

Criterion III

The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.

Chapter 7: *Undergraduate/Graduate Learning*

Introduction

The primary purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that Ball State University is accomplishing its educational mission and document this accomplishment through assessment of student achievement, especially the use of direct measures of assessment. This chapter will document student learning as it takes place in graduate and undergraduate programs, in majors, and in the University Core Curriculum; it will generalize where possible about the results of that assessment; it will support such generalizations with additional indirect measures of learning; and it will point out where these results have been used to review and reform curricula. Within the discussion of graduate education, this chapter will address the concern about graduate stipends from the 1993 reaccreditation report.

Educational Programs Appropriate to an Institution of Higher Learning

Consistent with its vision and mission, Ball State grants doctoral, master's, bachelor's, and associate degrees within its seven academic colleges. A complete list of programs and the number of their graduates is included in Basic Institutional Data Form F (Appendix BID). The university, individual colleges, and numerous programs are regularly accredited by national and professional organizations as noted in Appendix 7.1, while academic departments also undergo, on a seven-year cycle, regular internal review as listed in Appendix 7.2.

Degree program curricula may be internally reviewed and revised as often as every other year, a time frame that corresponds to the catalog publication cycle (graduate programs in odd years; undergraduate in even years), according to established processes described in Section IV of the *Faculty and Professional Personnel Handbook* (Exhibit 34 in the resource room). A list of the changes to university programs between 1993 and 2002 is provided in Exhibit 93 in the resource room. Since 1993, those changes have included the creation of the College of Communication, Information, and Media; expansion of the Ed.D. in science/science education; creation of a doctorate of audiology; extensive revision of all undergraduate teacher education programs according to new state performance objectives; and revision of the master's degree in physical education with a specialization in coaching to make that degree available through distance education.

Faculty Role in Curricular Decision Making

Ball State faculty members have a significant role in developing and evaluating all of the institution's educational programs. Each unit initiates curricular additions and changes

through a department curriculum committee. In addition, each college has established a curriculum committee to review and act upon proposed departmental changes. The Graduate Education Committee and the Undergraduate Education Committee are the two University Senate subcommittees of the Academic Policies Council charged with reviewing, evaluating, and revising policies and programs at their respective levels. Their voting membership comprises faculty and students.

Faculty also exercise extensive control over credit granted to undergraduates who transfer and graduate students who have courses from other institutions applied toward their degrees. For undergraduate transfers, department chairs or their designees approve all courses transferred to a program. Even "automatic" transfers coded into Ball State's Automated Course Transfer System (ACTS) are approved beforehand by department representatives. Graduate students meet with department representatives who determine the relationship of previous credit to a current course of study. For international students, the Center for International Programs provides initial screening, but departments again determine the relationship of earlier credit achieved to a student's current course of study. At Ball State, graduate students are not granted credit even for prior learning validated by examination, nor for credit based on an evaluation of a portfolio of original work products.

Since the last accreditation self-study, the information included on transcripts has been expanded to more accurately reflect student performance. Transcripts clearly indicate plus/minus grading, audits, withdrawals, and incompletes. Ball State's course repetition policy respects the integrity of earlier courses taken by students while offering them a chance to remove the initial poor grade from their grade point average. Finally, the university has an internal grade auditing system to ensure grades have been entered correctly.

Assessment of Student Achievement

Ball State has a history of leadership in academic assessment, having established the Office of Academic Assessment in 1987. As stated in the Academic Assessment Plan (Exhibit 3 in the resource room), "because of the defining principles, objectives, and characteristics of the program, academic assessment at Ball State University is able to accomplish its overall objective—the improvement of student learning." The following section documents graduate and undergraduate programs and evidence of student achievement in these programs.

GIR 11: Its faculty has a significant role in developing and evaluating all of the institution's educational programs.



GIR 2: It is a degree-granting institution.

GIR 23: It accurately discloses its standing with accrediting bodies with which it is affiliated.



Description and Assessment of Graduate Programs

As an established university, Ball State functions as an incubator for the development of new ideas, new processes, new technology, and new organizational structure. Faculty scholarship and creative activity are generally of an applied nature, thereby addressing several areas of state and national need, including education, allied health professions (including psychology), biotechnology, information/computer technologies (including nanoscience), organizational leadership/management, and environmental issues.

The teacher–scholar model is integrated within the institutional culture and reward structure, allowing the university to function as a research-intensive institution that offers selective, high-quality graduate programs. New sources of support for technology, distance learning, international student recruitment, and graduate student recruitment are expanding the delivery of educational programs to a broader audience. The institutional emphasis on assessment—emulated by other universities—allows Ball State to fine-tune and refocus its priorities as needed in response to the changing needs of its constituents. The university’s move during the past two decades toward increasing the quality and quantity of scholarly productivity and graduate program offerings has successfully led to the development of new graduate faculty guidelines implemented in fall 2003. These guidelines are in the *Faculty and Professional Personnel Handbook* (Exhibit 34 in the resource room).

Administration and Policy Development: The Graduate School, headed by a dean who also serves as an associate provost, is the administrative unit responsible for graduate education. The Graduate School maintains close ties with the School of Extended Education, Office of Academic Research and Sponsored Programs, Center for International Programs, and Office of Academic Assessment and Institutional Research. These units are all housed within the Academic Affairs area, thereby facilitating the coordination of services between these areas and the Graduate School. The school also collaborates with various units in the Student Affairs, Business Affairs, Information Technology, and University Advancement areas, and its staff consults regularly with college deans, graduate program administrators, and department chairs.

