grows, the visibility of out-of-classroom activities to students in the transition into college increases faster than the visibility of classroom priorities and realities.
- *Communication to others involved in the first year*
UCA Ambassadors and Admissions personnel regularly visit and communicate with counselors and other decision makers at the secondary school level. Parents who attend S.O.A.R. receive specialized information in separate sessions, but this represents only a small percentage of first-year families. Efforts to reach other support networks in the community are ad hoc, developed by various departments and specialized offices on campus. For instance, the College of Business Administration connects with local and regional businesses, particular campus ministries connect with local churches, and campus charities and service groups connect with local organizations. Efforts currently underway to establish an office of service learning for the University could produce a more centralized clearinghouse for such connections.
- *Making connections*
The growth of the Residential Colleges represents a positive move in connecting more students to faculty through live-in faculty mentors. The advising center represents the only campus-wide program that consistently matches first-year students to faculty outside the classroom.

First-years interact with upper-level students most frequently in campus food service areas and in intramural sports/recreation activities. Students who get involved in campus activities report much higher levels of connection. The university has provided many avenues for making these connections. FreshFusion and S.O.A.R. represent promising programs for expanding freshmen connections to upperclassmen.

First-year students across the board report high levels of connection to other first-year students. Residential colleges and high numbers of freshmen living on campus contribute to this success.

Less than half of any significant subgroup makes a connection with academic support services -- even for remedial students. No separate data on first-year usage of such key academic support services as the Academic Success Center and University Center for Communication Support could be separated out.

- *Advising*
Academic advising has 30-50 minutes with each incoming freshman for summer registration. Rising sophomore times are considerably shorter and squeezed into a few weeks during advance registration in the second semester of the sophomore year. Our review did not come across any particular programs to address the unique needs of rising sophomores, although that does not mean such programs don't exist.

Areas of Concern:

- *Communications to students*
Main admissions webpage is basically a list of links; it is not welcoming or helpfully organized. Advisors report somewhat higher success in communicating institutional priorities to students, than students report receiving from the university. Orientation may need to be recentered on academic preparation. There is no central web gateway for first-years at the university; the A-Z index on the website does not have an entry that begins "First Year" or "Freshman." There is not a user-centered philosophy in place with regard to communication, and first-years are not assumed to be empowered to seek out and make judgments about what information is useful to them.
- *Communication to others*
Information on website for "Parents and Visitors" leads to a page of links, with no FAQ or other web gateway targeted to families. More specialized information for secondary-school counselors, AP teachers, special education teachers, and gifted-and-talented program faculty should be available through the gateway of the admissions and ambassadors; campus resources recruiting and targeting those populations are only connected with the University recruiting effort if the unit develops its own recruiting priorities, plans, and resources. A centralized office of community development is not in evidence, although officials responsible for such development may reside in the president's office and in the Foundation, for example.
- *Making connections*
Most students report fair or poor experiences connecting to faculty outside the classroom. Few programs exist where this connection is made a priority. First-year students do not have as high participation in RSO's (where they might come into regular contact with faculty advisors) as other students, and they may be reluctant to take advantage of their instructors' office hours (even though minimum office hours are mandated by the University, and must be posted for students).

Female, white (non-Hispanic), and off-campus resident first-years report lower levels of connection with upper-level students. Students who do not get involved on campus do not make these connections.

First-years report that they are well connected to other first-year students. High connections among this group can result in shared ignorance, if they are not supplemented by quality connections to more knowledgeable and experienced groups.

Academic support resources on campus of long standing (University Center for Communication Support, Math Lab) appear underused by the wider University community, although they are intensely used by students in particular departments (Writing and Mathematics, respectively). Students are directed to academic support services upon entry into the probation system, rather than encouraged to use them as part of their academic routine. Low levels of first-year usage of significant academic support services could result in a supply-demand feedback loop that reduces the availability of those services relative to the actual need on campus. If more connections were made to these services, would the resources be in place to service them, or would the services become overwhelmed?

▪ *Advising*

Rapidly increasing freshman class sizes will continue to strain the resources of the advising center and cause stress on the standards of excellence advisers seek to maintain. The institutional knowledge of advisers is in a mélange of forms and media, and is uncentralized.

The advising website, while it contains helpful information, is unevenly maintained and organized. Some links might look helpful to first-years, like a “How to ...?” page, but the one item on that page, a PowerPoint on registering for classes, is applicable only to returning students.

Students would benefit from having some of this helpful information available online in a user-friendly, user-driven website. Checklists and career guidance can be made interactive, and students might be encouraged to use them to prepare for their advising visit.

Summary of Evidence:

Communication to students

Student and faculty answers to survey questions agree on the whole, with faculty believing that communication is more successful than students believe. Material is provided to students in advising appointments, on the web, and in the student viewbook and handbook. The most relevant information, that given through the advising center, is given at the discretion of the advisor, and does not appear to be centrally available for browsing. In other words, the advisor is the gatekeeper for much of the university’s communication of important academic information to students.

Connections to others on campus

Data from the student survey were collected and the experience of subgroups identified. Programs that connect first-year students to faculty, upper-level students, and academic support were identified and listed. Contacts with OWL, Write On!, Math Lab, and Library services provided a profile of academic support programs currently in place.

Connections to others off campus

The UCA website’s evidence (or lack of easily accessible evidence) for programs that make these connections was a primary source of data. Information about the Admissions Office’s high school visitation schedule and the UCA Ambassadors’ mission helped fill in the picture regarding secondary school communications. Specialized publications for families of first-year students were collected.

Advising

Advising provided a thick notebook of photocopied sheets of major requirements, career paths using various majors, notifications of changes to degree programs and University policies, and other helpful but mixed information, much of it undated. None of this evidence was available in electronic form. The website was also used as evidence.

Recommended Grade: C+

Recommended Action Items:

- **First-Year Web Gateway (*High priority*)**
This one-stop shopping area of the UCA website will address the concerns of incoming and first-year students, families, and other key support for first-years. Information available needs to be contextualized (not a list of links whose relevance must be ascertained merely by the title), organized by the natural “life cycle” of an incoming and first-year student (information is needed predictably at particular times), interactive (calculators, check-list, scenario generators, trial study form), and supported (access to appropriate personnel needs to be readily available through contact info, again organized not by university department or directory, but by relevance to the first-year experience).
- **Continue growth of residential colleges (*High priority*)**
The university is increasing the percentage of freshmen in residential colleges, and this should continue. Extending residential college programs into the second year, and increasing opportunities for second-year students to mentor first-years in the residential colleges, should be a second goal.
- **Integrate more faculty into more orientation programming (*High priority*)**
Faculty are given opportunities to meet and interact with students in orientation programs in order to introduce some academic values and some academic programs (like WebCT). Interaction of faculty and incoming students should be increased, perhaps by involving faculty in orientation planning and staffing. Perhaps a “mock” college class could be integrated into orientation.
- **Conduct study of academic support services (*High priority*)**
The Provost’s office should undertake a comprehensive inventory and assessment of academic support services across the campus. Consolidation, centralization, and elimination of duplication should take place, along with an expansion of services and the elimination of gaps in services where needed. Not just current usage, but optimum usage of services in pursuit of the university’s mission should be considered.
- **Increase resources available to Advising Center (*High priority*)**
Staffing, time, support, and organizational resources in the Advising Center need to be evaluated and appropriately increased in order to meet current and future needs.
- **Reorganize advising website connected to First-Year Gateway (*High priority*)**
The Advising website should be user-driven and interactive, enabling students to explore majors, plans of study, career ideas, and other academic interests. Interactive features tied to the students’ own transcript and records, such as a dynamic general-education checklist or major plan of study, should be developed. Specific features tied to the first year should be prominently featured in the First-Year Gateway. Some material now only maintained for advisors can be made available to students on the website.
- **Second-year mentors (*Medium priority*)**
Residential colleges and the Honors College are connecting their returning students with incoming students in housing and student programs. This organic residential and programmatic connection should be expanded into any program where it is applicable.
- **Orientation emphasis on academic preparation (*Medium priority*)**
Orientation activities need to center around academic values and preparation. The mix of activities, their presenters, and their placement need to be evaluated to make sure academic communication is central, in line with the University’s mission statement and the institutional philosophy regarding the first year.
- **Website for secondary school personnel (*Medium priority*)**
Housed in Admissions and connected to recruiting, this website should centralize, maintain, and allow interaction with counselors, teachers, principals, and staff who need information about UCA, and who can pass on valuable information to us. The institutional memory of

recruiting staff can be leveraged to help build a site that keeps contact without losing a very personal touch.

- Role for community organizations in orientation activities (*Medium priority*)
Orientation can welcome community support networks onto campus during SOAR and Welcome Week.
- Integrate service learning into first-year courses (*Medium priority*)
The new office of service learning should focus its efforts at first-years, and departments and other units that serve and teach first years should be encouraged to make use of its resources to connect them to the community.

All Students Dimension Report

Foundations Institutions serve all first-year students according to their varied needs. The process of anticipating, diagnosing, and addressing needs is ongoing and is subject to assessment and adjustment throughout the first year. Institutions provide services with respect for the students' abilities, backgrounds, interests, and experiences. Institutions also ensure a campus environment that is inclusive and safe for all students.

Committee Leader:

Larry James

Committee Members:

Kim Hoffman

Lisa Shoemake

Stephanie Watson

Marvin Williams

Current Situation:

- The UCA community has identified 13 subpopulations having unique academic, social/personal, and/or safety needs. Some subpopulations self-identify as students apply for specific programs (high academic achievers apply for Honors College), seek out specific assistance (low academic performers seek tutoring assistance), or join certain organizations. Other subpopulations are identified by a particular office on campus using academic indicators, records indicating minority status, applications for programs, or other targeting mechanisms.

Subpopulations identified are listed below:

1. High academic achievers
 2. Low academic achievers
 3. Athletes
 4. Minority students
 5. Students with disabilities
 6. Employed students
 7. Military students
 8. International students
 9. Commuters
 10. Gay and lesbian students
 11. Non-traditional students (parents and 25+ years old)
 12. Residential students
 13. Transfer students
- The UCA community addresses the above needs of the identified subpopulations through a variety of programs, services, and activities. Many university offices work jointly to provide

these services. Some services are provided through formal programs that are highly advertised, while other services are less formalized. There is also variation in the amount of services offered to the subpopulations that address the academic, social, and safety needs.

