Undergraduate Education

V. Environments and Resources for Learning

Introduction

The University provides many of the physical and virtual environments in which students learn, and also offers its spectrum of students—including those who come to us well prepared, and those who do not—many support structures to help them overcome challenges and maximize their particular talents. There are countless ways in which the learning environment the University creates and the resources it makes available within that environment can impact student success.

Fundamentally, the University’s physical and virtual learning environments must be functional and welcoming. Research has suggested that universities can affect student success by “alter[ing] the physical environment on campus to create spaces and settings where teaching and learning can flourish” (Kuh et al., 2005a, p. 93).

A successful learning environment must also offer resources that support learning at all stages of students’ undergraduate careers and at all levels of preparedness for college work.

Effective academic advising, for example, teaches students valuable skills they need in order to achieve success in college and in life. As mentioned in the “Entry and Transition” section of this self-study, academic advising plays an extremely important role in helping new students build a foundation for success. The importance of advising’s role does not diminish as students go through the process of selecting a major program and making other academic decisions. As students progress toward graduation, career advising becomes increasingly important as well.

The University Libraries, an essential academic resource, also serve as a central learning environment. Librarians teach students information management skills that
Some focused programs help students improve their proficiency in areas such as speaking, writing, and math. Other programs target not skills but populations, and provide customized support to help those populations meet challenges and maximize their strengths. These populations include, for example, well-prepared, high-achieving students looking to push themselves with new opportunities; first-generation college students; disabled students; or the few students recruited because of exceptional achievement in athletics or fine arts who might need extra support in order to meet expected levels of achievement in other areas.

The effort to create effective environments and resources for learning supports our aspiration “to attract the most talented faculty, staff, and students . . . [and] to provide an environment where they can discover and fulfill their potential.” Our strategies for improving undergraduate education, according to *The Iowa Promise*, include:

**Strategy:** Recruit and retain a student population that can succeed at a comprehensive research university, and nurture their success, by:

. . . Guiding all students through their majors, and providing excellent academic advising

**Strategy:** Promote excellent teaching, effective learning environments, and learning opportunities that leverage the University’s strengths by:

. . . Developing more . . . honors courses, and other small class venues where students can interact with tenured faculty

Strengthening the honors program and other opportunities for high-achieving students

**Strategy:** Ensure that all students graduate with strong core skills, a broad liberal arts education, and concentrated study in one or more majors by:

Promoting their facility for critical thinking, writing, and other communication skills, creative endeavor, and the use of information technology

. . . . Augmenting support for the research collections, libraries, museums, and information technologies, broadly defined, that are critical to teaching and learning

**Strategy:** Help undergraduates prepare for life within and beyond college by:

Instilling in them a respect for the life of the mind and a habit of lifelong learning

. . . Creating with them a safe environment in which to live, learn, and work, including opportunities to participate in health-promoting activities

Providing career advising that will enable them to pursue their employment goals
An assessment of environments and resources for learning at The University of Iowa is a key component of our special emphasis self-study.

Scope

As described in the introduction to this special emphasis self-study, the self-study steering committee originally conceived of two separate themes having to do with the units, spaces, and structures in place at the University to support student learning: “Cultivating Student Potential” and “Learning Environments.” The steering committee appointed separate subcommittees to consider each theme. The confluence between the two, however, eventually led the committee to feel that the self-study would be better served by a focus on the broader theme of “environments and resources for learning.”

The steering committee asked the subcommittee on Cultivating Student Potential to study programs, policies, and practices that contribute to every student reaching his or her potential—including programs designed to support students who face particular challenges, programs designed to help talented and well-prepared students maximize their abilities, and programs designed to help any and all students extend their education beyond the classroom.

The steering committee asked the subcommittee on Learning Environments to study the places the University and the community provide for students to learn—including both physical and virtual spaces, and spaces used for formal and informal teaching and learning.

Research Process

The subcommittee on Cultivating Student Potential gathered much of its data from the student satisfaction survey described in the “Research Processes” section of the introduction to this special emphasis self-study and in the overview of survey results, below. The committee members also conducted interviews with personnel in the programs they considered, and culled information from outcomes assessment data provided by many of those programs.

The subcommittee on Learning Environments invited students to respond to a survey, e-mailed a brief questionnaire to faculty members, and held focus group discussions with faculty on the UI Classroom Committee. Additional data came from various University offices.

Summary of Findings

The University of Iowa offers its students many support structures and environments to help them develop useful skills, get assistance dealing with specific challenges, and make the most of opportunities for learning. The units and programs investigated for this portion of the self-study showed many signs of success, including student satisfaction.
The University’s physical and virtual teaching and learning environments seem to
be functioning well, are used appropriately, and are perceived by both faculty and
students as positive. Recent major efforts to improve learning environments include
the renovation of the Iowa Memorial Union, the growth in learning communities,
and the consolidation of course management systems into a single virtual learning
environment—ICON. The University provides very good online teaching and learning
environments and has a strong presence in distance education. As online teaching and
learning environments become more prevalent, we will need assessment methods and
other mechanisms to ensure consistent quality of online and “offline” environments.

**Description and Evaluation of Learning Environments and Units and Programs that Support Student Learning**

**Overview**

This section of our self-study deals with physical and virtual learning environments
and key resources that support learning, including student advising; the University
Libraries; programs that help students develop speaking, writing, and math skills;
University Housing; and programs that help students stay healthy and learn how to
maintain a safe and healthy lifestyle. This section also addresses programs that support
learning for selected student populations, including underrepresented students, student
athletes, and top scholars.

The student satisfaction survey did not ask students about all of these units and
programs. It did ask about many of them, however, so we begin with an overview of the
results of that survey.

**Overview of Student Satisfaction Survey Results**

The student satisfaction survey, as described in the “Research Processes” section of the
introduction to this special emphasis self-study, included a set of questions designed to
assess student satisfaction with programs, people, and “parts of the University” other
than classes and teachers and their contribution to academic and personal growth.

The survey targeted several specific units and programs and asked students to respond
to questions about the helpfulness of those units and programs, if they had used
them. The subcommittee on Cultivating Student Potential chose the targeted units
and programs by identifying parts of the University that have a significant impact on
the majority of undergraduate students, such as the University Libraries and academic
advising; and then also identifying several more specialized programs in areas
important to the University’s mission, such as fostering diversity and helping students
build communication skills.

Table II-24 gives the frequency with which students reported having used each of the
13 targeted programs. The table reflects, for example, that Opportunity at Iowa, Student
Disability Services, Support Service Programs, and the Women’s Resource and Action
Center are specialized programs serving relatively small numbers of students. (Note:
The high percentage of students who report having participated in the University
of Iowa Honors Program reflects that the survey responses were not proportionally
representative of the undergraduate student body.)
### Table II-24:
Percent of Students who Report Using Targeted University Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Program</th>
<th>% of Students Who Report Using</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Libraries</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Housing</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Wellness Services</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Iowa Honors Program</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Center</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Lab</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Center</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Technology Services</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity at Iowa</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Service Programs/NDIL*</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Resource and Action Center</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Disability Services</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Opportunity at Iowa and Support Service Programs/New Dimensions in Learning have merged into the Center for Diversity & Enrichment, as described later in this self-study.

The survey asked students to indicate—for each of the 13 targeted programs they had used—how much each program had helped them increase their skills, and how much each had contributed to their personal growth. Table II-25 ranks the programs by the percentage of respondents who perceived each unit or program as moderately to very helpful in increasing a variety of skills. Table II-26 does the same for the question of how much the programs contributed to students' personal growth.

### Table II-25:
Targeted Programs Ranked by Perceived Helpfulness for Increasing Student Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Program</th>
<th>% of Users who Report Program Moderately to Very Helpful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Libraries</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Service Programs/NDIL</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Technology Services</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Lab</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity at Iowa</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most programs were rated moderately to very effective at increasing skills by about 60% of respondents or more.

Table II-26:
Targeted Programs Ranked by Perceived Helpfulness for Personal Growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Program</th>
<th>% of Users who Report Program Moderately to Very Helpful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health and Wellness Services</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Center</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Center</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Resource and Action Center</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Disability Services</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Housing</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Housing</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Center</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Wellness Services</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Resource and Action Center</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Center</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Iowa Honors Program</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Libraries</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Disability Services</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Libraries</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Libraries</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Disability Services</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Lab</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Technology Services</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

None of the targeted programs was rated moderately to very helpful in contributing to personal growth by more than 60% of respondents; Opportunity at Iowa and University
Housing ranked highest, at 58% and 57%, respectively. Less than 40% of respondents felt that academic technology services, the Math Lab, Student Disability Services, the University Libraries, the University of Iowa Honors Program, or academic advising had moderately or significantly contributed to their personal growth.

The missions of the various units, certainly, account for some of the differences. Building skills is more central to the mission of academic technology services, for example, than is fostering personal growth; the opposite can be said for Opportunity at Iowa.

Before and after asking students about the targeted programs, the survey asked some open-ended questions, including:

- In addition to your classes and teachers, what programs and people at The University of Iowa have helped you grow as a person?
- What program or parts of The University of Iowa have interfered with your growth as a person?
- Outside of your formal courses and teachers, what programs and people at The University of Iowa have helped you develop the skills you will need to live well and successfully after you graduate?
- Please describe ways that specific programs or parts of The University of Iowa could have better helped you grow as a person.

No one “aspect of University life” was cited by a significant number of students in response to these questions. It may be of note that only 23% of respondents answered “none” when asked about ways that specific programs could have contributed more to their personal growth, whereas 51% answered that no aspect of University life had interfered with personal growth. The most frequently cited aspect of University life that could have contributed more to personal growth was academic advising, at 23%. Comments related to advising referred to advising within the department as well as advising by the Academic Advising Center.

**Student Advising**

**Overview**

*The Iowa Promise* recognizes that student advising for academic and career success is an important component of student support, especially at a large and complex institution such as The University of Iowa. Academic advising teaches students skills required for academic success, beginning with how to plan a program of study and make good academic decisions. At The University of Iowa, academic advising generally takes place in two contexts: in the Academic Advising Center (AAC) and in the colleges and departments. As students progress toward graduation, career advising becomes increasingly important. Some student populations—such as Advantage Iowa scholarship recipients, IowaLink students, students with disabilities, and student-athletes—also receive what might be called “support system advising” as described in various sections of this self-study.

For most undergraduate students, an advisor (whether from the Academic Advising Center or from the department or college) must authorize the student’s registration each semester. Nearly all of these students meet with their advisor to receive that
authorization, though some departments allow registration without a meeting. Some colleges and departments have determined that, given their programs, students can be allowed to opt out of advising.

The student satisfaction survey suggests that satisfaction with academic advising at the University is mixed. Approximately equal percentages of respondents mentioned academic advising when asked what aspects of University life had contributed to or interfered with personal growth (8% and 9%, respectively), and 23% indicated that academic advising could have contributed more than it did to their personal growth.

Academic Advising Center

The Academic Advising Center (AAC)—first described in the “Entry and Transition” section of this self-study—provides academic advising to almost all first-year students, many entering transfer students, many continuing students pursuing admission to selective majors or professional programs, and special status non-degree students. Most students are transferred to colleges and departments for advising according to timetables agreed upon by the center and academic departments, but some students, such as pre-med, pre-law, and international studies majors, as well as pre-approved track majors in interdepartmental studies, remain with advisors in the AAC until graduation—some as first and some as second majors. In 2007, the center’s fall semester caseload was 9,552 (counting first and second majors) and each advisor carried a caseload of about 340 students during the fall semester. The University has set a goal of reducing that caseload to 300 students.

Unlike advising centers at many large universities, the AAC assigns every student a specific advisor, with the goal of developing a sustained personal relationship that will contribute to persistence. First-year students meet with their assigned advisors during the summer orientation program. Advisors expect to meet with first-year students at least five times during the academic year, beginning with a group “new student meeting” to set expectations, and continuing with at least one planning and one registration meeting in each semester.

AAC advisors assist students in identifying academic goals and teach them how to develop appropriate plans of study. For students with declared majors, AAC advisors provide initial advising in the major as well as advising related to the General Education Program. They help students select courses related to their programs of study and develop plans to graduation. For students who seek entry into selective admission programs, advisors also assist students in monitoring their progress toward admission requirements and provide guidance in “parallel planning”—that is, identifying alternative programs of study they can follow if they do not gain admission to their first major choices.

Advisors assist open majors (students who have not yet decided on a major) in exploring majors according to each student’s academic strengths, interests, and career goals. Advisors and students have a number of resources to aid in the major selection process, including the AAC website, the Pomerantz Career Center, and the annual Exploring Majors Fair. The AAC has proposed that the University investigate options for creating an interactive online course on selecting a major. Such a course would help not only open majors but also students who have been denied admission to selective programs and need to re-think their academic goals.

AAC provides advising to 69 majors, designations, or programs. All advisors are trained as generalists to help students explore majors, but each advisor also has broad
areas of specialization for advising within majors. For example, advisors who work with pre-med students might also advise biology, microbiology, and chemistry majors as well as related health sciences pre-professional students. The center maintains strong working relationships with academic departments by assigning an advisor-liaison to each department.

Some AAC-advised students work with other offices or programs as well, such as the University of Iowa Honors Program, the Center for Diversity & Enrichment, Student Disability Services, and Athletic Student Services. AAC advisors collaborate with counselors and coordinators in these offices to ensure that the specific needs of these students are met.

AAC advisors undergo an intensive year-long training program as well as extensive ongoing staff development. The center uses multiple approaches to increase cultural competency of advisors including UI staff development programming, HR programs, and its own nationally recognized advisor development program.

Each spring the Academic Advising Center asks students to evaluate their AAC advisors and their experiences at the center as a whole. More than 1,600 students respond each year. Median responses to the statement “My advisor did his or her job well” are consistently above 3.6 on a four-point Likert scale.

Demonstrating a growing focus on advising as a form of teaching, the AAC has begun implementing outcomes assessment for advising services. Staff are refining their mission statement and identifying learning outcomes. The next steps will include mapping the outcomes onto different parts of the advising process, determining the resources and staff development necessary to help students achieve the outcomes, and assessing learning and the delivery of services.

As noted in the “Entry and Transition” section of this self-study, the AAC has become increasingly involved in programs to improve persistence and timely graduation, and also in efforts to increase collaboration across units. Advisors have a key role, for example, in the “College Transition” course and the 2 Plus 2 Guaranteed Graduation Plan. AAC advisors were involved in the development of two new interdisciplinary majors, international studies and interdepartmental studies, and work with students in those majors all the way to graduation. AAC advisors are partners with the Center for Diversity & Enrichment in helping to improve retention of students from underrepresented minority groups.

**Collegiate and Departmental Academic Advising**

After a student declares a major—unless the major is one for which the Academic Advising Center handles advising all the way to graduation, as noted above—he or she is transferred to the college or department for advising, according to a timetable agreed upon by that unit and by the Academic Advising Center. For most non-selective majors in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, this happens after the student has earned 24 semester hours of credit. Advising in the department or college may be provided by faculty, professional advisors, graduate students, and/or peer advisors.

The decentralized nature of academic advising within the major is a strength for UI in some ways, in that students receive advising from those with expertise in the area. Some colleges and departments have established more effective advising practices than others, however. In responses to open-ended questions in the student satisfaction survey, collegiate and departmental advising received high praise from some and severe
criticism from others.

Models of Advising within the Major

Of 54 respondents to the survey of departmental executive officers conducted for this self-study, 30% (16 out of 54) indicated that their departments have a centralized advising location for students in their major—either a single advisor who meets with all students in the major, or a centralized advising “center” that all students can use. Eighty-nine percent (48 out of 54) use faculty advisors, alone or in conjunction with professional staff advisors; 24% (13 out of 54) use professional staff. Six percent (three out of 54) use graduate students to advise, and 6% (three out of 54) use other advisors, such as peers. Twenty percent (11 out of 54) have a formal system in place to assist faculty in advising methods, mainly as part of formal mentoring and new faculty orientation programs.

Factors that determine how departments offer undergraduate advising services include department size, undergraduate enrollment, and faculty assignments. Small departments often rely on faculty—either a single faculty member designated as student advisor, or multiple faculty members who share undergraduate advising responsibilities. Many departments with larger undergraduate enrollment use professional staff as student advisors, or use a combination of professional staff and faculty advisors.

In the Department of Linguistics, which has 42 undergraduate majors in fall 2007, each student is assigned a faculty advisor. Students meet with their advisors before registration each semester to map out which courses will be taken so that at the end of four years students will have met all requirements.

The Department of Biochemistry has 114 undergraduate majors in fall 2007. One faculty member, a full professor, serves as director of the undergraduate biochemistry major program. This professor meets with each undergraduate student each semester, to advise the student on coursework, opportunities for work in research labs, degree requirements, career opportunities, and other issues that may arise.

The Department of Psychology, one of the largest undergraduate majors—1,130 students in fall 2007—uses a three-tiered system of undergraduate advising. A professional staff member serves as academic coordinator, the academic advisor for all majors. In addition, students are assigned a faculty advisor who is available to provide advice concerning careers and preparation for graduate school. A group of junior and senior psychology majors, called the Psychology Peer Advisors, offer advice about course selection and volunteer and research opportunities.