The mission of the Graduate School is to ensure high standards of achievement in advanced education and inquiry. This is accomplished in the following ways:

- ≈ administering policies and procedures recommended by the Graduate Education Committee and approved by the University Senate
- ≈ working with academic units to develop new degree programs and to monitor the academic progress of students in these programs
- ≈ administering graduate and doctoral assistantships and fellowships

- ≈ certifying students for graduation and recommending the awarding of all post-baccalaureate degrees
- ≈ evaluating all applications for membership in the graduate faculty
- ≈ approving membership for master’s-level research and thesis committees and doctoral-level dissertation committees
- ≈ approving doctoral program directors
- ≈ monitoring university policies to ensure compliance and equity in application

The Graduate School serves the university community in many other ways. It coordinates university-wide efforts of people, committees, and academic units to initiate advanced degree programs. The dean reviews each proposal for a new program and brings it forward to the Graduate Education Committee for review and approval. If approved, the proposal is considered by the university’s Board of Trustees and, if necessary, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education. The Graduate School shares responsibility with academic departments for implementing, administering, and maintaining the quality of graduate programs. The Graduate School also conducts an annual orientation for all new graduate students, administers the annual Distinguished Dissertation Award and Distinguished Thesis Award, and administers all advanced degree assistantships and fellowships.

Formulation of educational policy for graduate education is the responsibility of the Graduate Education Committee (GEC), a standing committee of the Academic Policies Council of the University Senate. Membership consists of the graduate dean or a designee; provost or a designee; assistant dean as nonvoting ex-officio; members of the regular graduate faculty, elected or appointed through governance procedures; and graduate students. The GEC is charged with the following:

- ≈ initiating and recommending policies and procedures for the administration of graduate programs
- ≈ recommending the addition, deletion, or modification of graduate curricula and programs
- ≈ carrying on a continuous evaluation of graduate programs and recommending appropriate changes
- ≈ initiating and recommending policies and procedures concerning the establishment of qualifications for graduate and doctoral assistants, fellowship recipients, and proposed nominations for honorary degrees
- ≈ evaluating and approving applications for membership in the graduate faculty

A summary of policy changes adopted by the GEC from 1993 through 2002 is available in the *2002 Graduate School Self-Study* (Exhibit 41 in the resource room) and in *Policies Passed by GEC, 2002–2003* (Exhibit 62 in the resource room).



Current policy and recent policy changes serve to distinguish graduate offerings from undergraduate offerings and to restrict graduate academic credit to work taught and evaluated by Ball State graduate faculty. Currently students are limited in the number of transfer hours applicable to master's and doctoral degrees, the former recently reduced. In addition, all credit from other institutions must carry at least a B grade to transfer successfully. All research requirements must be completed at Ball State. Students are limited to a six-year period for applying past courses to a graduate degree, thus ensuring their preparation is current. Graduate courses are clearly distinguished between those meant only for doctoral students (700 level), those restricted to graduate students (600 level), and those that can be taught with undergraduate courses. Even in the latter classes, graduate students receive a more extensive set of assignments than the undergraduate students, thus assuring a high-quality, intensive, graduate-level experience for Ball State graduate students.

Distinguishing graduate courses from undergraduate courses has been a priority at Ball State for at least two decades, and previous reaccreditation reports commended the institution for significantly reducing the number of taught-with courses in its graduate programs. The university is continuing to work toward further reduction in the number of taught-with courses upon the suggestion made during an external review of the Graduate School in spring 2002. The Graduate School is working with college deans who in turn are working with their departments to ensure that courses offered are in keeping with Graduate School policy. In addition, the GEC is considering whether to institute a policy limiting the percentage of taught-with courses that may be counted toward a graduate degree.

Graduate Faculty: Graduate faculty are approved by the dean of the Graduate School, acting upon recommendations by the department chairpersons and college deans. A faculty member may be appointed to the graduate faculty in one of two groups—regular or temporary. A complete description of the policies governing graduate faculty membership is found in the *Faculty and Professional Personnel Handbook* (Exhibit 34 in the resource room).

Degree Programs: Ball State offers master's, specialist, and doctoral degrees in more than 100 fields of study. All seven colleges award graduate degrees. Since 1994–95, the university has awarded an average of 766 master's (range is 687–833), 11 specialist (range is 6–14), and 49 doctoral (range is 42–64) degrees annually. Although the number of specialist and doctoral degrees has remained stable since the last accreditation review, the number of master's degrees has increased significantly; approximately 640 degrees were awarded annually in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Master's degrees offered at Ball State include:

- ≈ master of architecture
- ≈ master of arts
- ≈ master of arts in education
- ≈ master of business administration
- ≈ master of landscape architecture
- ≈ master of music
- ≈ master of public administration
- ≈ master of science
- ≈ master of urban and regional planning

The minimum requirement for a master's degree is 30 credit hours. Each degree program requires the completion of a research or creative project component.

Degrees offered beyond the master's degree are the specialist in education, which requires a minimum of 30 credit hours beyond the master's degree; doctor of education; doctor of philosophy; doctor of arts; and doctor of audiology. All doctoral degrees except audiology require a minimum of 90 credit hours past the baccalaureate degree and completion of an acceptable dissertation. The audiology program requires a minimum of 100 graduate credit hours and a clinical internship.

Graduation Rates: Graduation rates for students entering master's programs (defined as the number of graduates divided by the total number enrolled minus students still actively enrolled) have remained steady for the last three cohorts expected to graduate: students entering in 1998 have graduated at a current rate of 73.1 percent; students entering in 1999 at a rate of 72.9 percent; and students entering in 2000 at a rate of 75.7 percent). Graduation rates for doctoral students are slightly less stable, given the longer period they have to complete their degrees. Still, 67.3 percent of students entering in 1994 have graduated (an additional 13.5 percent are still considered active students); 55.3 percent of students entering in 1995 have graduated (with 36.7 percent still active); and 68.0 percent of students entering in 1996 have graduated (with 38.2 percent still considered active).