- Survey results from freshman subpopulations indicate that most subpopulations are fairly satisfied with the degree at which UCA addresses their academic, social, and safety needs. Students who are high academic achievers and students who identified themselves as very involved in campus activities reported the highest degree of satisfaction across the three needs. This reflects the many services offered to high academic achievers at UCA and the many opportunities for students to participate in student organizations on campus.
- Students not classified as remedial/developmental or honors; Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hispanic students, and those who are somewhat involved in campus activities or living off campus with family reported the highest scores with regard to their academic needs being met on campus.
- Honors, Hispanic and part-time students; students very involved or somewhat involved in campus activities; and students living in residence halls reported the highest scores with regard to their social needs being met on campus.
- International, honors, and multiracial students as well as those aged 17 years or younger reported the highest scores with regard to their physical safety needs being met on campus.
- The UCA community does the best job at providing services to the academic subpopulations (high and low academic achievers). These subpopulations are provided a wide array of programs and activities such as:

Programs/services for high academic achievers

- Honors College
- IDEAL - Freshman Leadership Team
- Scholarships
- Departmental honor societies

Programs/services for low academic achievers

- UCAN (Unlocking College Academics Now)
- University College
- Tutoring Center
- Academic Advising Center
- University Testing Office
- Services provided by the above offices/programs address all three needs. For example, the academic subpopulations are offered programs addressing good study habits; provided with information about campus resources; encouraged to engage in group social activities; referred to counseling and career services, and instructed in safety issues.
- The other subpopulation where UCA excels in providing services is the residence hall student. Students in university housing have access to a wide array of programs and activities that meet their academic, social, and safety needs:
 - R-Links Cluster Classes
 - Fresh Fusion
 - Residential College
 - Residence Hall Association
 - Judicial Board
 - Social activities, tutoring, mentoring in the residence halls
- Other subpopulations are provided with specific programs to address the three needs, primarily through orientation programs (primarily during Welcome Week), student organizations, mentorship programs, and the academic advising center.

- UCA recognizes the excitement and anxiety that comes with a first-time college experience and the issues and problems that may accompany these emotions. To address these issues and problems, UCA has put many programs in place that benefit the needs of students in their first year of higher education (referred to as FY students). A summary of some of those programs are listed below:

Individualized attention from faculty/staff

- Faculty members are required to hold at least 10 office hours per week.
- Every FY student is assigned an advisor with whom the student has regular contact (in person and via email) throughout their first year.
- Residence Assistants are available in residence halls to discuss a wide variety of issues.

Academic support outside classroom

- Faculty members are required to hold at least 10 office hours per week.
- Academic Advising offers seminars to help with note taking, test taking, and other academic trouble spots.
- There is a Tutoring Center designed to help with math and tries to accommodate other subjects as students express a need. There is a Writing Center to help students with writing papers. Other departments on campus offer labs for outside-of-class assistance (e.g., Accounting).
- Residence Master and Residence Assistants are prepared to discuss study techniques, test anxiety, and tutoring. In residential college, a faculty member actually lives in the residence hall with the students.
- Students responding to the survey question “At this institution, to what degree do you feel your academic needs are met?” answered 91.2% moderate, high or very high.
- Honors Students responding to the survey question “At this institution, to what degree do you feel your academic needs are met?” answered 96.7% moderate, high, or very high. On a similar question asked of faculty, 100% responded either moderate, high, or very high.

Opportunities for campus involvement

- Academic Advising encourages students to get involved in non-academic activities and how to balance that with academics.
- There are opportunities for campus involvement everywhere: through academics, through social and religious groups, through residence life, etc. Many of these are publicized in the campus newspaper, at an SRO Fair (Student Registered Organizations), and flyers.
- Students responding to the survey question “At this institution, to what degree do feel your social needs are met?” answered 87.1% either moderate, high, or very high.

Inclusive campus environment

- Students responding to the survey question “At this institution, to what degree do you belong?” answered 85.6% either moderate, high, or very high, with international, age 17 and younger, and honors students having the highest sense of belonging.

Areas of Concern:

- Identification of some subpopulations could be improved. First, some subpopulations are not identified through any formal mechanisms. For example, activities and/or programs for some subpopulations are solely student initiated with student self-identification (i.e. non-traditional students, students struggling in academics, etc.). Another example of self-identification is immigrant students who are non-native speaking who may have language or cultural barriers that are likely to impact academic success. These students are often identified by their professors and sent to the Intensive English Program, but there are no

formal means of identification through an office or specific program. Due to the lack of formal identification, some students may not know about available services.

- The University does not have a central resource for the effective dissemination of information to the various subpopulations, thus students who are not formally identified and targeted by a specific program may not be aware of services that are provided. Although students may receive information regarding an array of services and resources available during Welcome Week, knowledge of the existence of some programs is lost through “information overload” and not reinforced later through a formal institutional mechanism.
- Although the Student Services webpage attempts to provide a comprehensive resource for services and programs available to all students and, more specifically, to specific subpopulations, it is not designed for navigation using the typical student vernacular, nor does it provide ease for a student to search for “solutions” to their “needs.”
- In a few instances, subpopulations have not been identified by the university, therefore, little or no tailored services are provided. Such subpopulations include students from single parent homes and students with childcare issues.
- Non-traditional, part-time and African-American students as well as those with no involvement in campus activities, living in campus apartments, and classified as remedial/developmental reported the lowest scores with regard to their academic needs being met.
- Non-traditional and part-time students; students living in campus apartments; as well as students with no involvement in campus activities and students classified as remedial/developmental reported the lowest scores with regard to their social needs being met on campus.
- Non-traditional, African-American, and part-time students as well as students with no involvement in campus activities and students living in off-campus apartments reported the lowest scores with regard to their physical safety concerns being met on campus.
- There are limited programs and funding for non-traditional students. As discussed previously, some non-traditional students (students with children) may have needs that are not addressed by a specific program. There are fewer formalized services and programs for the non-traditional student than for most traditional students.
- There is inadequate faculty training in how to instruct students enrolled in the University College program. Many faculty are unaware of the program and the unique needs of the students, while others are aware of the program but believe the students should be taught no differently than the “average” college student.
- Services geared specifically for students returning from the military are fragmented and not readily available and identifiable by the student.
- Per survey results, the UCA faculty and staff are aware of Academic Advising and some aspects of SOAR and Welcome Week. However, many of the programs that are in place to assist the first year students are not common knowledge to the faculty. When asked to identify programs at UCA that target FY students, many faculty/staff respondents answered, “I can think of none,” or “I have no interaction with first year students. Therefore, I cannot address this question.”
- Academic Advising does a great job of specializing in individual attention and of knowing about all the programs available for students. Regardless of the presence of Academic Advising in the lives of these freshman students, their daily contact is with the faculty. Academic Advising, SOAR, and Welcome Week all do a great job at informing the students about everything that is available to them. However, given the new environment, the excitement, and anxiety these students are probably experiencing, there is a lot of information to assimilate, and at some point the students are on information overload.
- UCA does a good job of identifying freshman students by subpopulation by academic ability, social needs and preferences, etc. and providing these students with an environment

that is conducive to their academic, social, and safety needs. However, to some extent, the students are fragmented by this practice. For example, some activities are designed around what residence hall a student is living in or what minority group or religion a student belongs to. While the service provided to these students are important, it ultimately harms the degree to which the freshman experience an inclusive campus environment.

- Students responding to the survey question “At this institution, to what degree do you belong?” answered 85.6% either moderate, high, or very high, which means that 14.4% of students don’t believe they belong.
- Several group had a high percentage responding slight or not at all. Most notably, 26.7% of responding part-time students feel they don’t belong, and approximately 22.7% of students over 25 don’t feel they belong. These two groups are not surprising as it is logical to believe that these groups spend a majority of their time on issues not related to UCA.

Summary of Evidence:

- Interviews were conducted with various departments on campus to determine the type and level of services provided to students. The results of these interviews are summarized in an Excel Spreadsheet entitled “All Students Dimension: Interviews” and is stored in the evidence library. There are four tabs in the spreadsheet: (a) Services available to all students, which directly addresses; (b) services available to all students but delivered only to those who apply and are accepted to the program; (c) services provided to students based on their academic performance, and (d) services provided to students based on non-academic factors (e.g., race, disability).
- During the course of the interviews, many items were collected including brochures, booklets, handouts, fliers, etc. Images of these documents are found in a variety of PowerPoint documents grouped by program and are stored in the evidence library. In addition, several web addresses were collected as evidence in place of paper documents. These documents and web addresses are referenced in the Excel Spreadsheet entitled “All Students Dimension: Interviews” in the Evidence Library.
- Surveys were administered to faculty/staff and students. Several of the results have been quoted in this response, and a summary of the results of the questions pertaining to this dimension can be found in an Excel Spreadsheet entitled “All Students Dimension: Survey Results” in the Evidence Library.

Recommended Grade: B

Recommended Action Items:

- Improve Faculty Awareness of Student Services (*High priority*)
Faculty should be trained in the considerable resources available to first year students and should be proficient at properly referring students to beneficial programs and services.
- Best-Practices for Creating an Inclusive Campus (*High priority*)
A task force reporting to the Provost or other appropriate executive should research best practices for creating a more inclusive campus. There most likely is a high correlation between improving communication flow between faculty and staff horizontally across all divisions of the University and improving the delivery of services to all first-year students.
- Training for Faculty (*High priority*)
Faculty should be trained in alternative instructional styles designed to meet the unique needs of University College students
- Create a service referral resource within Student Services (*High priority*)
A centralized resource should be created to direct students who are seeking services specific to their academic, social or safety needs to appropriate providers and/or organizations on campus. This centralized resource should disseminate information through a help desk,

referral hotline, and interactive website designed for navigation using the typical student's vernacular.