Tippie College of Business

The Tippie College of Business Undergraduate Program Office advises students who have been admitted to the College and students who have met particular benchmarks toward admission to the College. The office advises undergraduates with regard to academic programs, and also occasionally refers students to faculty, who serve as mentors and address career and discipline-specific issues. The Department of Economics, the exception to this model, assigns faculty advisors to all of its B.S. and B.A. liberal arts majors. Students earning a B.B.A. in economics are advised by the Undergraduate Program Office.

In addition to its individual work with students, the Undergraduate Program Office encourages connections to and within the College with a weekly e-mail “Undergraduate
Update” that keeps students apprised of events, opportunities, and deadlines.

Partly in response to a recent slip in the undergraduate program’s *Business Week* rankings, the Undergraduate Program Office is in the process of enhancing its advising services by adding staff and advising hours. The office has implemented new admission policies to encourage earlier entry into the College and student engagement in collegiate programs. The College expects that offering earlier admission to students who are most likely to succeed in the College’s programs will help them connect sooner with the College and its faculty.

The University’s FY 2009 tuition and fee proposal, approved by the Board of Regents in December 2007, includes a $1,500 tuition supplement for upper division students entering the Tippie College in fall 2008, in part to allow the College to hire four additional advisors. This would bring the advising caseload down to about 350 students per advisor, from the current 900 students per advisor.

**College of Engineering**

Engineering students who have declared a major are assigned faculty advisors. Those who have not yet declared a major are advised by staff in the Student Development Center (SDC). The SDC welcomes declared students, as well. The College requires that students see their advisors before registering each semester.

All first-year engineering students take a seminar that deals with collegiate and campus resources, ethics, major options, and professional opportunities. Some College of Engineering departments also offer sophomore seminars to expand their majors’ knowledge of professional opportunities, elective options, and prospective employers.

**College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**

Departmental advising practices within the very large College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) differ widely, as described above. Generally, CLAS departments use one of four approaches to advising:

- Faculty advise students from entry into the program until graduation (e.g., physics and astronomy, speech & hearing science).
- Students are advised by faculty and/or graduate students in the department after a period of advising by the Academic Advising Center (AAC) (e.g., anthropology, English, sociology).
- Students have both a faculty mentor and a professional staff advisor (e.g., international studies).
- Students have professional staff advisors and/or peer advisors in the major department after a period of advising by the AAC (e.g., art and art history, biological sciences, communication studies, elementary education, psychology).

Each department identifies an honors advisor.

Regardless which model is used in a student’s major department, a student may request a different advisor for any reason.

**College of Nursing**

The College of Nursing assigns all admitted students to an academic advisor who assists
with their program of study, and a faculty advisor to help them make decisions about their educational and professional goals. Students also consult with the College of Nursing Office of Student Services about plans of study and degree requirements.

Honors Advising

Students in the University of Iowa Honors Program receive advising regarding their academic programs from the Academic Advising Center or in their major department, like all other students. They may choose to pursue supplemental individual advising, however, from the Honors Program’s professional staff. Beginning in summer 2007, the Honors Program also provides Honors Summer Advisors to help orient entering honors students, and in fall 2007 the program added a staff of honors peer advisors. For several years, the Honors Program has operated a popular peer mentoring program for prospective and entering Presidential Scholars.

Student Perceptions of Advising

The student satisfaction survey asked students “How satisfied are you with the advising process in selecting a major,” and “How satisfied are you with the advising within your major.” It should be noted that a student may have more than one advisor, either because he or she has multiple majors or because the major program involves multiple advisors (whether from the Academic Advising Center, the department or college, or both).

All questions were rated on a five category Likert scale where one=“not satisfied” and five=“very satisfied.” Points two through four were not defined. Because not all respondents selected a response for every survey question, response percentages do not total 100% in all cases.

Student Perceptions of Advising in Process of Selecting a Major

The student satisfaction survey asked if students were satisfied with the advising process in selecting a major. Table II-27 gives the response distribution by college and also summarizes responses given by students who reported their majors as “open,” students who reported having just one major, and students who reported having two or more majors.
Table II-27:
Student Satisfaction with Advising in the Major Selection Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Breakouts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Major</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Major</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Majors</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only 42% of students with a single major and 36% of students with multiple majors indicated a high level of satisfaction (four or five on the satisfaction scale) with the advising process in selecting a major, while 30% and 36% respectively responded with a one or two. The results were consistent (about 30% choosing one or two and 40% choosing four or five) for the Colleges of Business, Engineering, and Liberal Arts and Sciences. The College of Nursing had the highest percentage of respondents selecting four or five (54%), but the percentage selecting one or two was consistent with the other colleges. The College of Education had the lowest percentage of respondents who selected four or five (28%) and the highest percentage selecting one or two (41%). Only 33% of open majors responded to this question with a four or five.

Student Perceptions of Advising within the Major

The survey also asked if students were satisfied with advising within their major. Table II-28 gives the response distribution by college and also summarizes responses given by students who reported having just one major and students who reported having two or more majors.
Overall, students appear more satisfied with advising within the major than with the process of advising in selecting a major. Fifty-four percent of students with one major and 45% of students with more than one major selected four or five on the satisfaction scale (compared to 42% and 36% for advising in selecting a major)—although the percentage of students with multiple majors who chose one or two on the satisfaction scale was the same for both advising questions (36%). Students report significantly more satisfaction with advising in the College of Nursing than in any of the other colleges.

Factors Affecting Student Satisfaction with Advising

Several factors unrelated to quality of advising might contribute to the differences in student satisfaction. Choosing a major is a developmental process that often involves unavoidable periods of uncertainty. Also, as noted in the “Education within the Major” section of this self-study, about 45% of first-year CLAS students enter the University with a declared interest in a selective undergraduate or pre-professional program. Some of these students will experience disappointment when they do not gain entry into their chosen program, and may even be forced to choose between a UI degree and their first choice major. Even the best advising cannot compensate for that disappointment. The new pre-approved tracks in interdepartmental studies have the potential to diminish this disappointment by offering students alternative pathways that build on coursework they have already completed while pursuing admission to a selective program.

Four-Year Graduation Plan

The UI Four-Year Graduation Plan, first offered to first-year students in 1995, has proven attractive to prospective students. The plan is a contract between a first-year student and the University according to which the University promises that graduation in four years will not be delayed because of course unavailability, and the student promises to meet established benchmarks or “checkpoints” for progress toward a
degree, as outlined in the General Catalog and on the CLAS web site. (A few majors cannot typically be completed in four years or have selective admission and therefore are not part of this program.)

First-year students may sign a Four-Year Graduation Plan Agreement at orientation, or at any time during their first two semesters at the University. Participation in the plan has grown steadily from 45% in 1995 to more than 80% in 2006.

This program has resulted in better planning not only for students but for departments, leading to improved course availability for all students and better advising for academic planning. The program also led to the new enrollment management practices described in the “Common Academic Experiences” section of this self-study. Students who sign the agreement have a higher four-year graduation rate than students who do not; for the 2002 cohort, 44% of those who signed up for the plan graduated in four years, compared to 30% of those who did not.

Data about participation and graduation rates for the Four-Year Graduation Plan can be found in the Profile of Students.

**Pomerantz Career Center**

The Pomerantz Career Center serves more than 20,000 students in the Tippie College of Business, the College of Engineering, and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS). Its mission is “to prepare University of Iowa undergraduate students and alumni to maximize their potential through innovative career strategy advising, superior internship opportunities, and early direct contact with representatives of corporate America, national and local government, and businesses both large and small.”

The Pomerantz Career Center surveys graduates from the Tippie College of Business and CLAS regarding post-graduation activities. The most recent survey data available at the time of this writing reflect the responses of 64% of the May 2006 graduates from the Tippie College of Business and 49% of the combined fall 2005, spring 2006, and summer 2006 CLAS graduates. Beginning in January 2007, the Career Center will conduct a survey of organizations that have hired UI graduates, asking their general impressions of the graduates’ preparedness for their jobs and what, if any, additional skills and training they need.

Since its creation in 2005, the Pomerantz Career Center has focused on increasing the numbers of employers coming to campus, on-campus interviews for students, and site visits to employers. In 2003, approximately 69 employers came to campus and there were 1,000 student interviews and no site visits. In 2006, more than 350 employers came to campus. There will be more than 6,000 student interviews in 2007, and center staff now make more than 275 visits to employers each year.

The next wave of growth has focused on career advising and a number of new initiatives for students.

Approximately 5,000 students per year receive career advising through the Pomerantz Career Center. The center plans not only to increase that number, but to make more and better use of technology, to increase consistency among career advisors, and to implement a new “career strategy” model in place of the old “interest/skills/values” model. Hallmarks of the new model are “branding” (students learn to establish, communicate, and protect their unique “brands”) and the development of e-portfolios.
Several new initiatives are helping students develop employment skills and internship experiences, and/or are encouraging employment in Iowa:

1. The Career Leadership Academy is a four-semester, credit-bearing program comprising seminars, activities, and events designed to give students an edge as leaders in the career field of their choice.

2. The Consider Iowa program helps emerging Iowa businesses attract strong internship candidates, and informs graduates of the many career opportunities that exist within the state.

3. The Des Moines Center offers students the opportunity to live in Des Moines for a semester or summer while serving as interns in a range of industries.

4. The Chicago Center is an effort to forge strong relationships between UI students and alumni, as well as employers and organizations in northeastern Illinois.

5. The Senior Conference is a daylong annual event for graduating UI seniors that includes sessions on understanding benefits, negotiating job offers, communicating on the job, learning to budget, adjusting to the workplace, etc.

6. The Experience Iowa Internship Program brings UI students and emerging Iowa businesses together by subsidizing approximately half the cost of a paid internship, with the balance provided by the employer. Last year, Experience Iowa funded $78,000 for employers to hire UI students.

7. The Hire-a-Hawk Employer Conference brings employers from around and outside of Iowa to campus to talk about recruiting and hiring trends.

The Career Center also offers for-credit courses in career development and job searching. The center is developing a research component to its activities. The director envisions the center collecting information on student outcomes, surveying employers, and becoming a clearinghouse for research on employment trends and economic development. The center hopes eventually to offer funding for employment- or career development-related graduate research.

Conclusions—Student Advising

Advising in the colleges and departments receives a mixed response from students, which reflects the difficulty of maintaining a consistent level of quality for a service that is so decentralized—as well as the difficulty of interpreting one-time surveys of student satisfaction. Students express a high level of satisfaction with their advisors at the Academic Advising Center, but some concern about the level of assistance the University gives them in choosing a major. Although this concern might arise from unavoidable issues such as the uncomfortable uncertainty associated with choosing a major or the disappointment some students feel when denied admission to a selective program, it merits further examination. Creative options such as the interactive online course in major selection proposed by the Academic Advising Center could offer needed assistance as students and advisors work through processes associated with choosing and entering majors.

The Pomerantz Career Center has grown very quickly, and is on track to continue
developing as an extraordinary resource for Iowa students as they seek to cultivate their professional potential.

University Libraries

Overview

A university’s library system is central to student development—especially the development of information literacy. A total of 92% of respondents to the student satisfaction survey conducted for this self-study said they had used the University Libraries, and 76% of those reported that the Libraries had proven moderately to very helpful in their development of skills—the highest percentage for any of the targeted programs. During the 2005-06 academic year, undergraduate students accounted for 29% of all materials checked out of the Libraries.

The University of Iowa Libraries comprise the largest library system in Iowa, and the 21st largest among the nation’s public research libraries. The Main Library, the Hardin Library for the Health Sciences, and the nine branch libraries together contain approximately four million volumes, with about two-thirds of this collection located in the Main Library. The nine branch libraries—Art, Biological Sciences, Business, Engineering, Geoscience, Mathematical Sciences, Music, Physics, and Psychology—are located in proximity to the relevant colleges and departments. The Hardin Library for the Health Sciences supports the five health science colleges.

The Libraries’ most recent annual report, for 2006-07, indicates that in that year the Libraries held 610 instructional sessions with more than 16,000 participants. They counted more than 90,000 reference transactions, almost two million catalog searches, and recorded a “gatecount” (entries into the building) of 1.9 million. Students have averaged nearly two million visits to the Libraries each year over the past five years.

Four hundred computers are available for public use throughout the libraries, and the Main Library Instructional Technology Center (ITC) is both the largest and busiest ITC on campus. A new library initiative, begun in fall 2006, has led to increased delivery of course reserve materials via ICON, UI’s new course management system.

Since FY 2002, the Libraries have lost about $1.5 million in funds for salaries, which translates into approximately 25 entry-level librarian positions. According to a recent self-study (August 2006, revised August 2007), the Libraries’ budget for personnel and is now smaller than any of the libraries at our peer institutions. This reduction has made it challenging to maintain services and also move in new directions, such as library staff playing a more prominent role as partners in the instructional process.

The Libraries system occupies about the same amount of space it did in 1975. Since then, however, collections have more than doubled, the staff has grown larger, and student enrollment has increased. The University Libraries together have study seating capacity for only 10% of the University’s 30,000 students, far below the recommended seating standards for academic libraries. Book stacks are severely overcrowded compared to national standards, and the Libraries have had to eliminate user seating to accommodate them.

A library high-density book storage facility, now in the planning stages, may relieve some archiving space problems within five to eight years. The project will provide long-term, environmentally-controlled storage space for less frequently used books and for archives and other materials. The planned facility will consist of approximately 22,000...
In addition to the programs described below, some ongoing Libraries programs worth noting include:

Since 1995, librarians have been part of the University of Iowa’s Upward Bound program, which was described in the “Entry and Transition” section of this self-study.

A satellite Writing Center opened in spring 2005 in the Main Library as the result of a proposal from library personnel. Initially located on the first floor of the Main Library, the center is now located on the 2nd floor, in proximity to the Main Library ITC. This was the third location for a satellite Writing Center, now one of five. The role of the Writing Centers is considered below.

In spring 2006 the University Libraries began a program of outreach to those affiliated with the University’s cultural and resource centers, which were described in the “Learning Alongside the Curriculum” section of this self-study. The Libraries have designated a librarian for each cultural center to participate in activities, provide specialized library services, and encourage students to apply to work in the Libraries.

An ongoing information-gathering effort involves focus group-style discussions with students. In spring 2006, 206 students enrolled in 12 discussion sections of “Western Civilization I” participated, and discussed, among other topics of interest, why some of them do not use the Libraries. A summary of their comments can be found in Appendix II-N. Additional focus group sessions with undergraduate students are scheduled as part of an ongoing effort to gather input on library services and suggestions for additional ways the Libraries can meet student needs.

Physical Learning Environments in the Libraries

In 2006, motivated by a general need for renovation and the transformation in library services due to developments in technology, the University Libraries conducted a major space study. As stated in the space study, until the last 30 years the mission of the Libraries was “. . . to collect, store, preserve, and make accessible much of the world’s publications.” In the last three decades, however, there has been a dramatic philosophical change in the mission of research libraries. As stated in the Libraries’ strategic space planning report, “the goal of on-site collection and storage . . . has been replaced with one of providing access to materials, whatever their format or location, when needed.” The expectations for librarians have shifted also, and the emphasis on education and service has increased. Added to the functions of maintaining collections and providing one-on-one service within the library are functions such as helping students gain skills in accessing information, and supporting people who access the libraries’ materials electronically. All of these developments have implications for library space needs and usage.

Main Library

The goal for the Main Library, as stated in the space study, is to create a “revitalized place of scholarship and an intellectual center for the University.” The study envisioned a major change in function for the first and second floors of the Main Library, and creation of new spaces where the University would be able to offer both virtual and place-bound services in support of learning, teaching, scholarship, electronic publishing, and research.
The study led to a vision for library space that considered multiple kinds of spaces—
“living room” space, conference rooms, conversation vs. quiet spaces, social vs. study
spaces—that will be needed to support students, faculty, student advising, tutoring,
and perhaps other services not yet envisioned. Library space must be attractive, clean,
comfortable, well lighted, and flexible in configuration. Twenty-four hour access to at
least some of the Main Library must be considered in future plans. Hours of operation
for the Food for Thought Café in the Main Library should be expanded.

These concepts have led to calls for improved, integrated support, with people,
technologies, and spaces available to provide, for example:

- Support for technology—including existing software and hardware, but also support
  for creating new products from existing ones (e.g., using the Media Services
  collection to transform traditional media into new media)

- Support for using information resources, including information literacy skills
  development and help with citation management software, plagiarism and copyright
  information, and tools for managing quantitative and qualitative data

- Support for writing, speaking, and presentations. There is a Writing Center satellite
  in the Main Library, but space is needed to support the development of presentations
  as well—perhaps a Speaking Center satellite.

A major feature of this space would be support for collaborative work. Increased
interdisciplinary endeavors lead to the need for spaces that support more interaction
among students and between students and faculty. More group study rooms and project
development spaces, appropriately equipped, are desirable. This will require ongoing
 collaboration between the University Libraries and its many partners on campus who
support teaching, learning, and research.

Though still in very early stages of planning, this project envisions the Main Library as
a student learning space with expanded hours of access, collections of student-focused
services—both “high-tech” and “high-touch”—and a variety of types of spaces designed
to meet the changing learning styles of today’s students.

In fall 2007 a team of undergraduate students responded to preliminary ideas about
a reconfigured Main Library and made additional suggestions about what the Main
Library would look like if they were to contribute to the design. The president of
the UISG provided two brief reports outlining the students’ ideas, and reported his
perception of a “great deal of excitement out there for this proposal.”