Graduate Stipends: In the 1993 reaccreditation visit report, evaluators observed that “the continued lack of competitiveness with peer institutions in graduate student stipends is a barrier to the maturation of the university's graduate programs, particularly at the doctoral level.” Some progress has been made since 1993, though larger increases still need to be realized and are included in the planned use of increased tuition revenue beginning in fall 2003.

Graduate stipends have increased significantly since 1993, with master's stipends rising from an average of \$5,025 in 1993–94 to \$6,512 in 2002–03 (a 39.3 percent increase) and doctoral stipends rising from an average of \$7,002 in 1993–94 to \$8,907

GIR 13: It has degree programs in operation, with students enrolled in them.

GIR 14: Its degree programs are compatible with the institution's mission and are based on recognized fields of study at the higher education level.

GIR 15: Its degrees are appropriately named, following practices common to institutions of higher education in terms of both length and content of the program.

GIR 12: It confers degrees.



in 2002–03 (a 36.8 percent increase). Even as stipend amounts have steadily increased, the total number of assistantships has risen dramatically. While the number of doctoral stipends has remained roughly the same over the past 10 years, about 126 per year (with a high of 138 in 2000–01 and a low of 113 in 1996–97), the number of master’s stipends in that same period rose from 529 in 1993–94 to 687 in 2002–03. This growth is linked to an enrollment plan to add graduate students in areas of university excellence or market demand. Several service units decided to convert student wage and/or staff salary dollars to assistantship stipends. Departments also made use of special offers to students that included tuition remission, housing subsidies, and stipends to focus on enhancing teaching using technology. In addition, more and more faculty are including funded assistantships as part of their grant budgets.

The establishment of doctoral fellowships during this 10-year period also helped increase Ball State’s competitiveness among peer institutions. Each year about eight fellowships are awarded to the best graduate applicants at a funding level up to 25 percent above the average for an applicant’s academic area. Some growth in support for doctoral students has also been the result of increased grant support. For example, 10 doctoral fellowships funded by a recent National Science Foundation grant will receive approximately \$19,250 per academic year (\$27,500 for a 12-month position), a suitable funding goal for all doctoral stipends in the university. Of the 831 graduate students currently on the payroll, 128 (15.4 percent) are funded through external grants.

Beginning in fall 2003 and consistent with the university’s strategic plan objective to fund more graduate assistantships at a higher level, new tuition dollars generated 28 new assistantships with an average award of \$9,000. Similar increases in the future, as well as increased grant support, will be dedicated to raising graduate student stipends to the necessary level of competitiveness with peer institutions.

Assessment of Learning: Graduate students responding to the past two Graduate Student Exit Surveys (Exhibit 42 in the resource room) report that they are satisfied with their experiences at Ball State. Results include:

- ☞ At least 95 percent of respondents in 2001–02 and 2000–01 reported that their general attitude toward Ball State was very positive or positive.
- ☞ In 2000–01, 88 percent of respondents stated they would recommend Ball State to someone who is considering their program. Over 84 percent gave the same response in 2001–02.
- ☞ Nine out of 10 respondents in both years reported their overall academic experiences were either excellent or good.
- ☞ More than 80 percent of respondents in both years rated their personal enrichment as excellent or good.

- ☞ More than 84 percent of respondents in both years rated as excellent or good their opportunities for interactions with classmates and with faculty.
- ☞ At least seven out of 10 respondents in both years rated as excellent or good the quality of teaching they experienced and the consultations with faculty about their theses, dissertations, research papers, or creative projects.
- ☞ At least 94 percent of respondents in both years agreed that as a result of their graduate program they had extended their knowledge of their discipline, they were committed to the professional and ethical standards of their discipline, and they could analyze, synthesize, and apply knowledge in their discipline.

Clearly, graduate students perceive that they have learned and believe their learning will affect them positively for the future. Direct measures of their learning verify both that student perceptions are accurate and that many departments and faculty engage in direct assessment of student learning leading to curricular review and revision.

“Direct measures” of student learning, as used in this chapter, refer to measures such as those identified in the writings of Peter Ewell and Cecilia Lopez. For example, common direct measures are capstone courses, portfolios, and juried projects. In addition, although it is generally true that graduation rates do not serve as direct measures of learning, the current graduation rate of over 60 percent for doctoral students does establish a baseline to analyze learning because all doctoral and specialist degree students complete, usually at the end of their programs, comprehensive written and oral examinations, which are direct measures. Graduate students pursuing a specialist degree in education are required to complete a 6 credit hour thesis or a field experience/internship for which the student’s committee will determine that research competencies are demonstrated. Doctoral students also complete a dissertation and dissertation defense with graduate faculty drawn both from inside and outside their departments.

Assessment of learning in master’s programs is less standardized but also characterized by the use of direct measure assessment and related curricular review and revision. To capture the range and results of this assessment, a self-study task force sampled 16 master’s programs concerning measures they use to assess student learning. The programs selected generally each award at least 15 master’s degrees per year and account for a majority of all master’s degrees conferred in a year (approximately 70 percent of the 797 conferred in 2000–01). They also represent all seven academic colleges.

Appendix 7.3 summarizes the types of direct measures of student learning used by the departments sampled. As can be seen, the most common measures used are a thesis/creative project, a capstone course, authentic performances or demonstrations,

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faculty-designed comprehensive exams, and portfolios of student work submitted over time. Only two degrees require none of these measures program-wide, though one of the two noted that individual courses required such assessment. Departments also report using indirect measures for assessing student learning, and program representatives identified a variety of options, with alumni surveys, course evaluations, and exit interviews being the most common.