- **Increase Emphasis on Residential Life in Campus Apartment Complexes (*High priority*)**
The Department of Housing and Residence Life should research methods of providing increased emphasis and encouragement for students living in campus apartment complexes to become involved in the many residential life programs offered by the University.
- **Maintain Highly Visible Police Presence (*Medium priority*)**
As the campus infrastructure and population grows, and as more students reside in campus owned or leased apartments off campus, the Police Department will need to add officers to maintain the same visible presence in all areas of the campus and within off-campus apartment complexes as that presence afforded students living in on-campus residence halls.
- **Establish a Non-Traditional Student Services Office (*Medium priority*)**
The non-traditional student services office should be located within the Student Services division, but consideration should be given to its own identity, rather than just an auxiliary program within Career Services. The office should receive adequate funding to provide for the identification of non-traditional students, assessment of individual needs, and referral to, or development of, appropriate programs and services.
- **Establish a Veterans Services Office (*Medium priority*)**
The veteran services office should be located within the Students Services division, but again, consideration should be given to its own identity. The office should be funded to provide for the identification of veterans and students returning from the military, assessment of individual needs, and referral to, or development of, appropriate programs and services.
- **Best-Practices for Unconnected Students (*Medium priority*)**
An appropriate office or committee reporting to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies should research best practices for first year students who are typically "left out" - non-traditional students, students in campus apartments, students who rarely participate. There is most likely a high correlation between students who rarely participate in campus activities and the non-traditional students, and other institutions may have found successful programs to improve the feeling of inclusiveness on campus.

Diversity Dimension Report

Foundations Institutions ensure that all first-year students experience diverse ideas, worldviews, and cultures as a means of enhancing their learning and preparing them to become members of pluralistic communities. Whatever their demographic composition, institutions structure experiences in which students interact in an open and civil community with people from backgrounds and cultures different from their own, reflect on ideas and values different from those they currently hold, and explore their own cultures and the cultures of others.

Committee Leader:

Barbara Satterfield

Committee Members:

John Gale

Penny Hatfield

Terrance Kearns

Current Situation:

- **Initiatives solely based in the curriculum:**
The institution insures that first-year students experience diverse ideas and world views through the curriculum in two ways.

First, the required course, 1100 UNIVERSITY STUDIES, is designed to aid students in being successful at a collegiate level as well as in their personal lives through meeting two goals: (1) empower students to become successful learners at the collegiate level, and (2) empower students to develop a realistic sense of themselves as healthy citizens in a university, professional, public and global community.

Second, of the forty-six courses offered through the General Education Program, thirty-four include global matters, twenty-eight include treatment of diversity issues, and twenty-two handle both. Of the six courses that all students must take, four take up global considerations and all six will bear upon diversity. Statistics reflect the faculty at large and were provided by Institutional Research; the office didn't have statistics targeted for the general education faculty as a group.

▪ Initiatives solely based in the co-curriculum:

A major influence in campus dissemination of diverse ideas and world views centers, the events selected by the Student Activities Board are organized and selected in four categories: music, comedy, pop culture, novelty and films. First-year students have informal opportunities to experience diverse ideas and world views through the activities selected by their peers. Recent events have included: Chuck D, leader and co-founder of legendary rap group Public Enemy who redefined rap music and Hip Hop culture with messages about race, rage and inequality; Rent, a film set in New York's East Village about a group of bohemians struggling to express themselves through their art and strive for success and acceptance while enduring the obstacles of poverty, illness and the AIDS epidemic; and Austin Willacy, an accomplished vocalist/songwriter and member of Tommy Boy/Warner Bros. recording artists The House Jacks, who tours extensively throughout the US, Europe and Japan, performing with Ray Charles, James Brown, The Neville Brothers, The Temptations, The Gap Band, The Pointer Sisters, LL Cool J, Run DMC, Starship, Chicago, and Crosby, Stills and Nash.

In addition to the SAB line-up of events, the Office of Minority Services sponsors Miss Essence Scholarship Pageant, the All Greek Step Show, and Black History Month activities (2006: a one-act play by black students: Colored Museum; the Hip Hop Dance Project) that also serve to disseminate diverse ideas and world views absent of curricular constraints. Initiatives integrated across the curriculum and co-curriculum:

The University insures informal opportunities for first-year students to experience diverse ideas and world views in the co-curriculum through three complementary program venues. While the organizing principles of the venues are discipline-specific and related to degree Programs of Study, the events are inclusive, publicized, and readily available to all interested persons on campus.

First, experiences are available through the College of Fine Arts and Communication Artist-in-Residency Program. The Program selection criteria "...mindfully include[s] members of diverse or minority populations in its selection pool...", thereby bringing an average of six artists or groups to campus annually who interact with students in master classes, for informal presentations, and through performances that are free of charge, publicized, and open to all students. Past resident artists include Denyce Graves (singer), Ly Bolia (film director), Melissa King (writer), Heather McHugh (poet), Ellen Gilchrist (writer), Judith Viorst (writer), Terence Blanchard (musician), Edward James Olmos (actor), Jennifer Christman (writer), Joan Schirle (actress), Mary Lou Belli (television director), Ann Coulter (political commentator), Cherish the Ladies (musical group), Martha Ann Selby (translator), Medieval Art of India (art exhibition of Indian bronze and basalt stone steles), Gerald L.

Brockhurst (historic etchings art exhibition), The Dizzy Gillespie Alumni All-Stars (musical group), Jacob Lawrence: Three Series of Prints (art exhibition of works by black American artist), Syed Akbar Hyder (film critic), Anoushka Shankar (musician), Joan Morris (singer), Sandy Skoglund (photographer, art exhibition), Andrea Hollander Budy (poet), Jennifer Paddock (writer), Basudeb Chakraborti (translator), Arielle Greenberg (poet), Mara Leveritt (writer), Kristin Lewis (singer), Jo McDougall (poet), and Lazlo Tarnay (film director).

Second, departments and entities within the College of Fine Arts and Communication (Art, Music, Mass Communications, Theater, Writing and Rhetoric) annually sponsor art exhibitions, writing seminars, film series, theatrical performances, concerts, and visiting artist workshops that introduce diverse ideas and world views through authorship and content of materials, selected discussion themes, speakers, performers, and selected artists/art objects. Additionally, the annual season of the Reynolds Performance Hall provides an average of ten performance events that introduce diverse ideas and world views by virtue of the subject matter and/or performers. Reynolds Hall performances are free of charge for students.

Third, departments and programs within the College of Liberal Arts annual sponsor seminars, workshops and activity weeks that introduce diverse ideas and world views through the Humanities and World Cultures Institute. The Institute supplements the curricular efforts of the established disciplines by coordinating five minors that cross traditional departmental boundaries: African/African American Studies, Asian Studies, Gender Studies, Latin American Studies, and Southern and Arkansas Studies. Under its Visiting Humanities Scholars program, the Institute hosts specialists in these areas who come to UCA to do workshops for faculty and students or to lecture on topics of interest to students of world cultures. A recent example of the interdisciplinary activities sponsored by the College of Liberal Arts is found in Africa in America Week programming: presentations by playwright and poet Amiri Baraka, workshop with writer Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi, steel drum performances, and film showings of *Amistad*, *Daughters of the Dust*. The African/African-American Studies program, begun at UCA in Fall 2004, is an interdisciplinary major or minor allowing students to combine courses in literature, history, philosophy, religion, music, art, and several other subjects. It “aims to nurture in students an understanding of the diversity that makes for human culture, an understanding that will foster respect for difference,” according to the program brochure.

Fourth, the UCA Honors College High Table program sponsors regular presentations and discussions on social and cultural issues of current and topical interest. Recent programs have included: Tai Chi (principles, practice, and philosophies explained by anthropologist Adam Frank to explore what it means to be “Chinese” in the twenty-first century); African Music (traditional Malawian music used in African culture for politics, education, and communication performed by Dr. Kondwani Phwandaphwanda); Genetic Screening (discussion of the role of the genetic counselor, current uses of genetic screening, and pros and cons by Noelle Agan); and Same-Sex Marriage (discussion of current socio-cultural issues by Paul Hawkins: *An Argument for Equal Rights in America*.)

- Faculty/Staff at the Institution: We do not know the level of interaction between first-year students and faculty/staff at UCA who are individuals from backgrounds and cultures; statistics were requested for the General Education faculty pool, but unavailable. However, as evidenced in the Strategic Thinking Initiative, the University is committed to diversity in the faculty pool, seeking to attract and retain a diverse body of qualified faculty and staff (Goal 4) beginning in AY 2005-2006. In addition, the University Board of Trustees Policy 110 requires that the university compete nationally to build an outstanding faculty and,

through an affirmative action program, it is to seek racial and cultural diversity among faculty.

- Other Students at the Institution: Interaction between first-year students and other UCA students whose backgrounds and cultures differ from their own are structured through five (5) programs.

First, the UCA Intensive English Program links IEP students (freshman and sophomore) with American students (first-year freshman-senior) through: the Conversation Partner Program for weekly one-on-one conversations between the two to improve conversational English skills; exchanges with the College of Education for mini-language and cultural lessons with classes (EDUC 3306); and exchanges with the College of Fine Arts and Communication Basic Oral Communication classes for interviews of IEP students. The Program further encourages informal links between IEP and first-year students by suggesting attendance to and membership in Recognized Student Organizations and the foreign language clubs on campus.

Second, the Office of International Programs links international students with American students (first-year freshman-senior) through annual orientation programming that assists them in meeting other students/faculty/staff, and through international students who participate as Orientation Leaders for American first-year students. Further, a special section of the required class, Introduction to US Culture and Higher Education (University 1100), was introduced in Fall 2005 for freshmen international students in order to address the unique needs of those visiting and studying in the U.S. for the first time. However, while the special section serves a laudable purpose, it also serves to separate those students from interacting with others in traditional University 1100 classes.

Third, the Recognized Student Organizations coordinated by the Student Government Association provide numerous options for students of diverse backgrounds to meet people of like mind and expression. However, no formal infrastructure for exchanges between members of such groups exists; therefore exchanges are by necessity informal.