The opening of the UI Campus Recreation and Wellness Center just south of the Main
Library should also be considered as part of this concept, since the proximity of the
buildings will link learning and recreational spaces on campus.

Virtual Learning Environments in the Libraries: Distance Librarian

Since 1998, the Main Library has had a “distance librarian,” a position funded by the
Division for Continuing Education and initiated in part to support the students and
faculty who teach or take distance education courses. The distance librarian’s role
has expanded significantly since it was first created, again due to developments in
technology, as well as growth in the number of distance education courses offered and
the number of students who participate in them.

The commitment to maintain this position demonstrates the commitment of the

1c: Mission pervades organization
2a: Preparation for future
3c: Effective learning environments
3d: Support for learning and teaching
4c: Useful curricula
5c: Responsiveness to constituencies
5d: Constituencies value services
University Libraries and the Division of Continuing Education to extend University of Iowa academic resources to people in need of credit-bearing course work, certification and licensure courses, in-service training, or professional development, and to ensure that those students receive the same level of support in using library resources and services as other students.

The distance librarian's role is, in part, to help create a “virtual presence” and a sense of community for distance learners. Two key factors in supporting distance learners are access and user education. A well developed, clearly organized web site that makes resources easy to find is crucial to both, and also to creating a positive learning environment. In recent years, access to University resources has been streamlined, and is now the same for on- and off-campus students.

To ensure that students are able to communicate using methods they are comfortable with, the distance education library web site includes both e-mail and toll-free telephone access to the distance librarian. The Libraries are in the process of revamping the distance education library web site to make it easier to navigate and to include features such as the new “library tips blog,” which provides another way for distance education students to ask questions, report problems, share tips about doing research or using the library, and search through other students’ postings.

Distance librarians can also assist distance learners by working with faculty to be certain students have access to electronic reserves and that information for classes is organized and available in a timely way. The distance librarian is currently planning a new project to work with faculty on integrating library resources in their ICON (see below) course sites.

Student Usage of the Libraries for Study

When asked if they spend most or all of their study time in one of the University Libraries, 18.2% of respondents to the survey on learning spaces conducted for this self-study responded positively. An additional 52.0% said they spend some or about half of their study time in the Libraries. Undergraduate students use the Main Library most often (57.1%), with the Hardin Library for the Health Sciences and the Business branch library accounting for the next largest percentages, 8.2% and 12.1% respectively. When asked if there is adequate space for group study at the Main Library, 65.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed; asked the same question about individual study space, 75.8% agreed or strongly agreed. Finally, 63.7% of students agreed or strongly agreed that there is adequate transportation between the libraries and where they live.

Although some of the student comments about the Libraries compiled in Appendix II-N are contradictory (“too quiet,” “too crowded/loud”), this supplementary information about student perceptions of the Libraries does suggest some ways the University could improve the learning environment in the Main Library. The students describe what they would like to see in terms of furniture and space—more “comfy” chairs, smaller tables, more group study spaces—and highlight things that inconvenience them, such as the fact that the south entrance closes early.

LibQUAL+ Survey

During fall 2006, the University Libraries surveyed campus users regarding their satisfaction with library services and collections using a nationally-recognized instrument, LibQUAL+™, developed in 2001 through 2003 by the Association of
Research Libraries (ARL) and based on the SERVQUAL model. The survey asks questions in three categories: affect of service, information control, and library as place.

In total, 127 undergraduate students completed the survey and commented about the Libraries. The comments focused on library spaces, technology, and people and services. Space was of particular concern to this group—one student commented, for example, “Services, collections, and staff are wonderful, but the main building itself is not very inviting.” Another referenced the Art branch library “as a shining example of location, lighting, comfort, and color scheme combining to create an environment that facilitates learning.” “Having the library open for 24 hours” was a common concern, as was the limited availability of space for group study and projects.

“College Transition” Program Support

Since fall 2001, more than 5,000 first-year UI students have enrolled in the one-credit “College Transition” course, described in the “Entry and Transition” section of this self-study. All “College Transition” students experience a hands-on class session in the Main Library that introduces them to the Libraries’ services and resources. In fall 2006, more than 40 library staff members participated in these “College Transition” class sessions, reaching more than 850 students. Library personnel have made presentations at regional and national conferences about assessing learning outcomes, based on what they have learned from the evaluation component of this program—an ongoing pre-test/post-test study.

“College Transition” students take a pre-test that consists of 15 questions designed to determine the extent to which students have written research papers during high school, what kind of library orientation they received in high school, and their level of familiarity with library resources and services. Students take another test immediately after their first library session, and again a few weeks later to determine if the library session was successful.

The Libraries also administer a brief post-test survey, to which 880 students responded in fall 2007. Of those respondents, 91% agreed or strongly agreed that the library component of the “College Transition” course had given them “a better understanding of library resources.” About 90% indicated that they knew the criteria to evaluate websites, and about 77% felt they understood how to use Academic Search Elite to look for magazines and journal articles. Comments that may help identify areas in need of improvement include:

Information provided in a void is less relevant then when it is presented at a point of need. Since “College Transition” has no research assignment, students appear to retain less information than if they had a related assignment.

There is some redundancy if students are taking both rhetoric and “College Transition.”

The library component of the “College Transition” course has reinforced for library staff the idea that the Libraries and development of information skills can contribute in a key way to student satisfaction and retention.

“Library Research in Context” Course

In fall 2005, with support from the associate provost for undergraduate education,
the University Libraries developed a “Library Research in Context” (LRC) course. The Libraries first offered the course, under the aegis of the University College, in spring 2006. This one-semester-hour course is intended for upper-level students who are also taking a class in their major that requires a research project.

LRC is an activity-based course that helps students develop an understanding of how library resources can support individual courses of study. The course introduces students to the basic research process and to research conventions in specific fields, and teaches how to integrate information skills and concepts to accomplish course goals. Subject-specialist librarians present the course material through lectures, in-class activities and assignments, and class discussion. Librarians taught five sections of LRC during spring and fall 2006 and seven in spring and fall 2007.

LRC instructors collect survey data at the beginning and end of each course to identify strengths and weaknesses in the students' ability to use library resources, and also to collect students' general impressions about the course. Students have expressed a high level of satisfaction with the course, as well as some concern that it might involve more work than is appropriate for only one semester hour of credit. Students report feeling less “library anxiety” and more confidence in navigating what previously seemed like an “information quagmire,” as well as greater confidence in their researching skills. Students report feeling more able to evaluate information found online and to develop their own ideas based on that information.

Faculty members have expressed a great deal of enthusiasm about the course, but a disappointingly small number have been willing to collaborate with the Libraries to develop course sections, resulting in fewer sections than anticipated.

**Rhetoric Matching Program**

The Rhetoric Matching Program matches rhetoric teaching assistants with librarians who serve as their contact points and/or consultants, supporting rhetoric instructors by providing:

- Orientations to the libraries and library services for instructors and their students
- Suggestions for instructors developing library assignments
- Information on teaching students how to evaluate information
- Suggestions regarding information resources and tools that can help students
- Instruction and support on using various information resources (e.g., the library catalog, EbscoHost Academic Search Elite, etc.), so that instructors can pass that knowledge on to their students
- Recommendations of resources that might complement instruction and might be included on course web sites
- Teaching library sessions for students in the Main Library Information Arcade classroom

Rhetoric teaching assistants participate in the program only if they choose to, so not all students enrolled in rhetoric (a requirement of the General Education Program, as described earlier in this self-study) receive the program's assistance. From those who do participate the Libraries have received considerable positive feedback.
Conclusions—University Libraries

University of Iowa students have a remarkable resource in the University Libraries, whose four million volumes place it 21st in size among the nation’s public research libraries. According to the student satisfaction survey conducted for this self-study, students seem to appreciate that resource. Librarians’ participation in “College Transition,” “Library Research in Context,” and rhetoric courses through the Rhetoric Matching Program also seems to have significant benefits for undergraduates. Library leaders are concerned, however, that staffing levels at the Libraries may not be adequate to meet their goals for assisting in student learning. A review of the Libraries, nearing completion in fall 2007, might address this issue.

The Libraries are feeling space constraints as the collections, staff, and student enrollment have grown since 1975, while the Libraries' physical space has not. The library archiving facility now under development will relieve some archiving space pressures, but seating standards remain below recommended levels.

Developing Student Speaking, Writing, and Math Skills

Overview

Labs, programs, and centers on campus focus on helping students build skills necessary for student success. Among these units are the campus writing centers: the UI Writing Center, the Writing Fellows Program, the History Writing Center, the Department of Accounting Writing Program, the College of Medicine Writing Center, the College of Engineering Center for Technical Communication, the Judith R. Frank Business Communications Center, and the Spanish Writing Center. The Speaking Center helps students improve public speaking skills, and the Math Lab uses a similar format to help students develop math skills.

All of these can make a significant contribution to cultivating student potential, because these skills are so important to student success in college and beyond.

Writing Center

The University of Iowa Writing Center, established in 1934, offers free one-on-one instruction in rhetorical and communication skills to all interested students on campus. Instructors include faculty members in the Department of Rhetoric, and graduate students from such departments as English, communication studies, and rhetoric. Students can choose to enroll in the Writing Center for an entire semester, make individual appointments, or request help via e-mail.

Over the years, Writing Center services have grown with the addition of satellite centers in the Blank Honors Center, North Hall, the Rehder Lounge in the Quadrangle residence hall, the Main Library, and the Iowa City Public Library. In spring 2007, the center added workshops in fiction, non-fiction, and poetry.

The Writing Center provides assistance to address a wide range of student needs and interests. In fact, many students who attend the Writing Center are excellent writers, some of whom have published work in prestigious journals and texts. Tutors are not oriented toward “fixing” individual papers but toward assisting writers in improving their strategies of researching, organizing, drafting, editing, and revising. Often, tutors develop mentoring relationships with Writing Center students.
The Writing Center attracts a culturally diverse population, including a high percentage of international participants. Every semester, students from ten to fifteen different language backgrounds and countries enroll. The Writing Center produces a journal of student writing, *VOICES from the University of Iowa Writing Center*, and sponsors a reading at the end of the semester. *VOICES* provides a venue for students across disciplines and from many cultures to share their work.

At the end of each semester, tutors solicit written feedback from each student enrolled in the program. The overwhelming majority of these evaluations are positive, and students from all backgrounds report that the Writing Center has helped improve their writing skills and made them more confident writers. Suggestions for improvement are considered by the Writing Center staff as they seek to expand their services to be even more comprehensive. The satellite centers, increased appointment hours, Sunday night hours at the Main Library, a wider variety of workshop topics, and community workshops are examples of student suggestions that have led to Writing Center improvements. The demand for Writing Center services is likely to lead to future expansion of staff, hours, and services.

**Spanish Writing Center**

The Spanish Writing Center (SWC) was established to provide writing assistance to undergraduate students in 100-level Spanish courses, and it is gaining in popularity quickly. Its mission is to help students focus on issues of content, organization, and structure when they write in Spanish.

Students sign up for 30-minute appointments, which involve one-on-one help with specific writing assignments. Tutors have students explain the assignment and discuss their writing goals. They hope to help students discover areas in the paper that need improvement and points that need expansion, elaboration, or clarification. As does the Writing Center, the Spanish Writing Center seeks to help students become better writers, not to fix or edit individual pieces of writing.

**Tippie College of Business Judith R. Frank Business Communications Center**

The Judith R. Frank Business Communications Center in the Tippie College of Business works with undergraduate students in that college to address the particular challenges of business communications. More than 600 undergraduates visit the center every semester.

The center, staffed by master’s-level and peer tutors, works primarily in conjunction with writing intensive courses in the College. Collaborating closely with the course instructors, staff in the center develop handouts and give class presentations tailored to the writing assignments in the course. They also work with individual students. Any business major, enrolled in one of the writing intensive courses or not, may visit the center.

Center staff also encourage groups to use their services, and will work with student teams to address collaborative writing issues such as collating research, writing sections with the big picture in mind, and using targeted checklists to measure results.

The director of the center oversees a core course for business majors, “Foundations of Business,” which focuses on writing and speaking skills in the context of business ethics and leadership. Students complete several writing and presentation assignments, participate in peer-review activities, and analyze ethical issues in business. The center
offers several specialized classes as well, with enrollment limited to 15 students.

**Speaking Center**

The Speaking Center’s mission is to help all members of the UI community who are interested in improving their speaking and teaching skills. Staff tailor tutoring sessions to meet an individual’s needs, such as help with a speech for a rhetoric or English course, a panel presentation, a dissertation defense, a conference presentation, an interview, a reading, or any other oral presentation. The center also serves as a resource center for instructors who incorporate speaking into their syllabi. The Speaking Center teamed with the Writing Center in spring 2007 to offer an English as a Second Language (ESL) conversation group; each Friday, enrolled students met with Writing and Speaking Center staff to discuss a conversation “topic of the week.”

This year, the Speaking Center expanded its services and hours of operation to accommodate more students. It reserves more than 30 weekly time slots for ESL conversation instruction, in addition to the 65 weekly appointment hours available to students working on projects. In spring 2006, the center held 168 30-minute appointments with students; in spring 2007, the center held 594 30-minute appointments.

In 2006 the Speaking Center procured a student computing fee grant for more than $30,000, which has enhanced TA training and purchased new technology, such as digital cameras to allow taping of student speeches so that tutors can review performance with students. The grant has also enabled the Speaking Center to develop, collect, and catalogue multimedia instructional materials. The purchase of new workstations—although crowded in the current space—has allowed the center to manage the expansion of its library of digital assets, and offer a working environment for students to use in developing, revising, and refining multimedia presentations. The new technology has, furthermore, allowed the Speaking Center to conduct more effective outreach instruction—workshops on matters such as effective conference presentations and interviewing techniques, which have been popular with many units across campus. In the near future, the center expects to add new programs including workshops on web resources, research, streaming media, and multimedia presentations for business, engineering, science, and honors courses.

The Speaking Center’s expansion, broader focus, and greater technological capabilities have attracted a larger, more diverse clientele. Space restrictions, however, hinder further expansion. The center is housed in a single room, which makes it difficult for more than one tutor to work with more than one student at one time. Staff have been able to accommodate the increased volume of appointments in part by holding some meetings in private offices rather than in the center’s space.

In focus group discussions with faculty about learning environments, some faculty wondered whether the space currently allotted to both the Writing Center and the Speaking Center could be increased, to allow for more usage of those resources.

**Math Lab**

A service unit under the auspices of the Department of Mathematics in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Math Lab provides a comfortable atmosphere where students can congregate to study math and receive one-on-one tutoring. The lab records about 8,000 student visits per year.
When asked about sources of support for being an effective student, many first-year students in RISE interviews cited the Math Lab. These students noted the accessibility and usefulness of the lab.

Located in several large, comfortable rooms with good lighting, the Math Lab provides an inviting atmosphere and a bank of computers that run tutorial software and standard math applications such as Maple and Mathematica. The lab added new tutorial software in spring 2007. A lab supervisor directs students to the help they need, and tutors provide one-on-one assistance. Students can come regularly or drop in for one-time assistance; those who experience the most improvement use the lab once a week.

The Math Lab was founded in 1979 in response to the concern that large math classes left students without regular one-on-one consultation with an instructor. In addition, many students enter the University without the algebra and pre-calculus skills necessary for success in University-level courses. The Math Lab is a much needed resource, therefore, but labor intensive; almost all of about 20 incoming graduate students in the Department of Mathematics work in the lab half time for their first year. These TAs receive training in tutoring, and their extensive experience in the lab helps make them more effective in leading discussion sections the following year.

The Math Lab also offers short courses on special topics in areas that are known to cause difficulty for large numbers of students, such as logarithms or using the chain rule in calculus. Student comments mention the helpfulness and understanding of Math Lab tutors.

The Math Lab enjoys an excellent reputation among advisors and students for helping students who are struggling with math. The student satisfaction survey reinforced that reputation. Of the 42% of respondents to the student satisfaction survey who reported having used the Lab, 66% rated the experience “moderately helpful” to “very helpful” in increasing skills.

Conclusions—Developing Student Speaking, Writing, and Math Skills

The University’s writing centers, Speaking Center, and Math Lab are gaining in popularity, used by students from a wide variety of backgrounds, and receive positive evaluations. First-year students interviewed for the RISE study mentioned the Math Lab in particular as having contributed to their success. The University might investigate ways to expand the capacity of these units.

University Housing

Overview

The residence halls are one of the most important learning environments the University provides. They play a particularly important role in helping new students transition to University life.

Role of Residence Halls In Helping Students Transition to the University

Research has shown that “Residential living during college is consistently one of the most important determinants of a college student’s level of involvement or integration into the various cultural, social, and extracurricular systems of the institution” (Pascarella, Terenzini, & Blimling, 1994, pp.25-26). With more than 90% of all first-year UI students living in one of ten residence halls, University Housing clearly plays a
critical role in the experience of new undergraduates.

The 2006-07 Residence Halls Guidebook provides an excellent overview of the role residence hall life can play in the transition to college:

The residence halls at The University of Iowa are more than just a place to live. In addition to safe and comfortable surroundings, living in an adult environment with limited supervision provides students with a glimpse of what living in society is all about: interacting with people from various backgrounds, taking responsibility for personal behavior, learning how a political governing system works, and learning how to have fun—and get along—with friends and neighbors. From classes, to interesting programs, to spontaneous fun, the residence halls at The University of Iowa provide for a living/learning experience on campus.