When asked to relate assessment to program revision, departments most often reported revising the content of their programs, especially to further the development of writing or research skills, or to require more core experiences, thus reducing electives. Programs are also revised to help students improve their performances on department or national examinations. Some programs noted revisions meant to improve pedagogy (e.g., to implement portfolio reviews or to improve distance education opportunities). Finally, some revisions emerged from assessment that asked departments to better reflect more current practices in the field or to improve department outreach activities.

To further illustrate the level of learning at the graduate level as well as the use of assessment to measure that learning, the outcomes of that assessment, and the curricular revisions that resulted, case studies of representative doctoral and master's programs were conducted. The five master's programs selected also are included in the survey of masters' programs just summarized. Exhibit 28 in the resource room provides these case studies, which illustrate in detail the role of assessment, especially direct assessment, to measure student learning and to revise curricula.

Description and Assessment of Undergraduate Programs

Ball State's undergraduate degree programs include three components: the University Core Curriculum (UCC), areas of specialization, and electives. Consistent with its mission, Ball State offers the following range of baccalaureate degrees:

- ≈ bachelor of arts
- ≈ bachelor of fine arts
- ≈ bachelor of general studies
- ≈ bachelor of landscape architecture
- ≈ bachelor of music
- ≈ bachelor of science
- ≈ bachelor of social work
- ≈ bachelor of urban planning and development

With the exception of the bachelor of landscape architecture (B.L.A.), these are four-year programs requiring a minimum of 126 credit hours to graduate. The B.L.A. is a five-year program requiring a minimum of 150 credit hours to graduate. All degrees require 41 credit hours in the University Core Curriculum.

Ball State also offers a variety of associate in arts and associate in science degree programs. These require a minimum of 63 credit hours, of which 16 to 31 hours are required in general education and 32 to 47 hours in the specialization area. With the exception of the degree in general arts, associate degree programs are vocational and technical; requirements are identified in the undergraduate catalog under the departmental headings (Exhibit 86 in the resource room).

Program Review and Policy Development: Undergraduate programs are developed and reviewed by individual academic units according to their own procedures for assessing student learning, following the guidelines outlined in the *Faculty and Professional Personnel Handbook* (Exhibit 34 in the resource room). Proposed revisions are monitored at the university level by the Undergraduate Education Committee (UEC), a standing subcommittee of the Academic Policies Council of the University Senate. UEC members include 13 faculty members, three undergraduate students, one Academic Advising Resource Center Coordinator, six members of the Academic Policies Council, and the provost or provost's designee. Responsibilities of the UEC are outlined in the *Faculty and Professional Personnel Handbook*, and minutes of recent UEC meetings are available in Exhibit 87 in the resource room.

Three standing subcommittees assist the UEC: the Honors Subcommittee, the University College Subcommittee, and the University Core Curriculum Subcommittee. Basic policies affecting undergraduate curricula, academic regulations, and instructional practices are contained in the *Undergraduate Catalog* and the *Faculty and Professional Personnel Handbook*.

Student Retention: A common index of student learning is the student retention rate. Table 7.1 on the next page provides fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall retention rates for Ball State freshman cohorts from 1996 through 2002.

Ball State's strategic plan establishes the goal for second-year retention at 80 percent for 2006, a goal reached three years early.

The strategic plan establishes the 2006 goal for the university's graduation rate as 60 percent. The rate was 52 percent at the time the plan was written. To reach the 2006 goal, six-year graduation rates must improve an average of 4 percent more per year for the next three years. New data show the four-year graduation rate for 1999 new students has already jumped almost 6 percent and the five-year rate for 1998 new

GIR 14: Its degree programs are compatible with the institution's mission and are based on recognized fields of study at the higher education level.

GIR 15: Its degrees are appropriately named, following practices common to institutions of higher education in terms of both length and content of the program.

GIR 12: It confers degrees.

GIR 13: It has degree programs in operation, with students enrolled in them.



Table 7.1: Freshman Retention Rates 1996–2002

Fall Semester	Number of Freshmen	Percent Returning for Spring Semester	Percent Returning for Second Year
1996	3,900	84.3	67.5
1997	4,037	84.3	68.5
1998	3,488	88.4	74.4
1999	3,471	88.5	75.5
2000	3,533	90.0	76.6
2001	3,566	89.4	76.6
2002	3,742	91.5	80.1

students has already jumped almost 5 percent, indicating that continued efforts should be successful by 2006.

Much of Ball State’s recent success with learning, retention, and graduation is the result of careful and creative planning within the university and support from Lilly Endowment Inc., which awarded Ball State \$6.5 million for two projects, the first focusing mainly on first-year students and the second allowing the university to expand first-year programs while carrying successful efforts into the second, third, and fourth years. Freshman Connections is a major component of these projects. Successful programs that have been supported by the Lilly funds are gradually being integrated into the university’s normal programming and budgeting processes.

University Core Curriculum: The UCC was a result of general studies reform in 1985 that tied the goals of the program directly to the university’s mission statement. A key strength of the program is that the same program is required of all baccalaureate degree students in all seven colleges. This coherent program is designed to develop broad competencies and to promote intellectual inquiry, as is evident from the stated goals of the program listed below:

- ☞ an ability to engage in lifelong education by learning to acquire knowledge and to use it toward intelligent ends
- ☞ an ability to communicate at a level acceptable for college graduates
- ☞ an ability to clarify one’s personal values and to be sensitive to those held by others
- ☞ an ability to recognize and seek solutions for the common problems of living by drawing on a knowledge of historical and contemporary events and those aspects of the cultural heritage related to these events
- ☞ an ability to work in concert with others in solving the common problems of living
- ☞ an ability to assess one’s unique interests, talents, and goals and to choose specialized learning experiences that will foster their fulfillment

A more detailed description of UCC goals and procedures is found in Exhibit 90 in the resource room.