Fourth, the Office of Housing and Residence Life doesn't provide a system-wide formal structure through which first-year students interact with those whose backgrounds and cultures different from their own. However, the vision statement within the Housing and Residence Life mission includes the phrase: "seek to understand, respect, and celebrate our differences." (The Office sponsors the Sophomore Year Experience, which more specifically addresses diversity issues.) However, in Residential College settings, co-educational learning communities in which students and their professors interact closely with one another, opportunities are made available to first-year students through programming that introduces them to other cultures: for example, field trips to Heifer Project International and work with Habitat for Humanity. Freshmen are encouraged to apply. The Residential College program expectations for graduates include a social component that requires students to: "...demonstrate a sense of commitment to local and global concerns; contribute their time, talents, and efforts in service to the community; and recognize themselves as part of a diverse and ever-changing world."

Fifth, the Department of Minority Services provides the Transitions Workshop program specifically for first-year students. The program informally introduces them to individuals from backgrounds and cultures different from their own. The Workshop also pairs freshmen students with upper-classman peer advisors to help introduce them to the university faculty, staff and students, and to campus activities and organizations, all of which give evidence of

diversity and informal opportunities for interaction.

In addition to these programs, the University—as indicated in its *Strategic Framework*—is committed to increasing exchanges between students of different backgrounds by increasing the diversity of the student population. The *Framework* recommends formulation of a recruitment plan to address this objective by AY 2005-2006. Common Data Sets for 2004-2005, Enrollment by Racial/Ethnic Categories identifies in the first time, first year population: 30 non-resident aliens, 370 black, non-Hispanic, 10 American Indian/Alaskan Native, 40 Asian/Pacific Islander, 41 Hispanic, 1669 White, non-Hispanic, and 75 Race/Unknown.

- Individuals Outside the Institution: Interaction between first-year students and individuals outside the institution whose backgrounds and cultures different from their own are formally structured through co-curricular events (See PI 7.1 Diverse Ideas), and informally available according to the follow two avenues: orientation programming, and service work and programming through RSOs (Recognized Student Organizations).
- Current situation: The University conveys standards to first-year students regarding participation in an open and civil campus community in traditional and informal ways. Standards of Student Conduct are clearly outlined in the Student Handbook, available online and by printed copy, that give students notice of non-academic prohibited conduct while at UCA. Offenses are numerated on pages 87-90 and refer specifically to civil behavior by addressing procedures for resolving issues of racial or sexual harassment, coarse or abusive language and displays, and hazing. Pages 112-114 outline the Sexual Harassment Policy and procedures for resolution of offenses.
- In 2005, the University created a staff position in the Office of Student Services, Educational Seminar Coordinator, to address campus sensitivity training needs on an invitational basis per request by University faculty and staff. While no formal proactive University attendance requirement exists for student training in diversity/tolerance or sexual harassment, the Seminar Coordinator provides workshops and seminars on an invitational basis to first-year students and upperclassmen who work with first-year students through four venues.

First, Residence Hall Coordinators and Residential College Masters request training for student desk workers and mentors/resident assistants. Second, the Office of Minority Services sponsors regularly scheduled invitational training workshops for mentors in the Minority Mentor program, and fraternity and sorority members in the Greeks Lead seminars. Second, the University College secures sexual harassment training for International Student sections. Third, the Admissions Office sponsors diversity training for student Ambassadors who conduct Bear Facts Day tours, and members of the Student Orientation Staff who conduct Welcome Week orientation programs and the Summer Orientation & Academic Registration (S.O.A.R.) programs, six of which are offered annually for first-year students. Finally, the Educational Seminar Coordinator publicizes and conducts sessions on Diversity and Sexual Harassment on a regular basis to all UCA students on campus as well as on-line through the UCA website (the latter not yet widely publicized). The majority of attendees are upperclassmen who are work-study students or students involved in Recognized Student Organizations. Examples of training workshop currently being offered include: Diversity I - Open to all UCA employees and students to cover the concept of individual Cultural Identities and our Cultural Filters (how we see others), and discuss Diversity Fouls on campus—how to prevent them from occurring and how to respond to them; and Diversity II - Open to all UCA employees and students to cover the issue of respect and creating a “safe” environment to discuss difficult diversity issues, centering on “trigger” words we use or overhear on campus that cause an individual to shudder.

Areas of Concern:

- 1. How do we build a better culture of participation on campus that would systemically affect and encourage first-year students to attend the informal opportunities for experiencing diverse ideas and world views through performances, seminars, film series, and/or art exhibitions?
 2. How can we more effectively publicize such events? How can we improve communication with all groups of students through email, campus and departmental websites, and printed publicity?
 3. How do we inspire first-year students to develop a sense of ownership of, or participation in, the planning and completion of these events as they continue at UCA?
 4. What follow-up activities or evaluative tools are in place to measure the impact of activities and events related diverse ideas and world views on first-year, or any-year, students?
- 1. How best to support the Administration and the Strategic Thinking Initiative goals of increasing diverse populations of students and faculty/staff.
 2. How to collect info about ethnicity of first-year students in a timely and inclusive fashion: application forms, by law, and students aren't required to include or complete ethnicity demographic fields. This prohibits prompt availability of support services or programs for students.
 3. How can we meet the need for specific educational programs for students of different backgrounds while not separating them from others in University 1100 courses? Who has the information to identify the course most conducive to all-student interaction?
 4. How and when to recommend commitment of resources and administrative time to initiate formal infrastructures for interaction between groups of students through Residence Hall life (similar to the Sophomore Year Experience), RSOs and Minority Services programming.
 5. How best to encourage campus-wide participation in programs initiated by the Intensive English Program and International Programs.
- 1. How can we assess the breadth and depth of uncivil student proclivities? (NOTE: an online diversity survey has been conducted by graduate students for UCA; the results will be available 5/10/06 (<http://survey.uca.edu/ss/wsb.dll/Jlong/diversitysurvey.htm>)).
 2. How can we encourage and affirm positive, tolerant, and civil behaviors in our student leaders who work with first-year students (orientation, student government, student activities board, etc.)? Can we require training for appointment to positions of responsibility?
 3. What is the best avenue through which to reach the greatest number of first-year students with programming that sensitizes them to civil behaviors, tolerance, and good communication (University 1100, orientation groups/programs, or residence halls)?
 4. What are the most efficient and effective programs for modeling and rewarding civil behaviors in the campus community?
 5. How can we tap into unofficial off-campus web-based communication forms—such as

Face Book, My Space, or blogs—to encourage alternatives to and critical analysis of hate speech, racism, and misogynist expression?

Summary of Evidence:

- The Committee used the following sources for information regarding initiatives for first-year students to experience diverse ideas and world views: the University 1100 required first-year course description (<http://www.uca.edu/ubulletin/03/3090501.html>); Table (“Diversity and General Education at UCA) summarizing the number of freshman classes that address global issues and cultural/religion diversity; Institutional Research statistics for first-year student populations at UCA (<http://www.uca.edu/research/>); web link for Recognized Student Organizations: descriptions and process for joining (<http://www.uca.edu/org/>); web link for Office of Minority Services (<http://www.uca.edu/newsites/minorityservices/>); Student Activities Board campus-wide events for all students: films, performances, presentations (<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/student/activities/committees/committee.asp?cmt=music#evt166>); web link for College of Fine Arts and Communication programming (<http://www.uca.edu/cfac/>); web link for Reynolds Performance Hall programming (<http://www.uca.edu/publicappearances/>); web link for Baum Gallery programming (<http://www.uca.edu/cfac/baum/>); web link for UCA Theater Season (<http://www.uca.edu/cfac/mct/theatre/season/season.htm>); web link for UCA literary programming (<http://www.uca.edu/cfac/wrsp/literaryevents.htm>); web link for College of Liberal Arts, Humanities and World Cultures Institute diversity programming (<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/libart/hwci/>); and African/American Studies area (<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/libart/AfricanAmericaWeek.htm>).
- The Committee used the following sources for information regarding structured opportunities for interaction: Strategic Thinking Initiative statements affirming diverse/inclusive hiring practices (<http://www.uca.edu/sti/index.php?itemid=583>); Institutional Research statistics of student population percentages (<http://www.uca.edu/research/media/documents/CDS/CDS2004/cds2004-05.pdf>); email communications with Lynn Ramage Schaefer, Director, Intensive English Program, Department of World Languages, Literatures, & Cultures; and with Lisa H. Shoemake, Assistant Director of International Programs; web course syllabus for the College of Education (EDUC 3309 Cultural Perspectives: Families, Schools, & Community Partnerships; EDUC 5340 Cultural Diversity: Applications for Classrooms & Workplaces) (<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/coe/msit/syllabi.htm>); web course syllabus for the Masters in Business Administration (MBA 6312 Multicultural Communications) <http://www.uca.edu/gbulletin/03/30102.html>; web course syllabus for general education requirements (1100 UNIVERSITY STUDIES) (<http://www.uca.edu/ubulletin/03/3090501.html>); web-based purpose statements of RSOs: note religious, ethnic, political, cultural, and gender-oriented student organizational goals (<http://www.uca.edu/org/purposes.htm>); web information on Housing and Residence Life mission/vision statement and diversity statement (<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/admin/housing/Mission.htm>); web-based Residential College mission statement (<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/undergradstudies/Residential/mission.htm>); and web-based information about Minority Services programming (<http://www.uca.edu/newsites/minorityservices/mentorship.html>)
- The Committee used the following sources for information regarding institutional communication of the standards it expects for participants in an open and civil campus community for first-year students: Web link to Student Handbook, Standards of Student Conduct (<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/student/handbook>); Email communications with Charlotte Strickland, Educational Seminar Coordinator, Email communications with Penny

Hatfield, Office of Admissions; web link for the Office of Student Services (<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/student/>); web links for Orientation programming (<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/student/orientation/STUDENTORIENTATIONSTAFF.htm>; <http://www.uca.edu/divisions/student/orientation/INTROPAGE.htm> <http://www.uca.edu/divisions/student/orientation/WELCOMEWEEKPAGE.htm>); web link for the Office of Minority Services (<http://www.uca.edu/newsites/minorityservices/>)

Recommended Grade: B

Recommended Action Items:

- Communicate (*High priority*)

Inform providers of events and activities that promote diverse ideas and world views of the best practices for informing first-year students of programming: poster distribution points (Residence Halls, Student Center, campus bulletin boards), campus publicity contact info (Echo newspaper, KCON, SCTV, Channel 6), and campus information sources (Student Handbook calendar, campus web/home pages, UCAToday).