Prospective students are first exposed to residence hall living during campus tours offered by the Office of Admissions. Selecting housing and choosing whether to live in one of UI’s 12 learning communities are among a new student’s first decisions. Resident assistants (RAs) are trained to develop relationships with first-year students during their first weeks on campus—a critical time for students to engage and integrate into the campus community. University Housing, therefore, plays a crucial role in the daily lives of new students.

In interviews, several University Housing staff members noted that returning students serve as mentors for first-year students by modeling appropriate social and academic behavior. Often they function as tutors as well, especially within learning communities. University Housing sets a priority on housing first-year students, so space for returning students is severely constrained. The lack of space for returning students translates into a disadvantage for new students, who miss out on the mentoring that returning students can provide.

The Residence Halls as a Learning Environment

The residence halls are not just a place for students to eat and sleep but also a place to study, learn, and establish a sense of community.

University Housing provides space that is just for students—where they are with their peers, have the freedom to decorate their own spaces, can create informal study groups, and feel comfortable and safe. Resident assistants run floor meetings and have other formal duties, but also provide an accepting environment. Some floors regularly sponsor informal activities.

These conditions are amenable to informal learning and also set the stage for formal learning. Wireless internet access is available in the dorms, and five out of ten residence halls also offer ITCs that are accessible 24 hours a day—which is important for students who do not feel comfortable leaving the residence halls at night, or who do not have their own computers.

The Residence Life mission statement reads:

Residence Life staff is committed to the holistic development of students. The services we offer are intentionally designed to foster the academic, social, cultural, and personal growth of our residents. We are dedicated to the preparation of leaders and involved citizens in a safe and inclusive residential community. Paramount to this endeavor is the promotion of understanding and responsibility in a positive living.
learning environment (emphasis added).

The results of the student survey of learning spaces conducted for this self-study indicate a generally positive attitude toward the residence halls as a learning environment. When asked whether the residence halls are conducive to study, 68.9% agreed or strongly agreed. Asked whether the residence hall rooms are furnished for serious study, 67.0% agreed. And 63.6% indicated that they do study in the public lounges in the residence halls. Overall, 52.6% of respondents indicated that they spend most or all of their study time in the residence halls, and an additional 24.4% indicated that they spend about half of their study time there.

University Housing is committed to its role in supporting student development. In 2006 University Housing developed and implemented a Community Development Blueprint intended to shift the focus from traditional programming to purposeful community development within the residence halls. In an effort to foster student learning, growth, and interaction, RAs plan programming around five outcomes:

1. Knowledge of individual and community needs
2. Focus on academics and expanding knowledge
3. Personal wellness and health choices
4. Attending to the well-being of others through social action
5. Commitment to career preparation

For instance, one of the ways University Housing discourages students from drinking alcohol is to provide alternative activities. Late on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights, RAs are encouraged to provide “Late-Night Initiatives” such as a video game competitions or trips to a local mall. In addition, University Housing plans at least one program for each of the three campus neighborhoods (East, West, and North) every weekend.

University Housing recently developed a policy of notifying parents when students are found to be using alcohol or drugs, and began imposing fines for drinking alcohol in the residence halls ($200 for a first offense, $500 for a second). Alcohol-related violations have dropped 30% since the fines were introduced.

Beginning in fall 2004, University Housing has distributed a Resident Satisfaction Survey (published by Educational Benchmarking, Inc.) utilizing a seven point Likert scale, with items focused on several factors related to satisfaction with the residence halls. Fall 2004 results were compared to three sets of institutions: every college that distributed the survey (n=254), all institutions in Iowa's Carnegie class (n=66), and six selected by University Housing. The factors “satisfaction with floor or hall facilities” and “satisfaction with residence hall facilities” ranked Iowa at the top of UI’s Carnegie class and second out of all institutions surveyed. Dining services also ranked highly. Satisfaction with RAs, fellow residents, and roommates compared less favorably, however. University Housing took these results into account in its strategic planning process. Results of the fall 2006 survey are posted on the University's web site.

The most visibly promising feature of residence hall life is the success of learning communities, as described in the “Entry and Transition” section of this self-study. When asked whether they were aware of learning communities, at least half of all respondents to the learning spaces survey—and half within each major or college included—answered “yes.” Asked whether they felt learning communities made studying easier, 38.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, and 36.0% were neutral (perhaps reflecting students who are not members of learning communities). These students
were also asked whether learning communities add a positive social dimension to studying, to which 48.8% said yes, and 46.4% were neutral.

The Learning Communities Task Force, described in the conclusion to this self-study, will offer recommendations concerning the next stage of development of both residential and non-residential learning communities.

The Office of Residence Life

Within University Housing, the Office of Residence Life (ORL) attends to the growth and well-being of student residents through a combination of programs, direct staff interaction, and policy administration. Table II-29 lists the programs ORL administers.

Table II-29: Office of Residence Life Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Associated Residence Halls (ARH) and Hall Governments</th>
<th>ARH is the overall governing body for the 10 residence halls on campus, to which each of the nine individual hall governments report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earthwords</td>
<td>Student-run publication featuring student prose, poetry, and original artwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational and Social Programming</td>
<td>A variety of programs for individual floors, halls, or the entire residence life community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night Games</td>
<td>A monthly, late night recreational alternative held at the Field House, administered in conjunction with Recreational Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome Week</td>
<td>Residence Life is a co-sponsor of the University’s Welcome Week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned in the “Learning Alongside the Curriculum” section of this self-study, University Housing also provides a number of opportunities for student employment.

Office of Residence Life Manager of Academic Initiatives

In 2007 University Housing created a new position, manager of academic initiatives, charged with increasing consistency among the learning communities, further implementing best practices from on and off campus, and managing University Housing’s focused shift toward developing the academic side of residence hall life. Staff will create more learning-oriented programming for the halls, such as the programs currently in place during Welcome Week. New programs may build on the success of the PACE (Promoting Academic Commitment Excellence) program in Burge Hall, which “catches” students studying and rewards them for it.

With this strengthened emphasis on academic programming in the residence halls, University Housing has already been able to implement several successful initiatives.

University Housing partnered with the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to promote the Peanut Butter and Jelly Mid-term Study Break, an out-of-class social student-faculty event. Two events were held in October, from 9:30 p.m. to midnight—one in Hillcrest Dining Lobby and one Currier. Faculty members from large lecture courses made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for students, who had
an opportunity to ask questions before mid-term exams, interact socially, and get to know the faculty members.

The Office of Residence Life, in conjunction with the Office of the Provost and the Department of Psychology, organized three Elementary Psychology Question and Answer sessions with Scott Robinson, teacher of the large “Elementary Psychology” course, for residents of Slater Residence Hall. The first of these out-of-class student-faculty interactions focused on upcoming mid-term exams for the course and questions about involvement in the field of psychology. Food and drinks were provided. More than 65 students attended (out of 98 invited), and most stayed for the entire two hours in the Slater Residence Hall Lounge. Asked to comment, students indicated that they felt the session was helpful for test preparation and they enjoyed learning about Robinson, both professionally and personally. The second session was held in late October, and the third immediately before finals. A graduate student from the UI Graduate Programs in Student Affairs will follow up with an assessment of the program.

The Office of Residence Life each year collects information from faculty and staff who want to volunteer to present information, interact with students, or teach a skill in the residence hall setting. Residence hall staff members contact ORL to request certain speakers, skills, or topic areas for programming. ORL matches these requests with its database of potential speakers and presenters, and facilitates arrangements for faculty visits to the residence halls. This process has led to program offerings dealing with the Iowa City Under 21 initiative, careers in the health sciences, stress management techniques, how to pass a science course, résumé writing, and even an opera performance. All of these programs involved a faculty member. ORL is committed to further developing this program in the future.

Conclusions—University Housing

Students express a positive perception of the residence halls as a learning environment. Learning communities have met with particularly positive response, are in great demand, and contribute to retention. An increased emphasis on academic initiatives in the Office of Residence Life has led to some innovative programs, and as that effort grows it might help to increase student academic engagement.

Supporting Healthy Choices, Personal Development, and Safety

Overview

One strategy related to undergraduate education in The Iowa Promise is to “creat[e] with [undergraduates] a safe environment in which to live, learn, and work, including opportunities to participate in health-promoting activities.” The plan also calls for “. . . persistent attention to the health and welfare of faculty, staff, and students.” Some of the units that help to carry out these responsibilities are Student Health Service, the University Counseling Service, the Office of Student Services Campus and Community Relations, and the Women’s Resource and Action Center.

Student Health Service

Student Health Service (SHS) is the primary health care resource for all University of Iowa students (undergraduate and graduate) and provides primary care, psychiatry, gynecology services, sports medicine, a full-service pharmacy, and travel/allergy
clinics, as well as health promotion services through Health Iowa. SHS’s mission is “to provide competent and quality health care for all students, while recognizing their own individuality as it pertains to treating their particular problems; to promote preventive medicine and healthy lifestyles; to develop educational and outreach programs; and to make student visits an informational and educational experience.”

SHS and Health Iowa, its health promotion and education branch, provide several programs related to recruitment, retention, and the first-year experience. Health Iowa provides training for orientation advisors as well as ongoing training for resident assistants, hall managers, coaches, and faculty and staff in various areas. A majority of the residents in Iowa’s residence halls are first-year students, and a strong infrastructure of health-related support is vital to their transition process. During orientation, Health Iowa staff make presentations to parents and provide MMR and Meningitis shots. SHS monitors immunization requirements for all students on campus.

 According to the most recent National College Health Assessment data (fall 2006), 73% of students report using the internet to obtain health information. SHS and Health Iowa offer very good web-based learning resources for students. HealthBlog is an online question and answer service that lets students ask questions of Health Iowa and SHS staff anonymously. More than 900 questions and answers are archived on the site. Health Iowa also offers a link to “e-CHUG” (electronic CHeck-Up to Go), a survey tool developed by San Diego State University that lets students confidentially assess their use of alcohol. The most highly used areas of the site are 1) the anonymous question and answer service that allows students to submit questions and receive credible answers and 2) the general health information arranged by topic (e.g., nutrition, substance use, etc.). The site is accredited by the Health on the Net Foundation.

Many mental health issues surface during early college years, so a strong mental health care system is also a vital component of transition services. SHS works closely with University Counseling Service (see below) to provide mental health diagnosis, counseling, and treatment. Health Iowa also provides substance abuse evaluations and early intervention, as well as dietetic counseling related to eating disorders. The SHS director serves as health expert and consultant for several units on campus—including the Academic Advising Center, University Housing, the Office of the Vice President for Student Services, and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences—to identify students who may need academic or other accommodations in order to continue at the University.

SHS works to ensure that its services are supportive and inclusive of individual and cultural differences. Staff members receive diversity training annually. The office has systems in place to make health information available to those whose first language is not English. And staff members help foreign students become familiar with the U.S. health care system.

Health Iowa participated in the joint implementation of AlcoholEdu (described in the “Entry and Transition” section of this self-study), and collaborated with the Department of Health and Sport Studies to offer three sections of “Alcohol and Your College Experience” and three sections of “Tobacco and Your College Experience” courses beginning in fall 2006. All class sections were full, and initial results show that students participating in a three-month follow-up survey decreased their average number of drinks, increased protective behaviors such as being a designated driver, were more likely to avoid drinking games, and more often used a buddy system. In an effort to address alcohol issues at an earlier age, Health Iowa is considering the option of holding spaces in these courses—or setting aside sections—specifically for first- and second-year students.
In 2006-07, SHS received 39,975 patient visits and 18,155 calls to the Nurse Call Line, which provides telephone consultation. Health Iowa conducted 28,792 workshops and consultations across campus. The SHS web site receives up to one million views per year.

In November 2005 and April 2006, SHS administered patient satisfaction surveys, asking patients to grade performance on a number of indicators using an A (great) to F (poor) scale. Patients gave SHS a grade of A in the categories of confidentiality, safety, and whether they would use the services again; they gave the staff category an A-. The payment category received the lowest grade, a C. Ease of getting care, waiting, and facilities received grades in the B range. In October 2006 and March 2007 SHS administered the surveys again. In this second result set patients gave SHS slightly higher ratings in all categories except facilities. All categories remained within the same grade range as in the prior year, except for the payment category, which moved up to a B-, and the facilities category, which moved down to a B-.

SHS also collects and reviews customer input through surveys, interactions, e-mail, comment cards, the Mt. Shadow Survey (feedback from first year medical students after shadowing a physician for a period of time), the Student Health Advisory Council (SHAC), and the UI Enrolled Student Survey. As a result of patient input, SHS has developed a brochure about insurance, added information and forms on the SHS web site, and hired an additional appointment scheduler.

University Counseling Service

The primary mental health service for University of Iowa students, the University Counseling Service (UCS) is staffed by 11 doctoral level licensed psychologists with over 150 years of combined experience in college student mental health and higher education, as well as three full-time psychology interns and six to ten graduate psychology students completing required practicum courses in counseling. UCS also employs one full-time project assistant and three support staff. In addition to short-term individual, couple, and group counseling, UCS provides consulting and educational programs on a variety of topics, such as study skills, career choice, communication, diversity, and relationships.

Although UCS works with University Housing and the network of RAs to try to ensure that students receive the care they need, staff members expressed some concern about their office’s limited contact with entering students, who sometimes struggle with the transition to college. Typically, UCS connects with parents of students who are already receiving care when they enter the University, or those who have a disability and need assistance. UCS reaches out to first-year students by participating in orientation (UCS staffs a table with information about counseling services, and participates in the “Staying Safe, Staying Healthy” panel for parents), conducting outreach and educational programs in the residence halls (18 outreach programs were presented in the residence halls between July 1, 2006 and June 30, 2007), and being part of the “College Transition” “scavenger hunt” (an exercise to help new students become familiar with UI offices and programs). The percentage of UCS contacts who are first-year students remains small, however.

During 2006-07, the Clinical Services area of UCS saw 1,681 students for 2,421 initial consultation visits and took in 620 of them for ongoing counseling. About 68.9% of these were undergraduate student clients, and most (58.1%) were self-referred. Among these clients, 18.6% resided in the residence halls, and 14.3% were first-year students.
The percentage of students seeking counseling increases with each academic level, so that senior students comprise the greatest percentage of undergraduate clients (20.0%).

UCS collects client satisfaction data during a two-week survey period each spring. The spring 2007 survey resulted in positive evaluations in all areas (including location, timeliness of service, competence of counselor, overall quality of services, and others). On a scale of zero to four where zero=poor, one=fair, two=good, three=very good, and four=excellent, the lowest rating for any category was 3.48 for “convenient location.” The highest rating was 3.92, for “felt respected by counselor.”

UCS’s 226 programs in 2006-07 had 8,921 participants, and 69 consultations served an additional 358 participants. One hundred eighty-five program participants completed a program evaluation questionnaire, and more than 97% of these rated both the program and presenter “good” or “excellent.”

The Division of Student Services is completing a review of UCS in fall 2007.

Alcohol Education

Alcohol abuse is the number one public health concern among the college population. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) report A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges (2002) offers some startling national statistics:

Every year, 1,700 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die from unintentional injuries related to alcohol, and half a million are injured.

About 25 percent of college students report academic consequences of drinking, including missing class, falling behind, doing poorly on exams and papers, and receiving lower grades overall.

Thirty-one percent of college students qualify for a diagnosis of alcohol abuse, and 6% for alcohol dependence, according to questionnaire-based self-reports.

Data from a variety of sources indicate that high-risk drinking among University of Iowa students is among the top tier of institutions of higher education in the nation. University of Iowa students report higher levels of “binge” drinking than students at other Big Ten institutions. For example, Iowa’s high-risk drinking rate is 69%, in contrast to 59% at Penn State University, 40% at Ohio State, and 61% at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. UI students also experience more alcohol-related negative consequences than the national average for college students, as outlined in Table II-30.

Table II-30:
Student Experience of Negative Consequences of Alcohol Use:
University of Iowa Rate Compared to National Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consequence</th>
<th>UI Rate</th>
<th>National Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forgot where you were or what you did</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missed Class</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did something (you) regretted</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Got behind in school work</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study (Iowa data, 2005; National Comparative Data: 2001)
The University of Iowa also has a high rate of alcohol-related arrests—a function of both high rates of alcohol use and a high rate of enforcement in Iowa City’s compressed downtown area. Health Iowa has worked to educate students about the effects an arrest or citation can have on their futures; for example, the What’s Your Degree Worth? brochure has been distributed to “College Transition” instructors, Greek chapters, and various other groups. The brochure will be updated in spring 2008.

Changing the “drinking culture” is an evolutionary process, and The University of Iowa has been working for years to implement environmental changes that will reduce excessive drinking; for example, more than 20 years ago UI launched the “Graduate with Class” campaign to stop students from bringing champagne to commencement ceremonies, and more than 10 years ago the University launched the “Safe Saturdays” campaign to cut down on drinking and unsafe behavior in the stands at Kinnick Stadium. Both efforts were successful.