The current University Core Curriculum comprises 41 credit hours, including 15 hours of foundation courses. Associate degree programs also include a general education component that varies by program. All students are required to pass a writing competency examination (WCE)—a holistically evaluated written essay—before graduation. Students who fail to pass after two attempts must take ENG 393, a portfolio-based course taken for credit or no credit. The credit hours for this course do not count toward graduation.

After the 15 credit hours of core courses, the remaining 26 hours of the University Core Curriculum are divided into five areas, with two courses required from the physical, earth, and life sciences; two from the social and behavioral sciences; one each from fine arts and humanities; one additional course from any of the previous areas; one course from international/global studies; and one two-credit-hour course in physical education, fitness, and wellness. A complete listing of UCC requirements is found in the undergraduate catalog.

Evaluation, review, and changes to the program are the responsibility of the University Core Curriculum Subcommittee, a standing subcommittee of the Undergraduate Education Committee. The UCC subcommittee consists of nine members: a member of the UEC appointed by the UEC’s chair, six faculty members appointed by the Governance Committee of the University Senate, an undergraduate student chosen by the Student Government Association, and the associate provost (ex officio) responsible for the UCC or a designee.

Results of Assessment on University Core Curriculum: Ball State is widely recognized for its leadership in using general and liberal studies as an academic framework for its undergraduate programs. The university was included in Strong Foundations, AAC, 1994. The University Core Curriculum is frequently the foundation for teaching innovations, and it often provides focus for faculty scholarship and grant opportunities (e.g., the Lilly Foundation Inc. grants and a recent grant from the Lumina Foundation for Learning).

To ensure the UCC meets its objectives, evaluation of the program was mandated by the University Senate in 1985. Two cycles of assessment have been completed, taking about five years each. The results of the first assessment were distributed on July 1, 1997 (Exhibit 89 in the resource room); the results of the second were distributed on March 21, 2003 (Exhibit 89 in the resource room).

GIR 16: Its undergraduate degree programs include a coherent general studies requirement consistent with the institution’s mission and designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and to promote intellectual inquiry.



The results of the first assessment cycle (1992 to 1997) affirmed some of the strengths of Ball State's University Core Curriculum. However, the 1997 assessment noted that the following areas required further attention. Among the recommended actions were:

- ≈ approving 43 courses for continuation in the program, deferring 31 more until further review of the master syllabi and assessment plan could take place, and removing two courses
- ≈ renaming the program University Core Curriculum to avoid confusion with the use of the term "general education" in Indiana to describe high school courses not having sufficient content or rigor to qualify as "college-bound" experiences
- ≈ revising courses to better address program goals
- ≈ revising courses in the social sciences to more clearly address overall program goals and revising courses in the social sciences and the humanities/ fine arts to better address area distribution goals
- ≈ reconsidering the role of foreign and modern languages within the program as a whole and within the humanities/fine arts area
- ≈ limiting the opportunity to use "exception" courses that replace those most students take, usually to simultaneously satisfy requirements in the major
- ≈ increasing the focus on the integrative, interdisciplinary nature of the program, clarifying ties between the goals of a course and the pedagogy used to teach first-year students, more effectively integrating technology in the classroom, and articulating more clearly the role of out-of-class activities with the UCC curriculum

The results of the second assessment cycle indicated progress had been made in the quality of the assessments submitted (71 courses were approved, with only three deferred and five recommended for removal from the program), in the areas of integrative, interdisciplinary learning, in the use of "growth or developmentally sensitive" pedagogy, in the use of technology in the UCC classroom (e.g., all ENG 101/102/103 sections are now taught in computer-enhanced classrooms), and in the ability of departments to articulate and convey to students the role of their courses in the program as a whole.

This second assessment report also noted the need for continual improvement in the way social science courses address both overall and distribution goals, the continual problem of "exception" courses not being able to address simultaneously both UCC goals and the goals of the major programs in which they play a part, and the need to use the Internet to best convey information about the UCC. The report also suggested that items on university assessment instruments that are indirect measures of learning be revised to correspond more closely to the goals and expected outcomes of the University Core Curriculum. Finally, the report recommended that the UCC program seek accreditation from the American Association of Liberal Education.

In addition to being measured by the assessment conducted in the five-year cycles, student learning within the UCC is directly measured by the Writing Competency Exam (WCE) and the College Basic Academic Subjects Examination (CBASE). The WCE is required of all students after they have completed 63 credit hours. Results from 1999 to 2002 show that 86.2 percent of all students passed the exam, with the College of Architecture and Planning demonstrating the highest pass rate over those three years (92.8 percent), partly due to the award-winning Writing in the Design Curriculum, a project funded by the college to place writing consultants in design studios.

CBASE is a pre/post measure in which a sample of students is given one of four modules (English, mathematics, social studies, or science) during freshman orientation. The same sample is invited to retake the same module as upper-division students (i.e., sophomores or juniors), thus providing a reasonable assessment of core curriculum knowledge in the four areas tested. Although Ball State administers CBASE and has explored ways in which the results might be used to make curricular revisions, at present the data are insufficient to draw firm conclusions due to the small sample of students within disciplines who participate in the program. As our data accumulate, however, we will be able to experiment with CBASE outcome-driven curricular modifications.

Future of the Core Curriculum: With the experience of two comprehensive assessments, the provost—with the recommendation of the UCC subcommittee—has begun a three-year process of revising the University Core Curriculum to respond to the results of the two assessments and to design an innovative program best able to meet the needs of Ball State students for this early stage of the 21st century. In September 2002, the provost appointed a 26-member Core Curriculum Task Force and charged it with presenting to the university community a set of goals for a revised UCC program. Task force members were drawn from all seven colleges as well as from the university governance system and the Student Government Association. This task force will complete its work by the end of the fall semester 2003. It will be succeeded by a second task force charged with implementing those goals. Details on both task forces, their charges, and the completed report on goals are available in Exhibit 91 in the resource room.