Increase reportage of events diverse ideas and world views after the fact by providing follow-up news articles, interviews, surveys, and video clips of responses to the events for public viewing and reading: goal is to evaluate, emphasize and prolong the influence of each event.

Encourage providers of events and activities that promote diverse ideas and world views to publicize their programs in first-year materials (SOAR, Welcome Week, University 1100), and to inform first year students of available committee participation in planning and completion of such events as upperclassmen.

- Emphasize Training (*High priority*)

Support the Administration and the Strategic Thinking Initiative goals related to increasing diverse populations of students and faculty/staff.

Support and assist the Office of Admissions in their effort to collect information about ethnicity of first-year students in order to connect a larger percentage of students to available services.

Support and Encourage the Office of Admissions to continue and emphasize training of their student leadership (SOAR, Welcome Week, Ambassadors) to advocate inclusive group behaviors and inclusion of all ethnicities in orientation groupings.

Cooperate with International Programs and the Intensive Language Program to integrate students with varying backgrounds in classroom projects and events.

Support and Encourage the General Education Program to identify a first-year course or opportunity through which students of different backgrounds can interact in a comfortable and inclusive manner with supervision and role modeling.

Recommend and support the commitment of resources and administrative time to initiate formal infrastructures for interaction between groups of students through Residence Hall life (similar to the Sophomore Year Experience), Recognized Student Organizations and

Minority Services programming (Greek Life, Mentorship Programs, and Black History Month).

- Assess and Intervene (*High priority*)

Support and encourage official surveys that assess the breadth and depth of student understanding of civil behaviors.

Encourage and affirm positive, tolerant, and civil behaviors in our student leaders who work with first-year students (orientation, student government, student activities board, etc.) by requiring training for appointment to positions of responsibility, and by intentional communication of those behaviors as a condition for participation.

Invite and support Housing and Residential Life and the Office of Student Services to determine the best venue (course, program, or series of activities) through which to reach the greatest number of first-year students to inform them and model civil behaviors, tolerance, and good communication (University 1100, orientation groups/programs, or residence halls).

Invite and support Housing Residential Life and the Office of Student Services to create a campus-wide or program-based recognition award for civil behavior in the campus community.

Invite and support campus publicity and campus programming entities to encourage articles and events that analyze and address the negative effects of, and to find alternatives to, hate speech, racism, and misogynist expression.

Invite and support campus Information Technology to identify alternatives for campus-wide web-based communication, to avoid student dependence on unofficial off-campus web-based communication forms such as Face Book, My Space, or blogs.

Roles & Purposes Dimension Report

Foundations Institutions promote student understanding of the various roles and purposes of higher education, both for the individual and society. These roles and purposes include knowledge acquisition for personal growth, learning to prepare for future employment, learning to become engaged citizens, and learning to serve the public good. Institutions encourage first-year students to examine systematically their motivation and goals with regard to higher education in general and to their own college/university. Students are exposed to the value of general education as well as to the value of more focused, in-depth study of a field or fields of knowledge (i.e., the major).

Committee Leader:

Wendy Holbrook

Committee Members:

Bill Lammers
Cheryl Lyons
Sam Buchanan

Current Situation:

- There are several departments that program specifically for freshmen students. The academic programs are coordinated through the (1) Division of Undergraduate Studies (general education programs), (2) Housing and Residence Life (residential college), (3) The Division of Student Services (Minority Services, Career Services, Leadership Development,

Counseling Center, Student Health, Intramural Sports, Disability Support), (4) Honors College (academic and residential programs).

- Housing and Residential life strive to create learning communities through the Residential College Program, Freshman Year Experience, Sophomore Year Experience, and various other programs. In their mission statement, four values are identified; diversity, excellence, integrity and loyalty. Students who choose to participate are exposed to programming that mirrors these values. However, there is no policy that mandates student participation. Freshmen are required to live on campus, but they do not have to participate in a specific learning community. Therefore a student could live on campus and never benefit from the programs offered.
- Student Services by definition is charged with providing quality programming for a broad spectrum of personal development. Health care, intramurals, leadership development, diversity training and community service, are just a few of the offerings. The mission statement reads: *“The mission of the Division of Student Services is to provide for the growth and development of the “whole” student and enhance the learning environment.”* There are 15 departments focused on a specific area of student development.
- There are over 80 registered student organizations, focused on everything from academics to Frisbees. Each of these organizations are required to meet certain membership requirements and have a faculty or staff advisors. Students have numerous opportunities for personal growth.
- To take advantage of the tremendous opportunities in Housing, Student Services and similar departments, students must self-identify and initiate the registration process. Many of the opportunities are time sensitive and require guidance from high school counselors prior to the beginning of classes. Once a student is enrolled, the lack of self advocacy skills and good communication skills often prevent them from participating or even being aware of personal growth opportunities.
- In regard to academics, all UCA students must complete a set of general education objectives that have been designed to provide students with a breadth and depth of study to prepare them to be an educated citizen of the world. General Education courses are encouraged to include the knowledge, skills, and values objectives in their course syllabi. Furthermore, an increasing number of courses in the General Education program, the Honors College program, and departmental programs include a service learning component that supports the goals of students becoming engaged citizens and serving the public good. Finally, the residential colleges emphasize the value of academics, learning, and service. A portion of their programming includes special academic sessions and philanthropic endeavors in the community.
- Perceptions of students and faculty were assessed with a survey that included questions regarding the roles and purposes dimension. In general, UCA students and faculty/staff believe that UCA does a moderate to moderately good job of helping students to increase their knowledge for future employment, increase their knowledge for personal growth, contribute to the betterment of society, be involved in the community, achieve life goals, and understand the reasons for getting a college education. Generally speaking, the relative degree to which faculty/staff believe they are providing information is congruent with the degree to which students believe they are receiving information. One discrepancy appears to be in the area of how college can help students achieve their life goals. Faculty/staff believe that they are doing a good job of providing this information whereas students rated this item last and believe that they are only receiving a moderate amount of information in this area.
- The survey data also revealed the following:
 - Hispanic students, students not involved in activities, and students working more than 30 hrs per week were least likely to perceive that faculty/staff discussed how college can help achieve life goals.

- Assistant and Associate Professors were least likely to advise 1st-year students on how college can help achieve life goals.
- American-Indian student, Hispanic students, students who rarely studied, students who plan to transfer from UCA, students with an unknown future, students not involved in activities, and students who work many hours per week were least likely to perceive that faculty/staff helped students to examine personal reasons for getting a college education.
- Students not involved in activities were least likely to perceive that UCA helped them to understand how attending college increases knowledge for future employment.
- Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and staff in Student Affairs were least likely to help 1st-year students explore their motivation for getting a college education in terms of preparation for future employment.
- Students who spend only 1 day on campus per week and students not involved in activities were least likely to perceive that UCA helped them to understand how attending college increases knowledge for personal growth.
- Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and staff in Student Affairs were least likely to help 1st-year students explore their motivation for getting a college education in terms of knowledge for personal growth.
- Students who spend only 1 day on campus per week, students not involved in activities, and students who study 0 hrs per week were least likely to perceive that UCA helped them to understand how attending college prepares them to be an involved member of the community.
- Assistant Professors were least likely to help 1st-year students explore their motivation for getting a college education in terms of active engagement in the community.
- Students who spend only 1 day on campus per week, students not involved in activities, and students who study 0 hrs per week were least likely to perceive that UCA helped them to understand how attending college prepares them to contribute to the betterment of society.
- Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and staff in Student Affairs were least likely to help 1st-year students explore their motivation for getting a college education in terms of contributions to the betterment of society.

Areas of Concern:

- The roles and purposes of an education at the University of Central Arkansas are reflected in the many programs and opportunities available to students. However, the roles and purposes are rarely stated explicitly. Thus, students are often aware of *what* they are doing and what they are learning but are often not aware of *why* they are doing and learning. Programs on campus could improve the degree to which they explain why their component of the college experience is important to the student.
- Students must self-identify to gain access to many programs designed to promote personal growth. Although this is a logical approach, often students are not aware of what is available to them, and, even if they know what is available, they are not able to discern how they would benefit from participating.
- There is no coordinated effort across programs to make explicit the value of the specific college experiences to the short-term and long-term development of the student.
- Several subgroups of students are less aware of the roles and purposes of their college education. These subgroups include Hispanic Students, American-Indian students, students who spend only 1 day on campus per week, students not involved in activities, students who work many hours per week, and students who study 0 hrs per week.
- Assistant and Associate Professors are some of the most knowledgeable and academically active individuals on our campus and would be a valuable resource to students. However, survey data suggests that they do not spend a great deal of time communicating with students regarding the roles and purposes of the college experience.

Summary of Evidence:

The following numbered items from the Evidence Library provide the basis for the subcommittee's conclusions: 7, 10, 12, 13, 16, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31.