Office of Student Services Campus and Community Relations

A Call to Action highlights the importance of tackling college alcohol abuse through programs targeting 1) individuals, including at-risk or alcohol-dependent drinkers; 2) the student population as a whole; and 3) the college and the surrounding community.

In response to this and other reports on student drinking, The University of Iowa has developed a multi-tiered approach directed by the Office of Student Services Campus and Community Relations (OSSCCR), which serves as a liaison between The University of Iowa and the local community.

On campus, OSSCCR partners with a variety of University units to enhance health and safety. For example, OSSCCR helped Athletics establish a no-alcohol policy in Kinnick Stadium, designate one tailgating lot alcohol-free, and close a parking lot that had become a location for high-risk drinking during football games. Another example is OSSCR’s work with University Housing to promote non-alcohol-related activities and education in the residence halls.

The University works closely with the City of Iowa City to send out a consistent message regarding excessive alcohol consumption and underage drinking. Nuisance property restrictions and party ordinances have been put in place. Businesses that serve liquor train servers to recognize underage and other high-risk drinkers. Iowa City has banned “all you can drink” specials, “ladies’ night” promotions, and sales of Jell-o shots. Fines for PAULA (possession of alcohol under the legal age) have increased, and a new ordinance bans patrons younger than 19 from bars after 10 p.m. Iowa City, however, remains unusual in allowing entry to bars by patrons who are not old enough to drink legally.

Since the increase in amounts for PAULA fines the number of violations reported through the Office of the Vice President for Student Services decreased from 1,071 to 621. Disorderly house violations have dropped from more than 100 in each year from 2000 to 2003 to 64 in 2006.

Stepping Up Project

A coalition of citizens from The University of Iowa and the Iowa City/Coralville area, the Stepping Up Project works to create recreational programs and government policies that reduce high risk drinking and its harmful effects. The program received a series of grants from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation beginning in 1996 and ending in spring 2006. The University has assumed responsibility for continued though reduced
The goals of the Stepping Up Project are:

- Communicate information regarding high risk drinking to students, faculty, staff, and community members
- Increase effective enforcement of community and university policies
- Decrease accessibility/availability of alcohol
- Increase social alternatives to high-risk drinking
- Change the larger environment within the state of Iowa as it pertains to high risk drinking
- Actively engage diverse student representatives in the development and assessment of policy initiatives

Stepping Up has provided evidence in support of the recent policy changes described above, including the increase in PAULA fines and party ordinances.

**Friday Classes and Alternative Programming**

Recent research suggests that students who take classes on Fridays are less likely to engage in binge drinking on Thursdays (Wood et al., 2007). On the basis of this evidence, the vice provost has developed plans to shift some Monday classes to Fridays, with particular emphasis on classes that enroll first-year students and have required attendance standards. The first shifts will take place in fall 2008.

In addition, the Center for Credit Programs has implemented spring break programming to give students an alternative to “partying.” Spring break 2008 classes include SCUBA diving, mountain biking, backpacking, ballroom dancing, and challenge course facilitation.

**Women's Resource and Action Center**

As described above, the Women's Resource and Action Center (WRAC) at The University of Iowa provides students with various opportunities to participate in programs that promote social change. WRAC also offers many resources to help individuals make healthy choices, overcome challenges in their lives, and make connections with others who have similar interests and challenges.

Each semester WRAC offers a series of support, discussion, and enrichment groups led by trained facilitators (primarily student and community volunteers). Participation is free. In fall 2007 WRAC groups included “The Savvy FreshWoman,” for female first-year undergraduates wanting to build support and skills to help them succeed in college; a lesbian reading group; “Mujer,” a group that brings together Latinas from diverse backgrounds to talk about their experiences living in Iowa; “Centered Self,” a group for students, staff, faculty, and community members of any gender to talk about incorporating self-care techniques into hectic schedules; and “I’m Graduating... Now What?!” a group for female undergraduates nearing graduation to discuss values, goals, and priorities for their lives after college.

Other resources available at WRAC include the Sojourner Truth Library, which
houses materials on topics such as women’s health, gender studies, and lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender studies; a computer loan program; individual counseling; diversity dialogue circles; internship and volunteer training programs; and many educational programs, including conferences, lectures, and workshops. Recent WRAC-sponsored events include the two part “Race, Privilege and Cultural Competence” mini-conference, created in response to the race and class inequities highlighted by Hurricane Katrina; the 14th annual Iowa Women’s Music Festival; and “When Someone’s Not Safe at Home,” a workshop for professionals to learn how to help individuals who might be experiencing violence in a domestic relationship.

Over the last three academic years, WRAC has collected satisfaction data from service users. Over that period, the percentage of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they found the event they attended enjoyable and/or helpful ranged from 83% (in 2005-06) to 95% (in 2006-07).

The Healthy Living Network

The Division of Student Services is developing a Healthy Living Network to encourage collaboration and assessment within the division regarding the holistic health of UI students. Still in the planning stages, the program’s goals include:

- Students will develop a deeper understanding of their personal health status and the role of environmental influences on health issues and practices.
- Students will make decisions aimed at living a purposeful, healthy and balanced life.
- Students will recognize and act on the value of a campus environment supportive of health and intolerant of abuse.

Measures that will be used to assess how successful the program is in achieving these outcomes include National College Health Assessment (HCHA) data, program evaluation data, and Educational Benchmarking, Inc., data. Outcomes will be measured for behavior change; change in self-knowledge; and self-reported change in knowledge, values, and actions.

Public Safety

Campus crime statistics show that UI students live and study in a relatively safe environment, but safety remains an ongoing concern.

The University of Iowa Department of Public Safety provides police and security services for the campus and cooperates with other local law enforcement agencies. The department has a full time crime prevention officer and offers a number of programs to educate students and other members of the campus community on strategies for self-defense and protection of property.

With the support of a U.S. Department of Justice grant, the University has created the Anti-Violence Campus Coalition. Working with a variety of internal units and community agencies, the coalition seeks to reduce violence against women, especially in the context of dating relationships.

Conclusions— Supporting Healthy Choices, Personal Development, and Safety

The University offers students many resources to help maintain health and well-being,
with a focus on helping students make wise choices about caring for themselves.

The RISE study and other data have demonstrated, however, that alcohol abuse is a serious problem at UI and that it affects both student health and student academic success negatively. Addressing this issue will require the increased attention not only of units that already focus daily on issues of student health, but of University administrators, faculty, staff, and students.

Environments and Resources to Support Learning among Selected Student Populations

Underrepresented Students

Overview

A diverse learning environment is fundamental to a university's ability to provide excellent education to all of its students. A commitment to diversity must pervade the institution at all levels; all colleges, departments, programs, and individuals are responsible for advancing this goal. In this self-study, however, we address a few programs focused on cultivating the potential of undergraduate students from groups historically-underrepresented in postsecondary education: the Center for Diversity & Enrichment, the Summer Research Opportunity Program, and Student Disability Services. Some additional programs that support the transition of underrepresented students were described in the “Entry and Transition” section of this self-study.

Diversity Action Committee Recommendations Related to Student Recruitment and Success

In 2005, Executive Vice President and Provost Michael Hogan appointed a Diversity Action Committee (DAC), charged with suggesting specific steps the University can take to achieve the diversity goals outlined in The Iowa Promise. The DAC’s March 2006 report discusses a wide range of issues concerning the recruitment and retention of underrepresented minorities, and includes this assessment of the University’s current efforts:

Although The University of Iowa has a well respected academic and research reputation, a common concern for prospective undergraduate and graduate or professional minority students is how well the University can help them achieve their academic and career aspirations while also meeting social and cultural needs that give underrepresented minority students a positive holistic college experience. For the University’s efforts to be successful, there is a need for a more personal approach to the recruitment of minority students.

The report offers 21 recommendations in the areas of student success, faculty and staff success, climate, University coordination to achieve diversity, and accountability. The recommendations under “student success” include:

Make minority student recruitment the responsibility of the entire campus.

Involve alumni in our recruitment effort.

Understand the needs of Iowa’s minority students and focus on the special needs and concerns of Iowa communities with large minority populations.

Restructure and revitalize the University’s scholarship and financial aid program.

Improve retention and graduation rates of underrepresented minority students.
Create a minority student advisory board.

Revitalize the cultural houses.

Also relevant to student recruitment are the DAC recommendations related to “climate,” which include:

Provide faculty, staff and students with the tools to be effective members of the University community.

Spark a climate of cultural awareness on the University campus.

Forge stronger links with the community.

Assess and monitor climate throughout the University.

The responsibility to track progress related to these recommendations rests with the special assistant to the president for equal opportunity and diversity and associate provost for diversity. As noted in the institutional self-study, significant progress has been made on many of the recommendations related to student, faculty, and staff recruitment, retention, and success; improving the climate; and enhancing the administrative structure for diversity efforts. Notable efforts related to student success include revision of UI diversity scholarships, enhancement of minority student recruitment and support efforts, engaging the community on topics related to diversity, engaging minority alumni on issues related to student recruitment and success, and undertaking careful review of the effectiveness of current efforts.

Campus climate surveys are providing additional goals for improvement. In developing its recommendations, the DAC responded to the results of an undergraduate student diversity climate survey conducted by the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity in 2005. The student survey, to which 1,095 undergraduate students responded, found that 80.1% of respondents felt as if “they belonged to the UI.” Respondents who were racial/ethnic minorities, born outside of the U.S., or older than 25, however, reported less access, equity, and inclusion at the University, and “perceived less institutional commitment to diversity” than their peers.

Center for Diversity & Enrichment

Another key recommendation in the Diversity Action Committee (DAC) report was to “foster the coordination of the University’s diversity efforts”:

In order to articulate, emphasize, and pursue the University’s goal of diversity on a systematic basis, we urge the central administration to institute a coordinating mechanism that will bring together the many University offices focused on specific aspects of achieving diversity.

In July 2006 the University created a new position: special assistant to the president for equal opportunity and diversity and associate provost for diversity. Two existing student diversity-focused units, Opportunity at Iowa and Support Service Programs, were moved under the purview of this new position. In March 2007 those two units merged into the new Center for Diversity & Enrichment (CDE).

In 2006-07 the senior associate provost for undergraduate education and the associate provost for diversity jointly appointed a task force to examine coordination of efforts to recruit underrepresented minority students, and to further implement the DAC’s
recommendations related to student success. Some recommendations from the report have been implemented and others are under consideration.

As described under “Entry and Transition,” the CDE provides leadership and coordination for outreach and service to underserved students, including students of color, first-generation college students, and students from low-income families. The center’s programs focus on outreach and “pipeline development” of pre-college students and providing academic support and enhancing the social and educational environment for students once they come to the University.

In addition to sponsoring numerous informal programs such as study circles, the CDE administers New Dimensions in Learning (NDIL), a TRiO supported program that offers tutors, academic counseling, and access to technology for students who qualify (see Appendix II-O for project performance outcomes for 2004-05 and 2005-06). The CDE provides mentoring, tutoring, and other academic support to recipients of the Advantage Iowa Award. And students who are first generation, low income, have a physical or learning disability, or are minority students affiliated with Support Service Programs (now part of CDE) may visit Academic Planning Services for counseling related to University policies, study skills, problem solving, financial planning, and program planning.

**Summer Research Opportunity Program**

Another important program for increasing undergraduate diversity—not just at The University of Iowa, but across the Midwest (among Committee on Institutional Cooperation [CIC] institutions)—is the Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP), described in greater detail in the “Learning Alongside the Curriculum” section of this self-study. This summer program pairs promising young researchers with faculty members expert in a research area of interest to them. The program’s goal is to increase the number of underrepresented students who pursue academic careers.

**Student Disability Services**

The Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) facilitates academic accommodations and services for students with disabilities so that these students have access to University programs and activities, and can participate in all aspects of University life fully. The office’s mission is to ensure equal access to education by providing reasonable accommodations for qualified students who demonstrate a condition that limits one or more major life activities significantly.

SDS functions under the umbrella of the Division of Student Services. A staff of seven full-time employees is supported by a graduate assistant and by student and non-student part-time employees (for services for deaf and hard of hearing students).

SDS participates in the recruitment and admissions process by sharing information about its services and about eligibility requirements to prospective students and their parents through office visits, phone calls, publications, and its web site. Each year, with funding support from the Office of Admissions, SDS sends a representative to the Choice Fair, a college information fair in Chicago for college-bound students with disabilities.

A student who enrolls at The University of Iowa may apply for SDS support. Instructors are expected to announce procedures for arranging academic accommodations at the beginning of each semester and include the information in the course syllabus. To
apply, a student must complete a confidential request for services and documentation review form and the student's health care provider must submit information about the student's disability. SDS personnel review the documentation and make a determination regarding eligibility for services.

If appropriate, the SDS office assigns the student to an SDS advisor, who meets with the student to discuss how his or her disability could interfere with course requirements. Together, the student and SDS advisor develop an accommodation plan, subject to approval by the instructor. Accommodations are tailored to individual needs and may include such elements as:

- **Alternative examination services**—extended time for examinations, readers, scribes, use of word processors, etc.
- **Alternative media services**—access to printed media materials by alternative methods such as Braille or scan-and-read software
- **Services for the deaf or hard of hearing**—American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, captioning services, note takers, etc.
- **Campus accessibility/transportation**—Bionic Bus (a specialized transport service for students, staff, and faculty with disabilities), building accessibility issues, etc.

The number of students registered with SDS increased 24% from 2005 to 2006. Of the 607 students registered with SDS during FY 2006, 50 were first-year students. The number of students registered with SDS was greater for each class level—up to 266 senior students—but the percentage of students requesting services declined from 78% of the first-year students to only 47% of the seniors. This may indicate that first-year students with disabilities need additional support as they become familiar with the University. To help address this need, SDS staff have proposed that students with disabilities be allowed to participate in the Iowa Edge program.

SDS outcomes measures address student use and promptness in providing services. The 2005-06 SDS annual report—which provides detailed metrics including demographic data, numbers of contacts, and types of accommodations provided—shows that the number of students registered with SDS increased significantly in 2005-06, as did the number of courses for which accommodations were requested, the number of scheduled appointments with SDS staff, and the number of SDS administered examinations. In spring 2006 the number of days between the assignment of a case and a response back to a student was less than three, half what it was in fall 2005.

In January 2006, the University’s ADA Compliance Review Task Force conducted a major study. The task force issued a report of its findings in May 2006. According to that report, 95% of respondents rated SDS services as either “good” or “excellent.”

### Student Athletes

**Overview**

The University of Iowa sponsors eleven men’s and thirteen women’s intercollegiate sports programs under the direction of the director of athletics and six associate athletics directors. The athletics director reports directly to the president of the University.
The Presidential Committee on Athletics, a charter committee, advises the University president and athletics director regarding policies governing the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, consistent with the rules of the Big Ten Conference and NCAA; the state of Iowa; the Board of Regents, State of Iowa; and The University of Iowa. Subcommittees on academic achievement, student athlete welfare, and equity contribute to the oversight of UI athletics.

The Academic Achievement Advisory Subcommittee of the Presidential Committee on Athletics reports academic success measures for UI student athletes. In the most recent ten-year reporting period, student athlete six-year graduation rates have been consistently above the rate for the general UI student population (see Figure II-7). Six-year graduation rates of female student athletes are, on average, 10.9 percentage points higher than their general student peers, while six-year graduation rates of male student athletes average four percentage points higher than their general student peers.

Overall, these data place Iowa second among Big Ten Institutions for men, fourth for women, and first overall. Forty-nine percent of Iowa’s 579 student athletes in fall 2006 earned at least a 3.0 GPA and 17% made the Dean’s List. Student athletes participating in IowaLink, a program designed for conditionally admitted students (see the “Entry and Transition” section of this self-study), achieve retention rates comparable to non-student athlete IowaLink participants. These academic performance indicators and retention and persistence rates suggest that student participation in intercollegiate athletics contributes to their overall retention and persistence to graduation.

The 2005-06 UI self-study for the NCAA recertification discusses graduation rates in detail (see section 2.1).

![Figure II-7: Comparison of Six-Year Graduation Rates for UI Student Athletes and for All UI Students](image)

The Department of Athletics

The University of Iowa Department of Athletics serves student athletes in many ways. The Department’s mission is to provide the administrative and coaching support, facilities, resources, and equipment necessary for student athletes to proceed successfully toward graduation from UI while participating in high level athletic competition.
Department of Athletics policies require that students attend all classes and lab/discussion sections unless previously excused, with five absences resulting in a suspension for 10% of athletic privileges, and each subsequent absence resulting in an additional 10% suspension. A student athlete may miss no more than eight class days due to team travel.

The department provides a variety of programs to support student athletes, including confidential personal counseling, career counseling, and leadership-building.

**Athletic Student Services**

**Athletic Student Services** oversees the recruitment of student athletes and monitors compliance with NCAA, Big Ten and University of Iowa guidelines. The office works closely with the Office of Admissions and with the IowaLink program.

Each year the University enrolls 170 to 200 new first-year student athletes. Participation in athletics can add considerable pressures to the college experience. Athletics Student Services pays special attention to first-year student athletes, to ensure they make a smooth transition to University life. New student athletes meet their academic counselors at summer orientation. Once classes begin, counselors meet weekly with new student athletes to review their academic and personal progress.