Assessment of Learning in the Major: As with the assessment of learning for graduate students, assessment of learning for undergraduate students in major programs comprises indirect measures of learning, direct measures of learning, and case studies of sample programs to illustrate specific measures of learning used, the results of those measures, and subsequent curricular changes.

Results from 1999 to 2002 show that 86.2 percent of all students passed the [CBASE] exam, with the College of Architecture and Planning demonstrating the highest pass rate over those three years (92.8 percent), partly due to the award-winning Writing in the Design Curriculum, a project funded by the college to place writing consultants in design studios.



Indirect Measures: Ball State uses numerous indirect measures of learning, as described in Chapter 11 of this report. Both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs are intensely interested in whether Ball State students are exhibiting the behavior valued by all those who foster that learning. Details can be found in numerous exhibits provided in the resource room (e.g., Sophomore Survey, Senior Survey, Alumni Survey, Quality of Life Survey, Student Interviews on Housing and Residence Life Outcomes, Service Learning Assessment Outcomes). Some general findings from selected surveys (i.e., the *2002 Sophomore Survey Summary Report*, the *2002 Senior Survey of May Graduates Summary Report*, and the *2000 Alumni Survey of 1997–1998 Graduates Survey Report*) are presented below.

Ball State students participate in a variety of learning-related activities. These activities often focus on their academic major and include internships, student organizations, volunteer work, and leadership programs. Specifically, the majority of senior students and recent alumni responding to these surveys reported that they participated in an internship, practicum, or co-op experience (i.e., 56 percent of senior survey respondents and 57 percent of alumni survey respondents). For sophomores, 37 percent of respondents indicated that they had already participated in volunteer work related to their major, while 30 percent reported that they had participated in a student organization related to their major.

Ball State students are also behaving in ways that promote learning, including attending class and studying. Sophomore respondents, for instance, reported the following:

- ≈ 89 percent missed one class or less in the previous week
- ≈ 48 percent typically studied more than 10 hours a week, compared with 74 percent of senior respondents who studied at least 10 hours each week
- ≈ 21 percent reported they often or very often participated in study groups or sessions outside class, while 46 percent of seniors had done so, suggesting an increased recognition of the value of collaborative learning

Some of this success may be due to the Freshman Connections program, Ball State’s first-year experience that incorporates a living-learning component.

Survey assessment conducted by the Student Affairs area verifies that students are behaving in ways that promote or indicate learning. The Office of Housing and Residence Life’s Quality of Life Survey (Exhibit 47 in the resource room), administered late each fall semester to all students in the residence halls, found in 2001 that of the 4,464 respondents, 76 percent said they interacted with residence hall students whose

backgrounds/values were different from their own, 83 percent expressed viewpoints even if they were unpopular, and 70 percent said living in a residence hall provided opportunities to identify important beliefs. All of these objectives are shared by university courses. These results serve as a reminder that many learning goals are realized by students’ out-of-class experiences.

More directly with the learning of specific, mostly UCC-related skills, Ball State sophomores, graduating seniors, and recent alumni report high levels of progress and preparation in writing, speaking, listening, and critical thinking. They also indicate that they have been able to engage in a variety of activities that reflect learning, including clarifying values, evaluating interests, and interacting with diverse groups of people. Table 7.2 below illustrates the percent of sophomores (with comparisons with seniors and alumni where available) who indicated they had progressed very well or satisfactorily in these areas.

Table 7.2: Percentage of Sophomores, Seniors, and Alumni Indicating Progress in Learning Skills

Area of Learning Activity	Sophomores	Seniors	Alumni
Preparing for a career	94	n/a	n/a
Preparing for further education	96	n/a	n/a
Listening	97	97	95
Analyzing and evaluating ideas	97	97	96
Problem solving	95	96	96
Critical thinking	96	96	96
Speaking	94	96	95
Writing	92	95	97
Evaluating their own interests, talents, and goals	86	n/a	n/a
Understanding morals and ethics	n/a	89	85
Clarifying personal values	84	94	89
Interacting with diverse groups of people	75	87	87

Both seniors and alumni felt they were very well or satisfactorily prepared to engage in lifelong learning (96 percent and 95 percent, respectively).



Employment or plans for further education also may indicate that students have learned in their undergraduate programs. The majority of employed alumni respondents reported that they were working full-time in the area of their major (60 percent), while another 19 percent indicated they were employed fulltime in an area related to their major. Of those same alumni, almost 92 percent reported that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with their employment. Moreover, 15 percent of respondents indicated they were already enrolled in graduate programs, while another 62 percent indicated they planned to obtain a graduate or professional degree in the future.

Direct Measures: An analysis of direct measures of learning used with undergraduate majors within departments confirms the level of learning taking place. As was explained in the analysis of graduate programs, direct measures of undergraduate student learning refer to measures such as those identified by Ewell and Lopez.

Appendix 7.4 illustrates the results of an analysis of catalog descriptions supplemented by interviews with deans, associate deans, department chairs, and undergraduate coordinators concerning the direct measures of student learning employed across campus. Of 41 departments analyzed, 40 use at least one direct measure of student learning. The three most typical measures used are a capstone course, a portfolio, and an internship. The two least-used measures are essay questions blindly scored by faculty and externally reviewed exhibitions and performances. The latter two measures still serve critical roles within the university (e.g., the Writing Competency Exam) and within specific colleges (e.g., the use of external reviews with exhibitions in the College of Architecture and Planning).