Recommended Grade: C-

Recommended Action Items:

- Coordinated effort to advertise the benefits of a college education (*High priority*)
The fact that the college experiences at the University of Central Arkansas increase knowledge for personal growth, prepare students for future employment, help students become engaged citizens, and help students learn to serve the public good should be explicitly stated across programs and levels of the university. There should be a coordinated effort to advertise the benefits of a college education so that students realize the value of attending college and being an active student on campus. The messages should be clear on our university website, in our advertising materials, during orientation, on our course syllabi, in our housing contracts, etc.
- Faculty development should include pedagogical strategies that emphasize the why of learning (*High priority*)
Faculty development should include pedagogical strategies that emphasize the why of learning in addition to the what. These strategies include application of concepts to real-world situations, reflection on the meaning of knowledge to personal understanding, discussion of the value of educated citizens in the global community, service learning, and other cooperative arrangements with employers/organizations in the community.
- Tenure-track assistant and associate professors should be rewarded for engaging with 1st-year students (*High priority*)
This would include teaching lower-level courses, serving as advisors for student organizations, and advising
- FYE Advisory Council (*High priority*)
Each department that is charged with programming for freshmen should provide one representative to serve on the council. This council should be charged with coordinating efforts of all involved. This would include a developing a “one-stop” shopping approach in marketing and advertising everything that is available

Improvement Dimension Report

Foundations Institutions conduct assessment and maintain associations with other institutions and relevant professional organizations in order to achieve ongoing first-year improvement. This assessment is specific to the first year as a unit of analysis—a distinct time period and set of experiences, academic and otherwise, in the lives of students. It is also linked systemically to the institutions' overall assessment. Assessment results are an integral part of institutional planning, resource allocation, decision-making, and ongoing improvement of programs and policies as they affect first-year students. As part of the enhancement process and as a way to achieve ongoing improvement, institutions are familiar with current practices at other institutions as well as with research and scholarship on the first college year.

Committee Leaders:

Sally Roden
Jonathan Glenn

Committee Members:

Donna Bowman
Shoudong Feng

Wendy Holbrook
Larry James
Barbara Satterfield

Current Situation:

- The fairly low ratings assigned by above reflect our sense of assessment related to most such initiatives on campus. In a few areas, assessment is a routine part of doing business and is carried out as systematically as possible. In other areas, assessment is either not happening or is “path of least resistance” assessment. Campus wide assessment (e.g., NSSE, which surveys both FY and SR students) is used, but has some problems (low response rates, little use of results).
- Uneven assessment practices as well as lack of funding and staff resources inhibit the ability of programs to benefit from assessment information. In those areas where assessment information is available, it is often not shared as widely as it could/should be.
- Inputs/expectations are often articulated, but assessment of outcomes is extremely limited and is not used to increase campus understanding in these areas.
- A small number of faculty and staff regularly attend higher education meetings with a focus on the first year. The FoE initiative has been UCA’s first comprehensive venture into a multi-campus initiative focused on the first year; others include the National Collegiate Honors Council and the Southern Regional Learning Communities meetings. Isolated attempts have been made to bring external experts to campus and to communicate campus-based expertise.

Areas of Concern:

- UCA tends to do satisfaction assessment rather than student-outcomes assessment (because satisfaction assessment is easier to do).
- We don’t know how to collect population-wide assessment without overburdening certain courses (e.g., WRTG 1310) with multiple surveys.
- Lack of specialized support--appropriate staff and other resources--for assessment processes.
- Uneven assessment practices and quality of results
- Poor documentation of improvement or confirmation based on assessment results
- Lack of systematic assessment and failure to use the assessment results that do exist.
- Lack of funds to send faculty and staff to higher education meetings.
- Lack of central leadership/coordination to encourage participation in such meetings and initiatives.
- Institutional follow-through: often big projects (like FoE) are completed and filed with no action.
- Lack of campus wide response to findings.
- Lack of campus recognition of work on projects like FoE.

Summary of Evidence:

The FoE executive committee’s judgments in this dimension are based on dimension subcommittee findings, student and faculty/staff surveys, and the committee’s collective knowledge. A selection of evaluation/assessment summaries have been added to the evidence library.

Recommended Grade: D

Recommended Action Items:

- Assessment of FY Initiatives (*High priority*)
Develop an annual cycle of assessment for UCA’s FY programming, identify resources and

processes necessary to implement the assessment cycle, and ensure that it is implemented and used to inform the campus and its communities and to improve the FY experience. The proposed FY director and committee will be responsible for this action plan.

- Make the FY experience a campus priority (*High priority*)
Provide resources to involve greater numbers of faculty and staff in higher education meetings and other initiatives related to the FY. Ensure that faculty and staff are rewarded for their participation in such events and initiatives.
- Public affirmation of the importance of the FY experience (*High priority*)
The university and its administration will publicly affirm UCA's commitment to the importance of the FY experience and will launch a campus campaign to elevate the visibility of the FY experience as a university priority.

Policy Center Feedback

Philosophy Dimension

To: University of Central Arkansas' Foundations Task Force

From: Kathleen Morley, Policy Center on the First Year of College

Date: May 20, 2006

RE: Philosophy Dimension Report

Congratulations are in order for the successful completion of the Philosophy Dimension Report and for the proposed campus philosophy statement! I offer comments below for your consideration. As I am indicating in my feedback to all reports, it is a basic premise of this project that the campus is in the best position to assess its standing on each of these Dimensions. Please consider my feedback food for thought. There is no need to respond to my comments.

- The key finding is that there is not currently a written campus-wide philosophy statement in place, but that there are written philosophy statements at the department level. The University of Central Arkansas is certainly not alone in this. In fact, several participating institutions lack written department first-year philosophy statements.
- I appreciate the value of presenting a proposed philosophy statement along with the Philosophy Dimension report. I encourage the committee and/or task force to consider involving key campus groups in the development of the final first-year philosophy statement. In a way, involving the broader campus community in the development of the statement is the first step in the dissemination effort. It is important that key campus constituencies have ownership of this statement. As such, I also encourage the task force to develop a plan for disseminating the philosophy statement.
- As the committee and/or task force moves from a proposed to a final philosophy statement, I encourage using the Policy Center's rubric for a campus-wide philosophy for the first year (<http://www.fyfoundations.org/doc.aspx?id=167>). Examples of philosophy statements from a variety of campuses are included on this web link.
- In addition, the committee and/or task force may find the Foundations survey data helpful as it communicates the value of a first-year philosophy statement. For example, 74% of faculty/staff reported that a formalized institutional philosophy for the first year of college is valuable to a "high" or "very high" degree.
- Once a statement is developed through a broad range of input, approved through proper channels, and widely disseminated, the University of Central Arkansas will be among a very select group of institutions who have publicly proclaimed their intentions for the first year of college.

I appreciate the contribution that the Philosophy Dimension Committee has made to this project. The report explores an important issue and offers recommended action items

that I hope will prove beneficial to your campus. Again, it is not necessary to respond to my comments.

Organization Dimension

To: University of Central Arkansas Foundations Task Force

From: Kathleen Morley, Policy Center on the First Year of College

Date: May 21, 2006

RE: Organization Dimension Report

My thanks go to the members of the Organization Dimension committee for producing a succinct, effective report on Central Arkansas' organization of the first year of college. Below is my response to this report. Please understand that these comments are NOT a critique of the judgments made by the task force. The core value of the Foundations project is that the task force is better positioned to evaluate the institution's achievement of each of the Dimensions of Excellence than any external evaluator.

- Central Arkansas is not alone in reporting that it lacks a comprehensive first-year structure that provides oversight and alignment of first-year efforts. Among the Four-Year Founding Institutions that piloted this work, the Organization Dimension was the area in which institutions reported implementing the most number of changes.
- The report indicates that one area of concern is that “resource and staffing constraints and the lack of central leadership limit partnering.” Has the committee and/or task force considered ways in which partnering can begin under the current circumstances? Additional resources and staffing that allow for central leadership can significantly strengthen the first year of college, but it is always important to consider what can be done in current circumstances.
- As the committee and/or task force considers ways to develop partnering, it may be beneficial to consider the role of faculty. I noticed that 52% of faculty/staff reported in the Foundations of Excellence survey that as faculty/staff members, they have a voice in decisions about first-year issues to a slight degree or not at all. I decided to look at how instructors responded. 55% of instructors indicated that they had a voice to a slight degree or not at all. Would it be beneficial for the committee and/or task force to consider ways to give faculty a voice in decision-making about first-year issues?
- I fully support the committee's recommendation to develop a structure to integrate and coordinate the first year of college. The aspirational model for first-year excellence, vetted by over three-hundred colleges and universities, calls for structures and policies that provide oversight and alignment of all first-year efforts. In addition, I appreciate the Organizational Dimension committee's approach of including evaluation of first-year initiatives among the responsibilities proposed for the Director of First Year responsibilities. This approach institutionalizing the work of the first year and reinforces continual improvement.

Congratulations for the completion of a strong report! The recommended action item addresses the structural constraints identified in the narrative and has the potential to have a significant influence on the first year of college. Again, there is no need to respond to my comments.

Learning Dimension

To: University of Central Arkansas' Foundations Task Force

From: Kathleen Morley, Policy Center on the First Year of College

Date: May 30, 2006

RE: Learning Dimension Report

Congratulations to the University of Central Arkansas' Learning Dimension Committee and Task Force for the submission of a strong report. The report is based on multiple sources of evidence, including interviews with program administrators. It is clearly linked to the performance indicators. And, provides a clear narrative of the degree to which Central Arkansas is or is not achieving the aspirational standards of the Learning Dimension. Please note that while I offer comments below, they are intended to be food for thought. As I am indicating in my feedback to all reports, it is a basic premise of this project that the campus is in the best position to assess its standing on each of these Dimensions. Below, I offer a few thoughts for your consideration. There is no need to respond to my comments.

– The committee did a very good job of identifying current venues for addressing learning goals and outcomes and presenting them as areas upon which the University could build. For example, the notion that learning goals for the first year could be generated from General Education learning goals, as well as the use of the assessment currently done in Writing as a model for others to consider. Identifying and using centers of excellence to strengthen University programs, practices, and policies can be an effective place to further enhance quality.

– The report indicates that “satisfaction with instruction is very high in the student survey.” I encourage the committee and/or task force to celebrate these results and communicate them broadly. It could be particularly beneficial to communicate these results to students. If students associate the University with quality, they will likely want to associate themselves with the institution.

– Under Areas of Concern, the committee describes the need to connect the “level of class work and the preparation of students before entering the University.” With an increasing percentage of first-year students in higher education needing developmental courses upon entering college, the level of preparation of students in first-year courses may have changed over time at any given institution. A follow-up discussion to deciding how best to assess the level of first-year student preparation, may be how does the institution align curriculum and pedagogy to meet first-year student needs? Is there a need to work with feeder institutions to better align the curriculum between secondary schools and the University?