The office monitors students’ class attendance and solicits feedback from their instructors each semester. In the fall, new student athletes participate in an extensive orientation and certification program that covers a wide variety of UI, Athletics, Big Ten, and NCAA policies. In addition, they take a one credit hour seminar on the transition to University and intercollegiate cultures. This seminar resembles the “College Transition” course in that it covers study skills, time management, learning strategies, diversity, and campus resources.

Other academic and support services **Athletic Student Services** provides to the 600 to 650 student athletes who participate in one or more of UI’s 24 intercollegiate sports include:

- **Athletics Academic Coordinator:** Athletics academic coordinators assist students’ academic advisors by advising them about Big Ten, NCAA, and University policies that affect student athletes, including standards for course load and academic progress. Academic coordinators work with advisors to monitor student athletes’ progress, help them understand rules, and help them select majors.

- **Gerдин Athletic Learning Center:** The Gerdin Center is an educational facility where student athletes work with tutors and with their athletic academic coordinators. This is the site for student athlete orientation and certification meetings and where many personal development and life skills programs are offered.

- **Structured Study Program:** Administered in the Gerdin Athletics Learning Center, the Structured Study Program is a prescribed and monitored academic support framework for student athletes to develop or improve their study habits. The program requires weekly hours of quiet study time, individual or group tutoring, and small study groups. Athletics requires a minimum of four hours per week of structured study, though most coaches mandate more.

- **Tutoring:** Tutoring is available to all student athletes free of charge, regardless of scholarship status. Tutors are postgraduates and teachers who assist with specific course content and study strategies.

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**3c: Effective learning environments**

**3d: Support for learning and teaching**
Retention: Retention and graduation are major goals of the Athletics Department and of Athletics Student Services. A retention coordinator works closely with student athletes who need specialized academic assistance. The retention coordinator assesses and diagnoses academic and learning needs, and organizes tailored services and programs that fit their needs, including counseling, tutoring, study groups, learning and organizational strategies, and mainstreming into on-campus services.

Athletics Student Services is committed to improving the recruitment and retention of minority student athletes and maintaining a supportive climate for them. They have developed a five-year Minority Issues Plan and are now incorporating that into their strategic plan.

Life Skills Program

The Division I-A Athletics Directors Association recognized the Iowa Athletics Program in 2000-01 as a Program of Excellence for its CHAMPS (Challenging Athletes’ Minds for Personal Success)/Life Skills program. The Program of Excellence award goes to Division I-A athletics programs that have established and demonstrated that student athlete well-being is a cornerstone of their operating principles. The NCAA created the CHAMPS program in the early 90’s as a way to emphasize holistic development of student athletes. The program deals with five areas: academic excellence, athletic excellence, personal development, service, and career development.

The program includes:

A one semester hour Transition Seminar that runs for eight weeks at the beginning of the fall semester. All new student athletes attend the seminar, which explores personal and academic issues arising from the transition to college and adjustment issues that are unique to student athletes.

Educational programs including seminars, speakers, workshops, and short courses on personal growth and life skills, with a primary focus on alcohol and other drugs

The Minority Student Athlete Enrichment Program, which offers a culturally supportive and stimulating environment in which minority student athletes develop friendships and a support network in the University

A registered and licensed dietitian/nutritionist

Honors Students

Overview

The University of Iowa Honors Program provides talented-and-gifted education for undergraduate students.

Entering first-year students with an Admission Index of 148 or above are admitted to the Honors Program automatically. Continuing students must maintain a minimum GPA to retain membership. Three years ago, the minimum GPA increased from 3.20 to 3.33. Nonetheless, the Honors Program has grown, with more than 5,000 members. Of each entering class, generally 12 to 15% join the Honors Program. In fall 2007, a record 735 entering students—17% of the class—joined the program.

The Honors Program has experienced extensive development and support from the University in the last ten years. The staff has increased from 1.5 FTE in 2000 to 6.25
FTE in 2007. In 2004, the program moved from temporary facilities to its present quarters in the new Blank Honors Center, adjacent to the Pomerantz Center where the Admissions Visitor Center, Academic Advising Center, and Pomerantz Career Center are housed. The program’s director now reports to the Office of the Provost, instead of jointly to the provost and the dean of CLAS.

The Honors Program does not prescribe a curriculum, but provides a collection of optional programs. Students can take honors course sections, live in the Honors House, or participate in scholarship workshops. Because students learn from their peers as well as their professors, the Honors Program ensures that many honors opportunities remain available to interested non-honors students as well.

The University of Iowa Honors Program is in the process of creating an overall vision for its future development called Honors Plus. The Honors House and the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates (ICRU) are two major components of Honors Plus that began operation in fall 2006, and early signs of success are encouraging. Also in development is the Aces Program for Analysis, Advocacy, and Action (described below), as well as Presidential Days, a recruitment program mentioned earlier under “Entry and Transition.” Several additional proposals are under consideration or in development.

In its first two years as a University-wide program, the Honors Program has added nine one-semester-hour honors seminars for entering students. It has experimented with honors college transition courses in several formats, and with honors seminars during interim sessions. It has improved the standards and procedures for designating any course for honors credit if professor and student make a contract for an extra honors project—an increasingly popular option. It has added more sections of “Honors Accelerated Rhetoric” to start students into UI general education. The program is making greater efforts to advertise such opportunities through Honors Summer Orientations and the Honors Listserv.

Honors Writing Fellows Program

A collaboration between the University of Iowa Honors Program and the University of Iowa Writing Center, the Honors Writing Fellows Program trains and pays about 30 honors students every semester to serve as undergraduate writing assistants. Each tutor tutors about a dozen fellow undergraduate students as they work through multiple drafts of major essays and increase effective attention to writing in a wide range of undergraduate courses.

About 300 of the students tutored by Honors Writing Fellows in 2004-05 submitted evaluations of the program. According to those evaluations, 98% of the program participants used feedback from their fellows to revise their essay drafts, and 70% of these students did so “frequently” or “always.” Moreover, 97% of the students rated the program valuable to them personally, and 74% reported it “helpful” or “very helpful.” Regarding written commentaries from writing fellows about their papers, 98% of respondents believed the commentaries had contributed to better papers.

Appendix II-P provides some samples of comments from student and faculty evaluations of the Honors Writing Fellows program. The comments reflect that students and faculty find the program valuable.

Aces Program

The University of Iowa Honors Program has launched a new program, the Aces
Program for Analysis, Advocacy, and Action, that equips students for participation in public affairs. The program teaches students to base public action on professional scholarship, and simultaneously prepares them to participate in major national and international scholarship competitions. Aces draws on Iowa’s strong programs in debate, writing, mock trial, rhetorical analysis of argument, and multimedia studies of political communication.

The program has four formal components: three honors seminars (public scholarship, public service, and public policy) and a research project working with a faculty mentor.

Honors House

In fall 2006 two honors learning communities—one for entering freshmen and one for transfers—were integrated into the Honors House in Daum Hall, which is connected by skywalk to the Blank Honors Center.

The number of entering honors students requesting accommodation in the Honors House has continued to increase, and students who live there develop enthusiastic ties to Honors House colleagues and programs. Nearly 90% of current and previous Honors House residents surveyed in November 2006 responded, virtually all with strongly positive responses. Nearly 60% of those who have lived in the Honors House would like to return for a second year there. Unfortunately, Daum does not offer the necessary capacity to comply.

The Honors Program is implementing several initiatives to try to accommodate students’ strong interest in living-learning arrangements. In fall 2007, for example, University Housing has agreed to open 20% of the rooms on the first through sixth floors to honors students who apply to return to the Honors House. The Honors Program and University Housing will work together to cluster groups of these “returners” mid-floor, to keep them close to the entering students. Not only will this respond to the requests of returning students, but new students will be able to gain from the experience of the older students.

Because the Honors House is so large (nearly all of the 306 residents in Daum are honors students), it may lose some of the advantages of a smaller scale learning community. Accordingly, the next step will be to add honors learning communities built around distinctive themes. The connection to the Honors Program will make these communities attractive to top students, but the themes will link them strongly to sponsoring units, keeping them small and focused enough for the intellectual and social dynamics of a learning community to succeed as effectively as possible.

After administering its fall 2006 survey, the Honors Program convened several focus groups of honors students who, after leaving Daum, had clustered themselves together in small groups of six to eight in other residence halls. The students see these clusters as ripe for becoming extensions of the Honors House, or small honors learning communities unto themselves. The survey results support the idea of organized clusters; 85% of respondents said they chose to live in Daum because it allowed them to live with other honors students, and more than 60% said they would live in an honors learning community in another residence hall if the opportunity developed. The Honors Program and University Housing have arranged a protocol to facilitate a least a few more of these clusters in fall 2007.
Conclusions—Environments and Resources to Support Learning among Selected Student Populations

The University of Iowa offers a variety of programs to help cultivate the potential of students who contribute to diversity in the undergraduate student body, who bring particular skills and talents to the community, and/or who seek opportunities for greater intellectual challenges.

Those programs for which we have some satisfaction or outcomes data seem to be effective, or at least well received. New Dimensions in Learning, which provides direct personal and academic support for first generation, low income, and disabled students enrolled at UI, met or exceeded most of its targeted outcomes in 2004-05 and 2005-06. The award-winning Summer Research Opportunity Program has served almost 500 students. Ninety-five percent of respondents to a survey regarding Student Disability Services rated SDS as either “good” or “excellent,” and the program has plans to expand its student-centered services.

The effectiveness of the University’s services to promote the success of student athletes—including customized advising, tutoring, the Gerdin Athletic Learning Center, and the Life Skills program—can be indicated to some extent by graduation and retention rates. Six-year graduation rates for student athletes on athletic scholarship have been consistently above the rate for the general UI student population over the last ten years.

“Strengthening the honors program and other opportunities for high-achieving students” is a key strategy in The Iowa Promise. Highly motivated and well-prepared students set an example for their peers and enrich the intellectual life of the community. Increased enrollments in the University of Iowa Honors Program and the popularity of its programmatic offerings are indicators of success.

Physical Learning Environment

Space Allocation

Space is a resource that is in demand for the research, education, and outreach provided by this institution.

The assignment of space is overseen by a committee that includes representatives of the Office of the Provost, the Office of the Vice President for Research, and Facilities Management (Office of the Vice President for Finance and Operations). This space committee negotiates the transfer of available or marginally productive space to individuals or departments that are in a position to put that space to more effective use. The majority of day-to-day space needs are accommodated by reassigning existing space. However, as the University steps up its building renewal efforts, the committee is challenged to identify swing space for the temporary relocation of the occupants while space is renovated. The committee is supported by the Space Planning and Utilization unit within Facilities Management.

Space Planning and Utilization works directly with the Office of the Provost, the Office of the Vice President for Research, departmental executive officers and deans, and others to make space decisions. Space Planning and Utilization is responsible for coordinating programming efforts in support of major capital projects. This work includes evaluation of space uses, benchmarking of space standards (both within the University and with peer institutions), and coordination of project-specific programming.
The University has launched the initial steps in the creation of a new web-accessible Space Information Management System (SIMS), which will allow UI to track all information on its physical assets via one virtual location. Cleaning and transferring existing data to the new system should be complete in 2009. A second phase linking additional space information, including maps and web-accessible floor plans, should be complete in 2010.

General assignment classrooms are scheduled by Classroom Scheduling in the Office of the Registrar.

Overview of Physical Teaching and Learning Facilities

Table II-31 shows how much space is available in the campus learning environment, broken down by campus region. Spaces on the health sciences campus are reported only for those buildings that support undergraduate education: the Hardin Library for the Health Sciences (HLHS), the Nursing Building (NB), the Pharmacy Building (PHAR), and the Wendell Johnson Speech and Hearing Center (SHC). The “southwest campus” refers to the buildings west of the river and south of the health sciences campus, excluding Boyd Law Building (the region called the “Boyd Law District” on the Campus Master Plan map).

Table II-31:
Summary of Learning Spaces for Undergraduate Education by Campus Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Space</th>
<th>East Campus</th>
<th>Arts Campus</th>
<th>Health Science Campus</th>
<th>Southwest Campus</th>
<th>University Housing</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Rms</td>
<td>Sq. Ft.</td>
<td># Rms</td>
<td>Sq. Ft.</td>
<td># Rms</td>
<td>Sq. Ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Assignment Classroom</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>173,376</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Classroom</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>31,574</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11,929</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Lab/Studio</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>104,167</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>48,501</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Open* Lab</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>59,587</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>26,925</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10,036</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>684</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study/Resource Room</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>187,163</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13,182</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>46,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25,176</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22,874</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lounge</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>55,527</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2,908</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4,354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMU Meeting Rooms</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20,340</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition Space</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,052</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>666,946</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>129,055</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>100,938</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Used for instruction that is informally scheduled or unscheduled
The University of Iowa campus has 720 classrooms, laboratories, studios, computer labs, and other rooms specifically created to be teaching/learning spaces. Another 351 rooms are designated for study—most in University libraries, but also including some departmental resource rooms available for individual and group study. Additional spaces serve as informal gathering spots, where study or discussion about courses may take place, and as locations for public lectures.

See Appendix II-Q for a list of all general assignment classrooms and a summary of their capacity and how they are equipped; see Appendix II-R for a summary of classroom utilization rates.

**Classrooms**

**Physical Condition**

Facilities Management has designated funding for building and grounds maintenance. In recent years, a thorough survey of the condition of major structures has yielded more focused plans to address deferred maintenance. Building renovations have been prioritized, and it has been determined that no classroom buildings should be targeted for demolition due to building condition in the near term. Capital funds for construction and renovation will provide new teaching spaces in the Chemistry Building (CB) and Art Building (AB), currently under renovations. Other recent projects have built undergraduate learning spaces in the new Art Building West (ABW), the Pomerantz Center (PC), the Blank Honors Center (BHC), and the Adler Journalism and Mass Communication Building (AJB). In coming years, renovations are anticipated in Macbride Hall (NH), Jessup Hall (JH), the Old Music Building (OMB), and Seashore Hall (SSH).

Appendix II-S provides a summary of upgrades to classroom spaces over the past ten years.

**Classroom Technology**

Of the 215 general assignment classrooms managed by the Office of the Registrar, 153 are equipped with technology resources, including desktop computers, projectors, and other presentation equipment. In 2007, the University reorganized technology management for general assignment classrooms, in response to the finding of the Campus IT Review that “classroom support is fragmented between unrelated units across campus, making it unclear where to obtain support.” All staff who support technology in these classrooms are now part of the Instructional Services Unit of ITS Campus Technology Services.

Computer labs and classrooms are staffed by professional staff whose salaries are partially supported by student computer fees. In FY 2005, classroom and lab computers were supported by approximately 49 FTEs, which accounts for 6% (and $1.87 million of salary expense) of all campus IT staff, according to the final report of the committee that conducted the Campus IT Review in 2005-06.

In that report, the committee benchmarked University of Iowa IT structure and services against 29 AAU institutions that had contributed data to the then-most recent (2003-04) EDUCAUSE Core Data Service, an annual survey that collects data about the IT environment and practices on EDUCAUSE member campuses. This group includes Iowa State University, the public institutions in the CIC, and the members of the Regents comparison group, except for Pennsylvania State University and the University of California, Los Angeles. Among these 29 institutions, 16—including The
University of Iowa—have network connections in all general assignment classrooms. UI ranked third in proportion of computers available in classrooms, second for document projectors, sixth for availability of wireless connections, and 10th for number of LCD projectors and smart boards available.

A section of the survey on learning spaces conducted for this self-study asked students about technology in classrooms, breaking down the questions by classroom category:

- Small classroom—fewer than 20 seats
- Average classroom—20 to 50 seats
- Large classroom—more than 50 seats
- Science labs

A high percentage of respondents—about 50%—gave neutral responses to questions regarding the science labs, which may reflect lack of experience with those spaces, or may indicate that students did not find the technology in question relevant to those spaces.

More than half of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that University classrooms in most categories are up to date with multimedia technology: 58.0% agreed for small classrooms, 76.6% for average classrooms, and 83.7% for large classrooms. Less than half, however—42.1%—agreed with that statement when applied to science labs (only 6.7% disagreed, however, compared to a range of 4.0% to 19.6% who disagreed with that statement applied to classrooms). Responses were similar when students were asked whether the multimedia technology in classrooms is readily available for student presentations: 58.3% of respondents agreed for small classrooms, 69.2% for average classrooms, 65.1% for large classrooms, and 36.9% for science labs.

The survey also asked students which classroom technology most enhances classroom learning: audiovisual equipment, “clicker” (personal response system) technology (described below), internet connectivity, presentation software, or “other” (they could choose more than one). Respondents chose presentation software most frequently (69.5%), followed by audiovisual equipment (59.2%), internet connectivity (58.5%), and clicker technology (20.2%).

Wireless Internet Access

Wireless internet access is available in 67 buildings and in several open areas on campus, including the Pentacrest and Hubbard Park. Wireless access is centrally authenticated using 802.1x security, and requires the use of a University login ID (HawkID) and password.

Asked whether adequate wireless connectivity is available in classroom buildings, 28.5% of respondents to the learning spaces survey agreed or strongly agreed that it is; however, 58.6% gave a neutral response, which may suggest that they have not attempted to connect to the internet using wireless access.