Appendix 7.4 provides a snapshot of how the learning of Ball State students is measured directly and by multiple means. A more detailed description of the university's academic assessment program can be found in Exhibit 10, catalogued in the resource room. This academic assessment document also includes descriptions of the programs in place for each college. However, Appendix 7.4 provides a summary of the types of assessment measures used by each department within each college. In addition, detailed case studies were prepared for this self-study that exemplify how the university assesses the level of learning at the undergraduate level, the use of assessment to measure that learning, the outcomes of that assessment, and the curricular revisions that have resulted. These case studies are available as Exhibit 29 in the resource room.

Faculty–Student Collaboration

One additional measure of the teaching/learning relationship is the degree to which faculty and students work together on projects, both in class and outside of class.

National data on retention and persistence suggest that student persistence and graduation is directly related to the frequency and quality of students' contact with faculty, staff, and other students. The Department/Unit Survey: Research and Accomplishments of Faculty and Professional Personnel (Exhibit 26 in the resource room) reveals the quality of such experiences at Ball State. Open-ended questions on Part B ask about the nature of faculty/student collaboration on research, creative, and scholarly activities. Many departments report a high percentage of collaboration between faculty and graduate/undergraduate students on such scholarly activities as publications, presentations, external grants, and teaching. Student perceptions corroborate these findings. In the 2002 Senior Survey of May Graduates, 83 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with opportunities for interaction with departmental faculty. Interaction with faculty is a key indicator of student perceptions of the quality of their learning experience at Ball State. Both Freshman Connections and department projects that are funded by a Lilly Endowment Inc. grant set a firm foundation for this relationship, which deepens as students progress through their programs.

Academic Centers

Academic centers (listed in Appendix 7.5) serve as incubators of research and creative activity at Ball State, allowing the university to fulfill critical aspects of its stated mission. These centers provide challenge and hands-on experience for students, allowing them to develop teamwork and problem-solving skills (e.g., Midwest Entrepreneurship Education Center and Child Study Center); promote inquiry, investigation, and creative activity (e.g., Center for Middletown Studies, Aquatic Biology and Fisheries Center, and Software Engineering Research Center); emphasize the integrative, interdisciplinary values of connection and collaboration (e.g., Virginia B. Ball Center for Creative Inquiry and Center for Economic and Community Development); and promote the civic and professional values of social justice and responsibility (e.g., Center for Peace and Conflict Studies). Students work in collaborative relationships with faculty to obtain experience in translating and applying their classroom knowledge to real-world questions and problems and to find creative expression in alternative venues. Academic centers enhance graduate and undergraduate education in ways that are important to professional and personal development of students and in ways that relate to the goals of Ball State's strategic plan.

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Extended Education

Ball State's distance education courses and degrees are accessible statewide through the university's School of Extended Education (SEE). Courses are delivered through the Indiana Higher Education Telecommunication System (IHETS), live classes at off-campus locations, the Internet, and the Independent Learning Program.

The largest of these programs is the Correctional Education Program, through which the university offers live, on-site classes at Indiana correctional facilities. But the university also offers several degree programs at other facilities located throughout the state. Three online only graduate degree programs were recently added to the distance education programs offered through SEE and were approved by the Higher Learning Commission in 2002 (see Exhibit 67 in the resource room). In 2002–03, 1,718 full-time equivalent students (an increase of almost 20 percent over 2001–02) enrolled in distance education credit courses and programs. SEE also offers more than 90 undergraduate courses via independent learning and a variety of noncredit programs and services to businesses, industries, not-for-profit groups, and government organizations. SEE also facilitates outside groups wishing to hold conferences and special events on campus.

Overall, the administrative support, policies, procedures, and practices of the university's distance education program conform to the five components of the Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs established by the eight regional accrediting bodies in September 2000 and published in the *Handbook of Accreditation, Second Edition*.

The university's distance education programs contribute significantly to Ball State's role and mission. Ball State's strategic plan calls for the university to "attain optimal enrollment through selective admissions policies and successful retention programs," states that the university "will continue to be a best practice institution in the innovative use of instructional and information technology," and challenges the institution "to broaden, diversify, and enrich its relationships beyond the campus."

The satellite television, Internet, and independent learning courses offered by SEE provide opportunities for faculty to experiment with and learn about the use of information technology to enhance their teaching. Ball State has excellent physical facilities to accommodate electronic distance education programs (see Chapter 5 of this report). Faculty members teaching distance education courses are oriented and trained in pedagogical issues related to electronic distance education courses by the university's Teleplex staff and the Center for Teaching and Learning Advancement. The university also provides closed-captioning services upon request for television courses for students who

are hearing impaired and screen-writing software is available to faculty members to use for students who are sight impaired.

Ball State also provides significant support for distance education programs and services. The university's combined expenditures for distance education, excluding indirect costs, are approximately \$5 million annually. Ball State's commitment to electronically offered distance education programs is evident from the university's faculty development support system, supplemental pay schedule, and administrative support provided by SEE. The management of distance education courses is shared between individual academic departments and SEE. Marketing, registration, payment, and enrollment management of distance education courses is the responsibility of SEE, while content and development of distance education courses is reserved for the colleges and departments. The process by which an electronically offered course or program evolves from conception to administrative authorization to implementation is outlined in the *Faculty Guide for the Development of Extended Education Electronic Courses* (Exhibit 37 in the resource room).