– I applaud the recommendation to develop a best practices database. There is so much to be gained from a common pool of knowledge. Faculty or staff who attend conferences or workshops on first-year related issues might be able to add to such a database.

– The report also recommends that the University “assess specific pedagogies.” The documentation of what instructional methods are currently being used could be quite beneficial. Has the committee and/or task force considered that some faculty might be concerned about being individually evaluated based on these data? Would it be beneficial to put the assessment of pedagogies in the context of faculty development?

– Finally, there were several areas of concern that were not addressed in the recommended action items section (e.g., the lack of standards for math placement, no assessment in emerging programs). Did the committee intentionally choose not to address these items? The recommended action items will likely be reviewed separately from the Dimension reports. As such, any areas of concern that the committee and/or task force particularly want to communicate should probably be addressed in the recommended action items section.

I appreciate the research, discussion, and thinking that went into this report. My thanks to the Learning Dimension Committee and Task Force for their contribution to this important work. Again, it is not necessary to respond to my comments.

Faculty Dimension

To: University of Central Arkansas’s Foundations Task Force

From: Kathleen Morley, Policy Center on the First Year of College

Date: May 2, 2006

RE: Faculty Dimension Report

The University of Central Arkansas’s Foundations of Excellence task force and Faculty Dimension committee have produced a strong, succinct, effective report. The report demonstrates careful consideration of the key components of this Dimension. And, the action items clearly flow from the information provided in earlier sections of the report. Please note that while I offer comments below, they are intended to be food for thought. As I am indicating in my feedback to all reports, it is a basic premise of this project that the campus is in the best position to assess its standing on each of these Dimensions. There is no need to respond to my comments.

– The report indicates that senior academic leaders encourage faculty to understand campus-wide learning goals, characteristics of U. Central Arkansas first-year students, and broad trends and issues in the first year to a low degree. However, this is not discussed in the current situation. Does the task force feel that the recommendation to establish a Centralized Office will address these low ratings? Could senior academic leaders be invited to suggest ways in which they can encourage faculty to address learning goals, student characteristics, and broad trends related to first-year students? It is in the interest of first-year students for senior academic leaders to develop and support an informed campus-wide perspective on the first year of college.

– The report indicates that different units on campus address learning goals, student characteristics and broad trends related to first-year students. The report also indicates that there are inconsistencies at the unit-level in implementation of policies and practices related to first-year students. I encourage the committee and/or task force to provide more detail regarding what is successfully communicated or encouraged by some units. This information may be beneficial to other units. As the committee indicates in its recommended action items, deans and chairs can play a pivotal role in supporting consistent implementation.

– Under areas of concern, the report indicates that “there is no system that ensures that unit-level administrators encourage their faculty” to address learning goals, student characteristics, and broad trends related to first-year students. I applaud the committee’s approach of identifying a need for a system to address the concern rather than focusing on individual behavior alone. The Foundations of Excellence project’s emphasis on understanding what the institution does presents a new perspective in the efforts to address first-year student needs. The institution has the ability to put in place systems that can make a difference in first-year student success.

– Finally, the report indicates that there is a concern regarding “expected low teaching evaluation” in large first-year classes. I encourage the committee and/or task force to explore this concern empirically. Are there certain large first-year classes correlated to low teaching evaluations? Generally, there is not a correlation between student satisfaction reported on teaching evaluations and class size. Some first-year students enjoy the potential anonymity of large classes. However, it is important to document and discuss what is happening on your specific campus.

Congratulations on the successful completion of the Faculty Dimension report! The report was well supported by an excellent use of evidence beyond the surveys. We strongly encourage campuses to utilize multiple sources of evidence as was done here. Again, it is not necessary to respond to my comments.

Transitions Dimension

To: University of Central Arkansas’ Foundations Task Force

From: Kathleen Morley, Policy Center on the First Year of College

Date: May 21, 2006

RE: Transitions Dimension Report

Congratulations to the Transitions Dimension Committee and Task Force for submitting an excellent report! The report reflects a careful, complete assessment of the main components of the Transitions Dimension, raising a number of concerns, and offering a series of recommendations that naturally flow from the narrative and supportive evidence. Please note that while I offer comments below, they are intended to be food for thought. As I am indicating in my feedback to all reports, it is a basic premise of this project that the campus is in the best position to assess its standing on each of these Dimensions. Below, I offer a few thoughts for your consideration. There is no need to respond to my comments.

– One of the strengths of this report is that it identifies components of the first year that are working well, e.g., Residential Colleges. Similarly, the committee and/or task force proposes recommendations that build upon existing programming, e.g., changes to orientation, the expansion of second-year mentoring, and a shift to a focus of service learning on first-year students. This entails strengthening what is in place which will likely make it easier to integrate changes from the new action items.

– I was pleased to learn that the University of Central Arkansas has live-in faculty mentors for its Residential Colleges. It contributes to faculty/student interaction and reinforces what makes the residential college experience unique.

– The finding regarding the connection to academic support services was quite striking, i.e., that fewer than half of any significant subgroup of students connects with academic support services. I suspect that this is the case at many institutions, yet it goes unexamined. I applaud the committee's careful examination of this issue. The report raises an important question regarding whether or not academic support services can realistically meet the genuine need of students with current staffing and resources. The University of Central Arkansas is certainly not alone in facing this situation.

– The committee did an excellent job of working with the data. It maximized what could be gleaned from the Foundations of Excellence surveys by examining responses by demographics and it effectively used evidence beyond the surveys.

– The recommended actions items suggest careful consideration of what the institution can do to address the transition needs of first-year students. The first idea of directly communicating to first-year students through the Web is consistent with how today's students seek out information. Also, the recommendation to expand second-year mentoring is consistent with the repeated message in the first-year literature that peers strongly influence first-year students. A strong student mentoring program could be quite beneficial. The challenge, of course, is that personalities do not always match.

– Finally, while there is a recommendation to better integrate faculty into orientation, there is not a recommended action item to address the noted concern of first-year students not connecting to faculty outside of class to a high degree. Was there a reason not to address this particular concern?

I appreciate the effort, deliberation, and assessment this report represents. My thanks go to the committee and task force for their high quality work in this important project. Again, it is not necessary to respond to my comments.

All Students Dimension

To: University of Central Arkansas' Foundations Task Force

From: Kathleen Morley, Policy Center on the First Year of College

Date: May 21, 2006

RE: All Students Dimension Report

The All Students Dimension Committee and Task Force have submitted an outstanding report. This is one of the best All Students Dimension reports I have read. The committee and/or task force approached the report exactly as we had intended, i.e., by focusing on the needs that have to be met rather than on certain classifications of students. The report reflects outstanding use of survey data and other forms of evidence. And, the detailed narrative carefully addresses the key components of the All Students Dimension. I offer comments below for your consideration. As I am indicating in my feedback to all reports, it is a basic premise of this project that the campus is in the best position to assess its standing on each of these Dimensions. Please consider my feedback food for thought. There is no need to respond to my comments.

– Under Current Situation, the report indicates that first-year students who were not classified as remedial/developmental or honors reported the highest scores when asked the degree to which their academic needs were being met. This is an important finding. I assume that non-remedial/developmental and non-honors first-year students represent the bulk of the university's first-year student population. It is certainly good news that the bulk of Central Arkansas first-year students reported the highest scores regarding having their academic needs met.

– The list of services identified in the report that are available to select student subgroups speaks to a high level of institutional intentionality regarding meeting various student needs. That is the goal of the aspirational All Students Dimension. Increased intentionality specific to the first year will likely prove quite beneficial to the campus.

– The Current Situation describes faculty/staff efforts to provide individualized attention to first-year students. As the report later indicates, faculty office hours are often not utilized by first-year students. For this reason, I applaud the use of email by advisors to maintain regular contact with first-year students.

– As I indicated in my feedback to the Transitions Dimension report, I was pleased to learn that the University of Central Arkansas has live-in faculty mentors for its Residential Colleges. It contributes to faculty/student interaction and reinforces what makes the residential college experience unique.

– The recommended action items flow from the description of the current situation and areas of concern. The only exception to this is that the recommendation to maintain highly visible police presence was not referenced in the areas of concern.

– The report recommends establishing a Non-Traditional Student Services Office. How is the committee and/or task force defining non-traditional? Sometimes non-traditional refers to older students. The Current Practices Inventory indicates that only 2% of first-year students at the University of Central Arkansas are over 25 years old. Is a different definition being used here? If not, is the establishment of a new office necessary to meet the needs of this small population? Similarly, is the veteran population sufficient to warrant the establishment of a new office?

– Finally, I applaud the committee and/or task force's recommendations to research best practices. I also encourage the University of Central Arkansas to learn more from other institutions about their experiences. The literature does not always address the implications of applying best practices.

Congratulations for producing a high quality report that should prove to be quite beneficial to your campus! My thanks to the committee and task force for the effort and professionalism that went into this report. Again, there is no need to respond to my comments.

Diversity Dimension

To: University of Central Arkansas' Foundations Task Force

From: Kathleen Morley, Policy Center on the First Year of College

Date: May 21, 2006

RE: Diversity Dimension Report

The Diversity Dimension Committee and Task Force have submitted an outstanding report. The quality of this report is exceptional. This is a comprehensive, extensively researched, and thoughtful report. Please note that while I offer comments below, they are intended to be food for thought. As I am indicating in my feedback to all reports, it is a basic premise of this project that the campus is in the best position to assess its standing on each of these Dimensions. Below, I offer a few thoughts for your consideration. There is no need to respond to my comments.

– The report documents the extensive efforts made by the University of Central Arkansas to assure that first-year students experience diverse ideas and world views. The report describes impressive programming. The university has reason to be proud of its extensive efforts.

– Given the extensive intentional efforts made by the University of Central Arkansas, the results of the Foundations of Excellence Student Survey are surprising. Between 34%-48% of first-year students reported that the degree to which their classroom and out-of-class experiences exposed them to different world cultures, world religions, political perspectives, and social class/economic status was to a slight degree or not at all. The report does not explicitly address these results, but does suggest that more can be done through the series of questions raised in the Areas of Concern section. How has the committee and/or task force specifically addressed these findings?