The University is currently working to make wireless internet access available in four buildings on the medical campus. The next buildings scheduled to receive increased coverage are the Theatre Building, North Hall, the Field House, Macbride Hall, Phillips Hall, Gilmore Hall, Halsey Hall, the Becker Communications Studies Building, Voxman Music Building, the Biology Building, Biology Building East, and Van Allen Hall. A campus-wide committee formed to help prioritize this area of growth has recommended that classrooms and student gathering areas receive strong consideration for the funds
available to increase wireless connectivity. Classroom space in the University’s primary academic buildings should be complete before fall 2008.

**Student Perceptions of Classroom Buildings**

A section of the learning spaces survey asked students to comment on classroom buildings. Asked whether public spaces in classroom buildings (such as the lounge areas in the Pappajohn Business Building and in the Adler Journalism and Mass Communication Building) are good places to study, only 30.0% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Slightly more, 37.6%, agreed or strongly agreed that public areas in classroom buildings are conducive to interacting with faculty and graduate students. Only 24.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that classroom buildings are welcoming places to study in the evening hours.

The survey asked students if they would make use of study rooms if such rooms were made available in classroom buildings; 68.1% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would. Only 27.9% of respondents agreed that there is adequate space for personal study in classroom buildings, but 41.6% agreed that there is adequate space for group project work.

Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that University classrooms are well maintained—72.9% for small classrooms, 83.6% for average classrooms, and 86.1% for large classrooms. Just under half, 49.6%, agreed with that statement applied to science labs.

Asked whether classrooms have good acoustics, 87.2% agreed or strongly agreed for small classrooms, 80.3% for average classrooms, 68.5% for large classrooms, and 47.1% for science labs. Respondents agreed that classroom lighting is appropriate in small classrooms (86.1%), average classrooms (90.0%), large classrooms (85.3%), and labs (59.5%).

**Faculty Perceptions of Classroom Buildings**

As described in the “**Research Processes**” section of the introduction to this special emphasis self-study, the subcommittee on Learning Environments solicited comments from faculty about University learning environments through small focus groups discussion and an informal e-mail survey. The feedback from these efforts was highly consistent. One theme that emerged clearly was the importance of flexibility.

Faculty views on the physical space in classrooms tended to focus on three dimensions: 1) the physical plans of classrooms; 2) the availability of classrooms of particular sizes; and 3) the availability of audio-visual and computer equipment in classrooms.

**Flexibility of Classroom Layout**

Faculty repeatedly mentioned the importance of being able to reorganize classroom seating, set lighting, and use whiteboard spaces in ways that suit individual teaching styles and formats. They mentioned their appreciation, for example, of classrooms with movable chairs and tables that allow for reorganization to accommodate both discussion and lecture formats. This seemed especially important in mid-range (50-to 70-seat) and smaller classrooms. Some faculty mentioned that some classrooms contain modular furniture that is too difficult to rearrange quickly between classes. Faculty also emphasized the need to reduce crowding in some classrooms—particularly mid-range and smaller rooms that seem to contain too many movable desks relative
to the space available—and to provide more surface space so that students can access course materials during class time.

Faculty also raised the issue of the importance of flexible lighting in classrooms. Faculty who use projectors, for instance, need to be able to adjust lights so that students can see the images projected on screen but can also see their classmates and instructor as they engage in discussion.

The Need for Different Classroom Sizes

The focus groups raised the issue of the need for more classrooms that can accommodate classes of 200 students. Further investigation is needed to determine if there is a shortage of 200-seat rooms, or if these rooms are being used by smaller classes because there are not enough smaller rooms for them to use. Or, some courses may be scheduled in these rooms because they project larger enrollments than actually occur. Adjustments to classroom scheduling policies might help to address either of these issues. The Classroom Advisory Committee is following up, beginning with a review of classroom utilization data.

In terms of the design of larger classrooms to be built in the future, faculty find breadth preferable to depth because it allows for better eye contact and communication, and reduces the potential for disruptive behavior.

Flexibility of Equipment Configurations

The third dimension of concern regarding classrooms centered on the flexibility of equipment configurations in classrooms of all sizes.

Most mid-sized UI classrooms have been equipped with standard audio-visual equipment, projectors, and computers. Because so many faculty are incorporating technology into their teaching, including in smaller classes, the University has been working to equip more of our smaller classrooms. Lack of funding has slowed this effort.

Faculty who teach large lectures, particularly those in the mathematical and natural sciences, voiced the need for dual projectors and screens in more of the large lecture classrooms. These faculty need to be able to show distributions, graphs, and other visuals while simultaneously using the document camera to project notes and formulas written as they speak. In very large lecture halls, many faculty do not like to use the whiteboards for notes because it is difficult for students in the back to see the board; in moderately large lecture halls, however, one projector and a whiteboard that remains exposed when the screen is lowered may suffice, especially if the design of the room is more broad than deep.

Again, throughout the discussion of technology in classrooms, faculty emphasized that the key is flexibility—so that instructors do not have to modify teaching style and format to fit technology, but can use technology in ways that enhance their own pedagogical methods. Faculty want to use technology to improve student engagement.

Some faculty also commented that they would like to see more classrooms offering wireless internet access, especially in classrooms with mid-range seating capacity. Faculty familiar with the personal response systems described below note that wireless technologies now emerging are likely to replace those systems soon, because they offer greater flexibility. To use the emerging technology, every student in the classroom would need to have access to the internet.
Another issue of increasing importance regarding technology in the classroom is the need for more electrical outlets, so that students in classes of all sizes can use laptop computers. This raises a safety issue as well, since outlets need to be located such that cords do not cross aisles and walkways.

**Heating, Cooling, and Acoustics**

Some faculty noted that in older buildings, it is not uncommon to experience problems with basic features of the physical environment, including temperature control, noise, and acoustics.

**Exterior Physical Environment**

The space outside buildings contributes to the quality of campus life for students, faculty, and staff. In addition, the extent to which the campus is perceived as attractive and modern makes a difference in our ability to attract new members to our community.

The development of the University’s physical environment is guided by the [Campus Master Plan](#), which describes how the University can respond to emerging academic and research needs while preserving the beauty of the physical environment and maintaining its distinctiveness. For example, the plan calls for creating a campus park along both banks of the Iowa River, to maximize enjoyment of the river landscape. The park will develop as projects along the river create opportunities; for example, the recent renovation of the Iowa Memorial Union (IMU) incorporated the addition of the IMU River Terrace, a green space and patio that serves as a venue for small concerts and plays as well as a student gathering area. In the long term, the river park will significantly increase quality outdoor space for gathering, socializing, or quiet contemplation.

Reaffirming the concept that ours is a “pedestrian oriented” campus, the Campus Master Plan gives high priority to the need for safe, efficient, and attractive pedestrian pathways. “A pedestrian campus,” the plan says, “supports social interaction and face-to-face collegiality that contribute positively to the quality of the campus life and the educational experience.” The plan also calls for undergraduate classrooms to be clustered, so that students can walk from one to another during the 10-minute class change period.

Outdoor gathering spaces, such as plazas and courts, encourage a sense of community and enrich the aesthetic character of the campus. A 2004 study called “Reinforcing Community: Campus Gathering Places Design Guidelines” mapped out design considerations and concepts for improving existing and potential gathering spaces. The report compares existing outdoor spaces that meet or do not meet the recommended design considerations.

**Iowa Memorial Union**

The student union on any campus carries a certain symbolic weight as the campus hub, or center of student life. Ideally, the student union should reflect the values, philosophy, and character of the institution.

The Iowa Memorial Union (IMU) was built in 1925. One of the most heavily used facilities on campus, the IMU houses a variety of services and facilities for students and staff, including the book store, retail food services, a hotel, the Office of Student Life, a
credit union, a coffee shop, office space for student organizations, and meeting rooms. Some other services and spaces in the IMU that contribute to student academic and co-curricular life include:

The Campus Information Center, the headquarters for general information about the University and for the University’s Master Calendar of Events

The Copyhawk copy center, which helps students create presentation materials for assignments

The new IMU Gallery, a unique venue where an art student may apply for high-traffic exhibition space for a period of one month

The ground floor entertainment space called The Hawkeye, which, with its nightclub-like atmosphere—dim lighting, pool tables, TVs, games, and Iowa memorabilia as the décor—was intentionally designed to compete with the Iowa City “bar scene” and to offer entertainment that is not alcohol related.

In 1998, the University began a process of “student services purposeful planning” with the goal of building a more student-centered campus environment. The Student Services Master Plan that grew out of this effort included plans for a major renovation of the IMU. A survey of students found that students considered improvements to the IMU a high priority, that student usage would likely increase from just over 50% to almost 80% with the proposed improvements in facilities and services, and that the majority of students were willing to fund the improvements with student fees.

The Board of Regents, State of Iowa, granted the University permission to proceed with planning in January 2003. The University continued to collect input from faculty, staff, and especially students during the planning process. A series of focus groups and town hall meetings were held in fall 2004, and in November 2004 the University presented the master plan for IMU renovation to the Board.

The plan called for two phases of renovation at a total cost of $30 million. The Board approved the schematic design for Phase I in May and June 2005. Phase I, officially completed in January 2007, added 13,860 gross square feet of space to the IMU, most of it in a three-story space (the Hubbard Pavilion) that improves circulation in the building and houses a new student lounge and study space, consolidated student organization offices on the second floor, and an in-development multi-use performance space on the third floor. Phase I also included building the River Terrace (described above), renovating the book store, creating a new food court, improving dining and lounge space, and addressing the most urgent deferred maintenance needs. Phase II has been outlined but has not yet begun.

Through the first six weeks of the fall 2007 semester, the IMU saw about 1,500 to 2,000 more people in the building each weekday than prior to the renovation.

The Phase I renovation increased the availability of electrical outlets for laptops and other electronic devices in some of these locations—an increasingly important feature for students looking for space in which to study or even socialize for a period of time. Wireless internet access is available in most of the IMU’s public spaces.

The survey on learning spaces asked a series of questions about the IMU.

More than 60% of respondents indicated that they do not spend time studying at the IMU.
Of the students who do not study at the IMU, 48.6% feel the Union is too distracting, 22.3% find the common areas not conducive to study, and 31.2% chose “other” as the reason.

Among all respondents, however, 57.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “I do not know where to study at the IMU,” and 45.7% felt that the public spaces there make good informal learning environments.

Asked whether they find the public spaces in the IMU “comfortable, welcoming, and student-oriented,” 79.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

Almost as many, 71.1%, indicated that they perceive the IMU as an entertainment and extracurricular venue.

The IMU faces a number of challenges in its mission to meet the myriad expectations of a large and diverse campus while remaining accessible and reasonably priced. Our peer institutions face similar challenges, among them competition from private industry with regard to textbook sales and food services. Ninety percent of the IMU budget comes from the revenues it generates.

**Off-Campus Locations**

The learning spaces survey asked students about their use of off-campus sites, such as local coffee houses and the Iowa City Public Library, for study. Asked if they spend a significant amount of time studying at off-campus public locations, 42.7% agreed or strongly agreed and 39.9% disagreed, 16.4% of them strongly. The survey also asked whether students prefer to study at off-campus locations. While 28.0% of respondents were neutral on that question, the rest were split almost equally, with 34.5% agreeing and 37.3% disagreeing (11.0% strongly, on either side).

The University of Iowa campus blends into and overlaps the Iowa City environment at numerous points, and in fact informal interviews by the subcommittee on Learning Environments suggest that students do not perceive a clear boundary between on- and off-campus.

When asked why they left campus to study, students in several downtown coffeehouses replied consistently that they did not feel they were going “off campus.” They pointed to the proximity of buildings such as Seashore Hall, the Biology Building, and Phillips Hall, and indicated that the downtown area feels like an extension of campus. Several students noted that they are likely to see professors and TAs (past and present) in coffeehouses, and they appreciate the opportunity this provides for informal interactions. When asked whether they would like to see coffeehouses on campus, most students felt the existing coffeehouses were essentially on campus and that their needs were met.

Students in the Old Capitol Town Center (the mall adjacent to campus that now houses the University Capitol Centre) seemed to have very little understanding of whether the building is under the jurisdiction of the city or the University. They use the center for errands (e.g. at the CVS drug store), food, and a place to study between classes. Students have an equally vague understanding about Iowa Book and Supply, a private book store directly across the street from the Pentacrest. When students in the store were asked, easily half thought the University owned Iowa Book and Supply, or that a formal relationship existed. Even those aware that Iowa Book and Supply is a private business indicated that they consider it a campus book store.
The public libraries in both Iowa City and Coralville also see student traffic—especially in Iowa City. When students were asked why they chose to use the Iowa City library, frequent responses included: 1) it is closer to their apartment or dorm than the University’s Main Library; 2) it is more approachable; 3) it is a nice place to sit between classes; 4) they can get a lot of the books they need. Although students have a much clearer understanding of the distinction between on- and off-campus libraries, still students seem to feel as if the public library space in Iowa City is part of the UI campus.

Conclusions—Physical Learning Environments

Our study suggests that the University’s physical teaching and learning facilities are serving their function well. Classroom facilities provide adequate space, are used appropriately, and are equipped comparably to our peers. The learning environments survey indicates that students generally find classrooms well maintained, equipped adequately, and sufficient in lighting and acoustics. The exterior environment is designed to support the University’s educational mission.

The Iowa Memorial Union has undergone the first phase of a major renovation, which has been guided by a process of “student services purposeful planning” and a vision of creating a more student-centered campus environment. The University should collect more information about changes in student usage of the IMU as a result of the renovations.

Virtual Learning Environments and Academic Technology

Overview

Information technology, like the library system, is fundamental to developing skills students need to succeed in college and beyond. Of the respondents to the student satisfaction survey conducted for this self-study, 66% who had used UI academic technology services reported that the experience helped them build skills.

In addition, technology helps faculty incorporate innovative and effective new teaching methods in their classrooms; allows new modes of course delivery to meet the needs of a diverse student body; and gives students, faculty, and advisors fast access to information about students and courses.

The University’s 1997-98 self-study for reaccreditation by the NCA included a special emphasis on “the application of information and communications technology to teaching and learning in a research university.” As a result of that self-study and the advice of the consultant-evaluators, the University has made several significant changes over the last ten years to enhance virtual learning environments and academic technologies. Many of those developments were described in the institutional section of this self-study.

Management of Virtual Learning Environments

As is the case with the management of other technology resources, the management of virtual learning spaces is split between Information Technology Services, the central campus technology support provider, and various colleges and departments. The Colleges of Engineering, Education, and Nursing, for example, have faculty and IT support personnel dedicated to the development of specialized virtual learning environments.
Information Technology Services

Information Technology Services (ITS) provides campus-wide information technology support for the University of Iowa campus. ITS provides computing facilities; administrative information systems; voice, data, and video communications networks and services; technological resources for teaching and research needs; Instructional Technology Centers (ITCs); and a variety of related services and support. ITS is a single organization comprising four departments that report to the University’s chief information officer (CIO): Administrative Information Systems, Campus Technology Services, Systems and Platform Administration, and Telecommunications and Network Services. Each department provides services that directly and/or indirectly support students on campus.

The technology systems students use most often are (in order of frequency) (1) e-mail; (2) the 26 ITCs across campus, which comprise a network of more than 1,000 workstations; (3) ICON, which student groups also use for non-academic communication; and (4) ISIS (Iowa Student Information System), the web-based system students use to register, retrieve grades, and transact other business. Other services ITS provides to students include:

- Digital storage space. MyWeb and MyFiles or Student Academic File Space (SAFE) allow students the opportunity to publish individual, academic-related websites, e-portfolios, projects, assignments, and other University-related materials. Each student is assigned 50 MB of space for posting documents securely.

- The Virtual Desktop service, a web-based system that gives students access to a wide variety of software applications installed on a remote computer. Students can access the applications from any computer, on or off campus, over the internet.

- The opportunity to purchase common software packages at a dramatic discount through the Campus Software Program. Students can also download licensed applications such as antivirus software, FTP software, and wireless authentication software for free from the software download site.

- The opportunity to buy computers at very good educational discount prices, through contract arrangements with major computer manufacturers, including Dell, HP, Apple, and Gateway

- The constantly expanding wireless service, which is extremely popular with students

SkillSoft and “Online@Iowa,” two completely online services offering training and support for technology use. The Books 24x7 component of SkillSoft makes available thousands of pages of technical documentation, which students can browse to find answers to questions and assist with troubleshooting, etc.

ITS is collaborating with academic units on campus to explore additional virtual learning environments, such as “e-portfolios,” which allow students to upload and organize evidence of their skills and accomplishments; “immersive learning environments” such as simulations, “virtual worlds,” and online games, which have various potential pedagogical applications; Web 2.0 collaboration resources such as blogs and wikis; and multi-point collaboration suites such as Elluminate.

ITS also offers special training opportunities for students. The Student IT Skills program is part of a training program for students who will work in IT support or web
development jobs for colleges, departments, or other administrative units. The program has three parts:

Training in core IT support skills—offered in an intensive, all-day format on five Saturdays, and available for credit

Training in web site design and development—offered in weekly studio sessions during the academic term, and also available for credit

Seminars on advanced topics in institutional IT support, offered on various topics throughout the semester

Students are actively engaged in all facets of IT services. A Student Technology Advisory Committee meets monthly during the fall and spring semesters to offer ITS advice and input on existing and needed IT support and services. ITS also employs students to:

Staff the Help Desk (60-80 student assistants)

Serve as Student Instructional Technology Assistants (SITAs). Currently, ten graduate students and two undergraduates work directly with faculty to incorporate technology into their teaching.