The decision to offer a distance education course is based on the needs of off-campus students to complete degrees at a distance and the desires of the departments and colleges. University faculty and departments determine the curriculum, instructional content, and qualifications of faculty hired to teach all distance education courses. Many library materials are available to distance education students electronically, either directly or through the reserve desk. The library provides interlibrary loan service to make both hard copy and electronic journals and books available to distance education students. Instructor-student interaction is assured in television courses through a "talkback" system available to students at satellite sites. Students at all sites are able to hear questions initiated from any site in the system and students at all sites hear the response of the faculty member. Student-to-student and student-to-faculty communications in Internet courses are facilitated through the use of e-mail, chat sessions, threaded discussions, list serves, and attached word document files. The technical requirements and descriptions of technical competence needed for Internet course students are available through the University Computing Services Web site. An online readiness test for students also is available at the site.

From assessment data gathered from the annual distance education student satisfaction survey and graduate student exit interviews, it appears that students are generally satisfied with Ball State's distance education courses, programs, and support services. Although the clear majority of distance education students report satisfaction with the advising they receive, these students report relatively less satisfaction than their

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on-campus peers report. This is due, in part, to the decentralized nature of graduate advising for distance education students. To assist with advising off-campus students, SEE has established direct electronic links to existing faculty advisors that students access through the SEE Web site (www.bsu.edu/distance/advising).

Evaluation of student performance in distance education courses and programs is the prerogative and responsibility of the academic departments and colleges. Student performance in distance education classes is measured in the same way as student performance in on-campus classes. Departments also conduct anonymous student evaluations and departmental review of faculty teaching. These evaluations and reviews are part of the faculty member's promotion and tenure decision.

A more detailed assessment of Ball State's distance education programs is provided for evaluators in *Description of Distance Education Program at Ball State University* (Exhibit 27 in the resource room).

Evaluation with Respect to Criterion III

Ball State has highly specific guidelines for assessing student learning that are embedded in the university's culture and institutionalized by their inclusion in the *Faculty and Professional Personnel Handbook*. Ball State's Guidelines for Assessment of Student Learning in Undergraduate Programs state that assessment of student learning "is an essential means for identifying areas of growth and improvement in those programs." Both direct and indirect measures of learning are noted. Specifically, each department and school is given latitude to determine its assessment program, though "each assessment program must include at least one direct measure of student learning." The data presented in this chapter—retention rates, graduation rates, placement rates, plans for further education, faculty-student collaboration, and indirect/direct assessment of learning—support the conclusion that Ball State is effectively accomplishing its teaching/learning mission.

The Higher Learning Commission describes a three-level process for implementing an improvement plan using assessment as an integral activity for curricular revision. Clearly, Ball State in the past decade has moved from the second level into the third. Faculty have developed learning and program objectives, are "taking responsibility for ensuring that direct and indirect measures of student learning are aligned" with those objectives, are becoming knowledgeable of assessment processes, and are collaborating to "identify improvements based on . . . results ('Level Two')." One clear example of this movement is the marked improvement in assessment strategies of the University Core Curriculum program. Increasingly, faculty and staff at Ball State are enhancing those assessment processes, building on them, and exploring the uses of assessment in context of research

on learning theories and active learning strategies. Moreover, the university has significantly increased the number of departments that "routinely link assessment results to decision making and program improvement ('Level Three')," and the university has articulated its expectation that all departments will adopt this operating principle.

Institutional Strengths

- ≡ Ball State's courses of study "are clearly defined, coherent, and intellectually rigorous." The university uses regular evaluations to develop new courses and programs and to revise existing programs and follows established procedures for implementation.
- ≡ Faculty have control over and responsibility for curriculum, granting credit, transferability of credits, and applying previous courses to graduate programs. Established curriculum and review committees composed mainly of faculty oversee and approve curricular changes and the granting of credit.
- ≡ Faculty, administrators, and staff play close attention to whether University Core Curriculum, graduate, and undergraduate programs are achieving stated objectives.
- ≡ Graduate programs have steadily become more strategic in offering and revising courses based on continuous assessment and through regular internal and external reviews.
- ≡ The University Core Curriculum is a model for general education, program development, assessment, and curricular revision.
- ≡ Cooperation between the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs areas has provided an opportunity for Ball State to define a common set of intended learning outcomes that are interdisciplinary and developmental in nature and that are not limited to learning that occurs only in the classroom.
- ≡ Extended education serves demonstrated needs among a growing number of distance populations. Faculty members control the teaching of extended education courses, and they are assisted with the development of materials for these courses by university personnel using the latest technology and delivery systems.
- ≡ The university supports numerous interdisciplinary research centers that benefit students with interests and needs beyond what single departments can provide.

Concerns and Future Challenges

- ≡ Competitiveness of graduate student stipends continues to be a concern at Ball State. To address this concern, a portion of the increased revenue resulting from the 2003–04 \$1,000 tuition increase was directed toward increasing the base budget for graduate assistant stipends. This enabled the institution to offer several new assistantship positions in 2003–04 and will enable substantial stipend increases for all assistants in 2004–05. In addition, Ball State's increased emphasis on and success in obtaining external grants is an integral aspect of its long-term strategy to address this concern.



- ☞ As Ball State continues to articulate its teacher–scholar model, the university will be challenged to maintain a balance that is consistent with its mission and available resources. As new advanced fields such as nanoscience and biotechnology emerge and as new faculty are recruited who have more specialized research interests, the institution will need to identify new resources to support these activities, as well as those to support further development of effective and efficient teaching strategies, improving relationships with the community, and updating classroom technology.
- ☞ In reference to the Higher Learning Commission’s three-level process for using assessment to drive curricular revision, Ball State is committed to full achievement of the third level. As the university matures in this area, it must build on the strengths of a decentralized system that adapts well to program differences while also becoming better able to measure selected objectives at the university level.
- ☞ As the extended education programs grow, the university is challenged to retain some measure of personal contact with these Ball State students. Specifically, the institution will need to adapt its advising processes to serve this population more effectively.