– The recommended action items emphasize communication, training, and assessment/intervention. I noticed that only one of the fifteen specific recommendations address the curriculum, i.e., encourage the General Education Program to identify a first-year course in which students of different backgrounds can interact. I encourage the committee and/or task force to explore options for addressing exposure to diverse ideas and world views to first-year students within the curriculum. The report indicates that the University Studies course and multiple General Education courses address this need. However, given the results from the student survey, would it be beneficial for the University of Central Arkansas to discuss or perhaps assess the degree to which these course offerings meet the intended goals?

– The recommendation to provide follow-up to events such as interviewing or surveying participants strikes me as different from most, if not all, of the other recommendations.

This recommendation includes an opportunity for first-year students to reflect upon their experiences. Has the committee or task force discussed the degree to which offering first-year students opportunities to discuss and contextualize their experiences with diverse ideas and world views plays a role in student learning related to diversity?

Again, I am absolutely impressed with the degree to which the Diversity Dimension Committee documented and assessed the University of Central Arkansas' standing in relation to this Dimension. Congratulations on a job well done! Remember that it is not necessary to respond to any of my comments.

Roles & Purposes Dimension

To: University of Central Arkansas' Foundations Task Force

From: Kathleen Morley, Policy Center on the First Year of College

Date: May 31, 2006

RE: Roles and Purposes Dimension Report

Congratulations to the Roles and Purposes Dimension Committee and Task Force for submitting a very strong report. This report describes the opportunities offered at the University of Central Arkansas for first-year students to benefit from higher education, effectively uses survey data, and candidly addresses potential areas of improvement. Please note that while I offer comments below, they are intended to be food for thought. As I am indicating in my feedback to all reports, it is a basic premise of this project that the campus is in the best position to assess its standing on each of these Dimensions. Below, I offer a few thoughts for your consideration. There is no need to respond to my comments.

– The report describes the ways in which certain programs reinforce the values of diversity, excellence, integrity and loyalty, and other programs offer first-year students numerous opportunities for personal growth. It further describes how general education objectives are designed to help prepare the first-year student “to be an educated citizen of the world.” As the committee indicates in the areas of concern, these offerings help first-year students benefit from higher education, but do not explicitly help first-year students understand the roles and purposes of higher education in relation to their own motivations for being there.

– The committee indicated that the University of Central Arkansas intentionally provides first-year students with opportunities to examine their personal motivations for pursuing higher education to a very low degree or not at all. Given this, has the committee and/or task force considered expanding its recommendation for faculty development to include strategies for emphasizing “the why of learning” to exploring ways in which the University can intentionally structure opportunities for first-year students to explore their own personal motivations for pursuing higher education? Explaining the benefits of higher education and learning is one thing. Having the first-year students discuss and reflect on what benefits they personally want out of higher education is another.

- The report communicates some very interesting findings. As previously mentioned, the committee did an excellent job of utilizing the survey data. The comparisons by first-year student demographics allow the University to be strategic in addressing student needs.
- The committee assigned high or very high ratings for the degree to which the campus communicates the rationale for its academic requirements. However, the report does not explain the ways in which the campus accomplishes this.
- The first recommended action item indicates that the University should explicitly communicate that the educational experience at the University of Central Arkansas addresses the four roles and purposes for higher education identified in this Dimension. I encourage the committee and/or task force to tailor the communication of these various roles and purposes to the University’s mission and first-year philosophy, i.e., integrate the communication of the roles and purposes of higher education mentioned in the Dimension with the primary values of the University of Central Arkansas.

I appreciate the work that the Roles and Purposes Dimension Committee and Task Force did in producing this data supported thoughtful report. Again, it is not necessary to respond to my comments.

Improvement Dimension

To: University of Central Arkansas’ Foundations Task Force

From: Kathleen Morley, Policy Center on the First Year of College

Date: May 31, 2006

RE: Improvement Dimension Report

My thanks to the Improvement Dimension Committee and Task Force for completing the Improvement Dimension Report. This report describes the status of the current assessment culture on campus and identifies a list of concerns, but does not provide the level of detail typically found in the University of Central Arkansas Dimension reports. Please note that while I offer comments below, they are intended to be food for thought. As I am indicating in my feedback to all reports, it is a basic premise of this project that the campus is in the best position to assess its standing on each of these Dimensions. Below, I offer a few thoughts for your consideration. There is no need to respond to my comments.

- The report indicates that, while not the norm, assessment is a “routine part of doing business” and done systematically in a few areas at the University. I encourage the committee and/or task force to identify these areas as potential models for other departments/programs to consider.
- The report states that the ratings assigned to the performance indicators “reflect our sense of assessment related to most initiatives on campus.” The local knowledge of the committee is very important to the evaluation of each of the Dimensions. However, the report describes conclusions rather than the assessment process that led to the

conclusions. For example, the first performance indicator asks to what degree each of the five initiatives that serve the largest percentage of first-year students. There is no narrative describing the current assessment efforts for any of the five initiatives. The report does note that assessment summaries were added to the evidence library, but only two of assessment summaries refer to the five initiatives. And, there is no interpretation of the value of the evaluation procedures described in the assessment summaries.

– I was pleased to read that the University of Central Arkansas attends National Collegiate Honors Council and the Southern Regional Learning Communities meetings. Participation in such groups provides the opportunity for professional development, networking, and the development of new ideas.

– I encourage the committee and/or task force to use specific Foundations of Excellence Faculty/Staff survey results to strengthen its case for the recommended action items. Note that there are no questions related to the Improvement Dimension on the student survey.

– The report raises important questions about the lack of assessment culture on campus. As you likely know, many institutions have faced resistance to assessment. However, systematic assessment is increasingly becoming the norm at institutions of higher education, particularly given the high degree to which accrediting agencies have embraced assessment. I encourage the committee and/or task force to connect with an institution that has established a culture of assessment.

This report raises important questions about the manner in which the University of Central Arkansas approaches assessment, and more importantly improvement. A culture of assessment or lack thereof has strong implications for first year of college. I appreciate the Improvement Dimension Committee's participation in this project. Again, it is not necessary to respond to my comments.

Evidence

The following list indicates items stored in UCA's Foundations of Excellence Evidence Library, an online repository. The library will be available on the Internet through December 2006 in the Foundations of Excellence "FoETec" tool at <http://www.fyfoundations.org>. A valid username and password are required for access.

- Academic Advising Center (*PDF*)
- Academic Advising Center's web page for incoming freshmen
(<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/undergradstudies/advising/newstudent.htm>)
- Academic Advising for First-Year Students (*PDF*)
- Academic support and family connections report (*doc*)
- Advising main web page
(<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/undergradstudies/advising/>)
- Advising New Student page
(<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/undergradstudies/advising/newstudent.htm>)
- Area objectives for the General Education Program
(<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/gened/objectiv.htm>)
- Ask an Advisor webpage
(http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/undergradstudies/advising/ask_an_advisor2.htm)

- Attitudes and Values objectives of the General Education program
(<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/gened/attitudes.htm>)
- Board Policy 701 (<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/admin/board/policies/701.html>)
- Career Services (*PDF*)
- Center for Academic Success (*PDF*)
- College Algebra exam (*PDF*)
- College Algebra sample quiz (*PDF*)
- College Algebra sample syllabus (*PDF*)
- Computerized Placement webpage
(<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/assess/testing/cpt.htm>)
- Counseling Services (*PDF*)
- Faculty advisors survey: Transitions (*PDF*)
- Faculty non-advisors survey: Transitions (*PDF*)
- Financial Aid Q&A page (<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/admin/finaid/faq.asp>)
- First Year Experience (*PDF*)
- First Year Experience course advertisement
(<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/undergradstudies/figs/FYFS.htm>)
- First Year Seminar objectives and guidelines
(<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/gened/FYFS.htm>)
- First-Year Experience Course (FYFS 1320) (*PDF*)
- Freshman Residency Requirement (*PDF*)
- General Education Committee (*PDF*)
- Honors College “About” webpage
(<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/honors/index1.php?nav=p&sec=pro&pg=about>)
- Housing and Residential Life (*PDF*)
- How to ... page on advising website
(<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/undergradstudies/advising/howtopage.htm>)
- Job Ads (*doc*)
- Leadership Development
(<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/student/leadership/leadershipdevelopment.htm>)
- Memo from the President (*PDF*)
- PowerPoint on how to register for classes (*ppt*)
- Registered Student Organizations-Directory (*PDF*)
- Report: How Freshmen Connect With Other First-Year Students (*doc*)
- Residential College (*PDF*)
- Resources for Students advising web page
(<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/undergradstudies/advising/newstudent.htm>)
- Retention Committee (*PDF*)
- Review of How Entering Freshmen Connect With Faculty Outside The Classroom (*doc*)
- Review of How Entering Freshmen Connect with Upperclassmen (*doc*)
- Sample assessment areas for College Algebra (*PDF*)
- Sample History 1310 syllabus
(<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/history/1310Brodman.htm>)
- Sample History 1320 syllabus
(<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/history/1320jones.htm>)
- Service learning proposal (*doc*)
- Service learning budget (*xls*)
- Skills objectives for the General Education program
(<http://www.uca.edu/divisions/academic/gened/objectivesfortheskills.htm>)
- Speech 1300 course description (*doc*)
- Student survey: Transitions (*PDF*)

- Traditional Learning Communities (*PDF*)
- UCA Admissions main webpage (<http://www.uca.edu/uca/admissions.php>)
- UCA Mission Statement (<http://www.uca.edu/uca/mission.php>)
- UCA Residential Colleges (*PDF*)
- UCA webpage for parents and visitors (<http://www.uca.edu/uca/parentsvisitors.php>)
- UCAN (*PDF*)
- University College (*PDF*)
- University College Main Page (<http://www.uca.edu/ucollege/>)
- University College New Student Page (<http://www.uca.edu/ucollege/newstudents.php>)
- Welcome Week Orientation/SOAR Program (*PDF*)
- Writing 1310 course description (*doc*)
- Writing 1320 course description (*doc*)