Serve as RAs (six to 12, mostly graduate students), which provides an opportunity for students to work on University research programs

Work with the Student Software Services Group (SSSG), a unit of the ITS Help Desk that services student-owned computers free of charge

Participate in the fall introduction to ResNet, the information network for the Residence Halls, which provides information to help students navigate dorm life. A group sets up stations in the dorms and participants help incoming students set up their computers correctly.

The students who participate in these programs are very active and engaged, and eager to respond to new developments in information technology.

ITS seeks information on student needs and desires with regard to technology on a regular basis. Typical student responses include “more connectivity,” meaning “more wireless connectivity.” Another common theme is greater integration among existing services—for example, the ability to log in once with a HawkID and password and access e-mail, ICON, ISIS, and other services without logging in additional times.

In 2005-06, ITS conducted a survey to collect baseline data from faculty, students, and staff about satisfaction with ITS services in five areas: the Help Desk, the Customer Information Desk, the ITCs (see Computer Labs, below), Software Services, and Survey-Desktop Services.

After using one of the designated services, individuals were asked to complete a brief survey in which they rated five areas: courtesy, skills and knowledge, performance, reliability, and overall experience. The survey used a five-step Likert scale with values ranging from “totally dissatisfied” to “totally satisfied.”

For the small group of respondents—about 100 each semester—the results indicated a high level of satisfaction with UI IT services. More than 90% expressed satisfaction with each of the five areas in fall 2005. In spring 2006 more than 90% of respondents expressed satisfaction with all areas except the ITCs.
Computer Labs

ITS manages 26 computer labs, or Instructional Technology Centers (ITCs), across campus. Funded by centrally administered student computer fees, the ITCs offer more than 1,000 Macintosh and PC workstations and more than 80 applications (a complete list is available on the ITC web site). Services available in the ITCs include:

- Hands-on instructional technology experiences
- Access to cutting-edge technology not easily purchased by end users (high end video editing, statistical analysis applications, graphic suites, etc.)
- Access to basic electronic resources for coursework and research
- Access to e-mail, instant messaging, and other communications tools
- Access to personal electronic resources (e.g., web pages, blogs) from campus locations
- Printing course documents (12 million pages in 2006-07)
- Access to digital file storage space

Of the 26 ITCs, six are accessible to students 24 hours a day.

In addition to the 26 centrally managed ITCs, there are over 100 departmental and college-managed computer labs at the University, offering students access to approximately 1,700 workstations using Mac OS, Microsoft Windows, and Linux/Unix operating systems. In general, departmental computing facilities are reserved for students from a particular discipline or major, and in many cases these labs are specifically configured to meet the needs of a given discipline—although a growing number of departments is collaborating with ITS to standardize software loads and printing services. Departments and colleges with particularly high concentrations of computer labs include:

- Tippie College of Business
- College of Engineering
- College of Education
- Department of Art and Art History in CLAS
- Department of Computer Science in CLAS
- School of Journalism and Mass Communication in CLAS

This balance of central and departmental resources is representative of the generally distributed support model for many IT services at UI.

Departmental and collegiate computer labs are, for the most part, also supported by student computer fees. Fees are assessed to each student by college, with students in the Tippie College of Business and the College of Engineering paying higher fees than students in other colleges because of the more technologically sophisticated facilities available to them. ITS produces a report summarizing how student computing fee funds have been allocated each year; the most recent report available is for FY 2006.

In addition to the centrally managed ITCs and departmental and collegiate computer labs, the University Libraries hosts more than 400 public workstations in 12 locations across campus. These workstations offer a software suite identical to that found in the centrally managed ITCs. The Main Library and the Hardin Library for the Health Sciences also have 75 notebook computers available for students to check out.
When asked how much of their study time they spend in an ITC, 52.3% of respondents to the learning spaces survey answered “some” (less than half of study time). Nineteen percent of respondents answered that they spend from about half to all of their study time in ITCs.

Asked, alternatively, if they primarily use the ITCs to do academic work, 54.5% agreed or strongly agreed. Asked whether they use ITCs for social networking, 36.3% agreed or strongly agreed. Just over 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the ITCs are well maintained, 65.9% agreed or strongly agreed that the ITCs are conducive to study, and 73.1% agreed or strongly agreed that the ITCs are open at hours that meet their needs.

**Iowa Courses Online (ICON)**

The University of Iowa hosts a centralized virtual learning environment in its course management system, Iowa Courses Online (ICON), which was developed to replace the University’s previous course management systems (Blackboard and WebCT) with a single service. The University developed ICON with the intent that it be easy to use and intuitive, in order to encourage faculty adoption and create an enhanced student experience. Additional reasons for adopting a single course management environment included the opportunity to provide better support and a variety of potential integrations. This full-featured system continues to develop to meet diverse on-campus and distance learning needs. ICON is intended to improve efficiency while eliminating barriers to teaching and learning.

During the spring 2007 semester, faculty hosted 1,686 courses on ICON, compared to 1,240 the previous spring. ICON statistics indicate that 23,000 students used the site during spring 2007. As of May 14, 2007, there were 2,177 active course sites on ICON, with more than 23,500 students enrolled.

**Teaching Technology—Personal Response Systems**

A number of faculty at The University of Iowa use personal response systems (PRS) units, or “clickers,” in their classes. Faculty members in the Department of Physics and Astronomy, for example, have used Interwrite PRS units for a number of years—primarily in large, introductory courses that meet general education requirements. In the Tippie College of Business, two faculty members—one in the “Introduction to Management” course and one in the “Statistics for Strategy Problems” course—have used Quizdom interactive technology. Students use these devices in classroom lectures to answer questions posed via PowerPoint, to participate in classroom surveys, and to otherwise provide feedback to the instructor. Audience response technology appears to have potential to enhance learning in a variety of large classes (Mazur, 1997). The University of Iowa has moved beyond the “innovator stage” and into the “early adopter” stage. As we monitor the effectiveness of this technology, we will need to provide support for those who will constitute the “early majority.”

At the end of the “Introduction to Management” course (required for all business majors and open to all undergraduates), students were asked to answer survey questions about clicker technology. In spring 2005 474 students responded (77% response rate), and in spring 2006 350 student responded (62% response rate). Most respondents agreed with positive statements about the use of clickers during lecture, as shown in Table II-32. Only a handful of respondents indicated that clickers were a distraction during class.
### Table II-32:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Percent Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clicker activities helped to keep my attention</td>
<td>68% 72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clicker activities helped me to feel involved</td>
<td>72% 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More likely to attend a lecture that uses clickers</td>
<td>54% 61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clicker activities and feedback helped me learn</td>
<td>57% 58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, the clickers are a worthwhile addition</td>
<td>70% 77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clicker activities were generally a distraction</td>
<td>12% 9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students in a 300-student physics and astronomy course also were surveyed at the end of the spring 2006 semester. Eighty-nine percent of respondents to that survey agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “PRS technology encouraged me to attend class, was beneficial in learning during lectures.”

### Student Information System—the MAUI Project

MAUI (“Made at The University of Iowa”) is an Office of the Provost-sponsored project to replace UI’s 30-year-old, home-grown, mainframe-based student information system with a new, integrated, web-based system. The system will replace current functions related to admissions, student records and registration, financial aid, advising, continuing education, transfer course articulation, and degree auditing. That is, it will provide more and better information for advising, give students better access to degree evaluations, and increase our ability to innovate—for example, by adding “service learning” designations to courses, or offering courses with fractional credits.

In 2002, the Office of the Provost, the Office of Admissions, the Division of Continuing Education, the Office of Student Financial Aid, the Office of the Registrar, and Information Technology Services formed a steering committee to explore “build or buy” options for replacing the existing system. After a careful analysis, the committee determined that the best option for UI would be a hybrid model, purchasing software components for specific functionality and integrating them with internally developed modules and components.

This is a major, enterprise-wide project, involving significant effort and input from the units represented on the steering committee as well as the colleges. Implementation, which began in fall 2006, will take a phased approach, using short planning horizons and development cycles to divide the project into manageable components. The system should be complete in spring 2011.

### Distance Education

Over the past two decades, social, demographic, institutional, and technological changes have led to a huge increase in the demand for distance education and also stimulated new directions in the way distance education is offered. In this self-study, we focus on
programs and services specific to undergraduates and on the central distance education delivery unit on campus: the Division of Continuing Education (DCE). Some colleges independently offer additional distance education courses.

In spring 2005, at the request of the Board of Regents, State of Iowa, the three Regent universities developed a strategic plan for distance education. The plan identifies the universities’ shared mission: to extend learning beyond the physical boundaries of our campuses to meet needs in the state, nation, and world.

The University of Iowa offers three bachelor’s degrees specifically designed for students whose location, work, or family commitments prevent them from attending classes on campus. The Bachelor of Liberal Studies (B.L.S.) and the Bachelor of Applied Studies (B.A.S.) were described earlier; the third is an R.N.-to-B.S.N. (Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing) degree program, which also can be earned with online coursework. In addition, three certificates can be earned entirely online: entrepreneurship, public health, and nonprofit management (an online certificate program in museum studies is in the planning stages). To support these programs, the University offers more than 200 courses online. Many degree- and non-degree-seeking students from other institutions and states look to Iowa’s online courses to find what they need, such as the hard-to-find online pathophysiology course (a prerequisite for admission to many colleges of nursing around the country) offered by the UI College of Nursing.

Undergraduates in distance education programs receive services similar to what the University provides to on-campus undergraduates. Upon enrollment, a student is assigned a HawkID and an advisor, with whom he or she will work by phone, e-mail, or in person if possible to plan a course of study and monitor degree progress. Distance students work with the distance librarian (described earlier) and with their instructors to navigate coursework. A quarterly newsletter helps them stay connected. They have access to scholarships reserved for distance education students. They have full technological support from the ICON staff, from Information Technology Services, and from the Division of Continuing Education.

The DCE has made investments in software and hardware to be able to offer rich course environments incorporating a variety of media, as well as two-way live faculty-student interactions; to provide security; and to build a redundant system that will ensure courses will not be interrupted. Each online course starts with an introductory “test your connection” page that lists computer requirements for the course. There is a dedicated, toll-free number for technical support. DCE staff work extensively with instructors to teach them how to use software, and once classes are under way, a DCE staff member is always on hand in case issues arise.

The learning spaces survey asked students if they were satisfied with their ability to connect to campus technology resources from off-campus; 66.6% agreed or strongly agreed that off-campus connectivity is adequate, while 16.4% disagreed.

A frequent concern regarding distance education is whether distance offerings have the same value and quality as on-campus offerings. The DCE has set a goal for the coming year to restructure and enhance course evaluation procedures, to ensure that on- and off-campus students are treated alike, and to assess whether the goal of providing off-campus courses that meet or exceed the quality of on-campus offerings is being met.

Recent trends show more on-campus students registering for online courses, which leads to more diverse classroom composition and promotes good use of resources (this can, for example, be a mechanism for increasing enrollment in low-enrolled courses).
The number of on-campus students taking online courses is unlikely to increase much more, however, given that tuition is prohibitive—students pay for courses offered by the DCE, even if total tuition for on-campus and DCE courses exceeds the tuition cap. The dean of the Division of Continuing Education has submitted a proposal, now under discussion, to change this policy.

**Faculty Perceptions of Virtual Learning Environments**

In the subcommittee on Learning Environment’s focus group discussions, faculty seemed generally pleased with ICON, though they noted some aspects of the system that are not as flexible as they could be (e.g., the “grade book” utility). Faculty agreed that the late summer training sessions for using ICON are important and should be continued, so that new faculty and graduate teaching assistants can become acquainted with the software quickly.

Some faculty are using technology for online discussions and office hours. This kind of usage can be expected to increase, and the University will need to be prepared to offer more options for online collaborations and discussion (e.g., programs such as Elluminate).

Some faculty see the need for expanding options for varied course formats, including offering certain undergraduate courses completely online.

Currently, the Center for Credit Programs collaborates with various UI colleges to offer online courses, but opportunities for teaching courses in this format could be expanded. These courses are important for students who cannot attend classes on campus due to health, family, or other reasons but do not want to interrupt their education. Colleges recognize that teaching courses online is at least as time-consuming and challenging as regular classroom teaching, and should be treated equivalently.

**Accessibility**

An important point to note is that as technology evolves, so do issues of accessibility. The ADA requires that University programs be accessible, and those that involve electronic or web-based resources must meet Section 508 criteria. The University’s policy on Accessibility Standards for Web Resources provides information and guidelines for web designers, but this is an ongoing effort.

**Conclusions—Virtual Learning Environments and Academic Technology**

Recent and ongoing major upgrades to important academic systems—ICON and the MAUI project—reflect the University’s continuing commitment to enhancing learning environments through technology.

ITS provides a variety of important and helpful services to the general student population, and also provides especially meaningful opportunities that enhance the potential of students who have a particular interest in technology. Of respondents to the student satisfaction survey, 66% who had used UI academic technology services reported that the experience helped them build skills. ITS’s own survey indicated a high level of student satisfaction with UI IT services.

ITS seeks information about student needs and desires with regard to technology regularly. Current themes for development include increased connectivity—especially wireless—and greater integration among services.
As distance education and online courses become more widely used, issues of ensuring equal quality among online and traditional courses and fair treatment of course instructors will gain exigency.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS—ENVIRONMENTS AND RESOURCES FOR LEARNING**

**Signs of Success**

The many organizational units and programs that help students of all backgrounds cultivate their academic and personal potential play a key role in the University’s ability to fulfill our mission of “educat[ing] students for success and personal fulfillment.”

All of the units and programs investigated for this self-study showed signs of success. The University Libraries, academic technology services, Center for Diversity & Enrichment programs, and the Math Lab all did particularly well in the student satisfaction survey, with 65% or more of respondents who had used those programs or services indicating that they had helped their skill development. The University Libraries clearly are an extraordinary resource for students, and efforts to integrate librarians into undergraduate courses have had promising outcomes. Recent innovations and ongoing upgrades in academic technology, such as the MAUI project, promise significant benefits for students, faculty, and advisors. Students express a high level of satisfaction with advisors in the Academic Advising Center, and with many departmental advising programs. The Pomerantz Career Center is quickly growing into a world-class facility for career advising. The University of Iowa Honors Program has grown dramatically and is building on the extraordinary resources of the “Iowa Honors Connection” between the Blank Honors Center and the Honors House in Daum residence hall.

Our study suggests that the University’s physical teaching and learning facilities are adequately equipped and appropriately used. Computer labs—including centrally managed ITCs and departmental and Libraries computer labs—give students access to almost 3,000 workstations and more than 80 software applications on campus, and “Virtual Desktop” makes the same software applications available from off campus. Results of the learning environments survey suggest that students are very pleased with the ITCs as an academic resource.

The University’s residence halls also seem to be functioning well as learning environments. Learning communities like the Honors House are in great demand. Plans are under way to develop additional honors community clusters in residence halls other than Daum, and to make the large community in Daum smaller by creating smaller communities organized around themes.

The Iowa Memorial Union has undergone the first phase of a major renovation, which has been guided by a process of “student services purposeful planning” and a vision of creating a more student-centered campus environment.

As a central virtual learning environment, our new consolidated course management system has attracted a very high rate of participation from faculty and students. The University also offers more than 200 online distance education courses, including some that are difficult to find elsewhere. The University’s commitment to distance learners has long been demonstrated by the presence of a distance librarian to support these students.
Moving Forward

Our study suggests that we must investigate issues in academic advising. Students cite advising as one of their most positive experiences, and also one of their most negative. Although the Academic Advising Center receives very positive evaluations in general (on average, students give advisors marks above 3.5 on a scale of 1.0 to 4.0 “for doing [their] job well”), advising in the process of selecting a major area of study is an area of concern for students. Selecting a major can be difficult and anxiety-ridden for reasons that no advising service could eliminate, but the student satisfaction survey results suggest that we could do a better job of helping students through that process. Moreover, the system of specialized advising by colleges and departments results in wide variation in approaches to and quality of advising. This form of advising receives high praise from some students and criticism from others. Effective practices from some of the most successful departments might be implemented in less successful departments, or the University might find other ways to support advising within the departments.

With the shift in the mission of the University Libraries over the past several years—toward education, service, and helping individuals access materials electronically—both physical and virtual space needs have changed, and will continue to change. Faculty and students need more space for collaborative efforts, and consistent online access to materials.

University Housing recognizes that the residence halls play an important role in academic development, and the University should encourage efforts to increase academic programming, peer mentorship programs, and other positive interactions with faculty, staff, and peers in the halls. As suggested in the “Entry and Transition” section of this self-study, we should also build on the success of our existing learning communities. The residence halls also should be central to strategies that deemphasize alcohol consumption.

Interviews with faculty revealed a perception that there is a need for more classrooms of specific sizes. Further assessment of classroom use might help us identify some additional spaces that could help meet demands. As we renovate spaces and fashion learning environments, we must keep in mind the need expressed by faculty in this study for flexible room configurations, equipment, and lighting, so that rooms can support various pedagogical styles.

Student and faculty use of online teaching and learning tools will increase, and the University must be prepared to support those tools. At the same time, the role, philosophy, and value of online learning must be evaluated alongside traditional teaching and learning, to ensure consistent quality and fair treatment of both students and instructors.